TOWN OF SWANZEY

OFFICE OF PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Swanzey Planning Board Agenda
September 25, 2025
6:00 PM

A regular meeting of the Swanzey Planning Board will be held on **Thursday, September 25, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. The meeting is upstairs at Whitcomb Hall (17 Main Street, Swanzey).** The meeting will also be live streamed on the Town of Swanzey's Facebook and YouTube pages. More information on public access to the meeting is available on the Town's website at: www.swanzeynh.gov.

1) Call to Order

2) Approval of Minutes

A. September 11, 2025

3) Public Hearings

A. **None**

4) Discussions/Other Business

A. Ordinance updates resulting from approved House Bills.

B. Discussion on rezoning Tax Map 219 Lot 42 and surrounding parcels.

C. Other business as required.

5) Adjournment

Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire
Swanzey Planning Board
Meeting Minutes – **September 11, 2025**
Whitcomb Hall, Main Street, Swanzey, NH

Note: Draft Minutes are subject to review, correction and approval by the Board. Review and approval of Minutes generally takes place at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board.

CALL TO ORDER:
The meeting of the Swanzey Planning Board was called to order at 6pmpm by Chair Scott Self. The meeting was held at Whitcomb Hall and via Zoom software for the public. Other members present: Vice Chair Michael York, Victoria Ames, Richard Lane, Mark Scalera, Brandon Self, Alternates Stacey Goodale, Jane Johnson, and Selectman's Representative Mark LaBelle. Also present was Town Planner Adam Paquette and Recording Secretary Susan Ells.

The Chair called the roll and read the agenda for the evening. A quorum was present.

Absent: none

Others Present:
Pru Fraser, Charlie Harbeck, Bob Audette, and from the Conservation Commission: Nancy Karlson, Cheri Domina, Bob Goodrich and Bonnie Hart

MINUTES:
The meeting minutes of August 28, 2025 were considered. A motion was made by Lane to approve the meeting minutes as presented. There was a second by Scalera**.** All were in favor. With no further discussion, the motion passed.

APPLICATIONS AND PUBLIC HEARING(S):
None

DISCUSSIONS/OTHER BUSINESS

A. Wetland Conservation District Discussion – Final Draft of Proposed Changes

Chair Self explained this is a joint meeting with the Conservation Commission to review and discuss the proposed revisions to the Wetlands Conservation District Zoning Amendments for the March 2026 Town vote. Chair Domina called the role for the Conservation Commission; all were present except Jay Ward and Bud Winsor; Domina seated Jane Johnson for Jay Ward.

Chair Self asked if the group wanted to read the full document or just the edits; Domina offered to read it in its entirety and invited comments. Domina reviewed the history of how the document was created; the Conservation Commission is looking for ways to protect the town without causing undue hardship for landowners. Chair Self thanked her for the work on the document; Domina said they spent hours on the changes and are grateful for the knowledge and experience the Planning Board can provide. She is hoping for a good discussion on the proposed changes and hopes it can go to a public hearing without much further revision.

Chair Self stated that he felt the suggested changes are fair to Swanzey residents.

Chair Domina read through the document and explained the drafted changes; Chair Self asked for comments on each section.

Chair Self complimented the Commission on adding the condition that the applicant can make the decision as to what to request.

D: General Provisions: Chair Self suggested an addition for the conditional use permit to be clearer for set back and or buffer requirements. The Commission will come up with another wording to clear this up and will modify D-5.

E: Uses Permitted: Chair Self suggested E.1.j. be edited to include a small setback. The Commission will discuss and recommend a change.

F: Conditional Uses: Paquette suggested changing F.2.a. and F.2.b. to read …. *non-conforming structures* (rather than non-conforming uses) and in F.3 to remove *footpaths.*

G: Conditional Use Permit Criteria: Domina asked for comments on G.7 to be sure it was clear what was intended; suggestions were made to change this wording to …*jurisdictional buffer area and WCD…*

H: Conditional Use Permit Application Procedure: Chair suggested that H.4 should be clear and suggested …*the Planning Board at its discretion*... Chair said there is no time limit on when the Planning Board must make their decision. Paquette suggested 90 days. He will add this in.

I: Special Provisions: all sentences after the first should be removed in I.1.

J: Areas Exempted from this Section: Domina said that this section was virtually unchanged but they rearranged the order and added J.2.

The group discussed whether this can all be on one warrant article.

Lane stated that he would like the selectboard and town administrator to review and comment on the changes before it goes to the lawyer. Paquette confirmed that it would happen.

There will be more meetings regarding other zoning changes that will be reviewed. At that time, the board will vote as to what goes to the public hearing. If changed at public hearing, it would go back to the planning board, then back to another public hearing. Otherwise, it goes to the warrant. The consensus of the board was that these changes are fair.

Domina said that the Conservation Commission will meet on October 6 to incorporate the final changes that came from this meeting. Domina asked when the public hearing would be. Paquette said the first meeting in November is likely to be the date.

B. Other business as required – Charlie Harbeck is interested in joining the Planning Board; a notice needs to go out to the public before applications are reviewed. Chair Self thanked him for his interest.

ADJOURNMENT
A motion to adjourn was made by Lane. There was a second to the motion by B. Self with no further discussion. All were in favor and the m*otion passed.* Adjournment occurred at 7:05pm.

Next Meeting: September 25, 2025

Respectfully Submitted,

Susan Ells, Recording Secretary

Approved on

DRAFT

New Hampshire Municipal Association

THE SERVICE AND ACTION ARM OF NEW HAMPSHIRE MUNICIPALITIES

LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

Final Legislative Bulletin **2025 Session** **September 4, 2025**

Live Bill Tracker

In this issue:

- Overview of the 2025 Session
- New Laws by Topic
- 2025 Study Committees and Commissions
- Vetoed Bills
- Legislative Calendar
- NHMA Advocacy Team
- Sharing is Caring … About Sound Public Policy
- Final Word on 2025

Overview of the 2025 Session



(Photo by Marty Karlon)

