



**Town of Bristol**  
**Planning Commission**  
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## MEMORANDUM

From: Bristol Planning Commission, Katie Raycroft-Meyer, Chair  
To: Valerie Capels, Town Administrator  
Bristol Selectboard  
Date: August 7, 2020  
Re: Submission of the amended Bristol Unified Development Regulations

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Enclosed is the proposed Bristol Unified Development Regulations for the Selectboard's review and consideration for adoption at a hearing scheduled for August 24, 2020, 7:00pm, via Zoom.

This memorandum provides a summary of the changes the Planning Commission is proposing to the 2017 Bristol Zoning Regulations. It also constitutes the written report necessary to satisfy the requirements of 24 V.S.A. §4441(c) requiring that the Planning Commission prepare a written report explaining the proposed amendments to the regulations. On July 7, 2020, the Planning Commission completed its work revising the Bristol Unified Development Regulations and voted unanimously to refer this final draft to the Selectboard. A public hearing was held on August 4, 2020. No substantial changes were suggested or made.

A Selectboard public hearing has been warned for August 24, 2020. Notice of this hearing was posted in the August 6, 2020 *Addison Independent*. The goal of the Planning Commission is to have this document approved by the voters of Bristol on November 3, 2020.

The proposed Unified Development Regulations constitute a significant addition to and revision of the Town of Bristol Zoning Regulations dated March 7, 2017. While many things remained the same, the Planning Commission made changes in most Articles of the previous regulations. The Planning Commission believes these proposed regulations further the goals of Bristol's Town Plan and conform to State of Vermont statutes enabling municipal land use regulations. This memorandum highlights the changes that the Planning Commission deems the most substantive. It does not discuss every single minor change. Accordingly, all are encouraged to read the entire document.

1. **Inclusion of Subdivision Regulations.** The most substantive change to the new regulations is the inclusion of Article IX, Subdivision, governing the subdivision of land. Prior to this draft, the Town of Bristol regulated the subdivision of land using its zoning regulations. Land development that met the zoning setback and lot size requirements were provided zoning permits. These regulations provide a mechanism for the town to look at the substance of how land is proposed to be developed and requires applicants to

meet additional requirements concerning how infrastructure is designed and natural resources are preserved. It seeks to promote more thoughtful planning to implement the Bristol Town Plan and will work to provide Bristol with more local control over smaller projects by raising the threshold for Act 250 review within the Town of Bristol.

2. **Definitions pertaining to the subdivision of land.** To support the new Article addressing subdivision of land, the Planning Commission added a number of definitions to Article X of the regulations.
3. **New Name for the regulations.** Prior to this proposal, Bristol had called its regulations the “Town of Bristol Zoning Regulations”. The existing regulations contained both zoning and floodplain regulations. The Planning Commission proposes to add subdivision regulations into the previous document and to change its name to the “Bristol Unified Development Regulations”. The new regulations still contain Bristol’s zoning and floodplain regulations, but now also contains subdivision regulations and provide a comprehensive and unified review of land use in the Town of Bristol.
4. **Switch from a Zoning Board of Adjustment to a Development Review Board.** The Planning Commission also proposes to shift the responsibility for the review of all development from its Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Adjustment to one new body named the Development Review Board. The Planning Commission believes that unifying the review function will make the review process more efficient and predictable because the same board will be responsible for reviewing all types of development that need to be reviewed beyond administrative permits issued by the Zoning Administrator. Links to more in - depth descriptions of the Development Review Board’s role and responsibilities are included here: <http://www.vpic.info/PlanningZoning.html#REVIEW>
5. **The review process.** The Planning Commission amended the review process contained in Article III of the current regulations to add Subdivision review and reflect that a Development Review Board will be conducting the review.
6. **On Farm Accessory Businesses.** The Planning Commission added a section in Article 6 to address the change in legislation permitting accessory on farm businesses.
7. **Planned Unit Developments.** The Planning Commission changed Section 609 governing Planned Unit Developments substantially. Since planned unit developments are now a sub-set of the subdivision regulations, the Planning Commission removed portions of Section 609 and transferred them to Article IX regulating subdivisions to clarify the regulations.
8. **Other minor changes.** The Planning Commission made other small changes to the sections governing Home Based Businesses and Campgrounds generally making them more friendly to the applicant and more realistic in their expectations.

9. **What did not change?** The Planning Commission chose not make substantive changes to the vast majority of the existing zoning regulations:

- Article I, Enactment Intent and Organization did not substantially change;
- Article II, Establishment of Zoning Districts and District Map, changed only slightly. The Zoning Districts and map did not change. The uses and setbacks within the vast majority of the zoning districts did not change. The Planning Commission did add outdoor recreation as a permitted use in several districts to accommodate the desire for a trail around Bristol. It also increased the size allowance of accessory buildings in two rural zones.
- Article III, Administration and Enforcement, changed slightly. The review process did not change for the vast majority of permitted activities. However, as noted above, the Planning Commission added a subdivision review process and the Development Review Board in place of the Zoning Board of Adjustment.
- Article IV, Required Regulations, did not substantively change.
- Article V, General Regulations, did not substantively change.
- Article VI, Conditions attached to Specific Uses, included some changes to the provisions listed in items 6-8 of this memorandum. Most sections did not substantially change;
- Article VII, Design and Performance Standards, most standards remained the same. The Planning Commission did make some changes to the Noise and Parking Standards;
- Article VIII, Flood Hazard Area Regulations, did not substantively change;
- Article IX, Subdivision, This Article is new and constitutes the most substantial change in the document;
- Article X, Definitions. Most definitions did not change (The Planning Commission moved the definitions from the floodplain section into Article X to contain all definitions and added definitions related to the new subdivision provisions and on-farm accessory businesses).

In summary, the Planning Commission is proposing to add a new article regulating the subdivision of land (Subdivision Regulations), a new Development Review Board, and new processes to address the new subdivision regulations. It changed the name to the “Bristol Unified Development Regulations.” The vast majority of the existing regulations did not change. Specifically, most zones, uses, and setbacks did not change. However, it did make some small changes to uses allowed in certain zones and setbacks in certain zones. It added a specific provision to regulate On-farm Accessory Businesses, which also impacted and replaced some of its previous uses. Finally, it made a number of grammatical and format changes to improve the regulations.

The Planning Commission believes the changes improve the ability for an applicant to navigate the regulations, will promote thoughtful land development implementing the Bristol Town Plan, and provide Bristol with more local control over smaller scale development. Our goal is to implement our Town Plan and make Bristol a better place to live for all its citizens.

Bristol Selectboard

August 7 2020

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In order to meet the Planning Commission's goal for presenting updated regulations to voters for the November 2020 election, the article for adoption would need to be forwarded to the Town Clerk for inclusion on the November ballot by September 21, 2020. If the Selectboard wishes to make *substantive* changes as a result of or following the August 24, 2020 hearing, another public hearing would need to be noticed at least 15 days in advance.

Please do not hesitate to contact me or any members of the Planning Commission if you have questions regarding the document or the process.

On behalf of the Planning Commission members, thank you for your consideration.