



Information Sheet: Zoning and Permitting Resources in Essex

An Introduction to Permitting in Essex

The best way to determine exactly what path your project will require is to consult the Building Inspector early in your planning process.

The Building Inspector will lay out the general flow of reviews from other Boards that your project will need to undergo before the Building Inspector can issue a Building Permit.

In some cases, you may not need a Building Permit but can go directly to other departments for specific permits. One such case is the installation of a driveway or moving the location of road access where you may go directly to the Department of Public Works.

Most projects that involve the construction of any structure on your property or the renovation/alteration of existing structures require you to obtain a building permit from the Essex Building Inspector. The permitting process can range from a very simple office review by the Building Inspector (for projects such as replacing roofing shingles) to a fairly complex series of reviews by several boards, commissions, and departments that will form the basis for the Building Inspector's approval of a building permit (for projects such as new or expanded buildings, subdivision approval, variances from zoning rules, and site plan review).

Depending on the nature of the proposed activity, you may also need plans approved by the following entities: Board of Health (related to on-site wastewater disposal, potable water, and other issues); Conservation Commission when activity is near wetlands and streams.; Department of Public Works for projects proposing new driveways that require a curb cut permit; Wastewater Department for projects proposing connection to the municipal sewer system; Essex Planning Board for review of subdivisions and larger developments requiring site plan review; Board of Appeals when a variance may be needed or a comprehensive permit is sought. Other approvals may be required by the Building Inspector on a case by case basis.

Since the individual entities that provide pieces of the permitting checklist to the Building Inspector meet on their own schedules at varying times, it may be necessary for you to obtain approvals one step at a time until the Building Inspector indicates that he has what he needs to issue a building permit. It is also very possible that one board or commission will require changes to your proposal in order to meet their standards. In turn, that may require you to go back before some entities that had signed off on plans before subsequent changes were put in place.

A general rule is that the more complex a project is, the more time it will take to permit and the more iterations of plans will be necessary to satisfy all jurisdictions.

The Building Inspector cannot issue a Building Permit until the individual requirements of all Town Boards and Commissions that are necessary for the building permit are met, and their individual approvals are obtained.

Also, please feel free to contact the Town Administrator for further assistance with coordination.

Inspectional Services

Building Inspector

Building Permit Applications for all projects are available on the Town's website (www.essexma.org) or at the Essex Town Hall at 30 Martin Street in Essex; outside of the Building Inspector's office on the second floor, second door on the left; permits are to the left of the door in hanging files.

A full and completed Application includes: a completed application form, copies of contractor's licenses if you will be hiring someone to do the work; two sets of plans detailing the proposed construction activity; two sets of accurate site plans drawn to scale; all department reviews that may be required by the Building Inspector; and for all new construction, an energy report.

Town Hall Resources

Bill Sanborn, Building Inspector

L. William "Bill" Holton, Assistant Building Inspector

Brooke Friedrich, Clerk

Address: Essex Town Hall - 30 Martin Street - 2nd Floor

Phone: 978-768-2514 - Fax: 978-768-2505

bsanborn@essexma.org

Hours of Operation for the Building Department may be found on the Town Web Site, by calling the Department or by visiting Town Hall.

Building Permit Applications may be obtained at Town Hall during the Regular Scheduled Hours of Operation of Town Hall on the second floor, Monday – Thursday or on the Town Web Site. There are two types of Permit Applications located to the left of the door to the Building Inspector's Office. Please do not leave completed Applications at Town Hall; Please either you or your authorized representative should present completed Applications to the Building Inspector on Wednesday evenings 5 – 7 p.m. *** Applications left at Town Hall will be returned.

Inspections: Please call 978-768-2514 before noon on Friday and the Building Inspector or the Assistant Building Inspector will arrive for the inspection either the following Friday Afternoon or Saturday morning. Please plan accordingly.

