



CITY OF BELFAST, MAINE 04915

131 Church Street

PLANNING AND CODES DEPARTMENT

Phone: (207) 338-3370 ext. 125

Fax: (207) 338-2419

Email:

planningandcodes@cityofbelfast.org

NOTE TO BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

JANUARY 28, 2025

FIRST READING AND PUBLIC HEARING

RESIDENTIAL 5 AND RESIDENTIAL 6 ZONING DISTRICT MAP ADJUSTMENT TO ACCOMMODATE INCREASED HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES FROM BUB FOURNIER, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND CODES DEPARTMENT

RESIDENTIAL 5 AND RESIDENTIAL 6 ZONING DISTRICTS BACKGROUND

The Residential 5 and Residential 6 zoning districts were created in 2022 as part of the comprehensive Outside Rural Ordinance Amendments package that the Belfast Planning Board worked on for much of 2021 into 2022. Previously, the Residential 5 zoning district was comprised of areas along the water side of Robbins Road being part of the General Purpose A zoning district and areas on the east side of Robbins Road being part of the Protection Rural II zoning district. The current Residential 6 zoning district was entirely part of the former Protection Rural II zoning district.

In 2022, the Board had been looking at ways to increase housing opportunities and identified the area along Robbins Road as having the potential for additional housing because it was served by City sewer and was already made up of many fairly smaller lots. The Board identified the potential for increased housing, including multi-family dwellings, in this area with the creation of the Residential 5 zoning district with a minimum lot size of 10,000sqft for one- two-family homes on sewered lots, and the additional allowance at 20,000sqft of 3 and 4 unit multi-family dwellings and flex housing options. The Board proposed and the City Council adopted the new multi-family and flex housing standards for the east side (away from the water) of Robbins Road only due to Shoreland Zoning restrictions.

Regarding the Residential 6 zoning district, in 2022 the Board proposed, and the City Council adopted, no changes for multi-family or flex housing development. The adopted Ordinance changes continued the prohibition on multi-family housing in this area. This approach was in keeping with the history of the Protection Rural II zoning district being created by a citizen's initiative in 2000 in response to the 24-unit multi-family development owned and operated by

Penquis at 2 East Avenue completed in 2001. At the time, citizen's from the neighborhood brought a proposal to rezone the area to include the current dimensional requirements and prohibit new multi-family dwellings. The current minimum lot size for Residential 6 zoning district is a half-acre (21,780sqft) on sewer and an acre (43,560sqft) on a subsurface wastewater system.

RESIDENTIAL 5 AND RESIDENTIAL 6 ZONING DISTRICTS PROPOSAL

Staff is bringing the current proposal to the City Council after unanimous support by the Planning Board concurrent with the duly noticed public hearing on January 8, 2025. Staff had brought the proposal to the Board after discussions with the subject property owner in regard to increasing housing opportunities. The proposal includes a minor reconfiguration of the Residential 5 and 6 zoning districts to facilitate increased housing opportunities. **In the proposal, 3 parcels identified as Map 18 Lots 48, 49, and 50, would be rezoned from Residential 5 (formerly Protection Rural II) to Residential 6.** This proposed map amendment would allow the potential for additional housing in the form of either multi-family housing or a "flex housing" approach. Please refer to the enclosed map that shows the proposed changes which would affect approx. 2.6 acres of land.

It's important to note that Residential 5 multi-family dwellings are limited to 3-4 unit structures, which is the same limit for "flex housing". According to the property owner of the affected lots, connection to the gravity private sewer line serving the multi-family dwelling facility at 2 East Avenue is allowed in their deed. When the idea of this proposal was briefly brought up at a previous Board workshop, members asked staff to reach out to the Wastewater Treatment Plant operator Olver Associates Inc regarding nearby infrastructure capacity to serve additional housing in the area. The proposal would represent an increase in housing opportunity for the subject lots from approx. 10 dwellings to potentially 22 via "flex housing" or multi-family dwellings. There are currently only 4 dwellings on these lots. Staff shared correspondence with Asst. Operations Manager at the sewer plant, Travis Jones of Olver Associates, Inc on this subject with the Board in October, and it is included in materials for the City Council to consider.

In the City's most recently adopted Comprehensive Plan, housing is a common theme with several sections dedicated to the critical need for additional housing opportunities in the City. This particular proposal represents a minor adjustment to the City's Chapter 102 Zoning Ordinance to facilitate such an opportunity through increased utilization of existing infrastructure. This may be a great representation of smart growth as we continue to look for ways to generate more housing options in Belfast.

On October 9, 2024, the Planning Board had an opportunity to discuss this proposal and directed staff to arrange a public hearing on the proposed amendments. On January 8, 2025, the Board held a duly noticed public hearing, further discussed the proposal and unanimously recommended it for City Council consideration. I look forward to the discussion as we continue to look for increased housing opportunities.

FIRST READING

Staff would like to present the draft proposal consisting of a map amendment. As there is no text necessary to amend, this meeting would be the First Reading of the proposed amendments. Please note that all property owners in both zoning districts were noticed directly during the Planning Board process. I request that you consider directing staff to arrange a Second Reading and Public Hearing at an upcoming meeting. Following the Second Reading and Public Hearing on the proposal, the City Council could potentially adopt, table or amend the proposal. Only the City Council can adopt any proposed Ordinance Amendments.

Draft motion: *To accept the First Reading on the proposed Ordinance Amendment consisting of a map amendment to the Residential 5 and Residential 6 zoning districts and direct staff to arrange a Second Reading and Public Hearing at an upcoming meeting.*