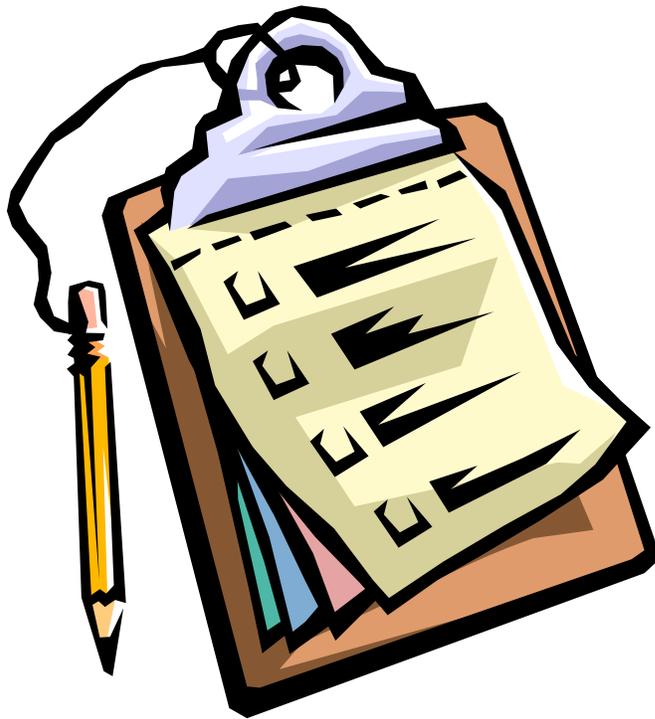


# TOWN OF NORTH READING

**Wading through the Permitting Process:**

**North Reading's Real Estate  
Development Guide – Updated  
September 2005**



**A comprehensive guide to the permitting process in North Reading.**



## **NORTH READING MUNICIPAL DEPARTMENTS AND STAFF**

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**NORTH READING REGULATORY BOARDS**

**Community Planning Commission**

Neal Rooney, Chairman  
Chris Hayden, Vice-Chairman  
Patricia Romeo, Clerk  
Warren Pearce  
Shep Spear

**Conservation Commission**

Martin Weiss, Chairman  
Timothy Allen, Vice-Chairman  
Paul Dick  
James Demetri  
Kathleen Legere  
Jonathan Cody

**Board of Health**

Gary Hunt, Chairman  
Michael Ricci  
Pamela Vath

**Zoning Board of Appeals**

Paul O'Leary, Chair  
Joseph Keyes, ViceChair  
Joseph Murphy, Clerk

**Licensing Commission**

[Board of Selectmen act as Licensing Commission]

## Section 1: Introduction to Boards and Departments You'll Be Dealing With



Almost any development project you may have in mind will require some type of permit from the Town. The larger and more complicated your project, the more permits it will likely require.

And the more familiar you are with these permits and their related requirements at the beginning of your project, the more you will minimize the likelihood of unpleasant surprises later, after you begin building.

There is nothing that will make your project go easier, improve your chances that your project design will be accepted, or reduce the possibility that you will have to make expense project modifications after you begin, than knowing the Town's requirements for your kind of project.

The best place to begin is to visit the Building Department currently located at 235 North Street. Visiting the building department and obtaining an application for a building permit will guarantee that each department head will review your proposed project and you will get feedback as to what type of permits in that Division you will be required to obtain.

But remember – it is your project, and you, not the town staff, are solely responsible for assuring that it meets all Town requirements. The Town Staff will not do your work for you, but can make your work with the Town more efficient and productive. The department heads at Town Hall will inform you what local permits your project is likely to require, what applications need to be submitted, what information and plans you will need to complete the applications, how many copies will be required, and who you may wish or need to see.

Your proposed project may require more than one review, and by different Town Boards. The boards most associated with development project reviews are the Community Planning Commission, Conservation Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals and Board of Health. Each has a staff person associated with it, to assist in its project reviews. The Community Planning Commission has the Community Planning Director, the Conservation Commission has the Conservation Agent, the Zoning Board of Appeals has the Building Commissioner and the Board of Health has the Public Health Director. If your proposed project is large and complex, it will be to your advantage to meet with these staff for a preliminary review of your project concept and ideas before the formal review by the Town Boards.

Additionally, many large projects will require a review by the Fire Department, Police Department or Department of PublicWorks to ensure that public safety standards are met. Change of businesses, common victualler licenses, and other items will need to get approval through the Licensing Commission via the Town Clerk's Office.

You have the opportunity to meet all town staff together in one place to receive their comments and suggestions regarding your project proposal – at a North Reading Development Review Team Meeting.



## THE DEVELOPMENT REVIEW TEAM MEETINGS

Meeting Schedule: 4<sup>TH</sup> Wednesday of every month, 9:00 a.m.

