

PLANNING COMMISSION REPORT

ON PROPOSED BYLAW AMENDMENTS

In accordance with 24 V.S.A. §4441, the Town of Peacham Planning Commission (PC) has prepared this written report on proposed amendments to the Town of Peacham Zoning and Flood Hazard Regulations.

Brief Explanation of the Proposed Amendments

The Town of Peacham obtained a Bylaw Modernization grant to identify any barriers to housing in the development regulations and prepare revisions as necessary to improve housing choice, affordability and opportunity. With the grant the planning commission was able to work with consultants to review the adopted regulations, conduct community engagement around housing issues in Peacham and propose amendments. The proposed amendments update the bylaw including legislative changes following the passage of the HOMES Act of 2023.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the proposed bylaw amendment is to further the goals and objectives of the 2019 Peacham Town Plan. The proposed amendments include a purpose statement in Section 103, which enumerates a set of 13 guiding principles. The Town Plan and the regulations as proposed seek to sensitively manage future development in the village districts by respecting the historic form while minimizing the impact of new development on productive agricultural lands and sensitive natural resources. The proposed regulations are also intended to promote housing choice, affordability and quality to sustain a diverse population and conform to equal treatment and fair housing laws.

Municipal Plan Goals and Policies

The Peacham planning commission commenced the bylaw amendment process with a review that recommended amending regulations to implement the goals and policies of the 2019 Town Plan, to conform with statute (including HOMES Act) and where appropriate the Enabling Better Places Guide (DHCD). The amendments to the Zoning and Flood Hazard Regulations propose removing barriers to housing choice such as conditional use review of zoning permit applications for ADUs.

Municipal Plan Future Land Use

The proposed amendment is compatible with the future land uses and densities set forth in the 2019 Peacham Town Plan as described below:

- The Town Plan calls for maintaining the historic settlement pattern in the village district. The proposed amendments remove unnecessary barriers to development of new dwelling units in existing historic homes and ADUs.
- The Town Plan envisions rural countryside beyond the villages and commits to ensuring local policies support the economic viability of farming and forestry. The proposed amendments implement changes in legislation between 2019 and 2023 including the HOMES Act while continuing to support the vision of the Town Plan.

Safe and Affordable Housing

The proposed amendments remove barriers to housing creation, particularly multi-unit dwellings in the Village district and ADUs in all zoning districts. The proposed amendments remove conditional use review for ADUs as required by statute and now make clear that 2-unit dwellings (duplexes) are a permitted use in all districts.

Planned Community Facilities

The proposed amendments do not directly implement any specific proposals for planned community facilities. The draft Zoning and Flood Hazard Regulations continue to implement the policies of the 2019 Town Plan which seek to promote sensitive development in the villages that reinforces the historic built form while preserving the character and farming viability of the rural district. These proposed changes to the regulations are not expected to create increased expectations for community facilities.