

Community Development Connection

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Office of Community Development Department - Town of Amherst



Resurfacing the Driveway Regulations

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DELIBERATIVE SESSION

February 5, 2014

7:00 pm

@

Souhegan High School in the Auditorium

Driveways are everywhere! Driveways are the main point between private property and the public roadway or right-of-way, thus creating one of the most prevalent types of intersections in Amherst.

The Town first adopted Driveway Regulations as part of the Subdivision Regulations (Section 5.3) in 1988 through the Planning Board's authority to adopt and enforce Driveway Regulation under RSA 236:13. As these intersections play a critical role in providing property owners access to their land and maintaining the Town's roadway network, the time has come to update them with current best management practices.

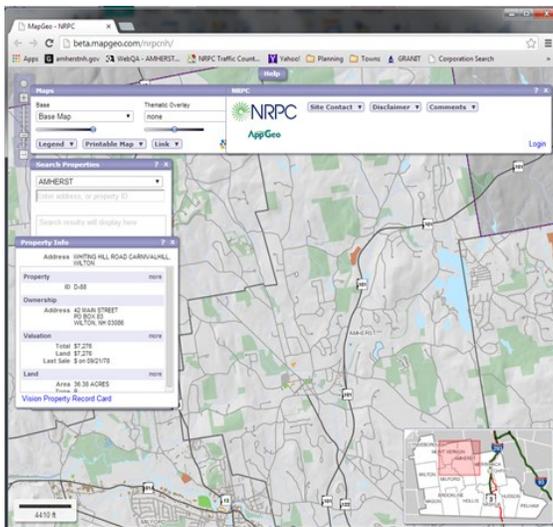
In partnership with the Department of Public Works, the Office of Community Development drafted revised regulations to meet the following key goals:

- Clearly detail driveway permitting and construction requirements,
- Provide a simplified waiver process,
- Allow for "Temporary Access Points,"
- Protect the Town's roadway system, and
- Comply with federal stormwater management standards.

The proposed draft regulations make significant strides toward meeting the above goals. The permit process now includes a timeframe to review and approve permits and detailed drawings specifying construction standards. In addition, the revised regulations no longer require Planning Board approval for all deviations from the regulations, a time-consuming step for all. Waivers can now be granted by the Director of Public Works (or designated agent), depending on the specific circumstances of the proposed driveway location and topography.



Did You Know?



There is a new Live Maps Application under development by the Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) in partnership with the Town of Amherst. The app features the NRPC GIS database including parcels and road inventory, as well as a number of regional overlays such as water resources, flood hazards, soils, and land use. It also features an annual integration with the Assessing Department's Vision Appraisal online property record cards, as well as Bing Bird's Eye aerials and Google Street View.

We would like to invite you to take a "test drive" now, and we would like to hear your feedback. The app has been thoroughly tested and configured according to feedback we've heard so far; but the more eyes we have on this tool, the better! To get started, visit the link: <http://beta.mapgeo.com/nrpcnh/>

Zoom in, zoom out, pan around, turn on and off basemaps and overlays, or click on particular parcels. Use the Search Properties to query particular addresses. See if you can find your property or your favorite place to get a cup of coffee!

We look forward to hearing any feedback about Live Maps functionality or data by Friday, January 24th at Noon. Please don't hesitate to contact Sara Siskavich, GIS Manager of NRPC, at saras@nashuarpc.org with any questions.

Meeting Results:



Each month this column will bring you a quick update on the results of the Zoning Board, Planning Board, and Historic District Commission's deliberations:

Zoning Board (ZBA)

The ZBA held a public hearing on January 21th to hear one application:

Case #PZ 4708 – Variance - Brian & Marta Sullivan, 16 Damon Pond, PIN# 010-053-000, are requesting a variance from the Amherst Zoning Code to allow a

relocation of a shed within the 100' buffer of the Public Water Protection Wetlands, in the Residential/Rural Zone.

The application was approved as presented.

PLEASE NOTE: The ZBA Meetings have returned to Town Hall .

Planning Board (PB)

The PB held two public hearings in January at Souhegan High School. The January 7th meeting was for a public hearing on the petition warrant articles and the January 8th meeting was for a Scenic Road Hearing and discussion.

