



## CITY OF BELFAST, MAINE 04915

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### PLANNING AND CODES DEPARTMENT

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### MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 27, 2026

TO: Belfast City Council, Mayor and City Manager Erin Herbig

FROM: Bub Fournier, Director of Planning and Codes

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

RE: First Reading and Public Hearing regarding Ordinances Amendments to Chapter 94 Subdivision, Chapter 98 Technical Standards and Chapter 66 General Provisions.

#### **Background Information:**

At its January 14, 2026 meeting, following a duly noticed public hearing, the Belfast Planning Board voted 5–1 to recommend that the City Council adopt a comprehensive Ordinance Amendment package affecting Chapter 94 Subdivision, Chapter 98 Technical Standards, and Chapter 66 General Provisions of the City Code.

The Ordinance Amendment package includes the following documents, some marked with **blue strikethrough** representing language to be deleted, **red** representing new language, **black** representing unchanged language and **green** representing guidance language that is not included in the Code:

- 1) Marked up Chapter 66 General Provisions proposed amendments to definitions.
- 2) Current Chapter 94 Subdivision Ordinance
- 3) Unmarked Chapter 94 Subdivision proposed amendments
- 4) Unmarked Chapter 98 Technical Standards Appendices A-H proposed amendments
- 5) Unmarked Chapter 98 Technical Standards Figures proposed amendments
- 6) Marked up Chapter 98 Technical Standards Waivers, Summary and Articles IV, V and VI
- 7) Marked up Chapter 98 Technical Standards Section 98-85 Street and Lanes Summary

The amendments represent the culmination of a multi-month, public process undertaken to modernize the City's Subdivision regulations, which had not been substantially amended since the early 1990s. The Planning Board finds that the proposed amendments improve clarity, consistency, and effectiveness of subdivision review; align local regulations with current State guidance and engineering practice; and support the City's adopted Comprehensive Plan, including goals related to housing production, orderly development, and protection of public health, safety, welfare, and natural resources.

### **Purpose:**

Subdivision regulation is a primary mechanism by which the City of Belfast implements land use policy, facilitates housing creation, ensures adequate infrastructure, and protects environmental and community resources. Subdivision is defined by the State of Maine and the City as development resulting in the creation of three or more lots or three or more dwellings on a single lot within a five-year period, subject to statutory exemptions.

Following comprehensive zoning updates adopted in 2023 and 2024, the Planning Board identified the Subdivision Ordinance as the next critical component of the City's land use framework requiring modernization. The overarching objectives of this effort were to:

- Update the ordinance to reflect current State guidance and planning best practices
- Improve procedural clarity and predictability for applicants, staff, and the Board
- Remove unnecessary regulatory barriers to housing creation
- Separate policy and process requirements from detailed technical specifications

### **Planning Board Process:**

The Planning Board's work on these amendments was conducted through a transparent, publicly noticed process beginning in March 2025 and extending through January 2026, including multiple workshops, regular meetings, and formal public hearings.

Key milestones included:

- March 2025: Two public workshops identifying the need for comprehensive updates to Chapter 94
- June 5, 2025: Consensus decision to remove most technical standards from Chapter 94 and consolidate them within Chapter 98
- July–September 2025: Review and refinement of a fully rewritten, non-technical Chapter 94 and marked-up Chapter 98 Technical Standards
- October 22, 2025: Duly noticed public hearing on the full Ordinance Amendment package
- January 14, 2026: Additional advertised public hearing and deliberation, followed by a 5–1 vote to recommend adoption by the City Council

Throughout this process, the Board received input from planning staff, City Engineer Mandy Holway of Olver Associates Inc., and members of the public.

### **Scope and Substance of the Amendments:**

#### **Chapter 94 Subdivision**

The amended Chapter 94 is a comprehensive rewrite that:

- Clarifies and standardizes the subdivision review process
- Improves alignment between review stages and submission requirements
- Streamlines review for smaller and less complex subdivisions
- Reduces ambiguity and internal conflicts in ordinance language
- Reflects current State guidance while remaining locally tailored

### **Chapter 98 Technical Standards**

Amendments to Chapter 98:

- Consolidate subdivision-related technical requirements into a single chapter
- Update infrastructure standards for roads, stormwater, and utilities
- Resolve outdated or conflicting provisions
- Reflect detailed technical review and recommendations from the City Engineer

### **Chapter 66 General Provisions**

Amendments to Chapter 66:

- Update and centralize definitions to ensure consistent interpretation across the City Code
- Reflect standard City practice for ordinance maintenance and amendment

### **Planning Board Recommendation:**

Following completion of the public hearing and deliberation on January 14, 2026, the Planning Board voted 5–1 to recommend that the City Council adopt the proposed Ordinance Amendments to Chapters 94 Subdivision, 98 Technical Standards, and 66 General Provisions. Supporting Board members agreed that the amendments:

- Are consistent with the City’s Comprehensive Plan
- Represent a balanced approach to housing facilitation and infrastructure protection
- Improve regulatory clarity and administrative efficiency
- Are the product of a thorough, inclusive, and well-documented public process

### **Next Steps:**

In accordance with State law and City procedures, the City Council will need to:

- Conduct a First Reading and public hearing at your upcoming regular meeting.
- Conduct a Second Reading along with at least one additional public hearing on the proposed amendments
- Take formal legislative action to adopt, amend, or deny the proposed Ordinance changes.

### **Possible Action:**

A motion to **accept the First Reading and direct staff to arrange a Second Reading and public hearing at an upcoming City Council meeting.**