

Permitting Guide

Town of Sterling, MA

A how-to manual for residents, business owners, developers,
contractors and consultants



Letter from the Select Board

Thank you for your interest in the Town of Sterling. Sterling is a welcoming community that is business forward while it maintains its small-town charm.

We have developed this helpful guide to assist our residents, businesses, developers, and contractors to better understand Sterling's development requirements and processes, so you can successfully complete your project.

The purpose of our permitting process is to make sure that development is in keeping with the character of the town, that natural resources are protected, and that our infrastructure (roads, water, and drainage) can support the project. We are also charged with ensuring that construction is structurally sound, accessible, energy efficient, and that risks of damage from natural catastrophe or fire are minimized through proper design and construction.

Our goal is a process that is efficient, predictable, and fair. We hope this guide will assist you in your endeavor and welcome your feedback. If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, please feel free to contact the Select Board at (978) 422-8111, x2316.

Sincerely,

Maureen Cranson, Chair
Select Board



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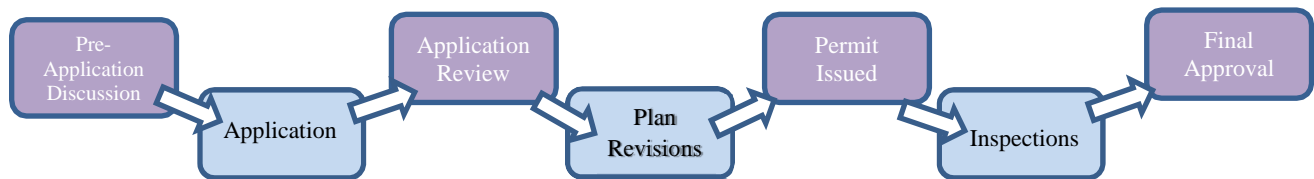
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How to Use this Guide

The Sterling Permitting Guide provides an overview of the permit review process in the Town of Sterling for a variety of different project types. You will find in this guide a quick reference chart for the types of permits that may be needed; flow charts of the various permitting processes; and a list of Town departments and boards with contact information, office hours, and links to the forms administered by each department. Permits and licenses are available through the Town's [e-permitting](#) on the website. The Town recognizes that the permitting process can be confusing and sometimes daunting. While we did not provide a flow chart for every type of development project, we hope that this Guide will provide enough of an overview that you know who to contact and an estimate of how long the process is likely to take, depending upon the requirements as laid out in the Town's existing regulations. **This document is only a guide, however, and does not supersede any of the laws, regulations, or bylaws that have been formally adopted by the Town.**

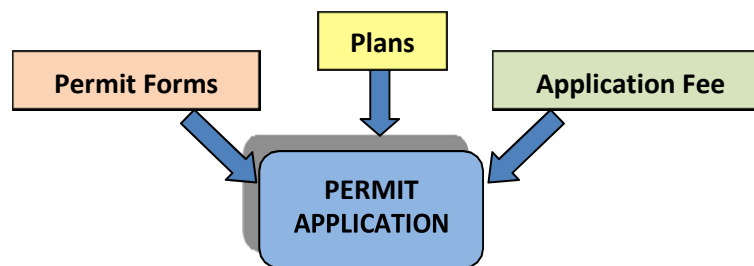
The Permitting Process: An Overview

The graphic below shows the general process for many permits that are required for more complicated development projects. Some projects, such as single-family homes that are not located near wetlands, may only require a building permit. Others may require approval by multiple departments and boards before a permit can be issued. Some may require approval by a board or commission prior to a building permit being issued. We strongly encourage all applicants to speak with appropriate departments throughout the permitting and inspection process in order to minimize the potential for delays. Furthermore, since every project is unique, the application for your project may not match what is found in this guide. We encourage you to speak to the building department staff or town boards prior to submitting your application to confirm the forms and documents that you will need to submit.



Application Components

While every application is different based on the type of permits, the following items are typically required for all development permits.



What Kind of Permits Do I Need?

Some permit applications require visits to several departments within local government, and review by several boards. For projects which involve development of land or change in use of a structure, the best place to start is with the [Building Department](#). The Building Inspector will review the zoning district in which your property is located and will advise you as to which forms you will need to fill out and will direct you to the regulations that apply to your project.

For larger or more complex developments that require review and approval by a number of boards (subdivisions or projects requiring Site Plan Review), a **Pre-Application Meeting** with the Planning Board and/or a technical review committee (the Building Inspector and representatives from the Fire and Police Departments, Board of Health, and Department of Public Works) is highly recommended. This allows the boards to provide feedback before final plans are developed.

Plan review and applications for permits from Town departments may happen concurrently, but a building permit cannot be issued until all other approvals have been obtained. Similarly, a zoning permit cannot be issued until all permits have been obtained.

