

**QUICK NARRATIVE SUMMARIES FOR SEVEN PROPOSED ZONING ARTICLES FOR ANNUAL TOWN MEETING 2016
PLUS FUNDING REQUEST TO RE-DO ALL BUSINESS ZONING**

ARTICLE 8: AMENDMENTS TO SCHOOL CONVERSION BYLAW TO ALLOW RESIDENTIAL EXPANSION

Overview from Petitioner(Page Place): This Article would permit redevelopment or expansion of existing or former public school properties for Multiple Residential Use (defined as more than one residential dwelling unit located in one or more attached or detached buildings located on a single lot or property). The current bylaw allows conversion of the school buildings to residential use; the change would allow additional dwellings to be built on the grounds, subject to certain criteria and still subject to special permit review.

ARTICLE 9: PACKAGE OF AMENDMENTS TO PREDOMINANTLY INDUSTRIAL USES, DIMENSIONS, HEIGHT AND FLOOR AREA

Overview from Planning Board: Article 9 proposes an extensive series of amendments to five chapter sections of the Zoning Bylaw (ZBL) and to Table I (Uses) and Table II (Dimensional and Density) therein. Collectively, these changes bring the sections in the ZBL pertaining to development and redevelopment of property zoned for industrial, office, research and development and closely related business uses, as well as allowable mixed business and hotel uses, into a modern, 21st century context that more closely reflects today's markets and development modes. The existing zoning is 40 to 55 years old and out of date in various ways, which does little to encourage desirable economic development. The proposed changes achieve these objectives by amending various parts of the ZBL, as follows:

- o Modifying various use classifications (definitions) in Section 4, inserting some new definitions, and omitting an obsolete one.*
- o Modifying Table I (Uses) accordingly, changing or inserting various updated land uses, changing permitting status where needed and adding the category for special permit mixed use.*
- o Incorporating the complementary business uses allowed in the industrial mixed use special permit option in Section 15.*
- o Making technical corrections to the Table to fix incorrect district designations, column headings and similar items.*
- o Adding general industrial development performance standards to reflect modern standards and amenities that benefit the community and the employees.*
- o Making extensive changes to Table II (Dimensions and Density) to bring Bedford's outdated development intensity patterns into alignment with modern, regional industrial development, in locations where doing so makes sense. This includes:*

- Selected, limited increases in allowable floor area, where there is an under-developed land use pattern.
- Selected, limited increases in maximum building height, where there is an under-developed land use pattern.
- Adjustments to various dimensional requirements in various industrial districts where the standard is unrealistic, unnecessary or excessive.

ARTICLE 10: THREE PROPOSED INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT CLASSIFICATIONS (REZONINGS) TO INDUSTRIAL B IN NORTH MIDDLESEX TURNPIKE AREA

The Planning Board is proposing three articles that could make sweeping changes to the existing industrial districts to modernize these very old, outdated regulations. One of the three articles proposes rezoning three parcels along the northern segment of Middlesex Turnpike from Industrial (Park) A and General Business to a modified Industrial B. The IND B designation is being changed in another proposed article to allow more logical density, dimensional and height requirements, in most cases liberalizing them to a reasonable extent.

This geographic location is significantly under-developed by current standards, so there is sufficient land area in which to develop or expand businesses. The area is also served by recently upgraded infrastructure in the form of the Middlesex Turnpike improvement project. The three parcels are generally referred to as Bedford Woods Office Park, the F.W. Webb property, and the Continental Leasing property. The rezonings will create an extensive massing of the newly-updated Industrial B zoning in the part of town where there is room for businesses to grow and sufficient infrastructure to support that development. Mixed use industrial projects would still be allowed by the 2014 Industrial Mixed Use special permit process.

ARTICLE 11: FURTHER AMENDMENTS TO DIMENSIONAL AND RELATED STANDARDS TO REDUCE ZONING INCONSISTENCIES AND MISLAIGNMENTS BETWEEN ZONING AND THE BUILT INDUSTRIAL ENVIRONMENT

Overview from Planning Board: Article 11 proposes a series of changes to Table II (Dimensional and Density), to adjust existing zoning requirements where they might be illogical or contradictory. For example a district with a larger minimum lot area now requires a much smaller street frontage than a district with a smaller minimum lot size. The change would also align the zoning standards for setback, frontage, minimum lot area or another parameter is where they do not conform to what is built on the ground. Examples: the IND C district has a frontage requirement of 50', when the median developed frontage is 410' and the smallest developed frontage is 63' and the required minimum lot area in IND B is 60,000 square feet, when the median developed lot area is 4.7 acres and the smallest developed lot area is 2.1 acres. These discrepancies emerged in land use studies that the Planning staff conducted during the summers of 2014 and 2015. These changes can be effected largely without

creating new zoning non-conformities, except in an isolated instance or two, in which case the property would enjoy full grandfathering protection for the existing dimensions.

