

# **“FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS” BUILDING**

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**1. Why do I need a building permit?**

Both NH State Law and Town of Belmont Ordinances require that a building permit be obtained. The purposes for permits include:

- a. provide for public safety for both current and future occupants of the structure;
- b. provide a mechanism of fair property assessment;
- c. assure that construction complies with all applicable minimum Zoning and Building standards.

**2. If I already built something and neglected to get a permit, do I still need one?**

Yes, a permit is still required. The same application form is used and it is considered an “After-the-Fact” permit.

**3. Where can I get an application form?**

Application forms can be obtained at the Belmont Land Use Office or on line at

[Building Permit & Demo Application](#)

**4. How much does a permit cost?**

Current Fee Schedule can be obtained at the Belmont Land Use Office or on line at

[Building Permit Fee Schedule](#).

**5. What is the Building Permit process?**

- a. Review standards that are applicable to the project
- b. Submit a completed application, with all required plans and sketches to the Land Use Office
- c. Zoning Administrator will review application for compliance to zoning/other local Ordinances
- d. Planning Board Chairman reviews for approval/signs complying application
- e. Building Inspector reviews application w/detailed plans for compliance to Building Code
- f. Building Inspector issues list of required inspections with approved permits
- g. Owner responsible for scheduling required inspections with Building Inspector
- h. Building Inspector issues Certificate of Occupancy or Use upon successful completion

**6. How long does it take to obtain a building permit? How far ahead of my project should I apply for the permit?**

Permits are usually available within 7 to 10 business days from application submission. State law provides up to 30 days for review. Applicants are noticed for incomplete applications.

**7. Can I start the project before having the permit in hand?**

No. You are not required to “post” the permit, but it must be on site prior to the start of the project and available to be signed by the Inspector during all inspections.

**8. Do building and sign permits expire?**

Permits expire if not substantially acted upon with 6 months of the issue date or if substantial construction activity ceases for any 6-month period once begun. If a permit expires you may apply in writing for one 6-month extension on the original application/permit. No additional fee is required. Additional extensions require reapplication and fee.

**9. What happens if my building permit application is denied?**

- a. Denials are issued in writing with the basis of the denial provided.
- b. Fees are returned if the application is denied.
- c. You can provide additional or amended information to address the problem areas and the application will be re-reviewed.
- d. You will be notified of your options which may include actions such as:
  - 1. Applying to the Zoning Board of Adjustment for a Variance, Special Exception or Equitable Waiver;

2. Applying to the Zoning Board of Adjustment for an Administrative Appeal.
3. Appealing the denial decision to the Zoning Board of Adjustment

**10. Is there a minimum project “value” or “cost” that doesn’t require a permit?**

No. The need for a permit is determined by the Building Code and Zoning Ordinance. It is not based on the cost or value of the project.

**11. Will my project be inspected? How do I schedule inspections? Will I receive a copy of the inspection results?**

A required inspection schedule is provided with the permit. The owner is responsible to call the Land Use office to schedule required inspections. Upon successful completion of all inspections a Certificate of Use or Occupancy will be issued.

**12. What if I don’t have a Certificate of Use (CU) or Occupancy (CO), how do I get one?**

Contact the Building Official to see if your house or project received a final certificate. If one was not issued, the Building Official will schedule the necessary inspection so it can be issued.

**13. What other types of permits may I need?**

- a. A permit from NH DES under the Shoreland Protection Act for work within 250’ of the high water mark of Winnisquam Lake, Silver Lake and Sargent Lake.
- b. A permit from NH DES for any project impacting wetlands.
- c. A permit from NH DES for new/expanded uses on individual septic systems.
- d. Belmont Tax Collector’s permit to remove or statement of taxes paid for a demolition/removal permit.
- e. Town of Belmont or State or NH Driveway permit.
- f. Belmont Municipal Sewer permit.
- g. Belmont Municipal water permit.
- h. Belmont Planning Board Site Plan approval for non-residential and multi-family uses.
- i. Belmont Planning Board Subdivision approval for condominium expansions.
- j. Town of Belmont sign permit.
- k. Belmont Selectmen’s permit to work in public road right-of-way.

**14. Assistance in completing the application form.**

- a. Legibly complete all applicable sections and attach additional information as necessary. Incomplete applications cannot be processed and will delay your permit.
- b. Fees can be paid in cash or by check made payable to the Town of Belmont. Fees for denied permits are returned. Cash payments being returned must be picked up at the Land Use Office. Fees for approved permits are nonrefundable.
- c. Contact the Land Use Office for additional assistance - (603) 267-8300x119, [landuse@belmontnh.org](mailto:landuse@belmontnh.org).