Documents you may need:

- Building Permit Application : There are two to choose from: One or Two Family and Accessory Use Building or All Other Permits if a Commercial Property
- Worker comp certificate and the form completed
- Home Improvement Contractor Registration
- Construction Supervisor(s) License
- Two Site Plans of Property
- Two Sets of Building Plans

Required with Building Permit Applications: All Applications for Building Permits must be accompanied by Two (2) copies of a Site Plan drawn to a suitable scale and containing the following information:

- Name(s) and address of Owner and Applicant
- Date
- Graphic Scale and North Arrow
- The graphically accurate shape, size, and location of the lot to be built upon
- A locus plan showing the lot's relation to abutting streets
- The graphically accurate shape, size, height and location of any buildings to be erected, altered or removed, including setbacks from lot lines
- The accurate size and location of existing buildings
- Required off-street parking and loading space, existing and proposed
- Location of any required screening
- All applications must be signed by the Owner. In the case of lease of the land or a signed Purchase and Sales Agreement, the signature of the Owner and the Applicant are both required
- Any other information which may be required by the Building Inspector or the Planning Board

Electrical Inspector

Applications for all projects and a list of fees are available on the Town Web Site or at Town Hall from the Selectmen's Assistant on the second floor during the regularly scheduled hours of operation of Town Hall Monday - Thursday from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Town Hall Resources

Ramie Reader, Electrical Inspector
John Shields, Electrical Inspector's Assistant
Address: Essex Town Hall - 30 Martin Street – Second Floor
Phone: 978-768-2514 - Fax: 978-768-2505

Plumbing and Gas Fitting Inspector

Plumbing & Gas Permit Applications and related fee schedules are available at Town Hall at the Board of Health Office on the second floor of the building. Please find these documents in the hanging bins to the right of the office door. The Board of Health Office is open during the regularly scheduled hours of operation of Town Hall, Monday - Thursday, 7:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. To schedule a Plumbing or Gas Inspection, please call the Board of Health Office at 978-768-7614 by 3:00 the day before your requested inspection date. The Board of Health Clerk will be happy to assist you.

Inspections are performed Tuesday - Friday at 8:15 & 8:30 a.m.

Town Hall Resources

Richard Corriere, Plumbing and Gas Inspector
David Preen, Plumbing and Gas Inspector's Assistant
Address: Essex Town Hall - 30 Martin Street – Second Floor
Phone: 978-768-7614 - Fax: 978-768-2505

Essex Planning Board

The Planning Board has authority to review and approve or deny a wide range of projects under the provisions of the Essex Zoning By-laws and the Essex Subdivision Control Regulations. General duties of the Planning Board include the study of the Town's resources and needs, development of plans to address the protection or wise use of resources, and to meet the community's needs.

The Planning Board is particularly responsible to assure that land uses have adequate access to streets and ways, either through review of ANR applications or subdivisions. The Planning Board reviews land use issues referred to it by other town officials or boards, and prepares written recommendations to Town Meeting regarding matters before it pertaining to the physical resources and features of the town.

Duties requiring review and decisions by the Planning Board include:

- Review and approve or deny Special Permits
- Conduct Site Plan Reviews
- Review Approval Not Required (ANR) Applications
- Review and approve or deny Subdivision Plans
- Make recommendations to the Zoning Board of Appeals on Special Permits, Appeals, and Variances
- Review the town Zoning Bylaws and Proposed Amendments via a process of Public Hearings and vote at Town Meeting

Anyone undertaking construction which will require a Building Permit is encouraged to visit the Building Inspector during his office hours prior to contacting the Planning Board.

The Building Inspector will determine if a Special Permit Application or Site Plan Review is required.

Scenic Roads: If you are working on a dwelling, the trees on the lot, or if there is stone walls on a lot located on a designated scenic road (Belcher Street, Apple Street, Story Street or Choate Street) please contact the Building Inspector and ask if the proposed work will require review from other Town Departments as per Massachusetts General Law Chapter 40 Section 15C.

Forms and information on submittal requirements are available on the Planning Board page of the Town Web Site or from the Planning Board Secretary. All Applications must be submitted to the Planning Board Secretary and be date-stamped by the Town Clerk prior to submittal to the Planning Board.