The Development Review Team Meetings, or DRT, was created in the 1990's to help streamline the application and review process by performing a preliminary staff review of proposed projects to be reviewed by the various boards and committees. The Water/Sewer Superintendent acts as a coordinator for projects reviewed by the DRT, and is your contact person who will schedule you for your DRT.

The purpose of the DRT is to expedite the development project review process [i.e. the Town's process of reviewing proposed development projects] in North Reading by:

- a. helping development permit applicants identify the Bylaws, requirements, rules and regulations which they are expected to comply with; and
- b. assisting the North Reading regulatory boards in the review of proposed projects by identifying salient issues regarding proposed projects with which the Town is rightly concerned.

Thus, the Development Review Team will:

1. Meet with prospective permit applicants to share information;
2. listen to the prospective applicant's proposed ideas for development;
3. inform the applicant of the Town's bylaws, requirements, rules and regulations with which the applicant and the proposed project must confirm [however, as stated earlier, this in no way changes the applicant's responsibility to inform him/herself of all applicable state and local laws and regulations pertaining to his/her proposed project; while the TRC may help the applicant identify all the applicable laws and regulations of which they are aware, the responsibility for knowing and complying resides solely and unequivocally with the applicant];
4. coordinate their concerns and departmental responsibilities among themselves so as not to communicate conflicting requirements to permit applicants;
5. assist the North Reading regulatory boards by identifying the salient issues regarding proposed development projects, with which the Town is rightly and justly concerned;
6. facilitate communication among town department and professional staff who regulate and permit growth and land use.

Based on the issues raised by the proposed project, the DRT may recommend where the prospective permit application might best begin the permit application process [i.e. which local regulatory board should first review the proposed project]. The DRT also creates meeting reports for the prospective applicants and for the North Reading regulatory boards about the substantive issues discussed, concerns raised, recommendations made or problem resolutions offered. Unanswered questions and unresolved issues between town staff and permit applicants are noted both for applicants and the boards.

### **THE COMMUNITY PLANNING COMMISSION [CPC]**

Meeting Schedule: 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays of the month at 7:00 p.m. normally held in Room 10 of the Town Hall, 235 North Street.



The North Reading CPC generally reviews 4 different types of permit applications, for residential, commercial and industrial projects that must be recorded in the Registry of Deeds or the Land Court:

Approval Not Required [ANR] Application: These involve the subdivision of an existing property on an established roadway, or a lot line adjustment.

Subdivision of Land: The creation of new lots by subdividing property, which also requires the construction of a new roadway to provide access to the new lots.

Site Plan Review: The review of plans for a specific site, usually commercial or industrial development projects required by the zoning bylaw.

Special Permit: The CPC is the Special Permit Granting authority for various types of projects listed under the Special Permit Review Process described in Section 3.

The Community Planning Department Assistant can provide you with copies of the zoning Bylaws, Subdivision Regulations, and Special Permit Regulations for those projects/activities for which the CPC is the Special Permit Granting Authority, and various CPC application forms.



## CONSERVATION COMMISSION



Meeting Schedule: 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the month, at 7:00 p.m. in Room 14 at Town Hall, 235 North Street.

The Conservation Commission administers the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act [MGL Chapter 131, Section 40] and North Reading's Wetland Protection Bylaw.

Any construction or alteration of land e.g. any temporary or permanent structures, additions, driveways, filling, grading, etc.] within 100 feet of any wetland will require a permit from the Conservation Commission. The Conservation Agent can tell you if your project will fall within the Conservation Commission's jurisdiction; don't trust your own judgment. **Massachusetts defines wetlands by hydrology, soil conditions and by vegetation; you cannot assume that no wetlands are involved simply because there is no standing water on your land!**

The Conservation Department Assistant can provide you with written instructions and forms for filing a Request for Determination of Applicability [i.e. whether the wetlands protection regulations will apply to your proposed project] or a Notice of intent to perform work affecting wetlands, and can arrange an appointment with the Conservation Agent for you.

## **BOARD OF HEALTH**

Meeting Schedule: , Town Hall, 235 North Street



The North Reading Board of Health enforces state and local environmental and health codes. Among the many permits and licenses it issues are those for septic systems permitting or licensing of dumpsters, private wells, animals, trash trucks, septic trucks, tobacco sales, frozen dessert establishments, funeral directors, septic installers, massage therapists, tanning establishments, food establishments, semi-public and public pools & spas, mobile food vendors, body art establishments, trash trucks, recreational camps for children etc and Site assignment and inspection of solid and sewage waste facilities.

The Board of Health Department Assistant can provide you with written instructions, forms and applications for filling out all of the above listed permit applications. The Assistant can also arrange an appointment for you with either the Town's Public Health Director to help you determine whether your project will require Board of Health permits or approvals and explain the procedures for obtaining these permits.



## **ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS**

Meeting Schedule: , Town Hall, 235 North Street.

