



Seasonal Home Conversion Guidance Document

Approved: 6/28/22

This document provides the homeowner with an overview of the steps required to convert a seasonal dwelling into a year-round residence. The intent of this guidance is to avoid problems that may surprise the homeowner and could result in additional expenses or unforeseen problems. The contents below should be viewed as general guidance and should not take the place of contacting each Board or Commission to understand the full process and requirements mandated.

Definitions:

Seasonal Dwelling Unit-For the purposes of 310 CMR 15.260(8), a seasonal-use residential facility means a residential facility that is used six months or less during the calendar year. In many cases such a dwelling which has been retrofitted for year-round use without altering the footprint of the structure nor the total square footage will not be considered new construction under Title 5 for the purposes of a subsurface disposal system permit. Properties with "tight tank" systems as a sewage disposal system will require a comprehensive evaluation, as outlined in Category 1 or 2 below.

Habitable Room-Every room or enclosed floor space used or intended to be used for living, sleeping, cooking, or eating purposes, excluding rooms containing toilets, bathtubs or showers and excluding laundries, pantries, foyers, communicating corridors, closets, mechanical rooms, and storage spaces.

Tight Tank - A water-tight vessel having an inlet to receive raw sewage but no outlet, and which is designed and used to collect and store sewage until it is removed for disposal.

On-site System or Disposal System or On-site Subsurface Sewage Disposal

System or System- A system or series of systems for the treatment and disposal of sanitary sewage below the ground surface.

The standard components of a system are: a building sewer; a septic tank to retain solids and scum; a distribution system; a soil absorption system containing effluent distribution lines to distribute and treat septic tank effluent prior to discharge to

appropriate subsurface soils; and a reserve area. Tight tanks are addressed above in this guidance.

Overview:

The Harvard Board of Health shall evaluate all seasonal conversion requests. This evaluation shall include 1) an on-site inspection and a review of the historical property records to determine existing conditions of the interior of the dwelling and 2) a review of site-specific and local environmental conditions such as wetland resource areas and sewage disposal impediments (including, but not limited to poor soils and the presence of shallow depths of soils).

Minimum requirements for a conversion of an existing dwelling:

Category 1: Dwelling served by a Tight Tank:

- Applicant is required to submit building/floor plans
- Valid Title 5 Inspection report required
- Valid water quality testing results required
- Valid Contract for the inspection, maintenance, and pumping of the tank for a minimum period of two years
- The property cannot have an outdoor shower or “rinsing station”

Category 2: Dwelling served by an On-site SDS system (as defined in this guidance):

- Applicant is required to submit building/floor plans.
- SDS must be sized in accordance with Title 5 room count criteria and cannot exceed approved capacity.
- Valid Title 5 Inspection report
- Valid water quality testing results required
- Additional rooms shall only be approved by the Harvard Board of Health and deed restrictions will not be considered.
- No outdoor shower or “rinsing station”
- If the dwelling is serviced by a permitted and approved Innovative and Alternative system which requires inspections, a valid service contract with a provider for a minimum of a two years is required

Applicant Check List:

The following list is intended for residents applying for a seasonal conversion so that the application package is complete when submitted.

- A. Septic permit on file?
 - Yes or no,
 - Located at Harvard or NABH
- B. Title 5 inspection (within 1 year of the date of inspection) –
 - Passing?: Yes or No;
- C. Potable water supply (shallow well is not acceptable)
 - Well type
 - Water quality tests required within 1 year prior to date of filing.
- D. Increase to the “approved” septic capacity requires a fully compliant (with Title 5) septic system;
- E. For properties with a tight tank, there can be no increase in flow and a valid contract with a septage pumping company or a waste water treatment operator must be provided with a valid service contract with a provider for a minimum of a two years is required

The Board of Health advises homeowners to contact the Conservation Commission for its requirements, including but not limited to wetland mapping, setbacks, and protected habitat/species evaluation.