Mixed Results for Towns and Cities

No major cuts to state aid, but some smaller ones

Municipalities faced onslaught of zoning mandates

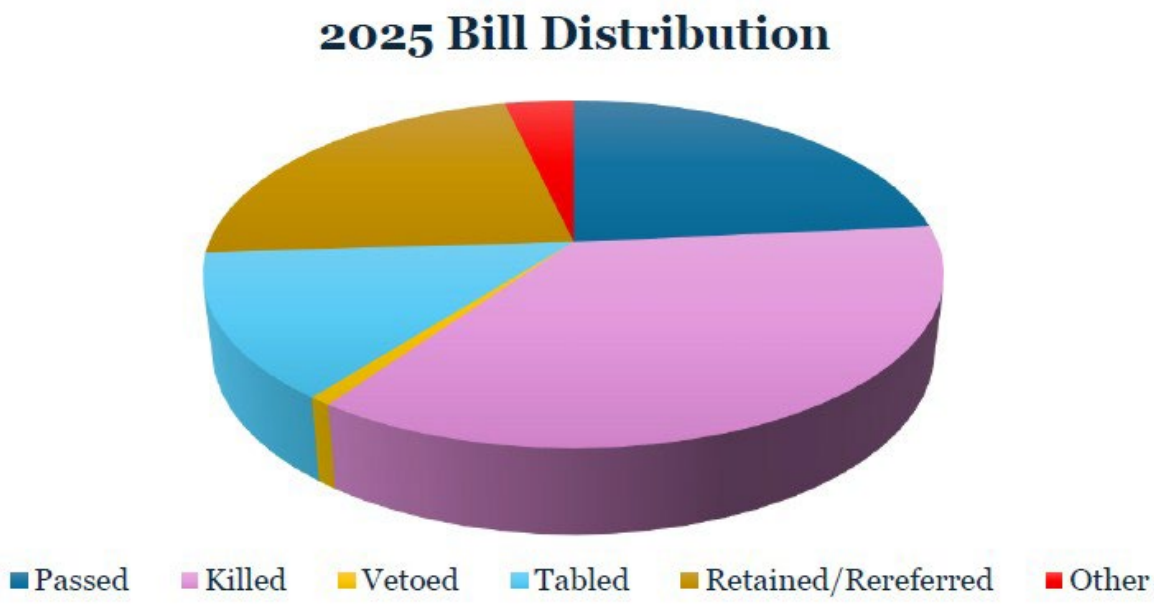
Multiple changes to election/town meeting laws

Eighty-six bills with municipal impact became law in the 2025 legislative session, but no session can be summed up by numbers alone. Overall, NHMA and our members ended up playing more defense than offense this year, spending a significant amount of time fighting a slew of bills that would hurt local government or supplant local decision-making, including working to defeat yet another effort that would have deprived municipalities of their voice at the legislature.

Still, we were able to work collaboratively with many legislators in both parties and other stakeholders to help pass important legislation including:

- Stabilizing ground ambulance insurance reimbursements, eliminating balance-billing, and creating a commission to determine fair, long-term reimbursement rates.

- Allowing the use of electronic poll books at town meetings.
- Securing a state commitment to pay the local "normal cost" attributable to significant retirement changes passed as part of the state budget.
- Enabling municipalities to create social districts.
- Adding municipal public works facilities as eligible capital facilities for the assessment of impact fees.
- Providing state-purchased accessible voting systems (AVS) to municipalities for local elections.



This chart shows the outcomes on nearly 360 bills NHMA followed throughout the session.

The two dominant policy issues in 2025 were the state budget and a concerted effort to override local zoning and planning, although the sheer volume of changes to election and town meeting laws was also noteworthy.

State budget preserves (most) municipal gains

Despite a challenging state revenue picture and costly legislative priorities (retirement system changes, school voucher expansion), the $15.9 billion, two-year FY 2026-27 state budget adopted in June maintains most of the hard-won gains in state aid that municipalities have achieved in recent years.

Various proposals to reduce 30% municipal share of meals and rooms tax were unsuccessful. Municipal revenue from this tax has grown steadily since the local share was restored in 2021.

Unfortunately, the state spending package budget did not include any new funding for Housing Champions or any other housing incentive programs, which was a glaring omission in a year where elected state officials in both parties touted housing as the biggest issue facing New Hampshire. Also left out was $200,000 in state block grants to support regional planning commissions.

The budget also introduced premiums for the Granite Advantage low-income health programs. NHMA is concerned that these out-of-pocket premiums will have an adverse trickle-down impact on local welfare budgets.

Finally, New Hampshire Retirement System pension benefit increases for a subset of first responders were hammered out literally on the eve of the final budget vote (see below for details of the key changes). NHMA advocated vigorously to ensure the added costs of these benefits not be downshifted to cities and towns and the final compromise included a promise of at least $262 million in state funding through 2034, although only the $42 million to be paid in FY 26-27 is guaranteed. If the state were to renege on its long-term promise, local retirement costs would skyrocket.

A detailed summary of changes contained in the state budget impacting municipal government is included in the new laws section below.

Land use: Pre-empting local control

More than two dozen bills regarding planning, zoning and land use were introduced in 2025. Many of the bills this session sought to impose one-size-fits-all solutions with regard to planning and zoning, permitting processes, and housing development.

NHMA believes that municipalities and the state legislature should work together to foster safe, healthy, and vibrant communities. Unfortunately, many of the housing and zoning bills this year were not crafted to address affordability or homelessness. They were designed—often subtly, sometimes brazenly—to serve the interests of those who stood to benefit financially, as well as for ideological actors, who see zoning mandates as a weapon against local governance.

NHMA, along with many of our members, opposed these efforts to undermine local self-governance by voicing concerns in committee hearings and with individual legislators. Our primary issues with many of these proposals centered on the loss of local voter input—as voters approve or reject zoning in most New Hampshire municipalities—and the potential impacts on infrastructure and parking.

Legislation in 2025 also created a Commission to study the New Hampshire zoning enabling act, which could be (mis)used to provide cover for future attempts to impose statewide central planning on our diverse towns and cities.

Toward the end of the session, some legislators began waking up to the fact that passing ill-conceived, technically flawed, overly broad legislation that eviscerates local decision-making may not be such a good idea and several troubling bills were tabled or killed. However, we fully expect to see many of these bills return next year, along with new efforts, so it's important that legislators continue to hear from you year-round about the importance of protecting local governance and decision-making. It's never the wrong season to advocate for your interests!

New Laws by Topic

Here is a summary of the bills affecting cities and towns that became law in 2025. If you have specific questions, the entire bill should be reviewed. The links below will take you to the ***Fast Democracy*** page for the underlying bill. Click on "Chaptered Final Version" to view the full text of the new law. **Note:** The links will no longer work later this year when the NH General Court archives the bills from the 2025 session; at that time, refer directly to the relevant statutes, which are **available here**.

NHMA has prepared guidance on several new laws enacted this year, which is **available here**. Laws denoted with an asterisk (*) are included in one of the guidance documents. Members with specific questions about the application of these and other statutes may be directed to NHMA Legal Services at legalinquiries@nhmunicipal.org or 603-224-7447.

HB 2 (BUDGET TRAILER BILL)

Weighing in at 161 pages, **Chapter 141 (HB 2)**, the budget trailer bill, included multiple sections impacting municipal government:

***SAG grants.* (Chapter 141: 112, 379):** The budget includes $2.5 million per year in funding for State Aid Grants (SAG), which provide 20% to 30% of eligible principal and interest payments for completed municipal wastewater infrastructure projects. The funding is still well below the $15 million per year included in the last budget.

