

Planning Board - Purposes and Duties

The general purpose of the Planning Board is to provide for and guide the orderly growth and development of the community. This is accomplished primarily through development of a Master Plan for the Town, the Zoning Bylaws, and the Planning Board's Rules and Regulations Governing Subdivision of Land. The purpose of these administrative duties is to ensure the public safety, interest and welfare of the residents of the Town within the Planning Board's functional areas as mandated by statutes and local bylaws and regulations. Specifically:

- The Planning Board is responsible for creating and updating the town's Master Plan, an ongoing process, pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 41 Section 81D. The Master Plan is a statement, through text, maps, illustrations or other forms of communication, which is designed to provide a basis for decision making regarding the long-term physical development of the municipality. The Master Plan forms the basis for the Zoning Bylaws, the Subdivision Regulations, and land development in general.
- The Planning Board is responsible for the administration of the Subdivision Control Law, Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 41 Sections 81K – 81GG, and under its Rules and Regulations Governing Subdivision of Land, to provide safe and adequate pedestrian and vehicular access to building lots. Under these provisions, the Board conducts meetings and public hearings in compliance with Massachusetts General Laws to review and consider subdivision plans and Approval Not Required (sometimes referred to as Form A or 81P) plans. The Planning Board also makes recommendations on the laying out and acceptance of public ways, pursuant to provisions of Chapter 82 and Chapter 41 Section 81I of the Massachusetts General Laws.
- Another important function of the Planning Board is to prepare and/or consider amendments to the Town's Zoning Bylaws, pursuant to the Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40A Section 5. The Board conducts public hearings on amendments drafted by the Board and on amendments that are submitted to the Board by way of citizen petition or by landowners or other town boards through the proper procedures for submitting Town Meeting articles, and makes recommendations to the Town Meeting on these proposals.
- The Planning Board also issues certain special permits and /or site plan approval under the sections of the Zoning Bylaws noted below:
 - Special Permit Granting Authority:
 - Open Space Residential Development (Section 3.05)
 - Mill Conversion Overlay District (Section 3.10)
 - Personal Wireless Service Facilities (Section 11)
 - Site Plan Review:
 - Uses requiring Site Plan Review by the Planning Board (Section 2.03.02)
 - Mill Conversion Overlay District (Section 3.10)
 - Large Scale Solar Photovoltaic (Section 3.12)
 - Site Plan Review (Section 5.04)
 - Personal Wireless Service Facilities (Section 11.06)
- The Planning Board also holds public hearings under Section 3.11.00 of the Zoning Bylaws, Scenic Roads, on proposals to remove public shade trees or to alter stone walls for construction purposes along designated scenic roads.