If the Building Inspector determines that a Building Permit Application requires review by the Planning Board, but that no other Applications to the Planning Board are required the Building Permit Application will be presented by the Building Inspector to the Planning Board during the next Regularly Scheduled Meeting of the Planning Board. You are not required to contact the Planning Board Office to request time on the Agenda.

Applicants applying for an ANR (Approval Not Required), a Preliminary Subdivision Plan or a Definitive Subdivision Plan, the required forms and the information regarding requirements are available on the Town Web Site or from the Planning Board Secretary. All Application and Plans must be date-stamped by the Town Clerk prior to giving them to the Planning Board.

If you require a certified copy of the Essex Zoning Bylaw (Chapter VI of the General Bylaws) please contact the Town Clerk during the regular hours of operation of the town hall.

If you have questions or concerns and would like to bring them to the attention of the Planning Board we ask that you mail or email your comments to the Planning Board office. The Planning Board will discuss the correspondence during the next Regularly Scheduled Meeting of the Planning Board during the Regular Business portion of the meeting and will respond to your correspondence in a timely manner.

Town Hall Resources

Mary-Ellen Feener, Secretary

Address: Town Hall – 30 Martin Street

Phone: (978) 768-7663

Email: planningboard@essexma.org

Hours of Operation for the Planning Board Office may be found on the Town Web Site, by contacting the Office or by visiting Town Hall.

Forms and Applications may be obtained at Town Hall during the regularly scheduled hours of operation of the Town Hall, Monday – Thursday or on the Town Web Site.

Planning Board Meetings: Every first and third Wednesday of the month, 7:30 p.m., T.O.H.P. Burnham Library, 30 Martin Street, Essex, MA; Unless otherwise noted. The Meeting Schedule is posted at Town Hall and on the Town web site.

Essex Conservation Commission

In 1972, Conservation Commissions were given the responsibility of administering the Wetlands Protection Act (G.L. Ch. 131 §40). This allowed the Essex Conservation Commissions to serve their community in a regulatory as well as a conservation capacity. The Essex Conservation Commission reviews applications for permits to do work in and near wetlands, flood plains, banks, riverfront areas, beaches and surface waters. At this time, Essex does not have any non-zoning bylaws or ordinances giving the Commission further local power to protect the wetlands.

Although the Commission does review plans which must be approved by other regulatory boards, the sole responsibility of the Commission is to determine if a project will have significant impact upon environmental resources and if the project falls within the scope of the Wetlands Protection Act. If a project falls outside of the scope Wetlands Protection Act, no other action will be taken by the Commission.

In Essex, it is required that most building permit applications be reviewed and approved by the Commission to determine if the project is covered under the Wetlands Protection Act. Any time the soil is disturbed, the Commission is required to review the project to determine if the project will have an impact on wetlands.

Town Hall Resources

Deborah Cunningham, Administrative Clerk
Address: Essex Town Hall -30 Martin Street – Second Floor
Phone: 978-768-2509
Fax: 978-768-2505
Email: conservation@essexma.org
Cell phone: 978-609-5158

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Conservation Commission Meetings: Every first and third Tuesdays of the month at 7:30 pm at the T.O.H.P. Burnham Library, 30 Martin Street, Essex, MA.

Documents You May Need:

- Environmental Notification Form
- Wetlands Protection Act

Board of Health

The role of the Essex Board of Health (BOH) is to assess and address the health needs of the Essex community in order to protect and improve the health and quality of life of its residents, visitors, and work force. This charge is carried out through health promotions, community health services, public outreach and education, as well as promulgation and enforcement of Health Department, Town and State regulations

In the area of land use and required permitting for development, the Board of Health has authority over the abandonment of septic systems, Title 5 inspections, Perc tests, review of sewage disposal systems, and construction permits for disposal works. Further, the BOH oversees the exam for the installers of disposal works, and licensing for septage haulers.

