

Table of Contents

Introduction	xi
Terms and Abbreviations Used in This Manual.....	xiii
CHAPTER 1 – Creation, Appointment, Liability	1
 Creation of a Zoning Board of Appeals.....	1
Boards Created Between 1957 and 1971.....	1
Boards Created after September 23, 1971	2
Boards Created Before 1957	2
Ordinance or Article Wording	2
 Creation of Other Types of Appeals Boards/Home Rule Authority.....	3
 Elected Board Members.....	4
 Qualifications for Office	5
Age, Residency, Citizenship	5
Oath.....	5
Incompatible Positions.....	5
 Vacancy	6
 Removal	7
 Liability of Board Members	7
Nonperformance of Duty	7
Maine Tort Claims Act	7
Maine Civil Rights Act.....	8
Federal Civil Rights Act of 1871.....	9
 Maine Freedom of Access Act.....	10
 Records Retention and Preservation and Public Access	10
CHAPTER 2 – Jurisdiction of the Appeals Board	13

Statutory Appeals Jurisdiction	13
Zoning.....	13
Enforcement Decisions.....	13
Special Amusement Permits	13
Farmland Registration Law.....	14
Jurisdiction by Ordinance or Charter.....	14
Other Assignments	16
CHAPTER 3 – The Decision-Making Process	17
Forms	17
Appeals Board Bylaws.....	17
Standing to Apply for a Permit	18
Freedom of Access Act (“Right to Know Law”)	19
General.....	19
Notice of Meetings.....	19
Board Member Discussions/Email	20
Executive Sessions.....	21
Common Violations.....	21
Site Visits	22
Additional Information.....	24
Board Records	24
Conflict of Interest; Bias; Family Relationships.....	25
Financial Conflict of Interest	25
Bias	27
How the Affected Board Member Should Handle a Conflict or Bias.....	29
Conducting the Meeting.....	30
Scheduling a Meeting; Notice Requirements; Agenda.....	30
Attendance by Applicant/Appellant.....	32

Preliminary Business	32
Procedure	35
Public Participation	35
Taking Adequate Time to Make a Decision; Seeking Technical and Legal Advice	37
Municipal Attorney Advising More Than One Municipal Board or Official on Same Matter	38
Minutes and Record of the Meeting	38
Making the Decision	39
Checklist for Reviewing Evidence	39
Basis for the Board's Decision in the Context of an Original Application or De Novo Appeal	40
Approval and Form of Decision.....	46
Majority Vote Rule	46
Abstention.....	46
Tie Votes.....	46
Findings and Conclusions	47
Reasons for Preparing Written and Detailed Findings and Conclusions	47
Address Each Review Standard	48
Recommended Procedure for Preparing Findings and Conclusions	49
After Making the Decision; Notice of Decision; Variance Certificate to be Recorded	51
Conditions of Approval.....	52
Prior Mistakes by the Board	53
Time Limit on the Use of the Permit	54
Sorting Out Which Board or Official Has Jurisdiction Over Which Part of a Project and at What Point in the Process	54
Reviewing Conditional Use/Special Exception Applications	55
General.....	55
Denials.....	55
Second Request for Approval of Same Project	56
Transfer of Ownership after Approval	56
Vague Ordinance Standards/Delegation of Legislative Authority.....	56

CHAPTER 4 – Administrative Appeals	59
Jurisdiction	59
General Rule.....	59
Enforcement Decisions.....	59
Appeal of Failure to Act.....	61
Deadline for Filing Appeal	61
Appeals to Board of Appeals	61
Appeal to Court	62
Untimely Appeal; Incomplete Appeal Application	63
Indirect Attempts to Challenge an Appeals Board Decision without Appealing; Refusal of Other Town Official(s) to Comply with Appeals Board Order	64
Appeal Involving Exempt Gift Lots in a ‘Family’ Subdivision; Appeal Involving Existence of Illegal Subdivision	64
Exhaustion of Remedies	65
Standing	65
“Particularized Injury” Test	65
Actual Participation in Proceedings Required	67
Appeal by Permit Holder	67
Appeal by Municipality	67
Nature of Review—<i>De Novo</i> vs. Appellate.....	68
Authority of Appeals Board Regarding DecisionAppealed.....	70
Consolidation of Pending Appeals	70
Court Review of Appeals Board Decision	71
Preserving Objections for a Court Appeal	71
Status of Original Permit or Approval During Appeal Period or During Period When Appeal Being Reviewed.....	72
Decision-Making Process.....	72
Deadlines; Notice Requirements	72