Board Approvals

Planning Board – Subdivisions, Site Plan Review, some Special Permits, Approval Not Required (ANR)

Conservation Commission – Development close to wetlands or water courses

Board of Health – Perc tests, well and septic permits

Zoning Board of Appeals - Variances, Special Permits, Comprehensive Permits, Administrative Appeals

Select Board – Some licenses, Earth Removal, Entrance to Public Ways

Departmental Permits

Town Clerk – Business permits, change of use, Doing Business As (DBA)

DPW – Curb cuts, water connections, work within the Town Right of Way

Building Department – Building Permit, permits for demolition, electrical, mechanical, plumbing; change of use or occupancy, signs

Fire Department – Smoke & carbon monoxide detectors, storage or use of hazardous or flammable materials

State & Federal Permits:

- NHESP – Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program
- MEPA – Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act
- SWPPP – Federal Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan– required for activities that disturb more than one acre of land
- State Curb Cut

Land Use

Land use and development is controlled by the Sterling Protective (Zoning) Bylaws, the Subdivision Rules & Regulations, and the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act. Review for each requires a different process. In addition, all projects require a Building Permit to comply with the Massachusetts Building Code.

Protective (Zoning) Bylaws

The Protective (Zoning) Bylaws promote the public health, safety, and welfare of the Town by regulating the way land is used in the town. The Bylaws consist of two components: the [Zoning Map](#), which divides the Town into various geographic zoning and overlay districts, and the [Protective \(Zoning\) Bylaws](#), which detail the regulations applying to those districts. Several types of regulations are contained within the Zoning Bylaws:

Use Regulations (Section 2.3) – the types of uses permitted in each district. Some uses such as multi-family dwellings, off-street parking & loading, earth removal, public swimming pools, and large- scale ground-mounted solar installations have additional regulations..

Table of Dimensional Controls (Section 2.5) – spatial qualities of land use, such as frontage, lot sizes, permitted height, and setbacks of structures within lots for each district.

Overlay District Regulations (Section 4) – modifications or additions to underlying zoning regulations for specific purposes, such as floodplains, water supply protection, wireless communications, and wind energy. These apply to specific “overlying” geographies, mapped or described.

Performance Zone 1 (Section 4.7) – standards for lighting, noise, odor, storm water runoff, erosion control, water quality, explosive materials, screening and buffer requirements that must be met in a specific district located near Dana Hill Road/Redemption Rock Trail/Legg Road.

Special Regulations (Section 4) – regulations specific to certain uses such as home occupations, multi-family developments and marijuana establishments.

Zoning Review is required for any change of use or physical changes to a site or the exterior of a building. Single family residential dwelling units may be permitted by the Building Inspector without the need for review by the Planning Board. The basic level of review by the Planning Board is for developments that require Site Plan Review according to section [6.4.1 “Site Plan Review”](#). The Board must approve a Site Plan as long as it meets all zoning regulations.

The bylaws require a Special Permit for many uses or developments, in addition to a Site Plan Review. Special Permits are discretionary and may be conditioned or denied. If your project requires a Site Plan Review and/or a Special Permit, it is important to speak with the Building Inspector, who will guide you through the process.

The following charts show the development review process required for Site Plan, Special Permits and Single Family Dwellings. These are followed by an explanation of the processes for Subdivisions, Variances and Conservation Commission Review. As noted above, some projects will require review by multiple boards and permits from multiple departments.

SITE PLAN REVIEW

PRE-APPLICATION: Consult Bylaws; meet with Building Inspector and/or Planning Board to discuss project.

FILE APPLICATION: Planning Board receives completed application (Application Form and 15 **copies of Site Plan**) Town Clerk stamps it. Applicant may also be required to submit a **deposit** for expenses related to review of plans including engineering or planning consulting services (53G account).

APPLICATION distributed to:
Building Inspector, Board of Health, Conservation Commission, Select Board, DPW, Fire Dept., Police Dept., Light Dept.

Within 60 days

COMMENTS from department heads are submitted to the **Planning Board**

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING:
Mailed to all abutters within 14 days of hearing
1st notice: published in newspaper and posted by Clerk at least 14 days before public hearing.
2nd notice: published and posted one week before hearing.

PUBLIC HEARING: Board receives testimony from applicant, public, & staff.

DECISION: Planning Board must act within 60 days of the date of submittal.

SPECIAL PERMITS

PRE-APPLICATION: Consult Zoning Bylaw; meet with Building Inspector and/or appropriate board to discuss project.

FILE APPLICATION: Special Permit Granting Authority (SPGA - Planning Board or Zoning Board of Appeals) receives completed application (2 copies of the SP Application Form and original & 5 copies of Site Plan, required fees & list of abutters). Town Clerk stamps it.

APPLICATION distributed to: Zoning Board of Appeals, Planning Board, Board of Health, Conservation Commission, Police, Fire, DPW and Light Department.

Within 35 days

COMMENTS submitted to SPGA and Applicant.

Within 65 days
Of hearing date

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING:
Mailed to all abutters within 14 days of hearing
1st notice: published in newspaper and posted by Clerk at least 14 days before public hearing.

PUBLIC HEARING: Board receives testimony from applicant, public and staff.

Hearing closed.

DECISION: Planning Board must act within 90 days of the close of public hearing.

