

Business Permitting Basics Town of Reading, MA

The following is a summary of most of the common State and local permits, licenses, and zoning requirements for opening and operating a business in the Town of Reading. We would enjoy working with you on your business location/relocation needs. **We have a full staff ready to meet with you to discuss your project and what approvals may be required.** We strongly encourage business and property owners to take advantage of this offer to make sure everything goes smoothly. Here are some of the licenses and approvals that may be required.

The approximate lead time needed for each permit is given below, but most permitting can proceed concurrently.



**Mike Schloth,
Permits & Licensing Coordinator
781-942-6654**

Change of Use & Construction

Site Plan Review

If a business is a **change of use** from the prior business, it is subject to a hearing before the CPDC for Site Plan Review. New commercial construction, parking lots, or alterations exceeding 300 gross square feet also require Site Plan Review:

http://www.ci.reading.ma.us/pages/ReadingMA_Planning/misc/SPR_Basics.pdf

http://www.ci.reading.ma.us/pages/ReadingMA_Planning/misc/SitePlanReviewApp.pdf

Site Plan Review contact:

Permits & Licensing Coordinator: Mike Schloth 781-942-6654

Staff Planner: Abby McCabe 781-942-6684

Community Services Director/Town Planner: Jean Delios 781-942-6612

Lead time: 5 weeks

Conservation Commission

Construction or additions to businesses near wetlands, Walker's Brook, the rivers, floodplain, etc. need a hearing before the Conservation Commission.

http://www.ci.reading.ma.us/Pages/ReadingMA_Conservation/index

Wetlands permitting contact:

Conservation Administrator: Fran Fink 781-942-6616

Lead time: 3 weeks between filing application and hearing date.

Building permits

All construction and demolition must meet the Massachusetts Building Code. All construction and demolition therefore requires an application for a building permit. It is best to discuss plans in advance with inspectors during their office hours, Mon/Wed/Fri 7:30am – 8:30 AM & 12:30 -1:30 PM; and Tues/Thurs 7:30 AM-8:30 AM only.

Building permit application contact:

Building Inspector/Zoning Enforcement Officer: Glen Redmond 781-942-6613

Permits & Licensing Coordinator: Mike Schloth 781-942-6654

Lead time: Once an application is determined complete, the inspector has up to 30 days to either issue the building permit or to issue a denial along with the reasons for the denial.

Demolition Delay

A demolition permit for certain historic properties cannot be issued until the Historical Commission is notified pursuant to the general bylaw and has the opportunity to hold a public hearing to consider invoking a 12-month delay. Properties affected under the bylaw are those on the Reading Historical and Architectural Inventory, or on the Massachusetts or National Register of Historic Places, or deemed by a vote of the Reading Historical Commission to be historically or architecturally significant. The delay period is intended to allow time to develop alternatives to demolition of Reading's historic properties and to document them.

The Demolition Delay bylaw can be found at:

http://www.ci.reading.ma.us/pages/ReadingMA_Clerk/Bylaws/DemoDelay.pdf

Properties protected by the Demolition Delay Bylaw:

http://www.ci.reading.ma.us/Pages/ReadingMA_BComm/HISTdocs/demodelaylist.pdf

Demolition delay contact:

Kathryn Greenfield, Chairman, Reading Historical Commission 781-942-6661 or Historical@ci.reading.ma.us

Building Inspector/Zoning Enforcement Officer: Glen Redmond 781-942-6613

Lot coverage, aquifer protection district

Part of the Business A district (at Franklin and Main Streets) is in the aquifer protection district. If businesses in that location add to their lot coverage by constructing building additions or adding walkways or paving, they must meet the aquifer protection overlay district requirements (maximum 15% of lot coverage; 20% w/infiltration system).

See Section 4.8 of the zoning bylaws:

http://www.ci.reading.ma.us/Pages/ReadingMA_Clerk/zoning%20by-laws.pdf

Also see 4.16 of Board of Selectmen Policies, which provide guidelines on infiltration systems

http://www.ci.reading.ma.us/Pages/ReadingMA_BOS/policies/E_BOS%20Policy%20Article%204.pdf

Aquifer protection overlay district contact:

Building Inspector/Zoning Enforcement Officer: Glen Redmond 781-942-6613

Permits & Licensing Coordinator: Mike Schloth 781-942-6654

Rebuilding after fire

If a property owner is re-building a non-conforming structure after a fire, a Special Permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals is needed, but the construction must be completed within 2 years of the fire, and can only reproduce the same building mass and footprint. Construction after two years, redevelopment, or new construction must comply with zoning, just like new construction. It is

strongly urged that you speak with the Building Inspector first when considering reconstruction after a fire.

Special Permit contact:

Building Inspector/Zoning Enforcement Officer: Glen Redmond 781-942-6613

Lead time: 4-6 weeks from application to hearing date. After decision is made by Zoning Board of Appeals, allow for the 20-day appeal period.