***Solid waste surcharge.* (Chapter 141:176):** A new $3.50 per ton surcharge on all solid waste disposed of at any of the state's six active landfills or its waste-to-energy facility takes effect January 1, 2026. The fee will be paid by municipalities, businesses, and other entities, but towns and cities will receive a 100% quarterly rebate. The surcharge will fund waste management programs at the state Department of Environmental Services (DES) and grants focused on improving waste disposal infrastructure across the state. DES is developing guidance for this surcharge and NHMA will pass along this information when it becomes available.

***PFAS mitigation.* (Chapter 141:375):** A new section was added to RSA 485-H:6 requiring DES to establish an application approval process and determine the prorated compensation amount for each public water system with PFAS detections based on the

amount public water systems spent or will spend on infrastructure to mitigate PFAS compounds minus the amount received from other funding sources.

***Vehicle safety inspections*. (Chapter 141:253):** The budget eliminates motor vehicle safety inspections in 2026 and authorizes the state to work with the federal government regarding emissions testing. Because 12 percent of the motor vehicle fee revenue is distributed to municipalities, the state Department of Transportation estimated this change will decrease municipal revenue by about $350,000 per year.

***Drinking Water and Groundwater Trust Fund*. (Chapter 141:378):** The budget appropriates $11.55 million from the Drinking Water and Groundwater Trust Fund to pay for drinking water infrastructure as part the Southern New Hampshire Regional Water Project.

***Revenue sharing*. (Chapter 141:111):** Although it has no current fiscal impact, the budget includes a repeal of municipal revenue sharing under RSA 31-A. In 1969, reform in how the state taxed businesses led to the implementation of the Business Profits Tax (BPT). This eliminated antiquated taxes that were more reflective of the agricultural economy of the past. These taxes, however, were assessed and collected locally and were part of the property tax base for municipalities, school districts, and counties. When RSA 31-A was enacted in 1970, it included a provision to increase state revenue sharing by 10% annually, however that promise was modified or deferred multiple times over the years. Although revenue sharing has been suspended in every budget since 2010, keeping the statute alive would have made it easier for a future legislature to revisit it someday.

***Housing Appeals Board (HAB)*. (Chapter 141:335-338):** The budget includes funding for a modified version of the HAB, which the House wanted to eliminate. Under the new model, the HAB will share resources with the Board of Tax and Land Appeals (BTLA).

***Right-to-know ombudsman*. (Chapter 141:206-208):** The ombudsman was converted to a per-diem position, which precipitated the resignation of the incumbent ombudsman. The position will continue to independently exercise the statutory jurisdiction conferred upon it when it is filled.

***Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)*. (Chapter 141:321):** This section prohibits DEI initiatives and DEI-related contract provisions in state and local government entities, public schools, and public universities, and includes financial penalties for school districts that don't comply. While municipalities are included, the legislation does not assess specific penalties to towns and cities for non-compliance. The state Department of Justice (DOJ) is mandated to establish a process by which all political subdivisions review their existing contracts for the presence of DEI-related provisions. This provision is currently being challenged in federal court by school districts and other parties.

***Ownership of property by foreign principals* (Chapter 141:346):** No foreign principal (defined as China, Russia, North Korea, Iran or Syria) may lease or acquire any permanent or temporary ownership or controlling interest in real property within the state by any means.

***Partners in Housing*. (Chapter 141:209-214):** The budget created, but did not fund, a new initiative under the Housing Champions program to assist municipalities, counties, and developers in building modestly priced housing on municipal or county owned land that is suitable for development.

ZONING AND LAND USE

***Recusal from ZBA votes.** Chapter 108 (HB 92)** mandates that a zoning board of adjustment (ZBA) member shall recuse himself or herself from voting on matters previously voted upon by the same member while serving on the planning board in a quasi-judicial capacity. **Effective: 8/22/25. Statute: RSA 673:3, V**

***State Building Code Update*. Chapter 135 (HB 134)** amends the state building code to incorporate more recent versions of various international codes and updates to the National Electrical Code. **Effective: 7/1/25. Statute: RSA 155-A:1**

***Impact fee expansion*. Chapter 58 (HB 168)** allows municipalities to include public works facilities as eligible capital facilities for the assessment of impact fees on new developments. **Effective: 7/28/25. Statute: RSA 674:21, V**

***Building permits on private roads.** Chapter 175 (HB 296)** adds an alternative pathway to gain authorization from local governing bodies to erect buildings along private roads. The law also contains an unrelated provision removing the zoning board of adjustment's discretion for determining when to take an appeal and replaces it with a non-discretionary 30-day period. **Effective: 9/13/25. Statutes: RSA 674:41; RSA 676:5**

***Vesting period for approved site plans.** Chapter 186 (HB 413)** extends the vesting time periods that protect approved subdivision and site plans from changes in local planning and zoning regulations and limits the authority of the ZBA or select board when acting as the building code board of appeals. **Effective: 7/1/25. Statutes: RSA 674:39; RSA 674:34, I ; RSA 155-A:11-b; RSA 478:1-a; RSA 679:5, IV; RSA 673:3, IV**

***State building code.** Chapter 276 (HB 428)** limits local amendments to the state building code and state fire code to matters involving issuance of permits, collection of fees, and similar administrative functions. **Effective: 7/1/26. Statutes: RSA 155-A:1-5, 7, 10, and 11-b; RSA 674:34; RSA 675:1**

***Occupancy limits.** Chapter 188 (HB 457)** prohibits municipal zoning ordinances from restricting the number of occupants of any dwelling unit to less than two occupants per bedroom. **Effective: 9/13/25. Statute: RSA 674:16, VIII**

***Accessory Dwelling Units.** Chapter 197 (HB 577)** modifies the existing laws regarding Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) by expanding their definition and allowing for detached units to be constructed by right. Additionally, the maximum square footage for ADUs is increased, with a stipulation that the total living space cannot exceed 950 square feet unless authorized by the municipality and cannot be restricted to less than 750 square feet. **Effective: 7/1/25. Statutes: RSA 674:71 and 73**

***Residential development in commercial zones.** Chapter 201 (HB 631)** mandates that municipalities allow multi-family residential development on commercially zoned land, with specific conditions related to infrastructure and exemptions for adaptive reuse projects. **Effective: 7/1/26. Statute: RSA 674:77**

***Supportive housing.* Chapter 153 (HB 731)** creates a limited state license exemption for supportive housing options specifically designed for individuals with developmental disabilities. **Effective: 9/5/25. Statute: RSA 151:2, II(a)**

***Youth recreation cabins.* Chapter 227 (SB 95)** exempts residential cabins in youth recreation camps from the requirement to install automatic sprinkler systems, even in new or renovated structures; clarifies that while these cabins must comply with the state building code, they are not required to have electrical, mechanical, or plumbing systems unless such systems are installed—at which point they must meet code standards; and limits new residential facilities at youth summer camps to two stories above grade. **Effective: 9/13/25. Statutes: RSA 153:5; RSA 155-A:14**