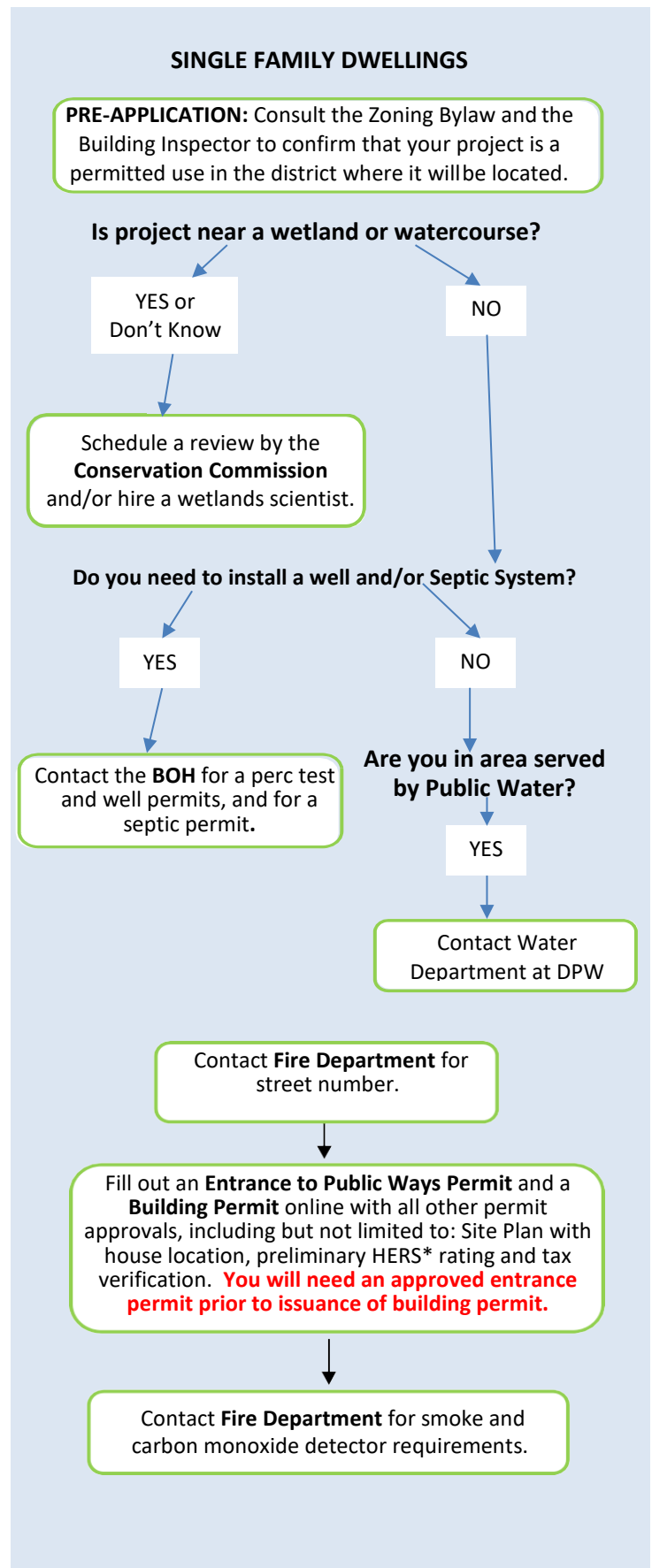
APPEAL PERIOD: Appeals filed with Town Clerk within 20 days of filing the decision. If no appeal, decision takes effect.

Applicant must record the Decision at the Registry of Deeds in order for it to take effect.

Single Family Dwellings

Building of Single Family Dwellings is allowed in the Rural Residential and Farming, Neighborhood Residential and Commercial zoning districts without the need for review by the Planning Board or Zoning Board of Appeals. Multi-family developments are allowed by Special Permit through the ZBA in Rural Residential & Farming, Neighborhood Residential and Town Center. They are not allowed in Commercial or Light Industrial. However, the project must comply with dimensional controls of the district in which it is located, may need to be reviewed by other boards (such as the Conservation Commission), and will likely need permits from other departments (such as the Board of Health and DPW). All development projects, including new home development and alteration of existing homes will need to submit a Building Permit.

