

# **PLANNING & ZONING FAQ**

## **What is Planning?**

Planning is a collaborative process in which stakeholders, Board of Selectmen, Town Meeting members, regulatory Boards and residents, define a vision for the future of a community. This process involves identifying and prioritizing issues, developing goals, objectives and strategies, and developing a plan of action and implementation.

## **What is the purpose of Planning?**

Planning serves as a guide for public officials and private citizens to assist in making informed and thoughtful decisions that will promote balanced growth and protect the quality of life.

## **What is Zoning?**

Zoning is the manner in which a community implements its planning goals. Zoning regulates land use, including the size, shape and uses of lots and structures.

## **What is the purpose of Zoning?**

Zoning serves to promote public safety, health, general welfare and property values. This regulatory authority, referred to as the police power, is granted from the State via home rule.

## **What is a Subdivision?**

A subdivision is a property that is divided into smaller parcels.

## **What are the Subdivision Rules and Regulations?**

The Subdivision Rules and Regulations, administered by the Planning Board, are the Town's design and construction standards that a proposed subdivision must comply with.

## **REGULATORY BOARDS**

### **What does the Planning Board do?**

The Planning Board is responsible for administering provisions of the Zoning Bylaw, specifically Site Plan Approval, specific special permits, and the Subdivision Rules and Regulations. In addition, the Planning Board is responsible for initiating planning and zoning studies.

### **What does the Zoning Board do?**

The Zoning Board is responsible for administering provisions of the Zoning Bylaw, specifically variances, findings and special permits. In addition, the Zoning Board hears appeals of a decision or zoning interpretation of the Building Inspector / Zoning Enforcement Officer.

## **ZONING PERMITS**

### **What is a Site Plan?**

A site plan, filed with the Planning Board, is a physical plan of the proposed layout and design of the site, including buildings, parking and landscaping and their relationship to neighboring roads and properties. The site plan is reviewed in conformance with Section 4 of the zoning bylaw.

### **What is a Special permit?**

Special permits may be granted for uses expressly allowed under certain conditions specified in the zoning bylaw. Typically a special permit is required for uses which are not essentially incompatible with the uses permitted in a zoning district, but require individual review and possible restriction in order to insure compatibility with the adjacent neighborhood.

### **What is a Variance?**

A variance is permission, granted by the Zoning Board, to deviate from a provision of the zoning bylaw. The Danvers Zoning Bylaw permits two types of variances; dimensional and use. A dimensional variance is a change in the literal provisions of the zoning bylaw as it relates to frontage, lot area, setbacks and height. A use variance permits a use of land that is otherwise not allowed in that zoning district. The Danvers zoning bylaw permits use variances with non-residential zoning districts only.

### **What is a finding?**

A finding, granted by the Zoning Board, allows for the enlargement or extension of a non-conforming use or structure, provided the enlargement or extension is not substantially more detrimental than the existing use or structure to the neighborhood. The Danvers zoning bylaw, Section 3.10, contemplate three types of findings that may be granted by the Zoning Board; those for one and two family dwellings, those for dwellings other than one and two family located in residential and non-residential zoning districts and the substitution of a new use, not otherwise permitted by right, for an existing nonconforming use.

