

TO: Freeport Town Council
FROM: Freeport Project Review Board
RE: FY 2018 Board Report
DATE: March 20, 2019

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with the Council during workshop session. Although the Board has chosen to provide a written report at this time, we do anticipate that we would like the opportunity in the coming year to workshop with the Council and the Planning Board regarding possible updates to the Freeport Design Review Ordinance. Following is a summary of projects and topics discussed/identified during the past year:

During fiscal year 2018, the Project Review Board's reviews continued to be projects smaller in nature such as requests for (12) Design Review Certificates, (3) Changes of Use, and (18) Site Plans or site plan amendments; the largest approvals being a 12,000 square foot boat storage building for DiMillo's Yacht Sales and a 4,800 s.f. addition to Power Engineers; both located on Route One (South). The Board also started the review on two residential open-space subdivisions (both off Wardtown Road) and one commercial subdivision (Route One-South).

During the first half of the fiscal year, in addition to project reviews, the Board identified regulations for Route One South as an area of the Zoning Ordinance that needed to be reviewed. The Board made recommendations to the Planning Board for Zoning Ordinance amendments regarding design and performance standards for the Commercial 1, 3 and 4 Districts. The proposed changes were to provide clarification to applicants and better reflect the types of development that are actually occurring in that area. The amendments were discussed by the Planning Board and eventually adopted by the Council.

With the review of multiple applications for projects on Route One South, the standard of Section 527.D of the Freeport Zoning Ordinance which requires "A pedestrian access at least 5 feet wide connecting abutting parcels shall be constructed on each parcel where development is proposed." The Board is concerned with this requirement and how it should be appropriately applied to projects on an individual basis. Staff and a working group are currently looking at this standard and hope to achieve a holistic approach to reviewing and planning for bicycle and pedestrian issues in this part of Town.

Half way through the fiscal year, the Board experienced significant turnover, and four new Board members were appointed. Together, the new Board started by having a legal workshop with the Town Attorney in regards to general legal topics for the Board to be aware of (such as conflicts, sitewalks, Board authority, etc). They also had a discussion about Freeport's Design Review Ordinance, some legal issues pertaining to that Ordinance and the Board's role /interpretation, and some possible things to consider when updating the Ordinance.

Over the past year, the Project Review Board has encountered a number of issues and questions regarding application and interpretation of the existing Design Review Ordinance with regards to building classifications. One issue is that there is no information provided that informs the Board of a building's architectural significance or what features of those buildings ought to be retained. To that end, Donna Larson, Gordon Hamlin, and Guy Blanchard drove the Design Review Districts and determined that oftentimes no distinction could be made between buildings of different classifications with regard to appearance or architectural merit. A significant amount of time has passed since the prior town-wide survey of the Design Review Districts. The Board feels the Ordinance should be amended to provide greater clarity to applicants and the Board. A new survey of the Design Review Districts would better identify Freeport's existing historic building stock, and provide the Board with information as to what features, forms, materials, ornamentation, or details are significant and should be retained under the purview of the Design Review Ordinance.