



September 25, 2025

Norton Select Board
72 East Main Street
Norton, MA, 02766

Re: Zoning Bylaw Update

Dear Select Board Members,

I hope this message finds you well. I am writing to express significant concerns regarding the proposed zoning bylaw amendment currently being advanced by the Planning Board. As a resident who cares deeply about the wellbeing and fairness of our local government, I urge you to review the process and substance of this proposal, which I believe is flawed, confusing, and inadequately communicated to the public. I respectfully request that the Select Board intervene to halt the amendment's progress until these issues are addressed.

The Planning Board's "[9.24.2025 Zoning Bylaw Update redline](#)" document is both inaccurate and difficult to interpret. Rather than presenting a clear, redlined version of the existing bylaw with proposed changes, the Planning Board has submitted a document that alleges to show all language amendments within a new zoning bylaw format. This approach obscures the specific changes being proposed, making it nearly impossible for residents to understand how the amendments differ from the current bylaw. A more transparent and logical process would involve a two-phased approach: first, amending the language within the existing bylaw format through a redlined document, which would then be reviewed and discussed at public hearings and then eventually settled at town meeting; and second, reorganizing the bylaw only after the language changes are finalized. By combining these two steps, the Planning Board has created unnecessary confusion and hindered meaningful public engagement.

According to the redline convention used in the [9.24.2025 document](#), new text is underlined in black font and deleted text is shown in red strikethrough. However, this convention is not applied accurately. One example of the inaccuracies in the redlined version of the proposed bylaw relates to **"Section 1.6.1 Initiation of Amendments" on page 2.**

Page 2 of the [9.24.2025 document](#) presents the following paragraph without any underlining or strikethrough, suggesting the language is unchanged from the existing bylaw:

"An amendment may be initiated as set forth in M.G.L. c. 40A, s. 5 by the Select Board, Planning Board, not less than 50% by valuation of the owners of property included in such

amendment, or by written request of 10 or more registered voters of the Town of Norton for Annual Town Meetings or by written request of 100 voters of the Town of Norton for Special Town Meetings. When an amendment is initiated by petition of property owners or registered voters, it shall be submitted to the Select Board for inclusion in the Town Meeting warrant and for referral to the Planning Board for a public hearing as provided by M.G.L. c. 40A, s.5.”

However, this language is not identical to the current bylaw. Below I’ve shown an accurate redline reflection of how the existing bylaw language has been changed:

"An amendment may be initiated as set forth in M.G.L. c. 40A, s. 5 by the ~~Board of Selectmen~~ Select Board, Planning Board, not less than 50% by valuation of the owners of property included in such amendment, or by written request of 10 or more registered voters of the Town of Norton for Annual Town Meetings or by written request of 100 voters of the Town of Norton for Special Town Meetings.

~~A.~~ When an amendment is initiated by petition of property owners or registered voters, it shall be submitted to the ~~Selectmen~~ Select Board for inclusion in the Town Meeting warrant and for referral to the Planning Board ~~as provided by General Laws~~ for a public hearing as provided by M.G.L. c. 40A, s.5.”

As you can see, the 9.24.2025 draft version condenses multiple paragraphs into a single one. It includes both additions and omissions yet fails to show any markup indicating what changed. This omission misleads readers into believing the language is unchanged. As a result, residents are forced to painstakingly compare the full text of both versions, line-by-line to identify all changes. This example illustrates how the format change undermines transparency, making it extremely difficult for the public to understand what is truly being changed in the bylaw.

Furthermore, the process by which this bylaw amendment is being advanced raises serious concerns about transparency and fairness. The proposed changes have significant implications for residents’ property rights, yet the Planning Board has essentially limited its outreach to the bare minimum required by law - posting a notice of the public hearing in a newspaper. While this may meet legal requirements, it falls short of moral and ethical obligations to ensure that all affected residents are adequately informed. Given the magnitude of the proposed changes, the Planning Board should have provided direct mailed notices to residents, fostering greater awareness and participation. This lack of proactive communication undermines trust in the process and risks disenfranchising community members who deserve a voice in decisions impacting their properties.

I strongly believe that these issues - confusing and inaccurate documentation, as well as insufficient public notification - warrant immediate attention. The proposed amendment, in its current form and process, does not serve the best interests of our community. I respectfully request that the Select Board take action to pause the amendment’s progress until the Planning Board revises its approach to ensure clarity, transparency, and meaningful public involvement.

Specifically, I urge the Select Board to direct the Planning Board to produce a red-lined version of the existing bylaw, clearly delineating proposed language changes, and to implement a robust notification process, including mailed notices to residents.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. I trust that the Select Board will act in the best interests of our community to ensure fairness and transparency.

[REDACTED]