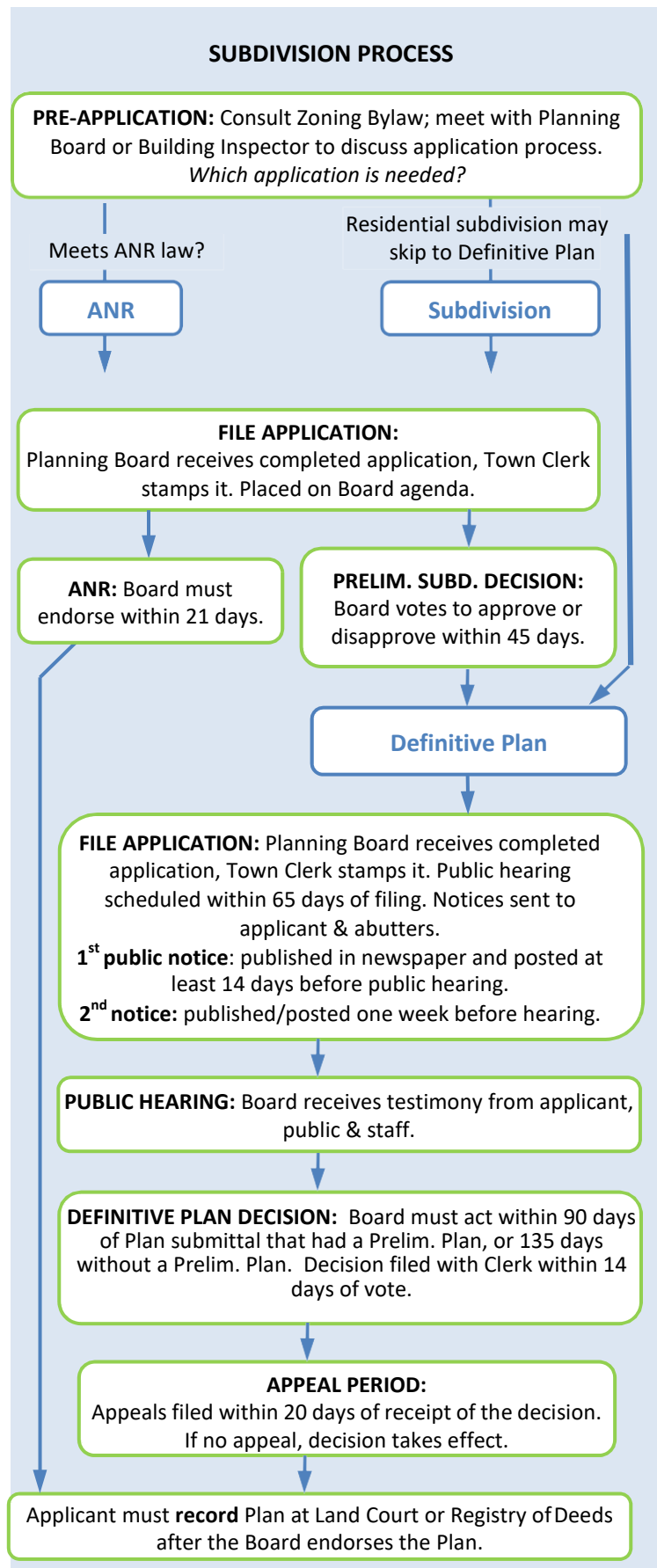
*HERS Rating is a Home Energy Rating System Index and is the industry standard by which a home's energy efficiency is measured. It's also the nationally recognized system for inspecting and calculating a home's energy performance.



Subdivision Regulations

Sterling's [Subdivision Rules & Regulations](#) regulate the division of land into smaller lots and also dictate standards for new streets, storm water infrastructure, and other improvements. Larger subdivisions typically go through a multi-step review and approval process.

However, under Massachusetts General Law, if the proposed lot divisions occur along an existing public way with adequate access, and result in lots that conform to zoning specifications for minimum frontage, the subdivision is not subject to Subdivision Control Law. This is known as an Approval Not Required (ANR) under subdivision control law.



Applying for a Variance

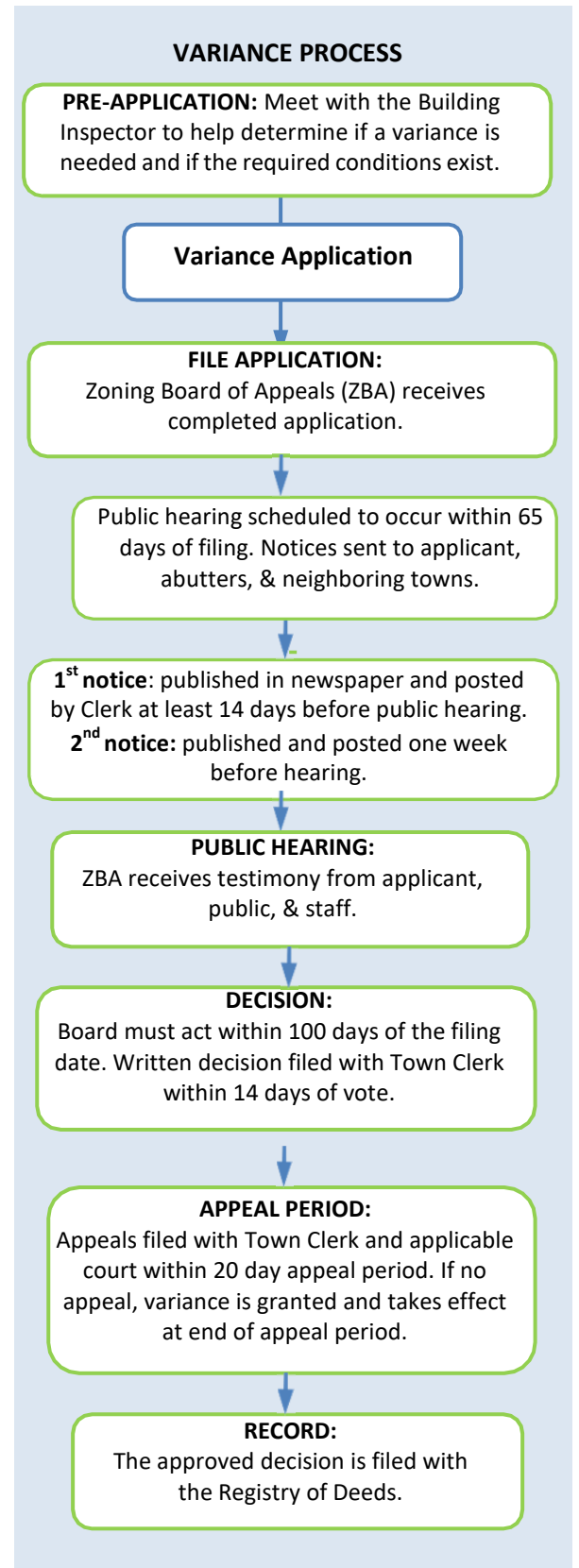
If a project cannot conform to the Protective (Zoning) Bylaws or Subdivision Regulations, owners/ developers may seek “variances” from the specific sections of the Bylaw or Regulations that would be violated. This must be done before a project can receive approval.