January 7th Petition Warrant Articles Public Hearing:

1. Petition A – To amend Article IV, Section 4.3.A by deleting the term “non-commercial sports and recreation uses” and replace with term “sports and recreation uses”; to repeal Sections 4.3.A.8.F (i) through (vii) in their entirety, and to amend Section 4.3.A.8.g to reduce the minimum required horizontal distance between site lighting fixtures and abutting lot lines from 500 to 250 feet.

The Planning Board voted to support this Petition by a vote of 4 in support and 3 opposed.

2. Petition B – To create a new zoning district entitled the Commercial Sports/Recreation/Function Zone (CSRF) including Map 2, Lot 98-33; Map 3, Lot 25; Map 4, Lot 29; Map 4, Lot 30; and Map 4, Lot 65-1.

The Planning Board voted to oppose this Petition by a vote of 0 in support, 6 opposed, and 1 abstention.

3. Petition C – To amend Article IV, Section 4.3.A by deleting subsection 4.3.A.8 and replacing it with a new section to allow Sports and Recreation Uses within the Residential/Rural District that meet the conditions, provisions, and definitions cited in the petition.

The Planning Board voted to oppose this Petition by a vote of 0 in support and 7 opposed.

January 8th Regular Meeting:

1. Scenic Road Hearing – in ROW near 7 and 9 Eaton Rd – Department of Public Works – Request to remove 4 pine trees, 3 ash trees, and 2 maple trees from Town Right-of-way.

The Planning Board voted to approve the application with the condition that all tree stumps be ground to be flush with the ground/roadway.

2. Pennichuck Brook Watershed Presentation and Discussion – Rebecca Balke, PE of Comprehensive Environmental Inc. and Don Ware, PE of Pennichuck Corporation – A power point presentation on Pennichuck’s efforts to improve the water quality of the Watershed and help municipalities to manage stormwater.

Resurfacing the Driveway Regulations (continued)

Also new, the revised regulations will allow for a second classification of Driveways called “Temporary Access Points,” with simplified construction standards. A Temporary Access Point permit might be utilized if a property owner wanted to have a pool installed in the back yard or to manage a wood lot over the course of several weeks, if the best point to reach their land was from a location other than the driveway. A Temporary Access Point permit would not require any paving, but will ensure the Town’s roadway system is protected by requiring a basic construction entrance/exit be installed. A construction entrance/exit will prevent mud and debris from being tracked onto a roadway, into our stormwater system, and will protect the edge of pavement from damage.

For more information on the draft regulations or to review the detail sheets, check out the Office of Community Development’s [Special Projects webpage](#). If you have any questions, please contact Sarah Marchant at smarchant@amherstnh.gov or 673.6041. The Planning Board will officially hold a public hearing on the proposed Driveway Regulations in February or March. Your questions and feedback are welcome!

Thank You for Your Help!

The Town of Amherst was the winner of the Regional Online Forum Contest. Thank you to all of you who contributed to the regional forum and our win! As the winner, the Town received FREE copies of the 2013-2014 Land Use Planning Handbooks.



Meeting Results (continued)

PLEASE NOTE: The February 5th Planning Board meeting will be held at the Souhegan High School at 412 Boston Post Rd in the Information Center, Rm 202, as the Deliberative Session will be held the same night in the SHS Auditorium.

Historic District Commission (HDC)

The HDC held a site walk on January 11th and a public hearing on January 16th for one application.

1. **Case#4721 – Jason & Gina Aselin – 31 Middle Street, PIN# 016-010-000** -- For the installation of a stand-by generator.

The HDC made the following findings:

It is a non-contributing property.

This is a highly visible property.

No visibility of the generator is always preferred, but this is not possible at this location.

Upon a motion duly made/seconded (DC/SW), the HDC unanimously approved the application as presented, noting that mature evergreen screening be put in place, and the tanks will be placed in the back yard so as not to be seen.

PLEASE NOTE: The HDC Meetings have returned to Town Hall .