***Third-party inspections and review.** Chapter 246 (SB 188)** allows licensed or certified third-party professionals to conduct building inspections and construction document reviews in place of local building officials. **Effective: 7/15/25. Statute: The bill did not state where these changes will be inserted into the statutory scheme.**

***Class VI roads.** Chapter 256 (SB 281)** prohibits municipalities from denying building or occupancy permits for property adjacent to class VI roads under certain circumstances. **Effective: 7/1/26. Statute: RSA 674:41, I(c)**

***Stairway requirements.** Chapter 257 (SB 282)** requires municipalities to allow residential buildings with four or fewer floors to have only one stairway, provided that the building is equipped with a compliant sprinkler system and meets specific fire code requirements. **Effective: 7/15/25. Statute: RSA 155-A:2, XII**

***Floor-area-ratios.** Chapter 301 (SB 283)** mandates that municipalities exclude below-grade areas, which include basements and sublevels, from the calculation of floor-area-ratios for new construction projects**. Effective: 9/30/25. Statutes: RSA 674:77-78**

***Required parking spaces.** Chapter 258 (SB 284)** reduces the number of residential parking spaces a municipality can require per residential housing unit from 1.5 to one. **Effective: 9/13/25. Statute: RSA 674:16, VII**

ELECTIONS AND TOWN MEETINGS

***Accessible voting machines.** Chapter 264 (HB 67)** requires cities and towns to ensure the availability of at least one accessible voting system at each polling place. It requires local clerks to enter into agreements with the secretary of state for the use of these systems, which will be provided by the state. The bill also stipulates that local governments are responsible for the costs associated with programming local elections using the accessible voting systems, while the secretary of state will cover programming costs for state and federal elections. **Effective: 1/1/26 (with current pilot extended to 12/31/25); Statute: RSA 659:20-b**

***Ability to adjust terms for supervisors of the checklist.** Chapter 166 (HB 151)** creates a local option that would allow the city or town's legislative body" to adopt 3-year terms for supervisors of the checklist. **Effective: 9/13/25. Statute: RSA 41:46-a**

***Hand-counting ballots.** Chapter 271 (HB 154)** allows any voter to request their ballot to be hand-counted. **Effective: 9/30/25. Statute: RSA 656:42, XII**

***Election audits.* Chapter 23 (HB 261)** changes the timing of when election audits are conducted, stipulating that audits will take place only after the completion of any recounts. **Effective: 7/13/25. Statute: RSA 660:17-c**

***Date for correction of the voter checklist.* Chapter 25 (HB 269)** removes the requirement for a Saturday session of the supervisors of the checklist, allowing for flexibility as long as the session occurs in accordance with the statutory requirements. **Effective: 7/13/25. Statute: RSA 654:28**

***External storage devices.* Chapter 174 (HB 270)** requires the preservation of electronic ballot counting device external storage devices until the resolution of any election contest and the expiration of all appeals, or for a minimum of 22 months following elections, whichever is longer. **Effective: 9/13/25. Statutes: RSA 33-A:3-a; RSA 656:42**

***Absentee ballot requests.* Chapter 62 (HB 288)** amends the procedure for requesting absentee ballots. Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act

(UOCAVA) voters may submit their federal official post card forms no earlier than January of the calendar year in which the election occurs. All other absentee ballot applications must be received or postmarked within six months of the election date; any applications received or postmarked prior to this six-month period will not be accepted. **Effective: 8/1/25. Statute: RSA 657:6**

***Processing absentee ballots.** Chapter 45 (HB 294)** repeals the ability of voters to postpone the processing of absentee ballots until after the polls are closed. **Effective: 7/28/25. Statute: RSA 659:49, II**

***Filing for NH House.** Chapter 47 (HB 327)** amends the statute to allow a state representative to file for office with the town/city clerk as outlined in RSA 655:15, II and III, or the secretary of state. **Effective: 7/28/25. Statutes: RSA 655:15, II and III; RSA 655:28**

***Partisan town elections.* Chapter 127 (HB 367)** changes the method for adopting partisan town elections to be the same as rescinding partisan town elections. **Effective: 9/13/25. Statute: RSA 669:11, 11-a, 12, 13**

***Multiple changes to election statutes.* Chapter 277 (HB 464)** prohibits candidates for political office from participating in the counting of ballots, with exceptions for certain positions such as moderator and clerk. Additionally, it allows the use of personal information from state agencies to verify voter eligibility and mandates that political committees report campaign donations under $50 without disclosing personal identifying information. **Effective: Multiple dates. Statutes: RSA 658:31; RSA 654:45; RSA 654:12; RSA 664:6; RSA 500-A:2; RSA 263:40-a and 5-C:9; RSA 664:3**

***Counting write-in votes.** Chapter 65 (HB 474)** requires there to be a second witness to the counting of write-in votes. **Effective: 8/1/25. Statute: RSA 659:64-a, I**

***Election system vulnerability.* Chapter 200 (HB 626)** requires the secretary of state to establish a vulnerability disclosure program for certain election systems. **Effective: 7/15/25. Statute: RSA 652:23**

***Posting requirement for election return forms.** Chapter 79 (SB 16)** adds a new requirement that the city or town clerk must post copies of the election return forms submitted to the secretary of state's office pursuant to RSA 659:73, I within 7 days following an election. **Effective: 8/9/25. Statute: RSA 659:73, VII**

***Poll books and electioneering.** Chapter 217 (SB 43)** authorizes cities and towns to use poll books for voter registration and check-in for not only elections but also for business meetings, deliberative sessions, and special meetings for both the town and

school district. SB 43 also amends the statute regulating clothing worn at a polling place that advocates for or against any candidate, political party, or measure. **Effective: 9/13/25. Statutes: RSA 652:16-h, I; RSA 652:27, I**

Terminology change. **Chapter 102 (SB 212)** changes all references from "votes" to "ballots," as requested by the secretary of state, and revises provisions related to write-in candidates and recount procedures, ensuring that candidates must meet thresholds based on total ballots cast rather than votes. **Effective: 6/17/25. Statutes: RSA 655:42; RSA 659:88; 659:91-a; RSA 660:1-3 and 6; RSA 669:31**

Voting procedures in unorganized places. **Chapter 249 (SB 215)** revises voting procedures for electing town officers in unorganized towns or places. **Effective: 9/13/25. Statute: RSA 668:6**

Documentation for absentee voting. **Chapter 298 (SB 218)** requires absentee ballot voters to submit information demonstrating citizenship, age, domicile, and identity in order to qualify to vote and requires town or city clerks to notify the applicant in writing within 7 days if their ballot cannot be certified; the town or city clerk shall provide the applicant with an absentee ballot and a notice that the ballot will not be counted unless the applicant submits the documents necessary to complete an absentee registration. **Effective: 9/30/25. Statutes: RSA 654:17, 17-a, 19; RSA 657:7, 16, 17, 17-a, 18**

