

Best Practices or Tips for the Zoning Amendment process

- Start early in the process. Summertime is a good time for the planning board to have work session meetings to prepare for zoning amendments.
- Do an annual review of the ordinance to check for conflicts in the ordinance, outdated regulations, etc. as well as check against the master plan and all other land use regulations for consistency.
- Plan to have a meeting with the Zoning Board of Adjustment and/or Code Enforcement-Zoning Officer to review recurring issues/problems arising under the current ordinance that might warrant an amendment. That meeting should take place in September at the latest.
- Keep a running list of issues encountered with the zoning ordinance that need to be corrected i.e. a definition, a use, a regulation that needs clarifying.
- Limit the number of amendments brought forward, too many amendments can be confusing and difficult to keep straight, reducing the chance for passage.
- Compose any proposed amendments so that each amendment addresses a single topic or section of the ordinance. Avoid omnibus amendments that cover multiple sections of the ordinance or subject areas.
- Take advantage of RSA 676:12 to hold the first public hearing for zoning amendments as early as possible-120 days before town meeting.

- Cooperate with other boards and municipal staff to see if they have run into an interpretation/clarification issue in the ordinance.
- Keep proposed language easy to follow. Have all proposed amendments reviewed by town counsel for legal correctness, not necessarily for content. Try to steer clear of legal language in a proposed amendment.
- If possible have planning staff or board members available at the polls to help answer questions/explain the amendments.
- Keep each zoning amendment to a single subject or provision of the zoning ordinance.