



TOWN OF WEATHERSFIELD

LAND USE ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE

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To: Weathersfield Selectboard
From: Ryan Gumbart, Land Use Administrator
Date: February 14, 2024
Re: Proposed Bylaw Amendment – Private Airstrips and Helipads

The State of Vermont Transportation Board circulated a letter dated February 10, 2021, regarding restricted landing areas (private airstrips and helipads). It details the State's authority and permitting process for the creation of new restricted landing areas. A proposed helipad or airstrip must first receive municipal approval, but in most cases the towns have no regulatory mechanism to review such applications.

Creation of such land uses can have dramatic impacts on the neighborhood in which they are located. As recommended by the VT Transportation Board, the Weathersfield Planning Commission has prepared a zoning bylaw amendment to address private aviation. The bylaw amendment was prepared, and a hearing was held by the Planning Commission on January 8, 2024.

24 V.S.A §4384(e) requires that the amendment, hearing notice, report, and solicitation for comments be transmitted to the Planning Commission Chairs of adjoining municipalities (or Clerk), the Executive Director of the Regional Planning Commission, and the Dept. of Housing and Community Development 30 days prior to the first hearing. This was done on November 29, 2023, 40 days prior to the first and only hearing date on January 8, 2024, by certified mail and email. The hearing was warned in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §4444.

On January 8, 2024, the Planning Commission opened the hearing. The only comment received was from a community member inquiring about how existing private airstrips and helipads would be treated. The Commission searched the State registry and found no lawfully existing private restricted landing areas. The Commission unanimously voted to send the amendment to the Selectboard with Planning Commission approval. The hearing was closed.

The Selectboard must warn a hearing (one or more) to take up the proposed amendment. Once the hearing has been warned and opened, the Selectboard may make minor changes. If substantial changes are made in the concept, meaning, or extent of the proposed amendment, it shall warn a new public hearing.

The bylaw amendment shall be adopted or rejected by a majority of the members of the legislative body at a meeting which is held after final public hearing. If adopted, the amendment shall be effective 21 days after adoption, unless petitioned for popular vote. A vote by the legislative body on a bylaw amendment shall not take effect if 5% of the voters of the municipality petition for a meeting of the municipality to consider the amendment and the petition is filed within 20 days of the vote.

Thank you for your consideration.

Ryan Gumbart, Land Use Administrator