Verification of voter checklist.* **Chapter 299 (SB 221)** amends the timing of verification of the checklist from every 10 years to annually, beginning in 2026. Additionally, SB 221 amends the look back period to determine whether a person shall be deemed reregistered from 4 years to 5 years. **Effective: 1/1/26. Statute: RSA 654:39**

"Primary petitioner" for petition warrant articles.* **Chapter 173 (HB 228)** establishes a process for a primary petitioner to be identified for every petitioned warrant article and guarantees the primary petitioner's right to introduce a petitioned warrant article at town meeting for at least 10 minutes. **Effective: 9/13/25. Statutes: RSA 39:9; RSA 40:7**

TAXATION/TAX CAPS

Timber tax/carbon sequestration. **Chapter 164 (HB 123)** creates a commission (see below) to study the impacts of carbon sequestration on state and local tax revenue, forest management, and the logging industry in New Hampshire, establishes a moratorium on carbon sequestration contracts for land parcels over 500 acres from July 1, 2025, until the submission of the commission report, and defines "pre-sequestration timber tax revenue." **Effective: Section 4, 11/1/27; remainder, 7/1/25. Statutes: RSA 79:1, 5, and 32-33**

***Tax impact notations.** Chapter 144 (HB 138)** requires municipalities that already include a notation stating the estimated tax impact of the annual budget and special warrant articles to include on special warrant articles with multi-year tax impacts a notation stating the estimated tax impact each year for the first 5 years, or each year if the tax impact is less than 5 years. **Effective 8/30/25. Statute: RSA 32:5, V-b**

***Overriding tax caps.** Chapter 170 (HB 200)** eliminates the current ability of a majority at town meeting to override a tax cap and requires any override to be approved by town meeting by ballot with a 3/5th vote. **Note:** Prior to the enactment of HB 200, a tax cap did not limit the amount the voters could actually appropriate at the annual town meeting; it was only a limit on the budget submitted to the voters by the governing body or budget committee. **Effective: 9/13/25. Statute: RSA 32:5-b**

***Tax caps tied to inflation or population.** Chapter 183** (HB 374) amends RSA 32:5-b to clarify how a tax cap using inflation and/or changes in population or school attendance will be calculated. New definitions on "Attendance," "Base Amount," and "Population" are provided along with a clarification that official inflation figures shall be as of October 1st preceding the date of the budget hearing held. **Effective: 9/13/25. Statute: RSA 32:5-b, c, e, and f**

***New options for budget caps.** Chapter 131 (SB 105)** enables municipalities to adopt a budget cap limiting a proposed budget not to exceed the dollars spent per resident in the prior fiscal year times the current town population plus a fixed percentage, or percent annual increase for inflation based upon data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics or American City or County. Furthermore, this legislation also introduces a new limit on the authority of town meeting to amend warrant articles: Any question to adopt a budget cap under RSA 32:5-g shall not be subject to amendment by the legislative body. **Effective: 8/23/25. Statutes RSA 32:5-g and h**

LOCAL AUTHORITY AND RELATED ITEMS

***Unlicensed dog notices.* Chapter 7 (HB 86)** increases the cost of service for notice of civil forfeiture of unlicensed dogs to the rate for certified mail. **Effective: 7/7/25. Statute: RSA 466:14**

***Special forest maintenance fund surplus.** Chapter 164 (HB 124)** enables a municipal forest committee or conservation commission to offer surplus money to the municipality for deposit in the municipal unreserved fund balance. **Effective: 7/1/25. Statute: RSA 31:113**

***Liability for indigent relatives.* Chapter 267 (HB 132)** changes the obligation of relatives from "shall" to "may" when it comes to assisting poor relatives in need of public relief and removes provisions that previously mandated court involvement and potential imprisonment for relatives who refuse to provide assistance, instead allowing towns or

cities to seek reimbursement from legally liable relatives who have sufficient means. Furthermore, the bill stipulates that aid to eligible individuals cannot be withheld due to a legally liable relative's refusal to provide aid. **Effective: 1/1/26. Statute: RSA 165:19**

Disaster relief. **Chapter 43 (HB 165)** increases the maximum annual amount of disaster relief funding that a municipality can receive from the state Disaster Relief Fund from $25,000 to $100,000. **Effective: 7/28/25. Statute: RSA 21-P:37-e**

Enabling the muzzling of dogs. **Chapter 272 (HB 250)** allows local governing bodies to establish regulations regarding the muzzling of dogs, specifically targeting vicious dogs as defined in RSA 466:31, II(g), with exemptions for certain working dogs. **Effective: 9/30/25. Statute: RSA 466:39**

"Quiet hours" exemption. **Chapter 61 (HB 272)** exempts certain agricultural practices from municipal noise regulation. **Effective: 8/1/25. Statutes: RSA 31:39; RSA 47:17**

Access to minor's library history. **Chapter 272 (HB 273)** allows a parent to access their minor child's library records. **Effective: 1/1/26. Statute: RSA 201-D:11**

Lease of town-owned real property. **Chapter 127 (HB 373)** requires the select board to obtain a vote from the legislative body for leases of real property exceeding one year, with the maximum lease term extended to 99 years. If a lease is for one year or less, the select board can proceed without legislative body approval. The legislative body may vote to grant the select board universal authority to lease property for up to five years without further action. **Effective: 6/23/25. Statute: RSA 41:11-a**

Social districts. **Chapter 158 (HB 467)** enables municipalities to create a "social district," defined as a designated outdoor area where individuals can consume alcoholic beverages sold by licensed establishments. **Effective: 9/5/25. Statutes: RSA 178:33-38**

Public Deposit Investment Pool. **Chapter 65 (HB 469)** requires the Public Deposit Investment Pool (PDIP) advisory committee to evaluate investment advisors by requesting proposals and reviewing them based on criteria established by the state treasurer and the advisory committee, subject to a competitive bidding process. The law also adds one member to the PDIP advisory committee appointed by the Municipal Managers Association of New Hampshire. **Effective: 8/1/25. Statutes: RSA 6:45; RSA 6:47**

County-wide communication districts. **Chapter 69 (HB 569)** enables the establishment of county-wide communication districts as a local option. **Effective: 8/1/25. Statute: RSA 53-G:1-2**

***Leases by state agencies*. Chapter 152 (HB 694)** requires leases of land, buildings, or space between a political subdivision and the state must adhere to this fair market value requirement, with the exception of leases obtained through a competitive selection or bidding process. **Effective: 9/5/25. Statute: RSA 4:39-g**

