



**TOWN OF GRAFTON**  
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**PLANNING DEPARTMENT**

### **MEMORANDUM**

TO: Town of Grafton Planning Board  
FROM: Fiona Coughlan, Town Planner  
CC: Natalia Alward, Planning Assistant (via email)  
DATE: March 9, 2023  
SUBJECT: Zoning Bylaw Modifications for Section 12.7.6 and Section 4.2

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*This memorandum has been prepared as part of the meeting materials for the March 13, 2023, Planning Board meeting. It serves as an update regarding zoning bylaw changes for parking in the VMU districts.*

#### **STAFF ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

##### **Section 12.7.6 Off-Street Parking Schedule and Section 4.2 Off-Street Parking and Loading:**

The Town Planner spoke with the Town's Zoning Enforcement Officer on multiple occasions about challenges associated with the current parking layout in the Village Mixed-Use Districts, particularly off-street parking requirements. After speaking with CMRPC on February 15, 2023, concerns were raised about the proposed increases in parking spaces per unit in the VMU districts and compliance with MBTA Communities requirements. When considering MBTA Communities zoning compliance alongside the proposed minimum parking increases, it should be understood that increased parking minimums will require, at minimum, increased multi-family district acreage and multi-family building density. Multifamily development that reaches the density requirements of fifteen units per acre must be allowed by right, and extra parking spaces will change the density equation unfavorably. If the parking minimum increases pass as proposed, it may require a blanket exemption for multifamily housing in the new districts that allow for lower parking requirements by right to meet density requirements. Per our Action Plan submitted in January 2023, amendments to the VMU districts are being strongly considered to meet MBTA Communities compliance due to their current regulations, adherence to smart growth principles, and allowance for density, walkability, and connectivity. An initial analysis found that standards in the VMU districts contribute positively toward meeting final unit capacity per district and density per acre requirements. They also best meet compliance in terms of including only whole parcels, compared to partial parcels. Partial parcels are an issue when considering options in the RMF districts.

Other options were being considered to avoid affecting the VMU districts. In the spirit of compromise, the Town Planner requested CMRPC run an analysis that examines the possibility of an MBTA Communities Overlay District with more stringent parking requirements than the underlying zoning. The model found the following:

- NGTVOD & the two VMU districts, retaining their current zoning, comply;
- An overlay of the NGTVOD & the two VMU districts with VMU zoning do **not** comply;



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- NGTVOD, the two VMU districts, and two RMF zones (15 & 16) comply if we use current NGTVOD zoning and VMU zoning in the two VMU districts and the two RMF zones;
- An overlay of the NGTVOD, the two VMU districts, and two RMF zones (15 & 16) with VMU zoning do not comply;
- NGTVOD, the two VMU districts, and two RMF zones (15 & 18) comply if we use current NGTVOD zoning and VMU zoning in the two VMU districts and the two RMF zones; and
- An overlay of the NGTVOD, the two VMU districts, and two RMF zones (15 & 18) with VMU zoning do comply;

Changes to the zoning in the Residential Multifamily districts are likely to generate issues that will decrease our chances of the new bylaw passing at Town Meeting, whereas our existing three districts with their current zoning will not affect the community at-large and have a higher likelihood of passing Town Meeting and meeting our 2024 deadline. The Town Planner relayed these findings to the Town Administrator who recommended more time to study the implications of these changes and disagreed with changing the current parking requirements in the VMU districts at this time. The Board and staff should agree on an approach to modifying the zoning but prior to writing the bylaw, we should allow ourselves time to conduct interviews and outreach with staff, community groups, neighborhood associations, other Boards/Committees, and the public and evaluate their thoughts on the matter.

CMRPC has offered to provide further comment on this matter at the next meeting on March 27, 2023. The Town Planner respectfully requests that the Board review this information and pause changing the parking requirements in the VMU at this time. The Town Planner does recommend moving forward with: (1) updating the Off-Street Parking Schedule for Transportation and Utility, Industrial, and Warehouse uses; (2) updating the parking in the Grafton Common Historic District.

Thank you.

Fiona Coughlan