If a building permit has been denied by the Building Commissioner based on zoning considerations, you may have recourse to the Zoning Board of Appeals, or ZBA. The ZBA will consider the reasons why the permit was denied, consider if any conditions imposed by Town Boards have been subsequently met, and will hold a public hearing. Based on these regulations, any new information presented, and the outcome of the public hearing, the ZBA will render its decision.

In addition, the ZBA is the permit granting authority for all Earth Removal Permits regulated under Article 200-41 of the Zoning Bylaw.

Finally, the Zoning Board of Appeals can issue findings to see if your proposed use or activity conforms to the intent of the Zoning Bylaw; and also can issue a variance to any of the dimensional requirements of the Zoning Bylaw, based on certain state-mandated criteria.



## **LICENSING COMMISSION**

Meeting Schedule: As needed, at least every other Monday of the Month, at 7:00 p.m., at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Room, Town Hall, 120 Main Street

North Reading's Board of Selectmen act as the town's Licensing Commission for issuing licenses to businesses serving the public. Such licenses include Common Victualler's, and Club licenses for establishments that serve liquor, package store licenses for stores selling liquor, one-day permits for special events where liquor is sold, licenses for automatic amusement devices, auctioneer licenses, bowling alleys, taxicab and livery licenses, licenses to buy, sell, exchange or assemble Class I and Class II motor vehicles, and licenses for the storage of flammables, among others.

The Town Manager's Office acts as the licensing coordinator for the Board of Selectmen, and can arrange for any meeting or public hearing that may be required. The license applications can be obtained from the Town Manager's Office.



## **PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT:**

This department answers inquiries for water supply and distribution [Water/Sewer Superintendent], sewage collection and treatment, solid waste collection and disposal, and street construction and maintenance. There is also an Engineering Department within the Division, which should be consulted on questions about roadways, parcel boundaries, curb cuts, and the location of underground utility lines such as gas and water mains.



## **TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE:**

The Town Clerk's office serves as the general informative department for the town hall. Applicants for projects are also required to file their Community Planning Commission, zoning board and conservation commission decisions with the town clerk prior to recording them with the Registry of Deeds. The Town Clerk's Office is the location where citizens would file citizen's petitions to amend the zoning bylaw or the zoning map, as well as other petitions to amend the general charters, etc.



**PARKS AND RECREATION:**

This department is responsible for the orderly construction and maintenance of parks and recreation activities within the Town. The department reviews upcoming plans to determine the impact of the new growth compared to the future parks and recreational needs of the town. In addition, the department coordinates and interacts regularly with the community planning and conservation commission departments to examine the long-range open space needs of the Town.

**SAMPLE CALENDAR OF MONTHLY PERMITTING BOARD MEETINGS**

Most meetings take place in Town Hall in either Room 10 or Room 14 in Town Hall, 235 North Street unless otherwise noted.

SUN	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SAT
	1 Board of Selectmen's Meeting - 7PM	2 Planning Commission Meeting – 7:30 PM, Room 10 Town Hall	6	4 Zoning Board of Appeals – 7:30 pm, Town Hall	5	6
7	8	9 Conservation Commission Meeting - 7PM	10	11	12	13
14	15 Board of Selectmen's Meeting - 7PM	16 Planning Commission Meeting – 7:30 P.M., Room 10, Town Hall	17	18 Zoning Board of Appeals – 7:30 p.m, Town Hall	19	20
21	22	23 Conservation Commission Meeting - Room 14, Town Hall 7PM	24 Development Review Team Meetings 9 AM @ Town Hall, Room 14	25	26	27

Planning Commission meetings - 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month at 7:30 PM.
Conservation Commission meetings - 2nd & 4th Tuesdays of each month @ at 7:30 PM.
Zoning Board of Appeals meet the 1 <sup>st</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> Thursday of every month at 7:30 PM.
Board of Health meetings – no set schedule – per request of Chairman.

## TOWN OFFICES AND DEPARTMENTS

The above regulatory Town Boards and their associated Town offices or departments – Building, Conservation, Health, Planning, Department of Public Works, Water/Sewer Departments, Town Engineer’s Office and the Zoning Board of Appeals – are all within the Town Hall currently located at 235 North Street. There are several other town departments **that are not located at 235 North Street** with which you and your project may have contact:

- **[Police Department at 152 Park Street](#)** for plan reviews and public safety requirements or recommendations from the Public Safety Officer or Police Chief. The Support Services Division Commander is the person to see for gun permits and licenses to carry firearms, etc.
- **[Fire Department at 152 Park Street:](#)** For plan reviews and public safety requirements or recommendations from the Fire Prevention Officer.
- **[North Reading Historic District Commission](#)** does not have its own office, but forms, information and contact can be had via the Community Planning Department at 235 North Street. This Commission has jurisdiction with respect to any new construction, reconstruction, alteration, relocation or demolition of any exterior architectural features of buildings and structures within North Reading’s Old Center Historic District that is adjacent to the High School.

