

PART I. ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT

TITLE VII. CITIES, TOWNS AND DISTRICTS

CHAPTER 43D. EXPEDITED PERMITTING

Section 1. Acceptance of chapter

Notwithstanding any general or special law, charter provision, by-law or ordinance to the contrary this chapter shall apply upon its acceptance by a city or town.

Section 2. Definitions

As used in this chapter, the following words shall, unless the context clearly requires otherwise, have the following meanings:—

“Governing body”, in a city having a Plan D or Plan E charter the city manager and the city council and in any other city the mayor and city council, and in towns the board of selectmen.

“Interagency permitting board”, the board, as described in section 62 of chapter 23A, established to review and approve or deny municipal priority development site proposals and to grant and administer technical assistance grants.

“Issuing authority”, a local board, commission, department or other municipal entity that is responsible for issuing permits, granting approvals or otherwise involved in land use development including redevelopment of existing buildings and structures.

“Permit”, a permit formal determination, order of conditions, license, certificate, authorization, registration, plan approval, zoning relief or other approval or determination with respect to the use or development of land, buildings, or structures required by any issuing authority including but not limited to those under statutory authorities contained in chapter 40A, sections 81A to 81J, inclusive, and sections 81X to 81GG, inclusive, of chapter 41, sections 40 and 40A of chapter 131, sections 26 to 32, inclusive, of chapter 111, chapter 40C, sections 13 and 14 of chapter 148, chapter 772 of the acts of 1975, or otherwise under state law or local by-law or ordinance, and all associated regulations, by-laws and rules, but not including building permits or approvals pursuant to sections 81O to 81W, inclusive, of chapter 41. “Permit” shall not include the decision of an agency to dispose of property under its management or control; predevelopment reviews conducted by the municipal office of permit coordination or a technical review team; or permits granted by the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority.

“Priority development site”, a privately or publicly owned property that is: (1) commercially or industrially zoned; (2) eligible under applicable zoning provisions, including special permits or other discretionary permits, for the development or redevelopment of a building at least 50,000 square feet of gross floor area in new or existing buildings or structures; and (3) designated as a priority development site by the board. Several parcels or projects may be included within a single priority development site. Wherever possible, priority development sites should be located adjacent to areas of existing development or in under utilized buildings or facilities, or close to appropriate transit services.

“Secretary”, the secretary of the executive office of economic development.

“Technical review team”, an informal working group consisting of representatives of the various issuing authorities designed by the head of their issuing authority to review requests submitted

under this chapter. The technical review team shall not include members of the zoning board of appeals

Section 3. Formal proposal for designation as priority development site; technical assistance grants

(a) For a property to receive a designation as a priority development site, the governing body, after approval by a town meeting in a town, shall file a formal proposal with the board. The proposal shall include: (1) a detailed description of the property; (2) good faith commitment to comply with this chapter; (3) written authorization of the property owner; and (4) at the discretion of the governing body, a request for a technical assistance grant.

(b) All requests for a technical assistance grant shall include a detailed description of how the grant will be used and shall be submitted with the formal proposal as described in subsection (a). The grants shall be used to implement the requirements of this chapter, which shall include but not be limited to, professional staffing assistance, local government reorganization, and consulting services. The amount of any single grant awarded from the fund, shall not exceed \$150,000. The board shall review and determine eligibility of the proposals and approve requests within 60 days of receipt of the proposals. In special circumstances where a specific and originally unforeseen need can be demonstrated, the governing body may be eligible for an additional technical assistance grant if approved by the board and the secretary.

Section 4. Rules and regulations on permit issuance

Within 120 days of the acceptance of this chapter the governing body shall implement the following: (a) appoint a single point of contact to serve as the primary municipal liaison for all issues relating to this chapter; (b) amend rules and regulations on permit issuance to conform to this chapter; (c) along with the issuing authority, collect and ensure the availability of all governing statutes, local ordinances, by-laws, regulations, procedures and protocols pertaining to each permit; (d) establish a procedure whereby the governing body shall determine all permits, reviews and predevelopment reviews required for a project; all required scoping sessions, public comment periods and public hearings; and all additional specific applications and supplemental information required for review, including, where applicable, the identification of potential conflicts of jurisdiction or substantive standards with abutting municipalities and a procedure for notifying the applicant; and (e) establish a procedure, following the notification of the required submissions for review as set forth in clause (d), for determining if all the materials required for the review of the project have been completed.