Attending Planning Board Meetings	73
Consideration of Constitutional Issues.....	73
Conflict Between Ordinance and Federal Fair Housing Act Amendments or the Americans with Disabilities Act	74
Authority of Municipal Officers	74
Second Appeal of Same Decision	74
Reconsideration by the Board of Appeals	75
Authority of the Board to Modify/Revise an Appeal Application	76
Role of Code Enforcement Officer or Planning Board at Appeals Board Meeting	76
CHAPTER 5 – Variances and Waivers.....	79
Variance/Waiver vs. Special Exception/Conditional Use.....	79
Zoning Variances in General; Statutory “Undue Hardship” Test.....	79
Other Limitations by Ordinance.....	80
Strictly Construed	80
Personal Hardship.....	81
The “Reasonable Return” Standard	81
The “Unique Circumstances” Standard	82
The “Essential Character of the Locality” Standard.....	82
The “Self-Created Hardship” Standard	83
Request for Variance “After the Fact”.....	83
Authority to Grant Variances.....	84
Zoning Variances	84
Non-Zoning Variances	85
Effect of Variance Decision.....	85

Procedure for Obtaining a Variance	86
Appeal of Board of Appeals Decision by Other Municipal Officials.....	86
Recording Variances; Abandonment of an Approved Variance	86
Recording Requirement	86
Abandonment	87
Second Request for Same Variance.....	87
Shoreland Zoning Variances	88
Disability Variances.....	88
Practical Difficulty and Single Family Dwelling Setback Variances.....	90
Sample Forms and Decisions	90
CHAPTER 6 – Vested Rights, Equitable Estoppel, Pending Applications, and Permit Revocation	91
Revocation of Permit or Approval.....	91
Equitable Estoppel	92
Applicability of New Laws to “Pending” Applications or Approved Projects; Expiration and Retroactivity Clauses.....	92
“Pending” Applications	92
Approved Projects; Expiration Clause	93
Retroactivity Clause.....	94
Vested Rights.....	94
Vested Rights in Valid Permit	94
Vested Rights to Proceed with Approved Construction Under Existing Ordinance	95
Vested Rights in Erroneously Approved Permit	95
CHAPTER 7 – Ordinance Interpretation	97
General Ordinance Interpretation Rules	97
General	97

Consistency	97
Object; Context; Common Meaning	97
Ambiguity Construed in Favor of Landowner	98
Natural Meaning of Undefined Terms	98
Similar Uses	98
Legally Nonconforming (“Grandfathered”) Uses, Structures, and Lots	99
Gradual Elimination.....	100
Phased Out Within Legislative Standards	100
Expansion of Nonconforming Use.....	100
Expansion of Nonconforming Structure.....	101
Replacement/Relocation.....	102
Discontinuance/Abandonment.....	102
Constitutionality.....	103
Merger of Lots.....	103
Adding Acreage to a Legally Nonconforming Lot; Dividing a Legally Nonconforming Lot	104
Functional Division.....	105
Change of Use	106
Illegality of Use; Effect on “Grandfathered” Status	106
Lots and Structures Divided by Zone Boundary	106
Definition of Dwelling Unit.....	107
Definition of Structure in the Shoreland Zone	108
Camper Trailers	108
Definition of Lot.....	108
Conflict Between Zoning Map and Ordinance; Clarifying Zone Boundaries.....	108
Conflict Between Ordinances	109
Road Frontage; Back Lots	109
Setbacks Within the Shoreland Zone; New Structures and Expansions; Functionally Water-Dependent Uses	110

Water Setback Measurement; Measurements Related to Slope of Land, Calculation of Building Expansion, Percentage of Lot Coverage, and Building Height.....	110
Decks.....	111
Essential Services; Communications Towers; Satellite Dishes; Public Utilities; Wind Energy Projects	111
Accessory Use or Structure.....	112
Home Occupations.....	112
Commercial and Industrial Uses	113
Docks; Related Easements.....	113
Pond.....	114
Quarrying; Rock Crushing; Mineral Extraction; Gravel Pits.....	114
Meaning of “Permitted Use” or “Allowed Use” in the Context of Nonconforming Uses.....	114
Clearing Vegetation in the Shoreland Zone	114
Appendices	115
 Appendix 1 – Board of Appeals Ordinances and Statute	117
<i>Sample</i> Warrant Article Wording to Adopt Board of Appeals Ordinance and <i>Sample</i> Ordinance.....	119
Suggested Provision to Reestablish an Improperly Created Board of Appeals.....	121
Board of Appeals Ordinance for the Town of Southwest Harbor	123
Appeal and Variance Provision from DEP Model Shoreland Zoning Guidelines (2015 Edition).....	135
 Appendix 2 – Notice and Procedure Materials	141
“Right to Know Law” Information Packet	143
<i>Sample</i> Board Member’s Affidavit Regarding Missed Meeting	145
<i>Sample</i> Bylaw Provisions	147
<i>Sample</i> Rules for the Conduct of Public Hearings	149
Town of Gorham–Planning Board Rules	155
<i>Sample</i> Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting Opening Remarks.....	165
City of Portland “Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting Process”	167