***Keno change; ability to ban games of chance.** Chapter 288 (HB 737)** automatically permits Keno, unless a municipality votes to prohibit it (i.e., opt out instead of opting in), and provides local governments the option to ban games of chance within their boundaries. **New Keno law effective: 6/1/27; New opt-out law effective: 7/1/25. Statutes: RSA 287-D:32; RSA 284:51-a**

***"Sanctuary Cities"—I** Chapter 39 (HB 511)** mandates that law enforcement agencies comply with federal immigration detainers for inmates when it is safe to do so, prohibits local government from enacting sanctuary policies that would impede the enforcement of federal immigration law, and limits law enforcement agencies from investigating an inmate's citizenship status in some circumstances. **Effective: 1/1/26. Statute: RSA 106-P:1-4**

***Death affidavits*. Chapter 114 (SB 42)** requires beneficiaries of a transfer on death deed to file a notice of death affidavit with detailed information at the registry of deeds within 60 days of the transferor's death, thereby ensuring proper documentation and communication with the tax assessor. **Effective: 8/22/25. Statute: RSA 563-D:22**

***Boat decal fees*. Chapter 84 (SB 51)** specifies that all boat decal fees collected shall not be diverted from specific dedicated funds. Some municipalities process boat registrations for the state. **Effective: 6/10/25. Statutes: RSA 233-A:13; RSA 487:25**

***"Sanctuary Cities"—II** Chapter 38 (SB 62)** prohibits a municipality from impeding law enforcement agencies from applying for or entering into federal agreements, specifically the 287(g) program, which allows for cooperation with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). The law also introduces enforcement mechanisms, allowing the attorney general to take action against local entities that violate these provisions. **Effective: 7/21/25. Statutes: RSA 106-P-Q; RSA 30-B:1**

ASSESSING/PROPERTY TAXES/EXEMPTIONS

***Notice of re-assessment*. Chapter 265 (HB 71)** creates a new public notice requirement that municipalities with a population of 10,000 or more must follow before issuing tax bills after the re-assessment. (The bill also prohibits school facilities to be used to provide shelter for certain illegal immigrants.) **Effective date of assessment notice requirement: 7/1/26. Statute: RSA 75:8**

Disabled veterans credit. **Chapter 15 (HB 99)** increases the optional maximum property tax waiver for disabled veterans from $4,000 to $5,000. **Effective: 7/13/25. Statutes: RSA 72:27-a; RSA72:28, 28-b, and 28-c; RSA 72:36-a**

Retroactive charitable exemption. **Chapter 20 (HB 426)** allows charitable organizations to request a property tax exemption for the 2024 tax year if it can demonstrate to selectmen that they were unable to file their statement of financial condition by the deadline due to accident, mistake, or misfortune. **Effective: 7/1/25. Statute: Session law**

Utility property tax. **Chapter 206 (HB 696)** makes changes to the application of utility property taxes and statewide education property taxes to electric generating facilities. **Effective: 7/13/25. Statutes: RSA 72:74; RSA 83-F:1, 5, and 9**

Religious property tax exemption. **Chapter 303 (SB 291)** exempts church parsonages that are rented or vacant from property taxation. **Effective: 8/1/25. Statute: RSA 72:23, III**

Application process for special appraisal. **Chapter 87 (SB 91)** eliminates the annual requirement that owners of residences located in industrial or commercial zones must apply for a special appraisal based on the property's current use as a residence and replaces it with a one-time application. **Effective: 4/1/26. Statute: RSA 75:11**

Housing covenants. **Chapter 120 (SB 173)** amends the appraisal process for residential properties subject to housing covenants under the low-income housing tax credit program. **Effective: 7/1/25. Statute: RSA 75:1-a**

PUBLIC EMPLOYEE RETIREMENT

Benefit restoration for some first responders. **Chapter 142 (HB 282)** restores most, but not all, New Hampshire Retirement System benefits for about 1,500 first responders hired before July 1, 2011, and not vested prior to January 1, 2012, that were changed through legislation in 2011. The bill also increases the maximum amount of a first responder critical injury benefit administered under worker's compensation. **Effective: Multiple dates. Statutes: RSA 100-A:1, A:5, A:6, A:6-a, A:10, A:16, A:19-b and d; RSA 21-I:30; RSA 281-A:32-a; RSA 198:41**

PUBLIC HEALTH

Homestead food operations. **Chapter 18 (HB 150)** allows homestead operations to use commercial kitchen equipment in preparing food for sale. **Effective: 7/13/25. Statute: RSA 143-A:12, I(a)**

Uninspected bison, red deer and elk meat. **Chapter 92 (SB 229)** permits the sale of uninspected bison, red deer, and elk meat by allowing retailers to purchase these products directly from producers. **Effective: 6/30/25. Statute: RSA 143-A:20-a**

Authority of town health officers. *** Chapter 60 (HB 230)** modifies the language of RSA 147:1 by removing the language "and such other regulations relating to the public health." The statute will now read, "The health officers of towns may make regulations for the prevention and removal of nuisances…" The definition of public nuisance in existing statutes seems to support the fact that a "nuisance" both encompasses and expands upon issues related to public health and safety. Therefore, it would be reasonable to take the position that even with the change in statutory language, health officers are still able to adopt regulations related to issues of public health. **Effective: 8/1/25. Statute: RSA 147:1**

PUBLIC SAFETY/CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Free police report. **Chapter 171 (HB 218)** allows crime victims to request a free initial police report related to their case and, upon the conclusion of the investigation or case, a free copy of the complete case file. **Effective: 8/1/25. Statute: RSA 21-M:8-k**

Bail reform. **Chapter 3 (HB592)** amends the administration of bail by repealing the establishment of magistrates and making corresponding changes throughout the legal framework. **Effective: 9/21/25. Statutes: RSA 490-K:1; RSA 594:20-a; RSA 597:6-e, and 7-a**

Ambulance billing. **Chapter 262 (SB 245)** requires insurers to reimburse ground ambulance providers at 325% of Medicare rates for two years on the condition that the ambulance service begins the process of becoming an in-network provider. During that period, a newly formed commission will conduct an in-depth study to determine fair, long-term reimbursement rates. **Effective: multiple dates; Statute/adopted: RSA 358-T:1, RSA 153-A:38, RSA 400-A:15; RSA 420-J:20-26**

Ambulance service designation. **Chapter 89 (SB 133)** designates ambulance service providers as essential service providers within the context of the homeland security and emergency management statute. **Effective: 8/9/25. Statute: RSA 21-P:35**

RIGHT-TO-KNOW LAW

Meeting minutes. **Chapter 112 (HB 265)** requires that a public body's meeting minutes include start and end times of the meeting and the printed name of the recording secretary. **Effective: 8/22/25. Statute: RSA 91-A:2**

