

# 1. History of the "Development on the Town Green" Policy



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Based on the documents I've reviewed, I can provide information about the development and implementation of a Policy Regarding Development on the Town Green in Bristol, Vermont. Here's what I found:

## Origins and Development of the Policy

The discussion about creating a policy for the Town Green began in 2015, stemming from concerns about modifications to the Town Green. On September 15, 2015, the Planning Commission made a motion to ask the Selectboard for a moratorium on further modifications to the Town Green until an ordinance was approved addressing its use and development.

On September 21, 2015, members of the Planning Commission (Sue Kavanagh, John Elder, Katie Raycroft-Meyer, and Chico Martin) met with the Selectboard to discuss this proposal. They expressed concerns about the unique nature of the Town Green and suggested creating an ordinance that would outline allowable modifications to the park. The Selectboard agreed to discuss this topic at a future meeting.

By October 20, 2015, the Planning Commission noted that the Selectboard had decided to draft a policy rather than an ordinance to address modifications to the Town Green.

## Adoption of the Policy

The Selectboard discussed the policy for the development of the town green on November 2, 2015. During this meeting, they discussed including provisions about replacing the fountain and signage on the park. The Town Administrator (Therese) was tasked with editing the policy and bringing it back on November 16, 2015.

On November 16, 2015, the Selectboard officially adopted the Policy Regarding Development on the Town Green when "Sharon Compagna moved to accept the Policy Regarding Development on the Town Green. Peeker Heffernan seconded, so voted."

Later in that same meeting, during the Selectboard Roundtable, Sharon Compagna noted that she had read the Planning Commission meeting minutes regarding the drafting of the green policy and was offended that two members of the Planning Commission did not think the Selectboard would create a policy regarding the Town Green, which they had just approved earlier that night.

The Planning Commission was informed about the policy's approval at their November 17, 2015 meeting, where "Sue informed the Commission that the Selectboard acted on their request for a policy in regards to structural development on the Town Green. Sue distributed a copy of the new policy that was approved at the Selectboard meeting November 16, 2015."

## Policy Content and Implementation

While the full text of the policy is not provided in the documents I reviewed, there are references to its content:

1. The policy requires the removal of a tree or structure if a new one is proposed. Picnic tables, benches, and trash receptacles are excluded because they are not permanent structures.
2. The policy also references Bristol's Zoning Regulations and suggests a zoning permit might be required for certain changes.

## Application of the Policy

The policy has been referenced and applied in several instances:

1. In April 2023, when family members proposed planting a white oak tree on the Town Green in memory of Lauris Kilbourn Chamberlain. The policy was cited, noting the requirement to remove a tree if a new one is proposed. The Selectboard approved the planting with the understanding that a dying maple in the area would be removed in the near future.
2. In October 2024, when considering a request to plant a memorial tree on the Town Green in place of a dying ash tree. The Selectboard approved the tree planting but noted that any memorial plaque or similar installation would need separate approval.

## Related Context

The Town Green is an important public space in Bristol. According to the Bristol Town Plan, it offers "a fountain, a lighted bandstand, an ADA-compliant children's playground and peace garden as well as three memorials to veterans." It serves as a venue for town events including "festivals, band concerts, chicken barbecues, and summer movies in the park" and is home to the Bristol Band Concerts, "which have taken place every Wednesday evening since the end of the Civil War."

The Bristol Town Plan also includes a policy to "Preserve the Town Green as an important recreational and social open space for town residents and visitors."

I focused on documents from Bristol, Vermont, particularly from the 2015 period when the policy was developed and adopted, as well as later documents showing its implementation. Keep in mind that I may have missed some details, as I had to be selective about what documents I reviewed and cannot review every document at once. If you'd like more information about this policy or would like me to search for documents from a different time period, please let me know.

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