Section 5. Priority development permits; review and final decision

(a) Priority development permit reviews and final decisions shall be completed within 180 days subject to the extension herein. The time period shall begin the day after the issuance of the notice that the application materials are complete pursuant to clause (e) of section 4. The governing body shall notify the applicant in writing within 20 business days from receipt of the completed form of additional information needed or requirements that it may have. The governing body may provide for pre-application conferences to facilitate this process.

(b) The resubmission of the application or the submission of such additional information required by the governing body shall commence a new 30-day period for review of the additional information.

(c) If, at any time, an issuing authority determines that a permit or other predevelopment review is required which it did not previously identify, it shall immediately notify the applicant by certified mail and shall where public notice and comment or hearings are not required complete action on the application filed for the previously unidentified permit within 30 days of receipt of the completed application or not later than the latest required decision date for a pending permit, whichever is later. Where public notice and comment or hearing are required for the previously unidentified permit, the required action date shall be not later than 30 days from the later of the close of the hearing or comment period, which shall be scheduled to commence as quickly as publication allows. The failure of the governing body to notify an applicant of the requirement of a public hearing or comment period shall not constitute a waiver of the requirement.

Section 6. Informal procedure for advisory review; fee

(a) In accordance with this chapter, the governing body may establish an informal procedure to allow permit applicants to obtain advisory review by a technical review team of any issue of law, policy, procedure, or classification that the applicant claims is in dispute between the applicant and the issuing authority which has affected or will affect the ability of the applicant to obtain timely review of the permit application. The procedures shall provide for filing a request for review by the applicant, representation by the issuing authority on the technical review team, and a period not to exceed 30 days for issuance of a decision. Use of this procedure shall toll the review time periods. An advisory determination or ruling made pursuant to a procedure established in this section shall not constitute a decision or final action and shall not be subject to any right of administrative or judicial review.

(b) The governing body may establish an additional and separate fee, in addition to any fees that may be assessed by an issuing authority in order to carry out its duties under this chapter, and may deposit the fees in a special account to be maintained by the treasurer. The special account, including any accrued interest shall be expended at the direction of the governing body, without further appropriation; but, the funds shall be expended only in carrying out its responsibilities under this chapter.

Section 7. Time for final actions

Failure by any issuing authority to take final action on a permit or approval within the 180-day period or extended time, if applicable, shall be considered a grant of the relief requested of that authority. In that event, within 14 days after the date of expiration of the time period, the applicant shall file an affidavit with the city or town clerk, attaching the application, setting forth the facts giving rise to the grant and stating that notice of the grant has been mailed, by certified mail, to all parties to the proceedings and all persons entitled to notice of hearing in connection with the application.

Section 8. Grounds for denial of grant

The grant shall not occur where: (1) the governing body has made a timely determination that the application is not complete in accordance with its requirements and notified the applicant as set forth herein and the applicant has not made a timely response to complete the application; (2) the governing body has determined that the final application contained false or misleading information; or (3) the governing body has determined that substantial changes to the project affect the information required to process the permit application have occurred since the filing of the application.

Section 9. Waiver or extension of time period

The 180 day time period may be waived or extended for good cause upon written request of the applicant with the consent of the governing body or upon written request of the issuing authority with the consent of the applicant. The 180-day period may be extended for up to 30 days by the governing body in the event an additional permit or other predevelopment review is required in accordance with subsection (c) of section 5, if the requirement for the previously unidentified permit or review has been determined no less than 150 days after the issuance of the notice of completeness. The 180 day time period shall be extended when the issuing authority determines either: (1) that action by another federal, state or municipal government agency is required before the issuing authority may act; (2) that judicial proceedings affect the ability of the issuing authority or applicant to proceed with the application; or (3) that enforcement proceedings that could result in revocation of an existing permit for that facility or activity and denial of the application have been commenced. In those circumstances, the issuing authority shall provide written notification to the secretary. When the reason for the extension is no longer applicable, the issuing authority shall immediately notify the applicant, and shall complete its decision within the time period specified in this section, beginning the day after the notice is issued. An issuing authority may not use lack of time for review as a basis for denial of a permit if the applicant has provided a complete application and met all other obligations in accordance with this chapter. If the Martha's Vineyard commission as described in chapter 831 of the acts of 1977, or the Cape Cod commission, as described in chapter 716 of the acts of 1989, require or allow referral of a permit application, the 180-day time period as described in this chapter shall be suspended upon receipt of the permit application. The 180-day time period shall recommence at the completion of the regional commission's review; but if either commission denies a regional permit on a priority development site, section 7 shall not apply and the issuing authority, upon receipt of the denial notice, shall permanently cease the 180 day time period.