ENVIRONMENT/ENERGY

Leachate management plan. **Chapter 196 (HB 566)** requires permit applications for new landfills to contain a detailed plan for leachate management. **Effective: 9/13/25. Statute: RSA 149-M:9**

Off-grid electricity providers. **Chapter 285 (HB 672)** creates a new category of electricity providers known as "off-grid electricity providers" and defines these providers as entities that generate, transmit, distribute, or sell electricity independently, without connection to the regulated electric grid; off-grid electricity providers are not considered public utilities. **Effective: 8/1/25. Statutes RSA 374:3-c**

Office of Energy Innovation. **Chapter 286 (HB 682)** reorganizes the NH Office of Energy Innovation and related entities and repeals both the offshore wind industry workforce training center committee and the offshore and port development commission. **Effective: 8/1/25. Statutes: RSA 12-P:7-b, P:16; RSA 162-B:4; RSA 188-E:30; RSA 362-F:10; RSA 362-H:2; RSA 485-I:6**

ISO New England. **Chapter 205 (HB 690)** mandates the NH Department of Energy to conduct a comprehensive investigation into the state's potential withdrawal from ISO-New England, as well as other strategic decisions that could impact ratepayers in relation to New England's environmental policies. **Effective: 7/15/25. Statutes: RSA 12-P:17**

Establishing commercial property assessed clean energy and resiliency program. Chapter 1 (SB 4) repeals and reenacts the existing energy efficiency and clean energy districts statute; delineates the roles of municipalities and the New Hampshire Business Finance Authority in administering the program, including the creation of special assessments to finance qualifying projects on commercial properties. **Effective: 1/1/26. Statute: RSA 53-F:2-5**

Energy regulation. **Chapter 294 (SB 108)** transfers various regulatory and adjudicative responsibilities from the Public Utilities Commission to the NH Department of Energy. **Effective: 9/30/25. Statutes: RSA 374-F:4-b; RSA 363-A:3; RSA 365:1, 1-a, 3; RSA 53-E:7; RSA 362-A:9**

Water testing fees. **Chapter 245 (SB 178)** mandates the state Department of Health and Human Services to establish administrative rules concerning laboratory services and the associated fees for testing water supplies. **Effective: 7/13/25. Statutes: RSA 6:12; RSA 485-A:26; RSA 131:3-a**

2025 Study Committees and Commissions

The following committees and commissions were created in 2025 to look at issues of municipal interest:

- Commission to study the New Hampshire zoning enabling act (**Chapter 2, HB 399**)
- Carbon sequestration programs study commission (**Chapter 165, HB 123**)
- Committee to investigate the implementation of housing investment trusts (**Chapter 130, HB 633**)

- Commission to study stable tokens (**Chapter 177, HB 310**)
- Committee to study adding statewide resources to assist with animal cruelty (**Chapter 9, HB 153**)
- Commission to study human trafficking within illicit massage businesses (**Chapter 63, HB 405**)

Vetoed Bills

The governor vetoed the following bills with municipal impacts. The House and Senate will convene later this year to address the vetoes, which can be overridden by a two-thirds vote in both chambers.

- **SB 213**, creating a misdemeanor-level offense for public employees who "electioneer," as newly defined in the bill.
- **HB 475**, modifying the calculation of default budgets in SB 2 towns.
- **HB 613**, enabling towns and cities to opt out of deploying accessible voting machines under certain circumstances.

The "Veto Day" session has not been scheduled yet.

Legislative Calendar

2025-2026 House Schedule

Monday, Sept. 15—First day to file LSRs for 2026 session.

Friday, Sept. 19—Last day to file LSRs for 2026 session.

Friday, Nov. 21—Last day to sign off LSRs for 2026 session.

Friday, Nov. 21—Last day to report all retained bills.

Wednesday, Jan. 7, 2026—Convening Day.

Thursday, Jan. 8, 2026—Last day to introduce House Bills.

2025-2026 Senate Schedule

Wednesday, Sept. 3—First Day to file legislation for 2026 Senate Session.

Friday, Sept. 12 at 4:00 p.m.—Deadline for the Office of Legislative Services to accept drafting of a Senate Bill, Senate Concurrent Resolution, or Senate Joint Resolution with complete information for the 2026 Senate Session.

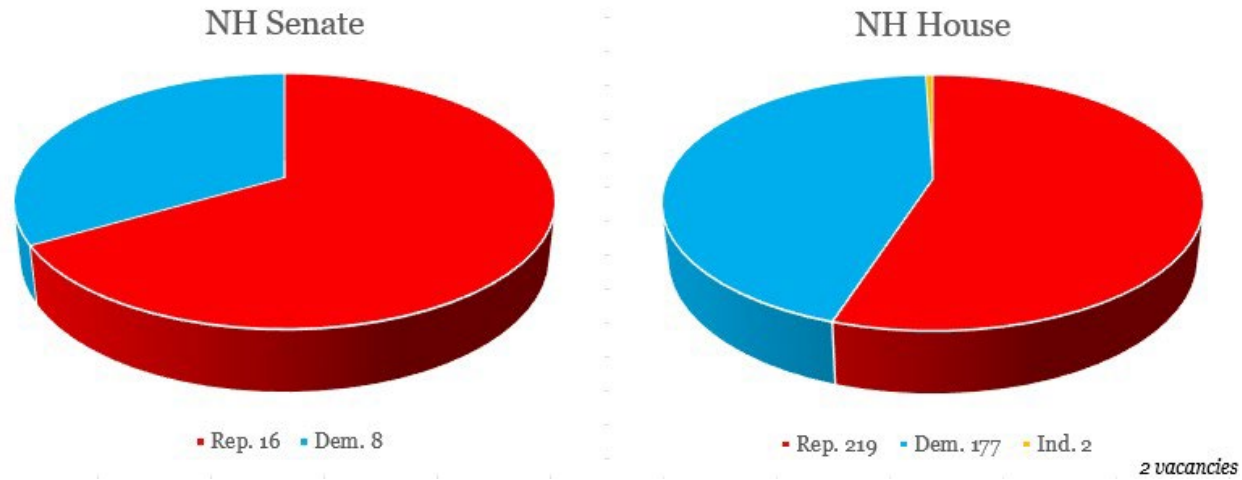
Thursday, Nov. 13 at 4:00 p.m.—Deadline for prime sponsors to sign off on legislation.

Thursday, Dec. 11 at 4:00 p.m.—Deadline for co-sponsors to sign off on legislation.

Thursday, Dec. 11 at 4:00 p.m.—Deadline to report rereferred bills out of committee.

Wednesday, Jan. 7, 2026—Convening Day.

Monday, Feb. 23-Friday, Feb. 27, 2026—Senate break.



NHMA Advocacy Team

The NHMA Advocacy Team are your eyes and ears at the State House. We follow several hundred bills of interest to municipalities during each legislative session, draft legislation to carry out NHMA's member-driven legislative policies, monitor legislative hearings, testify on bills when appropriate, and work individually with legislators and local officials throughout the process.