The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) is responsible for hearing variance requests. Under Massachusetts law, variances can only be granted if the ZBA finds *all* of the following exist:

- That a “substantial hardship,” financial or otherwise, exists because of the literal enforcement of the bylaw;
- That this hardship is owed to circumstances related to the “soil conditions, shape, or topography of such land or structures”;
- That these circumstances are “especially affecting” such land but not generally affecting that zoning district; and
- That relief may be granted without “substantial detriment to the public good and without nullifying or substantially derogating from the intent or purpose” of the bylaw.

Filing of an Appeal

An appeal may be filed by the applicant, the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC), or any person including an officer or board of the Town of Sterling or of an abutting city or town aggrieved by an order or decision by the Building Inspector or other administrative official. Appeals are filed with the Zoning Board of Appeals.

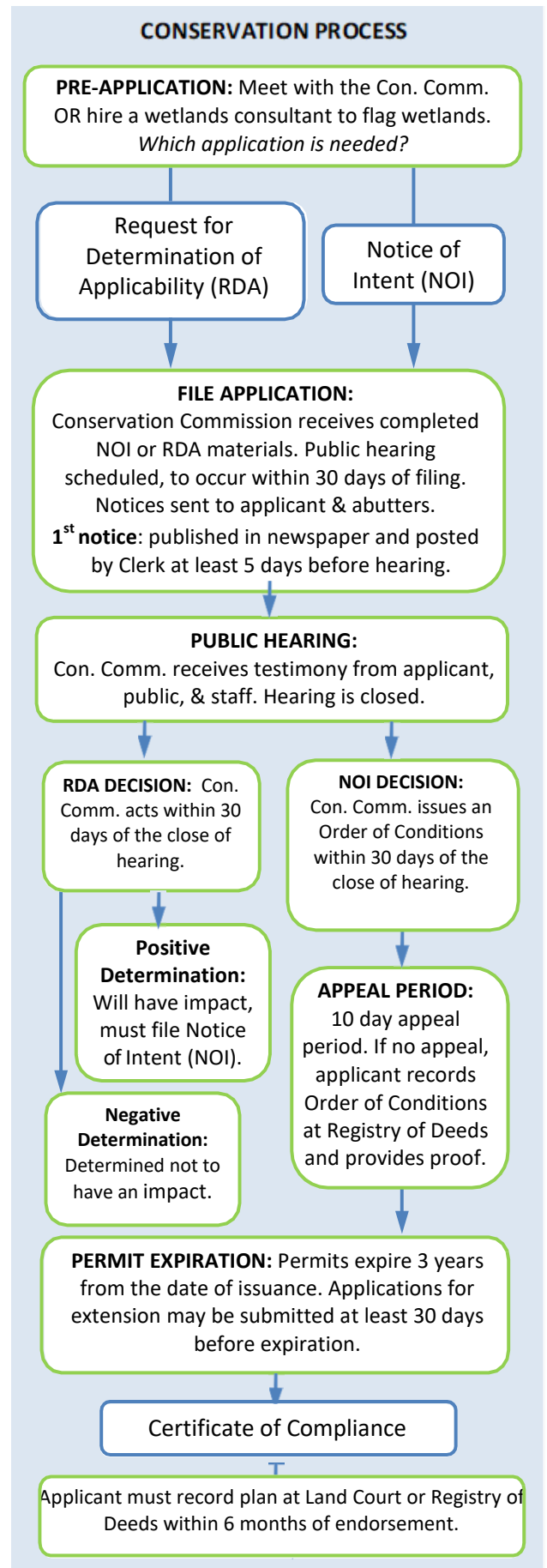


Conservation Commission Review

The Sterling Conservation Commission is responsible for reviewing applications for development to ensure that they comply with the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act ([MGL 131, Section 40](#)). The Wetlands Protection Act protects wetlands, water sources, and adjoining land areas by preventing or minimizing impacts to these resources. Anyone proposing to remove, fill, dredge, build upon, degrade, discharge into, or otherwise alter resources or areas within delineated areas as noted below will need permission from the Conservation Commission.

- 200 feet within any perennial stream or river;
- 100 feet from any freshwater wetlands, vernal pools, reservoirs, ponds of any size, or lands subject to flooding or inundation by ground or surface water;
- No development or disturbance is permitted within a minimum non-disturbance zone of 25 feet from the above resources;
- Exceptions for certain uses may apply.

Wetlands and water bodies are noted on the Sterling Zoning Map, but it is recommended that you work with a professional wetlands scientist to delineate actual resource extent.



