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FIRE PROTECTION WATER CISTERNS MINOR POLICY CHANGE

Summary

Per the request of the Fire Department the proposed change will eliminate water cisterns as an option for a fire protection water supply in subdivisions. After discussing the pros and cons of each means of fire protection for subdivisions with the Fire Chief, the Planning Board is recommending allowing any of three options for a fire protection water source in residential subdivisions.

Current vs. Proposed Fire Protection Water Supply Standards

Aspect	Current	Proposed
Acceptable Forms of Water Supply	Water cisterns (tanks), fire ponds, dry hydrant on an existing pond or stream, and residential sprinklers.	Elimination of water cisterns.
Priority for Water Supply Form	Water cisterns or fire ponds with volume reduction through home sprinklers.	Equal acceptance of fire ponds, use of existing water sources, or residential sprinklers.

Why the Change?

The Fire Department has stated their concern over the problems associated with allowing water cisterns (tanks) as a water source for fire protection in subdivisions. They have found them to be dry most of the time and are concerned with the difficulty of locating them in an emergency. There are also concerns over the long-term maintenance and the potential for leaks due to corrosion and cracks. Initial filling of the tanks is expensive and refilling them when depleted is also challenging for the Fire Department with its limited resources.

Residential sprinkler systems provide immediate fire suppression and can control the spread of fire through a structure. Fire ponds, if properly maintained, provide a source of water for both internal structure fires and fires that start outside the home. They can also provide a water source for properties outside of the subdivision. Although each of the solutions has advantages and disadvantages, the Planning Board sees allowing developers to choose the option that works best for them is acceptable. Each proposal will be reviewed by the Fire Chief.

We want to hear from you!

Do you support the proposed change to disallow water cisterns as a fire protection water supply in subdivisions and allow multiple options? Do you have any concerns about this change? Please share your thoughts with the Planning Board during the public participation process. You can submit written comments to the Town Planner for circulation to the Board by emailing townplanner@durhammaine.gov.