

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  
Recommendations of the Town of Abington  
Bylaw Review Committee

In August of 2015, the Abington Bylaw Review Committee was appointed by the Board of Selectmen pursuant to Article VII, §7-9 of the Town Charter. The Committee was comprised of two (2) members. John Buckley, Sr. served as the Committee Chair, while Andrew Levrault served as the Committee Secretary. The Committee began its undertaking by soliciting input from the various Town offices, boards, committees, departments, and commissions for recommendations on any changes to the Bylaws, particularly those which pertain to their respective jurisdictions. The Committee members then studied the Bylaws, both in total and section by section, in conjunction with the public input received, and discussed their recommendations for amendments at a series of nine (9) meetings, several of which were conducted in consultation with Town Counsel, who also reviewed several draft versions of the proposed amendments. The Committee then finalized its preliminary recommendations, and scheduled a public hearing to be held on March 8, 2016 at 7:00 p.m. regarding its preliminary recommendations.

The Committee's proposed amendments which follow reflect both substantive and non-substantive changes to the Bylaws. The most substantive changes are reflected in Chapter 11, which regulates animals. At the recommendation of Town Counsel, the Chapter was updated to reflect significant changes to the General Laws since this Chapter was originally adopted and last reviewed. Additionally, the Committee added several provisions which seek to strike a balance between an individual's rights as a responsible dog owner, and the safety and protection of the public. The Committee further recommended increasing the fees for certain infractions under this section.

The Committee also recommended the redistribution of certain administrative and/or operational responsibilities previously within the purview of the Board of Selectmen to other Town boards or officers. In so doing, the Committee's goal was to both alleviate some of the burden placed upon the Board of Selectmen, as well as to reassign matters to those individuals/Boards which, due to expertise, the current municipal structure, or practicality, would be in a better position to address the regulated matter. Examples of such restructuring are: updating Chapter 49 to allow the Planning Board to issue fill permits, as well as including a municipal exemption to such permits, and authorizing the Town Manager to exercise decision-making with respect to signage, sound trucks, and the hours and/or closing of Town buildings or offices. The Committee further suggested removing obsolete reporting requirements contained in Chapters 67 and 68 to reflect the current operations of Town government.

The Committee proposed insertion of an additional requirement to the issuance of Class 2 licenses, in which applications for said licenses must incorporate a plot plan which integrates green space within the site to enhance its aesthetics. The Committee's hope is that this requirement will, moving forward, increase the aesthetic value of various areas in the Town where Class 2 licensed properties exist. As indicated by the broad language utilized, this requirement is not meant as an encumbrance to the maintenance or growth of businesses in the Town, but rather as a reminder that these sites should be developed and maintained in a cohesive

manner, striking a balance between business interests and the maintenance/promotion of Abington's character. The Committee also inserted a new Bylaw chapter to formally recognize and codify the Saving Abington with Green Energy ("S.A.G.E.") Committee, in an effort to promote and support sustainable energy in the Town. Lastly, the Committee added language to clarify the existing Bylaw regarding the use and permitting of firearms and explosive with the Town limits.

The remaining changes to the Bylaws are non-substantive, and include addressing grammatical issues, removing and/or modifying obsolete provisions or language, or making minor modifications to existing provisions. Examples of these minor modifications include: additional notification requirements added to Chapter 75, related to leaks in underground storage tanks; modification to the location where plans for proposed solid waste facilities would be made available; and the promotion of compliance with the Open Meeting Law in the Bylaws. The Committee, with the assistance of Town Counsel, also suggested an amendment to create uniform citations to the Massachusetts General Laws as cited in the Bylaws, as well as a new section which provides the Town Clerk with the autonomy to make non-substantive, administrative changes to the numbering of the Bylaws, when necessary.

The Committee would like to thank all those who participated in this review, in particular, those individuals who provided feedback and insight to the Committee. The Committee would also like to thank Town Counsel for her review and support of the Committee's efforts.