State Permits

Curb Cut Permit

Required by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) for new or altered driveways on any State Roadway.

Contact: MassDOT, District 3
499 Plantation Pkwy, Worcester MA 01605
Phone: (857) 368-3000

<https://www.mass.gov/locations/highway-district-2-office>

The Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA)

The MESA is regulated by the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) and requires a permit for alterations to Priority Habitat areas. NHESP Priority Habitat maps are available for review at the Sterling Building Department and on the Town's [GIS](#) maps.

Contact: Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program
Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife
1 Rabbit Hill Road, Westborough, MA 01581
Phone: (508) 389-6357

<https://www.mass.gov/orgs/masswildlifes-natural-heritage-endangered-species-program>

Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA)

The MEPA requires the submission of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for projects and activities undertaken, funded or requiring a permit from state agencies if the project exceeds specified thresholds.

Contact: Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act Office
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900, Boston, MA 02114
Phone: (617) 626-1031

<https://www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-environmental-policy-act-office>

401 Water Quality Certification

Required by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) for any project that will alter over 5,000 square feet of wetlands and/or the dredging of more than 100 cubic yards of Land Under Water as defined in the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act.

Contact: Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP)
Wetlands Program - dep.wetlands@state.ma.us

<https://www.mass.gov/wetlands-protection>

Massachusetts Historical Commission Approval

This approval must be obtained if a designated historical or archeological landmark will be altered or affected by a project undertaken by a state agency or any private party seeking any state funding, permits, or licenses for the project. <https://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/>

Federal Permits

Section 404 of the Federal Clean Water Act

Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA) establishes a program to regulate the discharge of dredged or fill material into the “waters of the United States,” including ponds, rivers, streams and wetlands. Activities regulated under this program include fill or development, water resource projects such as dams or levees, infrastructure development such as highways or airports, and mining projects.

<https://www.epa.gov/cwa-404/section-404-permit-program>

National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 Review

Section 106 Review requires that certain federally assisted, permitted and licensed activities that might have an adverse effect on properties listed with or eligible for listing with, the National Register of Historic Places be reviewed concerning that effect and its consequences. Section 106 review is accomplished by submitting a Project Notification Form to the Mass Historical Commission.

<https://www.achp.gov/protecting-historic-properties/section-106-process/introduction-section-106>

Environmental Protection Agency Storm Water Notices of Intent and/or NPDES Permits

NPDES permits are required for storm water discharges associated with certain industrial activities except operations that result in the disturbance of less than five acres of total land area which are not part of a larger common plan of development or sale. The project owner and operator are required to file a Notice of Intent or pollution abatement plan with the EPA.

<https://www.epa.gov/npdes/npdes-permit-basics>

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I know if a permit or review is needed?

A good rule of thumb is that any work that builds a new structure or alters walls or roofs requires a building permit. Also, garages, sheds, fences, decks and swimming pools require building permits. Sometimes, depending on the project site and characteristics, other permits might be needed. Your best course of action is to ask first – the Building Inspector can help you determine exactly which permits apply to you. Most application forms are available online on the town website:

www.sterling-ma.gov. Many are on the Town's [e-permitting](#).

What if I want to construct a new home or new business?

New construction sometimes requires one or more permits, depending on the size, location, and proposed use of the structure. Your first step should be to consult the Building Inspector. The Building Inspector will discuss with you the property improvements you propose, and what the typical permit requirements are. The Building Inspector will also inform you of other regulations, like environmental regulations, wetlands, etc. that might apply to your site. S/he will also guide you to the Protective (Zoning) Bylaws, which specifies minimum lot area; setbacks for front, rear and side yards; and permitted uses in specific districts.

How do I know what laws apply to my project?

Call or [email](#) the Building Inspector. S/he can help you determine the laws and regulations that govern your project and your site.

What is Zoning?

All property in Sterling is classified into one of six zoning districts: Rural Residential & Farming, Neighborhood Residential, Commercial, Town Center, Light Industrial and Performance Zone 1. These districts define in detail the uses that are allowed in that district by right or by special permit. Each land use has specific regulations for lot frontage, lot area, and yard setbacks. There are also five “overlay districts” (Floodplain, Still River Protection, Groundwater Protection, Wireless Communication Facilities and Wind Energy) that stipulate additional development controls in some areas of town.

What is the difference between the Zoning and the Building Code?

Zoning regulations are established by the Town. Zoning determines the types of structures and uses that are allowed in each zoning district. No matter where your property is located in town, it is subject to some type of zoning regulation. The Building Code is established by the Commonwealth and applies to all structures and buildings, no matter the use or location. The Building Code sets the minimum safety standards to protect the health and safety of the building occupants and neighbors. The Building Inspector is also the Zoning Enforcement Officer in Sterling.

What if my proposed structure is not allowed by the Zoning Bylaws?

Some uses are allowed only with a Special Permit. A Special Permit means that the use is not automatically permitted, but the Town will consider allowing it if it meets certain criteria and is judged to be an overall benefit to the Town. The Zoning Bylaws outline the process and the uses subject to Special Permits (also see page 7 of this Guide). In other cases, when a proposed structure cannot fit properly on a lot, a Variance may be sought. See page 10 of this Guide and/or contact the Building Inspector for more information.

