

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD & ZONING OFFICE REPORT

2024 was a remarkably busy year here in town. We welcomed 5 new businesses to town and re-permitted the Village Store. I would like to take a moment to explain the conditional use permit process. Over my 25 years on the Planning Commission, ZBA and now Development Review Board I have seen many neighbors come before the Board with a look of fear or anxiousness. I would like to allay those fears.

The purpose of the conditional use permit process is not to deny a use of a property. Rather, the purpose is to give greater scrutiny to the proposed use in order assure the proposed use “fits” into the surrounding area. The DRB conducts a Site Visit, a Site Plan review and we ask the question, does the proposed development “result in an undue adverse effect on the character of the area affected.” Does the proposed use “harmonize with existing uses and with purpose statements in the town Bylaws and plan”? We examine closely the proposed scope and size of the proposed development to assure it will “fit” comfortably within the community. Often, this means we place conditions such as hours of operation, landscaping and screening requirements, and noise and lighting restrictions. Our hope is that the process is non adversarial, friendly, and neighbor like.

Notably, permits were issued for 13 new residences and 3 Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU). In the last 6 years permits have been issued for a total of 50 new residences.

The Development Review Board (DRB) is a five-member quasi-judicial board appointed by the Selectboard. The DRB conducts hearings and issues decisions on all subdivision applications, certain zoning applications and appeals from actions of the Zoning Administrator. Regularly scheduled meeting dates are set for the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month unless there are no matters requiring hearings. Agendas are posted at the town office, at local post offices and the DRB calendar.

The Zoning office encourages applicants to plan for projects. The reasons for this are that the zoning office is part-time, a hearing may be necessary and due to public notice requirements, the application deadline in these cases can be well in advance of hearing dates. The applicant is responsible for understanding and following the zoning ordinances and subdivision regulations both of which may be found on-line at thetfordvt.gov/departments/zoning

Regular scheduled office hours are Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM. Calls, email inquiries, and appointment requests are welcome and appreciated.

Tim Taylor, Chair
Development Review Board

Kelly Gardner, Zoning Administrator
VT E9-1-1 Coordinator, Town of Thetford

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Summary of Permits:	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Subdivision Plats Approved	1	2	2	2	1	2
Number of Lots Created	2	4	4	4	2	4
Annexations	2	2	2	1	0	N/A
Boundary Adjustments	0	0	0	3	2	1
Business/Conditional Use	1	0	1	2	3	6
Driveways	3	1	1	9	4	3
Residences	6	4	7	8	9	13
Accessory Buildings	23	20	13	29	19	18
Additions	8	8	4	3	2	6
Telecommunication Facility	0	0	0	1	0	0
Agricultural	0	2	5	0	0	1
ADU						3
Miscellaneous	7	6	5	9	12	18
Total Permits Processed **	71	57	53	70	54	71

* Miscellaneous: Porch/Decks, Enclosures, etc.

** Summary permit numbers may not add up to total. Some permits include multiple categories.



Zoning Administrator's Note:

As your Zoning Administrator, I would like to extend a warm invitation to all residents and property owners to stop by the office if you have any questions, concerns, or need assistance with zoning matters. My goal is to ensure clarity and support in navigating the zoning process.

Please note that the Zoning Bylaws have been updated, and these changes took effect on February 12, 2024. I encourage you to review the updated bylaws to stay informed of the changes that may affect your property or development plans.

Additionally, starting in 2024, the State of Vermont has implemented Residential Building Energy Standards (RBES). If you are planning any residential construction or renovation, I can direct you to the relevant information to ensure compliance with these new standards.

Feel free to reach out or visit the office during regular business hours for further information.

Sincerely,

Kelly M. Gardner
Thetford Zoning Administrator