<i>Sample</i> Notice of Public Hearing—Appeals Board.....	169
“Newspaper Notice,” “Legal Notes,” <i>Maine Townsman</i> , August/September 1997	171
Table of Consanguinity.....	173
<i>Sample</i> Public Water Supplier Notification Form.....	175
“Ethics for Quasi-Judicial Boards,” <i>Maine Townsman</i> , May 2007 by Douglas Rooks, Freelance Writer	177
“Letter to the Editor,” <i>Maine Townsman</i> , June 2007	183
Appendix 3 – <i>Sample</i> Forms, Minutes and Decisions; DEP “Shoreland Zoning News” Articles; Excerpts from Court Cases; <i>Sample</i> Language	185
<i>Sample</i> Application for Administrative Appeal to Board of Appeals	187
Application for Appeal.....	189
Falmouth Board of Zoning Appeals Request for Hearing.....	199
Town of Bar Harbor Appeals Board Decision, dated April 22, 2010	201
Town of Bar Harbor Appeals Board Decision, dated May 11, 2010	207
Town of Deer Isle Notice of Administrative Appeal Decision	213
Town of Falmouth Zoning Board of Appeals-Findings of Fact.....	217
Town of Islesboro Board of Appeals/Board of Assessment Review-Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law and Decision, dated October 7, 2008.....	223
Town of Islesboro Board of Appeals/Board of Assessment Review-Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law and Decision, dated September 25, 2009	227
Town of Lincoln-Decision of Board of Appeals on Appeal of Planning Board Decision on Permit Application of Evergreen Wind Power III-January 8, 2009	235
Town of Falmouth Board of Zoning Appeals-Request for Variance	241
<i>Sample</i> Board of Appeals Application for Variance.....	243
Town of Bellville-Board of Appeals Hypothetical Application for Variance	251
<i>Sample</i> Board of Appeals Notice of Decision-Variance.....	255
Town of Bellville-Board of Appeals-Hypothetical Notice of Decision-Variance	263
Camden Zoning Board of Appeals Minutes of Meeting-March 15, 2010 (Draft)	267
Town of Deer Isle Board of Appeals-Minutes of Meeting-August 6, 2008.....	273
Town of Glenburn Board of Appeals Meeting-March 18, 2010	277
Draft - Leeds Zoning Board of Appeals Minutes of Meeting – July 18, 2002	285
City of South Portland-Minutes of the South Portland Board of Appeals-September 23, 2009.....	287
Town of Southwest Harbor Board of Appeals Minutes-December 15, 2009	291

Southwest Harbor Board of Appeals Minutes-February 10, 2010	299
Southwest Harbor Board of Appeals-Continuation Hearing-February 11, 2010 (Draft)	305
Southwest Harbor Board of Appeals Minutes-March 17, 2010	309
Town of Turner Zoning Board of Appeals Minutes-July 11, 2002	311
Excerpts from Maine Supreme Court Decisions.....	315
“Expanding Nonconforming Structures Revisited,” “Legal Notes,” <i>Maine Townsman</i> , December 1998	323
Shoreland Zoning News, DEP-Bureau of Land Quality Control-Tracking Expansions of Non-Conforming Structures	325
Municipal Choices Under the Nonconforming Structures Expansion Section	327
News from the 118 th Legislature-Current 30 Percent Expansion Rule by Geoff Herman, Maine Municipal Association	329
Additional DEP “Shoreland Zoning News” Articles and Interpretations	331
<i>Sample</i> Wording for Use in a Permit Issued to a Landowner Where Title to the Land, Boundary Location or Other Title Problem has Been Raised by a Third Party	341
<i>Sample</i> Wording for Use in Approving a Development Plan to Ensure that the Plan will be Developed Exactly as Depicted Unless Revisions are Approved by the Appropriate Authority.....	341
<i>Sample</i> SPO Model Site Plan Review Ordinance Fee Provision.....	343
Appendix 4 – Variances	345
Zoning Appeals and Variances Statutes (30-A M.R.S.A §§ 4353 and 4353-A).....	347
“Zoning Variance” Information Packet.....	353
Certificate of Zoning Variance Approval	355
Certificate of Abandonment of Approved Zoning Variance	357
Summary of/Excerpts from Maine Supreme Court Decisions Regarding Variances-the “Undue Hardship” Test	359
“Zoning Variances–Which Ones Will Courts Uphold?” “Legal Notes,” <i>Maine Townsman</i> , August/September 2004	371
Board of Appeals Workshop-“Undue Hardship Test” Slides with Commentary	375
Excerpt from South Portland Zoning Ordinance—Variances (including Practical Difficulty and Disability Variances).....	381
Falmouth Board of Zoning Appeals-“Mislocated Dwelling Appeal”.....	385