Restaurants Food establishments need to apply to have their plans reviewed by the Health Administrator. Once the plans have been approved, a Food Establishment Permit to Operate (State Health Code) and a Common Victualer's License must be applied for. You may also need a License for Mile and Cream products. The application for the Common Victualer's License is obtained from the Town Manager's Office at Town Hall (entertainment licenses are obtained here as well if needed). The applications for a Food Establishment's plan review, permit to operate, and milk and cream license can be found at the following links. (Note that the plan review applications differ depending on if they establishment is new or exists and is being remodeled).

New Food Establishment's Plan Review:

http://www.ci.reading.ma.us/pages/ReadingMA_Health/docs/applications/foodbiz_newreview.pdf

Remodeled Food Establishment's Plan Review:

http://www.ci.reading.ma.us/pages/ReadingMA_Health/docs/applications/foodbiz_remodelreview.pdf

Food Establishment Permit to Operate:

http://www.ci.reading.ma.us/pages/ReadingMA_Health/docs/applications/foodbiz.pdf

Milk & Cream:

http://www.ci.reading.ma.us/pages/ReadingMA_Health/docs/applications/milkcream.pdf

Different types of food served require different **space needs** (square footage). Before buying or leasing a restaurant space or food establishment, discuss with Health Services Administrator the Health Code requirements for different food types.

Food permits contacts:

Health Services Administrator:

Larry Ramdin 781-942- 6653

Lead time: 30 days prior to start of construction for new establishments. New permits must be approved by Board of Health, which meets the second Thursday of each month. Provide information to Board of Health 1 week before their meeting for the transfer of restaurant ownership with no change in menu. Provide information to the Board of Health 2 weeks before their meeting for menu or equipment changes.

Common Victualers & Entertainment licenses:

Lillian Marino, 781-942-6644

Alcohol licenses:

As of September 2008, Reading has 5 beer & wine licenses for restaurants of less than 100 seats. Two such licenses have been issued, and an additional one is under application. Reading has 24 all-alcohol restaurant licenses, 18 have been issued.

The Board of Selectmen and Town Meeting have approved a measure to allow restaurants with less than 100 seats to sell all alcoholic beverages, and this measure has been approved by the State legislature and will be on the ballot at the spring 2009 Town election.

Alcohol beverage license contact:

Lillian Marino in the Town Manager's office 781-942-9043.

Lead time: Board of Selectmen hearing is scheduled within 30 days of receipt of application, then up to 2 months for state review by Alcoholic Beverages Control Commission.

See the Board of Selectmen Policy on Licenses:

http://www.ci.reading.ma.us/Pages/ReadingMA_BOS/BOS%20policy%20Article%203.pdf

Restaurant parking requirements: 1 parking space per 4 seats, plus one per employee on largest shift, plus one loading space. No on-site parking needed if establishment is within 300' of Town parking lot. More detailed parking information at Section 6.1 of the Reading Zoning Bylaw

http://www.ci.reading.ma.us/Pages/ReadingMA_Clerk/zoning%20by-laws.pdf

Parking requirements contact:

Building Inspector/Zoning Enforcement Officer: Glen Redmond 781-942-6613

Signs

All Businesses need sign permits:

http://www.ci.reading.ma.us/Pages/ReadingMA_Building/permit/appsignpermit.pdf

Businesses in downtown may have one wall sign whose area is 2-feet times the length of the front façade. One sign per business is allowed, either a wall sign, or an 8 square-foot projecting ("blade") sign, or an awning sign. Internally illuminated signs are not allowed in downtown. Free-standing signs are not allowed in downtown. For more details on what is permitted or prohibited for signage, see section 6.2 of the zoning bylaws, or consult with the Zoning Enforcement Officer/Building Inspector or the Permits & Licensing Coordinator.

Businesses in downtown also need a hearing for a Certificate of Appropriateness **before** getting a sign permit:

http://www.ci.reading.ma.us/Pages/ReadingMA_Building/permit/SignCertApprop.pdf

Design, materials, colors, and lighting are reviewed for design and compatibility in the downtown area.

Lead time: Two weeks prior to hearing date.

The Community Services Director/Town Planner may approve modifications to approved signage Certificates of Appropriateness for certain changes to signs in downtown, without a hearing, provided certain criteria are met. **A sign permit is still required.**

Sign permits contact:

Building Inspector/Zoning Enforcement Officer: Glen Redmond 781-942-6613

Permits & Licensing Coordinator: Mike Schloth 781-942- 6654

Business Certificates

The State requires that a business certificate be filed with the Town Clerk. Fee for filing a business certificate is \$40.00 (expires in 4 years)

Town Clerk's Phone: 781-942-9050

Lead time: Stop by Town Clerk's Office for Business Certificates.