Sarah Burke Cohen, Legislative Advocate: Sarah's areas of focus are elections, building/fire code, labor & employment law, right to know law, immunity & liability, welfare/health & human services, ambulance billing, energy, science & technology. Her

experience before joining NHMA includes serving as the Assistant Director of the NH Commission for Human Rights (HRC) and a staff attorney at NH Legal Assistance.

Brodie Deshaies, Legislative Advocate: Brodie's areas of focus are land use & zoning, town meeting, municipal budgeting, governing body powers & authority, property taxation/assessing, public works & highways. Before joining the NHMA staff, he worked as the Communications & Policy Manager for NH Hunger Solutions. Brodie's previous work experiences include being a political consultant and project manager, coordinating political campaigns, and serving as a NH State Representative. Brodie also serves as a member-at-large on the Governor Wentworth Regional School Board and previously served as a trustee of the Wolfeboro Public Library.

Marty Karlon, Policy & Research Analyst: Marty's areas of focus are the state budget and the retirement system. He works more behind the scenes, editing the weekly *Legislative Bulletin* and producing research, data collection, and analysis. Before joining NMHA, Marty was Director of Communications & Legislative Affairs at the NH Retirement System for nearly 15 years. Marty's previous work experience includes serving in several senior editing roles at New Hampshire newspapers.

Sharing is Caring … About Sound Public Policy!

If you know of anyone who may benefit from receiving the NHMA *Legislative Bulletin* next year feel free to pass this email along and encourage them to sign up! NHMA members can subscribe to the *Bulletin* through our member portal at:

https://nhmunicipal.weblinkconnect.com/portal

Once you are logged in, click "edit this profile" and "newsletter management." You can sign up for the *Legislative Bulletin, Newslink*, and *Town & City* magazine in one place! (If you are having trouble logging into your account, follow these steps.)

Final Word on 2025



The House Housing Committee had a packed house on April 15 for public hearings on several bills usurping the voice of local voters on planning and zoning issues. (Photo by Brodie Deshaies)

Throughout the 2025 session, members' testimony, emails, letters, and calls helped educate and mobilize legislators to take a deeper look at many bills, leading to improved outcomes for municipalities.

Here are some things you can do now and next year about legislation that impacts your city or town:

Speak	Speak to your local legislators by phone or in person.
Invite	Invite your local legislators to a select board, council, or aldermen meeting.
Tell	Tell your constituents about important bills and explain their impact.
Write	Write a letter or a commentary to send to local media outlets.
Share	Share your concerns about specific bills or issues with the Governor's office
Talk	Talk to NHMA to get additional background on these bills.
Attend	Attend the public hearings on bills important to your municipality and sign up to testify.

From everyone here at NHMA, thank you again for your input, questions, expertise, and support throughout the legislative session. **Your voices truly mattered!**

NHMA Events Calendar

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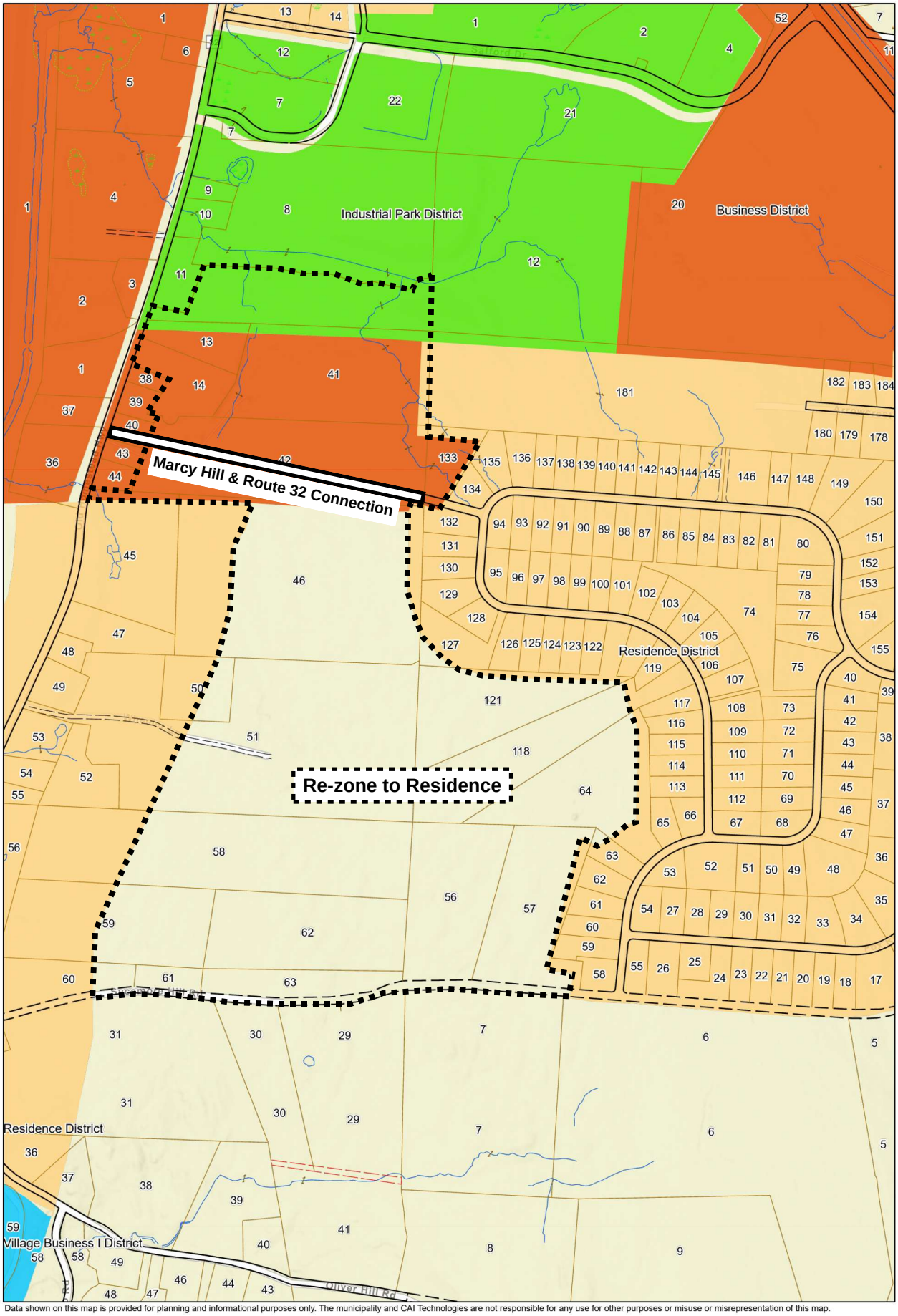
September 18, 2025

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