



# CITY OF BELFAST, MAINE 04915

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## PLANNING AND CODES DEPARTMENT

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## MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 16, 2025

TO: Belfast Planning Board

FROM: Bub Fournier, Director of Planning and Codes

CC: Alexandra E. Sykes, City Planner; Mandy J. Holway, PE, Olver Associates, City Engineer

RE: Upcoming Ordinance Amendment public hearing regarding Chapter 94 Subdivision and Chapter 98 Technical Standards

### **Background Information:**

Subdivisions are critical to housing production as well as a means to extend the principles of planning and zoning; preserve public health, safety, and welfare; encourage the well-planned, multiple use of natural resources; promote orderly development; and protect natural and ecological values. Subdivision is defined by the State of Maine and the City of Belfast as development that results in the creation of three or more lots in any five-year period or creation of three or more dwellings on a single lot in any five-year period with specific exemptions.

The Planning Board has been discussing amendments to Chapter 94 Subdivision since holding two broad workshop sessions for this purpose in March of 2025. The overarching goal of this work was to bring the City Subdivision Ordinance up to date with State guidance and current engineering practices, provide consistency and clarity, and look for opportunities to remove barriers to creating additional housing in the City. This ordinance has not been substantially amended since the early 1990's. The current effort to improve the City's Subdivision ordinance and related sections comes after the City's comprehensive zoning overhauls in rural, suburban and urban areas in 2023 and 2024.

This current process began with substantive work on June 5, 2025, to review marked up versions of Chapter 94 Subdivision to determine if comments from City Engineer Mandy

Holway and Planning staff were on track to update the technical content in both Chapter 94 and Chapter 98. The Board reached consensus on the approach to remove most technical sections from the Chapter 94 Subdivision Ordinance, update them, and place them in Chapter 98 Technical Standards.

On July 23, 2025, the Board reviewed an overhauled Chapter 94 Subdivision featuring a complete removal of most of the technical information with relocation in Chapter 98 Technical Standards as well as incorporation of a few minor adjustments as directed by the Board. The Board discussed and directed improvements to the process and overarching goals of Chapter 94 Subdivision.

On September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2025, the Board was again asked to review Chapter 94 Subdivision. That version had no markups because it represented a complete overhaul to incorporate consistent processes and submission requirements and other suggestions by the Board. The September 2025 version of Chapter 94 was not marked up because it represented all new language. Some comments in **green** remain and they will not appear in the official Code, but are there for guidance.

Chapter 98 Technical Standards, including appendices and figures, were then edited to incorporate discussions by the Board along with updates and suggestions from City Engineer Mandy Holway of Olver Associates Inc. The Chapter 98 narrative sections, appendices and figures utilize the typical markup (**blue-strikethrough** identifying sections to be deleted and **red** representing new language).

Chapter 66 General Provisions edits, identified by the typical color markup, consist of changes to definitions. Almost every Ordinance amendment includes changes to definitions in this chapter. Current practice has been to remove definitions from individual chapters and place them in Chapter 66 so that terms mean the same thing in all chapters throughout the Ordinance.

For the meetings on September 10<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>, and October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025, the Planning Board discussed the amendments which represent months of Board and staff work on this topic. The Board considered comments both written and delivered in person at the meetings. At the October 8<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Board asked City Engineer Mandy Holway of Olver Associates Inc. to comment on the potential for a private road to be unpaved if it were serving a small amount of dwellings. The Board asked the engineer to potentially respond to what number of dwellings would be appropriate for that threshold. The current version of the Ordinance requires paving for all roads in a subdivision, private or public, and to date all subdivisions with unpaved roads would have required a waiver from that minimum standard.

On October 22, 2025 a duly noticed public hearing is being held so that the Board may consider taking action on these amendments. If the Board chooses to recommend amendments for adoption after a public hearing, the City Council would need to review the proposal along with additional public hearings before any changes could be officially adopted.