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The weekly forum dedicated to helping you better understand your government

This week's question: **"It's my property – Why can't I do what I want?"**

It's all about balance – trying to allow residents the freedom to do as they wish but also protecting their neighbors from *annoying or bothersome situations*.

The Town of Newstead adopted the Zoning Code in the early 1980s. Different zoning districts were created and each allows for different types of uses for the properties in those zones. Generally speaking the majority of the town is zoned RA (Rural/Agricultural). The Commercial District is mainly limited to Main Rd. and there are sections throughout the town that have been zoned Industrial.

This allows potential buyers to know exactly what they can expect in the future, especially if there is vacant land nearby. Wouldn't it be horrible for you to buy a new home, or to build your home on a beautiful lot only to have someone build a Walmart right next door?

Some of the more specifics in each district control how far back you must build, how many animals per acre are allowed, how far from a neighboring home something can be built, etc. Each of these criteria has been determined to maintain the rural feel of our town and to be in the best interest of all property owners. Many of the rules dealing with animals and farming have been recommended by the Department of AG & Markets .

Because the Town of Newstead is relatively flat, there are rules in place to help control and rectify drainage issues and this is the primary reason for needing permission to divide off a new lot.

It is very important to understand that the Town of Newstead is a "Right to Farm Community". This means that some issues that may be deemed unpleasant, like odors and noise, are permitted if they are a result of a farming operation. Farms can also be exempt from some codes.

The Town recognizes that not all rules can be met at all times. So, if there is something that a resident would like to do that is not permitted, there is a Variance Process in place. The Zoning Board of Appeals will meet, hear the case and determine if the situation warrants special permission.

The Town of Newstead Zoning Code has been placed on our website for easy access for all residents. Like all legal documents, it can be hard and confusing to understand. It is always best to check with the Code Enforcement Officer before undertaking any kind of project to insure that you won't be creating a violation.

Next Weeks's Question: **" Where can I find Help? "**

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