ARTICLE 12: AMENDMENTS TO HEIGHT MEASUREMENT FOR BUILDINGS

Overview from the Planning Board: This amendment changes the way height is measured on buildings with pitched roofs; lowers the allowable height in all Residential Districts; and minimizes the creation on residential lots of layered “plateaus” that are constructed to significantly raise the existing ground elevation at the building’s foundation.

The current maximum allowable height in all Residential Districts is 37-feet. This height is measured “...as the vertical distance from the average ground elevation around the perimeter of the structure to the highest point of a roof or parapet in the case of a flat roof, or to the mean average finished grade between the plate and the ridge in the case of a pitched roof” (in other words, half-way up the roof).

This non-intuitive approach leads to misunderstanding and questions about why some residences seem so much taller than the 37-foot limit would imply.

This method for measuring building height for pitched-roof buildings finds its roots in building codes, not zoning laws. However, the relevant question here is not about the interior space, but rather the impact of a building when experienced from the surrounding environment.

Tall structures can have a looming effect, particularly in areas with undersized (i.e. non-conforming) lots. While these homes may technically meet the current height limit, they often are out of scale with the existing neighborhood and can appear to tower over adjacent homes. Abutters and neighbors may experience a loss of light, air, and privacy. Further, it has become common practice when new dwellings are built to bring in fill to raise the lot elevation to create a walk-out basement level.

Approval of this amendment will bring our measurement methods and height limits in line with regional standards; offer protection to abutting property owners where tall structures are proposed; encourage preservation of neighborhood scale, proportion and character; and provide adequate light and air in neighborhoods.

ARTICLE 13: AMENDMENT TO FLOOD PLAIN DISTRICT

Overview from Planning Board: This Article proposes to amend the Zoning Bylaw to incorporate revisions to the Flood Insurance Rate Maps produced by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and the related county Flood Insurance Study report. The map panels that are being replaced encompass the Shawsheen River flood plain. The Town is required to reference them in the Zoning Bylaw by July 6, 2016 when the new maps will take effect, to remain eligible for the National Flood Insurance Program. Maps and other materials relating to this amendment will be available for review in the Planning Office at Town Hall.

ARTICLE 14: AMENDMENTS TO LIMITED BUSINESS FLOOR AREA

Overview from petitioner Zoning Board of Appeals: This Article proposes to amend two subsections of the Business Uses section of the Zoning Bylaw. These changes (Subsections 4.5.1 and 4.5.6) would allow retail stores and indoor amusement facilities in the Limited Business District to be larger than the current 2,000 square foot maximum, up to but no greater than 4,000 square feet, but only if authorized by a Special Permit of the Zoning Board of Appeals. Such an increase would maintain small-scale businesses in the Limited Business District, but allow them some size flexibility if the Zoning Board of Appeals approved a Special Permit. The increase to 4,000 square feet proposed for indoor amusement facilities could allow a dance studio, gym or “black box” theatre (which seats approximately 150 people) in the Limited Business District. It would not be large enough to allow a typical movie theatre or bowling alley. The third proposed change (Subsection 4.5.13) is merely a rewording of the current language to make clear that the installation of new or rebuilt auto parts is not permitted as part of any establishment in the Limited Business District that sells retail or wholesale auto parts.

ARTICLE 15: FUNDING APPROPRIATION TO RECONSTRUCT ALL BUSINESS ZONING ALONG AND NEAR GREAT ROAD CORRIDOR

Overview from Planning Board, Bedford Business Zoning Appropriation:

Bedford’s General and Limited business zoning evolved between 1923 and 1979, with the bulk of the zoning bylaws being enacted in the late 1950’s and early 1960’s. While piecemeal changes have been made since, the basic underlying assumptions in the zoning remain those of another era and don’t reflect what has evolved in modern retailing in the ensuing decades. Furthermore, the zoning districts were drawn with simplistic borders and without regard to lot lines, proximity to residential areas, or consideration of appropriate uses in differing areas. Obsolete and “one size fits all” zoning create significant barriers to establishing and/or relocating businesses, which in turn decreases demand for commercial land and buildings. Fewer potential tenants lead to little, if any, new development, lowered rents, empty storefronts, and eventually, deferred maintenance. Ultimately, commercial tax revenues stagnate due to weakening property values.

This article proposes to appropriate \$120,000 to contract specialized consulting services to analyze, write, and bring to Town Meeting an entire “soup to nuts” package of new business zoning for the voters’ consideration. The scope of services will specify data gathering and a careful analysis of existing zoning; categorizing problems, inconsistencies, and opportunities; consideration of every alternative, whether modifications to existing districts, logical new districts, and/or overlay districts, all with customized bylaws crafted for each; and writing a complete and consistent package of new business zoning bylaws, ready to present to Town Meeting. A robust public participation process would inform every stage of the effort. The time frame is estimated at 18 months from the contract award.