



Wenham Town Department Profiles: Permitting Office

Website:	Permitting/Inspectional Services http://www.wenhamma.gov/departments/building_department.php Board of Health http://cms4.revize.com/revize/wenham/departments/board_of_health.php
Department Head:	Jackie Bresnahan (Permitting Coordinator & Special Projects Assistant)
Number of employees (FTE):	2.62
General functions:	Inspectional services, permitting for building, electrical, mechanical, and health
Phone numbers:	978 468 5520 ext. 4
Annual budget:	\$65,926.00 (Permitting & Inspectional Services) & \$31,393.00 (Health)

Who are you (past work experience, years of municipal service, time in Wenham, etc) and what is your department (mission)?

As of October 2016, I have been in Wenham for just over a year. I work part-time for the Permitting Office, including Inspectional Services and the Board of Health, and part-time as Special Projects Assistant for the Town Administrator. I received my Master's in Public Administration from Suffolk University in December 2015. Previously, I worked at the MA State House, the City of Leominster, and as Graduate Research Fellow at Suffolk.

The Permitting Office processes all Building, Electrical, and Plumbing permits and performs all inspections in a timely manner to ensure compliance with Massachusetts State Building Code and Town Zoning Bylaws. The Office also processes all Board of Health applications, including septic, food service, recreational camps, and public pools, and performs all inspections to be in compliance with state and federal regulations.

What are some of the most common tasks you assist the public with daily?

Most frequently, I provide information to residents interested in buying, altering, or updating their property. Some projects start and end with the Building Department, but many must seek approval from the Land Use Boards before getting started. I walk many homeowners through the approvals and documentation needed for projects before they get started. Even more commonly, I work with the contractors, hired by Wenham residents, including processing paperwork, scheduling inspections, and providing information on the different departments and committees that oversee land use projects and construction.

Finally, the Permitting Office handles the inspections and schedules of the many inspectors in Wenham, including the Building Inspector, Electrical Inspector, Plumbing & Gas Inspector, Health Agent, Assistant Health Agent, and Public Health Nurse.

What are some of the more rewarding elements of the work your department carries out?

To me, the most rewarding part of working in the Permitting Office is providing great customer service for the residents of Wenham. The Office gets constant feedback from homeowners and contractors and it is always wonderful to hear that we have provided a positive experience for those going through the Permitting Office. Recently, we started an e-permitting program so residents can submit building, electrical, plumbing, and gas permits online. We have been excited by the response of those using the online permitting, but even more so by the folks who are glad that we offer both online and in person permitting. We hope to make the process for both online or in person permitting as seamless as possible, but it is wonderful to have feedback from folks who are so appreciative of the Town offering both services.

What are some common challenges?

On many projects, plan or permit review is needed from many different inspectors and departments. This can be challenging in a small town where inspectors are only available certain days of the week. We do our best to route every application in a quick and efficient manner, but sometimes there are issues that individual departments need addressed that can hold up the permit for a few days. This can be frustrating to contractors and homeowners, but we try to give residents a realistic timeframe for when the permit will be ready, while still allowing the inspectors the time to properly review applications for compliance and safety.

In what ways do you work with other town departments daily?

I work closely with the Planning Coordinator and Land Use Boards, Assessor's Office, Fire Department, Town Clerk, Treasurer/Collector, DPW, Water, and the Town Administrator's Office. Many times I am reaching out to these departments for permit review, consultation, and approval. Other times, I am reaching out in my capacity as Special Projects Assistant regarding projects I am working on, such as assembling budget documents or developing the inaugural Citizen's Leadership Academy that we are currently offering

What are your goals for the department over the next year?

Over the next year, I'd like to extend to the online permitting platform to include septic and food service permitting for the Board of Health. I would also like to continue reorganizing our departmental records so they are easier for the public to access. We recently finished an overhaul of all of our property files and we now have a volunteer who is persistently working to log, organize, and store any plans we have on the premises in a searchable database. In October, the Board of Selectmen approved new fees for Inspectional Services. We wanted to make a more user-friendly schedule for homeowners and the development community. The new schedule will be effective on January 1, 2017 and we hope that it makes our services even easier to navigate. Finally, an ongoing goal for the Permitting Office is to continue to provide excellent customer service. Not every project is completed as originally envisioned. However, I hope that everyone who comes to our office has a positive experience, even if the project differs from their original plans.

What's the best way for the public to give you feedback and to get the assistance they need from you?

The best way to get in touch with me is to call the Town Hall at 978-468-5520 ext. 4 or email at permitting@wenhamma.gov. Most questions or requests can be handled over the phone or by email. If you have a more complex question or you are contemplating a larger home improvement project, feel free to make an appointment with me (anytime during Town Hall hours) or the Building Inspector (Tuesdays/Thursdays).