Table of Principal Uses

Principal Uses		Districts				
		RR	NR	C	TC	LI
A.	Residential Uses					
1.	Single-family dwelling	Y	Y	Y	SP	N
2.	Two-family dwelling	Y	Y	Y	SP	N
3.	Multifamily dwelling	SP	SP	N	SP	N
4.	Boarding or lodging house	SP	SP	N	N	N
5.	Group residence	SP	SP	SP	SP	N
6.	Assisted elderly housing	SP	SP	SP	SP	N
7.	Mixed use building with residential dwelling unit(s)	N	N	SP	Y	N
B.	Exempt Uses and Community Facilities					
1.	Use of land or structures for religious purposes	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
2.	Use of land or structures for educational purposes of land owned or leased by the commonwealth or any of its agencies, subdivisions or bodies politic or by a religious sect or denomination, or by a nonprofit educational corporation	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
3.	Family child-care home, large family child-care home	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
4.	Child-care facility	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
5.	Municipal facility	SP	SP	Y	Y	Y
6.	Use of land for the primary purpose of agriculture, horticulture, floriculture, or viticulture on a parcel of more than five acres in area	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
7.	Facilities for the sale of produce, and wine and dairy products, provided that during the months of June, July, August and September of every year, or during the harvest season of the primary crop raised on the land of the owner or lessee, the majority of such products for sale based on either gross sales dollars or volume, have been produced by the owner of the land and that such land on which the facility is located contains more than five acres in area	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
8.	Cemeteries	SP	SP	N	N	N
9.	Nonprofit social or recreational club, lodge, sportsman's club or camp	SP	N	N	SP	N
10.	Airport, airpark or heliport, whether public, private or accessory to dwelling	SP	N	N	N	SP
11.	Essential services	SP	SP	SP	SP	SP
C.	Commercial Uses					
1.	Nonexempt agricultural use, except fur farms and piggeries	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
2.	Nonexempt farm stand	Y	SP	Y	Y	Y
3.	Nonexempt greenhouse	SP	SP	Y	Y	Y
4.	Nonexempt educational use	N	N	SP	SP	SP
5.	Motel, hotel, inn	SP	N	Y	SP	N
6.	Convalescent or nursing home	SP	SP	N	SP	N
7.	Hospital or sanitarium	SP	SP	SP	SP	N

Principal Uses		Districts				
		RR	NR	C	TC	LI
8.	Commercial recreation or sports facility	SP	N	Y	N	Y
9.	Commercial automobile parking facility	N	N	Y	SP	N
10.	Commercial kennel, animal hospital, veterinarian's office	SP	N	SP	SP	N
11.	Major commercial project	N	N	SP	SP	SP
12.	Restaurant, service of food and/or alcoholic beverages	N	N	Y	Y	Y
13.	Restaurant, drive-in	N	N	SP	N	SP
14.	Restaurant, fast-food	N	N	SP	SP	SP
15.	Retail sales, including antique shops	N	N	Y	Y	SP
16.	Service, repair, or trade shop	N	N	Y	Y	Y
17.	Business or professional office	N	N	Y	Y	Y
18.	Bank or financial institution	N	N	Y	Y	N
19.	Sale, lease and manufacture of firearms and/or ammunition	SP	SP	SP	SP	SP
20.	Open air display area; outdoor retail sales	N	N	SP	SP	SP
21.	Motor vehicle service station	N	N	SP	SP	SP
22.	Motor vehicle repair or body shop	N	N	SP	N	Y
23.	Sale or rental of new or used cars and trailers in open lot	N	N	SP	N	SP
24.	Indoor sale or rental of new or used cars and trailers	N	N	Y	SP	N
25.	Bed-and-breakfast	SP	SP	SP	SP	N
26.	Drive-in or freestanding ATM	N	N	SP	SP	SP
27.	Place of amusement	N	N	SP	SP	SP
28.	Adult use	N	N	N	N	SP
29.	Marijuana establishments	N	N	N	N	N ²
D.	Industrial, Wholesale or Extensive Uses					
1.	Bus or railroad station	N	N	Y	Y	Y
2.	Rail or motor freight terminal; bus storage yard	N	N	SP	N	Y
3.	Mobile home park	N	N	N	N	N
4.	Wholesale, warehouse, or distribution facility	N	N	SP	N	Y
5.	Open lot storage of building materials, contractor's equipment and similar materials	N	N	SP	N	Y
6.	Storage of coke, coal, sand or other minerals, whether indoors or not	N	N	N	N	Y
7.	Quarrying or mining ¹	N	N	N	N	Y
8.	Manufacturing, assembly, processing, packaging or other industrial operation with or without retail and/or showroom component	N	N	SP	N	Y
9.	Junkyard or automobile graveyard	N	N	N	N	N

NOTES:

(Table is current as of 7/2022)

¹ See the Earth Removal Bylaw in the General Bylaws.

² Cultivation and product manufacturing by a duly licensed marijuana cultivator and product manufacturer shall be permitted as of right within the Light Industrial Zoning District only by existing licensed medical marijuana cultivation and product manufacturers operating within the Town prior to January 1, 2019.

Sterling Boards and Departments (This is not an exhaustive list of permits or responsibilities of these Boards and Departments).