Insights on Preventing House Fires Caused by Pyrolysis



Fire Chief and Community Development Director Provide Factsheet on Identifying and Reducing Fire Risks

Of the six residential structure fires occurring in Amherst in last year, five were directly related to the construction of the chimney. More specifically, these fires were caused by wood building materials not separated from the chimney by two inches of clearance, drying out over time from exposure to chimney heat, until the heat in the chimney could cause combustion – a process known as pyrolysis.

According to Sarah Marchant, Director of Community Development, whose department oversees building codes and inspections, “Today’s building code requires all new construction to provide a minimum two inches of separation between combustible materials and a masonry chimney.” This code became standard practice in Amherst with the voter-approved 1983 Building Code.

“The residents of Amherst have always been proactive in ensuring quality construction in the community. As early as 1970, voters adopted the first comprehensive building code requiring a one-inch separation and invested in regular building inspections. The 1970 Code was considered “best practice” at the time. By comparison, the State of NH did not require residential structures to comply with a standard building code until its adoption of the ICC building codes in 2007.”

“It’s important to understand that construction of a chimney with less than today’s standard of two inches of separation may not be limited to structures in Amherst,” said Amherst Fire Chief Mark Boynton. “It’s likely that this type of construction can be found in residential structures across the region and the state.”

The two departments have created a *Chimney Safety in Your Home Factsheet* available at <http://amherstnh.gov/fire-fact-sheet/> that offers steps for homeowners to follow if they are concerned about the potential for this type of fire in their homes. Residents can also call the Amherst Building Department at 603.673.6041 or Fire Department at 603.673.1545 for more information.

The Town of Amherst has continued to make construction practices and enforcement a priority since the adoption of its first comprehensive building code in 1970. By ensuring construction adheres to current building codes, the Town is protecting its structures and residents and reducing the number of property-related losses.

Recently, the Office of Community Development participated in an Insurance Services Office (ISO) Building Code Effectiveness Grading Schedule (BCEGS) review. The ISO is an independent statistical, rating and advisory organization that serves the property/casualty insurance industry (including Fire Department Protection Class Ratings). The review was based on an evaluation of 1.) Administration of Codes, 2.) Plan Review, and 3.) Field Inspection practices. Amherst was found to have made significant improvements in all three categories, increasing its rating from a **6 in 2003** to a **4 in 2013** for both Residential and Commercial building services. This places Amherst among the top 25 cities and towns in NH for the quality of its building code enforcement.

Because the Town’s rating has improved, Director Marchant suggests that residents undertaking new construction might benefit from lower insurance rates, and should check with their insurance agents before starting new construction projects.

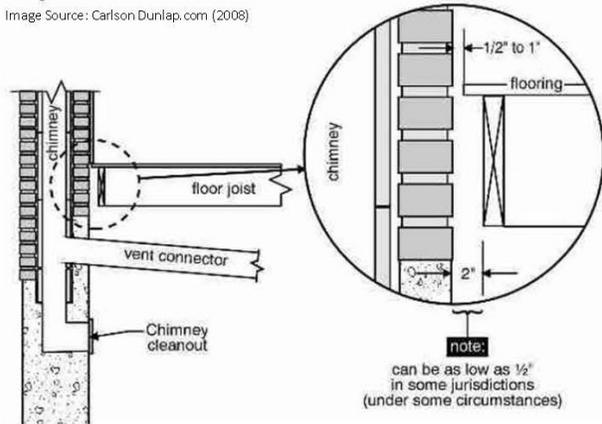
Chimney Safety in Your Home

When is a Chimney Considered Safe?

The basis of a safe fireplace is proper construction followed by appropriate maintenance and operation. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) recommends that chimneys be inspected at least once a year and cleaned as necessary. The required cleaning frequency will depend on amount of use, the type of installation, the type of fuel, and the burning habits of the operator.

Since 1983, the Amherst Building Code has required a minimum of 2" of air space between the chimney components and all wood framing, and this space is to be free of insulation as well. If you are installing new heating unit, be sure these clearance instructions are strictly adhered to. If you have a unit already installed, it is very important to check these clearances wherever possible. Any wood that is too close to the chimney will continue to dry and undergo a process called pyrolysis. Essentially, as the wood dries out, its ignition temperature is lowered; and it can eventually be ignited by the normal operating temperatures inside the chimney.