Town Hall Resources

Elaine Wozny, Board of Health Administrator

Ann White, Administrative Assistant

Kim Paskalis, Public Health Nurse

Address: Town Hall - 30 Martin Street – Second Floor

Phone: 978 768-7614

Fax: 978 768-2505

Administrator's and Assistant's Office Hours:

Monday - Thursday 7:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Friday 7:30 a.m. - Noon (Phone Only)

Board Of Health Meetings: Every second and fourth Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m. at the T.O.H.P. Burnham Library, 30 Martin Street, Essex, MA.

Documents You May Need:

- Board of Health Regulations
- Floor Drain Regulations
- Title 5; Application for Septic System Abandonment
- Application for Perc Test
- Sewage Disposal Permit Application
- Variance Request
- Disposal Works Construction Permit

Department of Public Works

The Department of Public Works (DPW) is responsible to key elements of development approvals, particularly when a new or expanded residential use is proposed. Anyone proposing a new driveway access onto public roadways, or a change in location of access, needs to get a permit for that access location from the DPW. Any new construction or expansion of residential or commercial properties may need a connection to the Town's water system, or may need new sewer connection permit within the sewer service area. The DPW is required to monitor and record all sewer connections. Anyone seeking a building permit in the sewer service area needs to have DPW approval to ensure design flow is not exceeded. Any water main extensions need an engineered plan for review by the Dept of Public Works.

Town Hall Resources

Paul Goodwin, Superintendent

Mandy Davis, Administrative Clerk

LeAnn Rowe, Administrative Clerk

Address: Water Treatment Plant - 44 Centennial Grove Road

Phone: (978) 768-6262

Alternate Phone: (978) 768-6431

Fax: (978) 768-2500

Office Hours: Monday – Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

If You Have an Emergency after Normal Business Hours Please Contact the Essex Emergency Center at (978)768-6628.

Documents You May Need:

- Driveway Permit
- Sewer connection permit
- Trench Permit
- Water Service Permit
- Drain Layers license
- MS4 Permit

The permit forms can be obtained at the DPW office at the address listed above.

Permits that require fees for Department of Public Works Review:

- Driveway Permit
- Water Connection service
- Sewer Connection
- Trench Permit
- Drain layers license
- MS4 Permit

Essex Board of Appeals

The Essex Board of Appeals was established to hear and decide appeals where an appeal has been filed with them within the required 30-day period following a decision alleging that there was an error in any order, requirement, decision, or determination made by the Planning Board, the Building Inspector or any other administrative official that is in violation of the provisions of the Zoning By-law of the town of Essex or of the provisions of Chapter 40A of the Massachusetts General Laws.

The Board may reverse or affirm, or modify, decisions made by any town officer. The Board can also provide a variance from the provisions of the Essex Zoning By-law in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 40A, Section 15, Massachusetts General Laws (M.G.L.). The receipt of a variance requires an application and a noticed public hearing. Massachusetts General Laws are restrictive of the conditions on which the Board of Appeals can grant a variance.

Town Hall Resources

Gillian Palumbo, Secretary

Address: Assessor's Office in Essex Town Hall – Second Floor - 30 Martin Street

Phone: 978-768-7831

Fax: 978-768-2505

Hours of Operation: Please call

Board of Appeals Meetings: Scheduled as needed

Documents You May Need:

- Application for Hearing
- Guidelines for Applicants and Procedures of the Board

Fire Department

The Essex Fire Department participates in review of building proposals by confirming the consistency with the 911 address and the actual location of the proposed development site. The Fire Department also reviews building construction for the location of smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors. In most cases, the contact with the Fire Department is made by the Building Inspector, but a resident can also approach the Fire Department for their review and sign-off. No application or fees are involved in this process beyond the provisions of a building permit application.

Fire Department Resources

Board of Engineers:

Daniel M. Doucette, Fire Chief-C1

Ramie Reader, Deputy Fire Chief -C2

Tim Lane, Deputy Fire Chief-C3

Address: Essex Fire Station - 24 Martin Street

Phone: EMERGENCY: 911 *or* 978-768-6363

Phone: Non-Emergency: 978-768-6511 (office)

Fax: 978-768-7635

Secretary's Office Hours:

Monday - Thursday 8 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Friday 8a.m. - 1p.m.