Assessor's Office

The assessors list and value all real properties within the town every 3 years to be submitted to the State Department of Revenue for certification. The assessors do not directly tax any properties. Assessors can provide a [Certified List of Abutters](#) needed for applications requiring Special Permits, Variances, Earth Removal Permits, Comprehensive Permits, Administrative Appeals and Site Plan Review.

Office: Town Hall, 1 Park Street, Sterling, MA 01564

Contact: Debbie Dreyer, Assistant Assessor (978) 422-8111 x2313

Board of Health

The Board of Health enforces the state and local health and environmental codes. Among the many permits and certificates it issues are those for septic systems, restaurants and food retailers, public swimming pools, and the raising of livestock and poultry.

Office: Town Hall, 1 Park Street, Sterling, MA 01564

Contact: Kathie Nickerson, Board of Health Assistant (978) 422-8111 x2305

Permits Issued: Septic Installation/Repair, Food Establishment, Stable Licenses, Beaver Control, Soil Testing and Wells.

Building Department/Zoning Enforcement

Responsible for the issuance of building, electrical, and plumbing/gas permits and their required inspections. The department provides staff support to the Planning Board, Earth Removal applications and the Zoning Board of Appeals. The Building Inspector is responsible for the enforcement of the Town's zoning bylaws.

Office: Town Hall, 1 Park Street, Sterling, MA 01564

Contact: Tony Zahariadis, Building Commissioner and Zoning Enforcement Officer (978) 422-8111 x2303, Patty Page, Administrative Assistant (978) 422-8111 x2301

Permits Issued: Commercial and Residential Building, Demolition, Electrical, Gas, Plumbing, Sheet Metal, Signs, Tents and Trenches.

Conservation Commission

The Conservation Commission is primarily responsible for enforcing the [Wetlands Protection Act](#) and [Rivers Protection Act](#).

Office: Town Hall, 1 Park Street, Sterling, MA 01564

Contact: (978) 422-8111 x2321

Permits Issued: [Request for Determination of Applicability](#); [Wetlands Notice of Intent](#)

Fire Department

The Fire Department processes all permits associated with the storage of flammable or hazardous materials, underground storage tanks, the use of explosives or blasting materials and cutting and welding equipment. Also, this department conducts inspections associated with smoke and fire detectors and sprinkler systems.

Office: 5 Main Street, PO Box 21, Sterling, MA 01564; (978) 422-8107

Contact: David Hurlbut, Jr., Fire Chief

Permits Issued: The following permits can all be found on the [online permitting](#): Oil Burner Permit, Blasting Permit, Tank Truck Permit, Vent Free Gas Heater Permit, Flammables Storage

Permit, Black Powder Permit, Tank Removal Permit (above/underground), Tank Storage Permit, Self Service Gas Station Suppression Permit, Sprinkler System Permit (minor or new construction /additions), Fire Alarm Systems Permit (minor or new).

Department of Public Works

The DPW manages the roads, bridges, and stormwater infrastructure for the Town of Sterling.

Office: 171 Worcester Road, PO Box 537, Sterling, MA 01564; (978) 422-6767

Contact: Ryan Mouradian, Superintendent

Planning Board

The Planning Board is responsible for the long term planning of the community through the development of a Master Plan. The Board conducts Site Plan Review, reviews Subdivision applications, Shared Driveway Permits, Scenic Road Regulations & Permits, Shared Driveways, and some Special Permits.

Office: Town Hall, 1 Park Street, Sterling, MA 01564. Meetings are held at the Town Hall in room 205 the third Thursday of each month.

Contact: (978) 422-8111 x2320 or x2301

Select Board

The Select Board is the chief elected body of the Town of Sterling committed to inclusive representation of all constituents and protecting the general welfare of the community. The Select Board has six specific areas of authority that are quite important to the Town. These include: the power to prepare the town meeting warrant and call town meetings; the power to make appointments to town boards and offices; the power to employ Town Counsel; the power to employ professional administrative staff; the power to sign warrants for the payment of all town bills; the authority to grant licenses and permits.

Office: Town Hall, 1 Park Street, Sterling, MA 01564

Contact: Bill Caldwell, Town Administrator (978) 422-8111 x2315

Permits Issued: Earth Removal, Entrance to Public Ways.

Tree Warden

The Tree Warden is responsible for trees located in Town Right-of-Ways and enforces the Public Shade Tree Law, MGL Chapter 87. The Tree Warden should be contacted when development is located next to significant or town-maintained street trees.

Office: 171 Worcester Road, PO Box 537, Sterling, MA 01564; (978) 422-6767

Contact: Ryan Mouradian, Superintendent

Zoning Board of Appeals

The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) is a permit granting authority that decides upon zoning appeals, special permits, and zoning variances, all detailed within the Sterling Protective (Zoning) Bylaws.

Office: Town Hall, 1 Park Street, Sterling, MA 01564. Meetings are held at the Town Hall in room 205 the second Tuesday of each month.

Contact: Patty Page, (978) 422-8111 x2301

Permits Issued: Variances, Special Permits. Appeals of Building Inspector decision, Comprehensive permits.

To link to the e-permitting, please scan the QR code below with your phone camera.





Scan with your phone camera to link to the permitting guide.