



TOWN OF FREEPORT, MAINE

Town Manager's Office
30 Main Street
Freeport, ME 04032

Phone: 207-865-4743
www.freeportmaine.com

MEMORANDUM

TO: FREEPORT TOWN COUNCIL
FROM: PETER JOSEPH, TOWN MANAGER
DATE: 09/29/22
RE: STRETCH CODE BACKGROUND

As you're likely aware, the Maine Uniform Building and Energy Code (MUBEC) is established by the Maine Legislature as a mandatory standard for municipalities in Maine. The individual codes comprising MUBEC as a whole are adopted and updated by the State of Maine on a regular basis, and the municipalities are required to use the codes as adopted by the State in their permitting and regulation of structures built within their respective jurisdictions. The current codes that municipalities are required to use under MUBEC include the following:

- 2015 International Residential Code (IRC)
- 2015 International Building Code (IBC)
- 2015 International Existing Building Code (IEBC)
- 2015 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC)
- 2015 International Mechanical Code (IMC)

These codes are usually updated on a 3-year basis, for example, both 2018 and 2021 versions of these codes currently exist, although they are not adopted by the State of Maine under MUBEC at this time. It is common for the adopted codes to "lag" behind the most current codes by one or more cycles, as the adoption by the State of Maine is a lengthy, political, and somewhat convoluted process. Code updates often include new standards that are informed by field observations and major incidents (for example structural failures, fires, building damage, etc.) reported around the world since the last code has been adopted.

In the Energy Code, there is usually a regular phasing in of new building standards and technologies designed to continually increase the energy efficiency of buildings, for example through increased insulation, air sealing, heating, and electrical requirements. Changes that are adopted through these various "cyclical" code updates apply to new construction, additions, or major renovations, but usually not to existing structures. Through this process, the aggregate energy efficiency of buildings in Maine is slowly increased as new structures are built and old structures are renovated or replaced.

The term "stretch code" as used in the context of MUBEC refers to the ability that the State gives for municipalities to adopt a newer (and usually more stringent) version of the energy code, intended to accelerate the increases in energy efficiency of structures within the municipalities that adopt the stretch code. The current stretch code is the 2021 IECC. The decision to adopt the stretch code is a political

decision that is left up to the local legislative body for each municipality. Like any decision made by the Town Council, there are multiple factors to be considered before making this decision. The generally accepted pros and cons of adopting a stretch code are as follows:

PROS:

- Increased energy efficiency in new construction
- Decreased energy costs over life of the structure
- Decreased environmental impact from energy consumption
- Increased building quality and resident comfort, if properly constructed

CONS:

- Increased initial construction costs
- Decreased building quality and resident comfort if improperly constructed, as improper construction can lead to problems with moisture, air quality, etc.
- There is always an adjustment and education period as contractors and homeowners are required to update from current construction methods and best practices to the new methods required under new codes

In terms of timing, it is expected that the 2021 codes will be adopted by MUBEC some time in calendar year 2023, and that new stretch codes will be adopted at that time.