Image Source: Carlson Dunlap.com (2008)



note:
can be as low as 1/2"
in some jurisdictions
(under some circumstances)

Should I be concerned about the chimney in my home?

- | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | Was your house built before 1984? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | When viewing your chimney from the basement or attic, is there obvious framing in contact with or less than 2" from masonry? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | Is the brick and mortar of your chimney enclosed (i.e. hidden behind sheetrock or walls)? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | Have you installed a woodstove into an existing chimney without a certified chimney inspection? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | Have you completed renovations in or around your chimney without inspections? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | Has it been more than one year since you have had your chimney inspected and cleaned (as recommended)? |

If you answer "Yes" to ***any*** of these questions you should discontinue use of your fireplace until it has been inspected by a certified professional.

Who should I contact for an inspection?

The Amherst Fire Department's, Fire Inspector (603) 673-1545, will conduct a safety inspection of your chimney free of charge. Depending on the construction of your home, the Fire Inspector may be able to evaluate the safety of your chimney by viewing your chimney from the basement or attic. If the inspector is unable to make a determination due to inaccessibility or other factors, a certified professional will be required to establish the overall safety of your chimney for you. A certified professional can be located through the following websites:

Chimney Safety Institute of America
<http://www.csia.org/Homeowner-Resources/index.aspx>

Northeast Association of Chimney and Hearth Professionals
<http://www.neachp.org/>

Mason Contractors Association of America
<http://www.masoncontractors.org/directoryofmembers/companySearch.php?stateQuery=32>

Community Development Department - Town of Amherst

2 Main Street
PO Box 960
Amherst, NH 03031
Phone: 603.673.6041
Fax: 603.673.4138
E-mail: smarchant@amherstnh.gov



WE ARE ON THE WEB!

WWW.AMHERSTNH.GOV

The Community Development Office strives to effectively manage community change in accordance with the Master Plan and the Town's ordinances and regulations by providing professional advice and technical expertise in a consistent and fair manner to citizens, boards, commissions, departments, and regional agencies on the implementation of land use ordinances, regulations, and policies for both the short- and long-term physical, natural, and economic development of the Town.

The Community Development Office is comprised of the Building, Zoning, Planning, Code Enforcement, and Economic Development Departments. The Office provides support to the Planning Board, Zoning Board, Amherst Conservation Commission, Historic District Commission, Heritage Commission, and the CIP Committee. The office provides a one-stop location for all land development processing in the Town.



NRPC UPDATE



BROADBAND PLAN FOR NASHUA REGION

NRPC is in the final stages of development of the draft Broadband Plan for the Nashua Region which is being developed in conjunction with the New Hampshire Broadband Mapping and Planning Program (NHBMPP), the Broadband Stakeholders Group (BSG), and the UNH Cooperative Extension. This comprehensive, multi-year initiative began in 2010 with the goal of understanding where broadband is currently available in New Hampshire, how it can be made more widely available in the future, and how to encourage increased levels of broadband adoption and usage. For more information on this initiative or to test your internet speed, please visit www.iwantbroadbandnh.org. Final

adoption of the plan is anticipated by late spring or early summer of 2014.

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS EXIT 36S PRELIMINARY COST ESTIMATES

The Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) is pleased to release a Request for Qualifications to develop a planning and pre engineering cost estimate for a new off ramp at Exit 36 on US 3 at the Massachusetts/New Hampshire Border.

A mandatory pre-proposal briefing will be held on Wednesday, January 22, 2014, at 10:00 AM at Nashua Regional Planning Commission office in Merrimack (go to nashuarpc.org for directions). The pre-proposal briefing is intended to provide guidance on the expectations of NRPC and NMCOG

and to respond to questions regarding the project. The pre-proposal briefing is mandatory for any consultant wishing to submit a proposal. Proposals submitted from consultants that do not attend the mandatory pre-proposal conference will be returned unopened. Neither NRPC nor NMCOG will respond to questions outside of the pre-proposal briefing.

Qualification statements and cost proposals must be submitted no later than 2:00 P.M. Thursday January 27, 2014, to Karen Baker at the Nashua Regional Planning Commission, 9 Executive Park Drive, Merrimack, NH 03054.

We would love to hear from you, so check us out on social media or visit our website at www.nashuarpc.org.