Numbers refer to building permit application:

- 4-6. For projects requiring such work, info on “Contractor”, “Plumber” and “Electrician” should be included at the time of application if known. It can also be added later by contacting the Land Use Office prior to project start.
9. If the property is part of a condominium, the application form must also be signed by an authorized officer of the Association. Increasing the size of a condominium unit may require additional application to and approval by the Planning Board.
10. To determine if a property is located in the “100 year Flood Plain Area” review HUD FIRM (Flood Insurance Rate Map) for your property in the Land Use Office, or on line at [FEMA Map Center](http://FEMA Map Center). If your property falls close to the bounds of the Flood Plain area, it may be impossible to determine whether or not it falls within the Flood Plain area

because of the quality of HUD's maps. In that instance you may need to provide with your application a copy of a Flood Plain Certificate provided to you by a licensed land surveyor. If the property is located within the Flood Plain area, please refer to the Belmont Floodplain Ordinance or contact the Building Official for additional information.

11. If any portion of your property is taxed under the NH Current Land Use assessment program you must submit one of the following:
  - . Copy of Current Use map showing the area to be developed is not currently under Current Land Use.
  - . Revised Current Use map showing the area to be developed and to be taken out of Current Land Use (results in tax penalty).
12. List all uses and structures currently existing on property (i.e. single family dwelling, garage, shed, retail business, etc.).
13. Explain any work proposed for driveway (i.e. build new driveway, asphalt existing driveway, none, etc.).
15. More than one improvement may be checked (i.e. you may demolish one shed and replace it with a new shed = "Demolition" and "New Structure"). If you will be demolishing or removing any structure you must obtain a removal permit from the Tax Collector and include a copy with your building permit application.
16. For an application to place or demo a manufactured (mobile) home include all applicable information.
18. Include the "value" of the improvement – what it adds to the value of your entire property. This is not what the improvement cost you. This is an estimate and used only for the building official's annual report of permits. It is not used as the basis for your tax bill. Any change to your tax assessment is determined by the Tax Assessor as of April 1<sup>st</sup> of each year.
22. If your proposal requires a new NH DES approved septic approval (i.e. new occupied structure, expansion of the number of bedrooms, reconstruction, etc.), that approval must be submitted with the application. If your proposal requires a new connection to the Belmont Sewer System, a copy of permit must be submitted with the application.
23. If your proposal requires a new connection to the Belmont Water System, a copy of that permit must be submitted with the application.
25. In all cases where the building is owned separately from the land, both building and land owner's signatures are required.
26. When completing the required sketch please refer to both the Example Sketch and the Plot Plan Instructions. Sketches that do not include all required information will delay your permit.

**15. What type of project doesn't require a permit?**

Project that are "cosmetic" and not "structural" in nature - projects such as new siding, replacing shingles, replacing a door or window with one of the same or a smaller size, painting, replacing the floor board on the surface of a deck (but not the framing boards for the deck).

**16. Do stairs need a permit?**

Yes, they are considered "Structural" in nature and require a permit.

**17. If I am renovating an existing structure, do I need a permit?**

Yes – if the work is "structural" in nature and not just "cosmetic". (See answer above)

**18. If I am replacing all or a portion of an existing structure do I need a permit?**

Yes – if the work is "structural" in nature and not just "cosmetic". (See answer above)

**19. Do “Temporary” buildings or buildings without a foundation require a permit?**

All structures require a permit even if they are for a “temporary” use (winter shelter, etc.) or are constructed in a “temporary” manner (no foundation, etc.).

**20. Can I do my own plumbing, new or repair/replacement, and do I need a permit?**

A permit is required. By State law a property owner or the property owner's agent may install, repair, or replace plumbing in the property owner's own single-family detached or townhouse residence, including new construction. All work must still comply with the applicable Plumbing Codes. A separate Plumbing Permit can be obtained for a plumbing-only project.

**21. Can I do my own electrical work, new or repair/replacement, and do I need a permit?**

A permit is required. By State law a homeowner may make electrical installations in or about a single family residence owned and occupied by him or her or to be occupied by him or her as his or her bona fide personal abode. All work must still comply with the applicable Electric Codes. A separate Electrical Permit can be obtained for an electrical-only project.

**22. If I am moving (relocating) an existing structure, do I need a permit?**

Yes. If the building is being moved on the same lot only a building permit is required. If it is being moved off the existing lot then both a demolition and building permit are necessary.