Section 10. Administrative appeals; time for filing; final written decision

(a) Appeals from issuing authority decisions or from a grant by operation of law shall be filed within 20 days after the last individual permitting decision has been rendered or within 20 days after the conclusion of the 180 day period as set forth in subsection (a) of section 5, whichever is later. The 180 day period shall be increased by the number of days in any extension granted under this chapter.

(b) A person aggrieved by a final decision of any issuing authority, or by the failure of that authority to take final action concerning the application within the time specified, whether or not previously a party to the proceeding, or any governmental officer, board, or agency, may appeal to the division of administrative law appeals by bringing an action within 20 days after a written decision was or should have been rendered. Appeals from decisions of multiple permitting authorities shall be filed simultaneously and shall be consolidated for purposes of hearing and decision. This section shall not apply to appeals pursuant to sections 40 and 40A of chapter 131, which shall continue to be appealed in accordance with said chapter 131, chapter 30A and applicable regulations.

(c) When hearing appeals under this chapter, the division shall revise its rules, procedures and regulations to the extent necessary to accord with the requirements of this chapter.

(d) The division shall render a final written decision within 90 days of the receipt of the appeal. Thereafter, an aggrieved party may appeal to the superior court department by bringing an action within 20 days after the division has rendered a final decision.

Section 11. Transfer of permits; renewals; modification; expiration

- (a) Permits shall not transfer automatically to successors in title, unless the permit expressly allows the transfer without the approval of the issuing authority.
- (b) Issuing authorities having substantive jurisdiction over permit issuance may develop procedures for simplified permit renewals and annual reporting requirements. If the procedures are not developed, renewals of permits shall be governed by the same procedures and timelines as specified in conjunction with this chapter.
- (c) Issuing authorities shall make reasonable effort to review permit modification requests within as short a period as is feasible to maintain the integrity of the expedited permitting process. An issuing authority shall inform an applicant within 20 business days of receipt of a request whether the modification is approved, denied, determined to be substantial or additional information is required by the issuing authority in order to issue a decision. If additional information is required, the issuing authority shall inform an applicant within 20 business days after receipt of the required additional information whether the modification is approved or denied or that additional information is still required by the issuing authority in order to render a decision. In cases in which the issuing authority determines that a requested modification is substantial, the original review period for permit categories as set forth in section 5 shall apply.
- (d) Permits issued pursuant to this chapter shall expire 5 years from the date of the expiration of the applicable appeal period unless exercised sooner. Where permits cover multiple buildings, commencement and continuation of construction of 1 building shall preserve the permit validity. Changes in the law subsequent to the issuance of permits based upon the priority proposal shall not invalidate the permits or review certificates. Nothing in this section shall limit the effectiveness of section 6 of chapter 40A.

Section 12. Benefits of priority development sites

A priority development site shall be eligible for the following:—

- (a) priority consideration for community development action grants, and public works economic development grants;
- (b) priority consideration for other state resources such as quasi-public financing and training programs;
- (c) brownfields remediation assistance;
- (d) enhanced marketing by the Massachusetts office of business development, and the Massachusetts alliance for economic development; and
- (e) technical assistance provided by the regional planning council.

Section 13. Technical assistance funding

- (a) Technical assistance funding is intended to be a one-time grant to municipality, if the municipality has adopted expedited permitting as provided in sections 3 to 11, inclusive.
- (b) A municipality shall be eligible for technical assistance funding, which may be less than the previous amounts awarded, for a second time if it has identified and successfully permitted one priority development site.

Section 14. Time for required reviews

Any required reviews established under sections 61 to 62H, inclusive, of chapter 30 or sections 26 to 27C, inclusive, of chapter 9 shall conclude within 120 days of a state determination of completeness of required review materials, as established by the executive office of environmental affairs in consultation with the state secretary. The secretary of environmental affairs and the state secretary shall establish time frames for all required filings and additional filings by the applicant in order to comply with this section. In the event an applicant fails to comply with all relevant time frames, the time shall be tolled until the applicant files the required documents.

Section 15. Substantive jurisdictional authority of issuing authorities

Nothing in this chapter shall be construed to alter the substantive jurisdictional authority of issuing authorities.

Section 16. Rules and regulations

The secretary shall promulgate rules and regulations to implement this chapter.

<http://www.mass.gov/legis/laws/mgl/gl-43d-toc.htm>