**23. If I am increasing the size of an existing structure, porch, deck, etc. do I need a permit?**

Yes. This includes increasing the footprint of a structure as well as increasing the “useable space” of a structure (basement, additional story, etc.).

**24. If I am decreasing the size of an existing structure, porch, deck, etc. do I need a permit?**

Yes.

**25. Do I need a permit for a “prefab” shed, gazebo, or other structure which is delivered to my property and not built on site?**

Yes.

**26. Do I need a permit for a tarp or canvas covered structure?**

Yes. These are considered “membrane structures” and do require a permit in the same manner as other structures.

**27. Do I need a permit for an In-Ground or Above-Ground Pool?**

Yes, both in-ground and above-ground pools require a permit.

**28. Do I need a permit for a Fence?**

No. Fences do not require a permit and are not required to meet a minimum setback from property lines.

**29. Do I need a permit for a new or renovated sign?**

Yes. All sign types are regulated. Permits are necessary to erect a sign, change the face, size or location of a sign, or to add or change the lighting for a sign. Sign permit applications can be obtained in the Land Use Office and at [Sign Application](#)

**30. Do I need a permit for a Home Occupation?**

Home occupations require review by the Land Use office. Complete and submit a Home Occupation Determination form

[Home Occupation Application](#) for a decision on whether a proposed use will be regulated as a Home Occupation or a Business. If the use is determined to be a Home Occupation no further permit with the exception of a sign permit is necessary.

**31. Is a permit necessary to Change the Use of a structure or property?**

Yes. A permit is required to change the use of a structure or property:

- a. to/from a dwelling;
- b. by increasing/decreasing the number of dwelling units;
- b. from a residential use to a non-residential;
- c. from one non-residential use to another.

Complete and submit a Change of Commercial or Industrial Use form Change [Change of Use or Tenant](#). Changes in/to non-residential or multi-family property may also require Site Plan approval from the Belmont Planning Board.

**32. Is a permit necessary for a New Business?**

Yes. If the new business is to be located in a space previously approved for the use then a Change of Commercial or Industrial Use or Tenant application should be completed. Site Plan approval from the Planning Board may also be required. If the location has not been previously approved for the proposed use Site Plan approval from the Planning Board is required.

**GENERAL CONSTRUCTION QUESTIONS:**

**33. How many layers of shingles can I have?**

The Building Code permits a maximum of 2 layers.

**34. Do Decks and Stairways need railings and how close together must the rungs be?**

Porches, balconies or raised floor surfaces located more than 30 inches above the floor or grade below shall have guards not less than 36 inches in height. Open sides of stairs with a total rise of more than 30 inches above the floor or grade below shall have guards not less than 34 inches in height measured vertically from the nosing of the treads. Required guards shall have intermediate rails or ornamental closures which do not allow passage of a sphere 4 inches or more in diameter.

**35. Does it matter what size window I use?**

Basements with habitable space and every sleeping room shall have at least one openable emergency escape and rescue opening. Such openings shall have a sill height of not more than 44 inches above the floor. Such openings shall have a single sash minimum net clear opening of 5.7 square feet. The minimum net clear opening height shall be 24 inches and width shall be 20 inches.

**36. What is the required Roof Loading?**

Belmont requires a 90-pound per square foot ground snow load.

**37. Are modular and manufactured homes permitted?**

- . Modular homes are defined as Presite Built Housing, NH RSA 205-C:1.XI. They are substantially constructed off-site and delivered to the property in two or more sections. They comply with the minimum standards of the NH State Building Code. They are regulated in the same manner as conventional site-built housing.
- . Manufactured (mobile) homes are defined by NH RSA 674:31. They are substantially constructed off-site and delivered to the property in one or more sections. They display a construction standard certification seal of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (H.U.D.). Except for units already located within Belmont, the unit's date of manufacture shall not be before January 1, 1985. Except as replacements for legally

erected units, manufactured housing units are allowed only on lots within manufactured home parks and manufactured home subdivisions.

**38. What are setbacks and how do I know if my project meets setbacks?**

A setback is the minimum distance that a structure can be erected from a property line, road, waterbody, unrelated structure, etc. To determine whether your project complies with the applicable setbacks you must determine in which zone your property is located and be able locate your property lines, high water mark, etc. Required zoning setbacks can be obtained at the Land Use Office or within Article 5, Table 2 of the [Zoning Ordinance](#). [FEMA Map Portal](#) and Article 4 of the [Wetlands Ordinance](#).