

PROPERTY OWNERS GUIDE TO BUILDING ON BEAVER ISLAND

Building on Beaver Island requires permission from:

- The applicable township, via a zoning permit,
- Charlevoix County's Building Safety Department, for building permits as well as other permits (Soil Erosion, Electrical, Plumbing, etc.), and
- Permits for drilling wells and constructing a septic system from the Northwest Michigan Health Department.
- If you are building a commercial facility, Charlevoix County's Building Safety Department and Northwest Michigan Health Department need to issue related permits, and depending on the use, other entities may need to be involved in issuing permits or licenses.

Beaver Island operates under the guidance of the Beaver Island Master Plan, the most recent version issued in September 2023. The townships regulate the development of land, uses, activities, and structures through the adoption of Zoning Ordinances. These ordinances are designed to promote public health, safety, and general welfare.

The Island zoning administrator is appointed by the two townships' boards to administer and enforce the zoning ordinances, including land use compliance. The zoning administrator processes zoning permit applications which are completed by the property owner or their agent (this agent may be their contractor or someone else the owner assigns this duty). Most zoning permits are handled directly by the zoning administrator. It's important to note that any construction or prebuilt buildings placed on a property require a zoning permit, regardless of the size or intended use of the structure.

The township planning commissions are responsible for the development of the island's master plan, zoning ordinances, and capital improvement plans. Zoning permit applications involving critical sand dunes, special uses, and rezoning requests must be approved by the applicable township planning commission (rezoning property requires a hearing). In addition, zoning permit applications involving property in the Commercial District, Harbor District or Marine Related (MR) District are reviewed by the St James Township Planning Commission.

The zoning administrator and planning commissions review site plans (which are part of every zoning permit application) against standards. Zoning requirements may include:

- Building arrangement, setbacks from property lines, and building height (which are required for all permits). Setbacks and building height (e.g., the maximum height for a new home is 35' unless the property is within the MR District which has a 16' height restriction). These setback distances and the 35' height restriction are based on fire department access and equipment limitations.
- For more complex projects the site plan will be reviewed for parking and loading; natural features/landscaping; lighting/signs; vehicle and pedestrian circulation; stormwater and utilities; and other local requirements.

Each township has a zoning board of appeals (ZBA) which considers appeals from an applicant, via a hearing, to:

- reconsider a zoning administrator or planning commission decision,
- interpret zoning text(s) or map, and
- request for zoning variances.

Some of the above actions require public disclosure via a newspaper notice of a pending meeting or hearing, and some actions require notice of neighbors within 300' of the project. The permit applicant needs to plan their request with the understanding that some actions take time to process as these steps are mandated by state of Michigan legislation.

If you are building a residence and are moving to Beaver Island to become a full-time resident, you will qualify for PRE, which is a homestead for reduction in taxes. This will need to be communicated with the Township assessor to ensure property values are appropriately calculated.

Integrating the above necessary information into steps, the following is needed to begin construction on Beaver Island.

- 1) If you do not have an address, contact the Charlevoix County Equalization office to obtain one,
- 2) Prepare a site plan for your building, home, deck, prebuilt, or ancillary unit to be reviewed to obtain your necessary permits,
- 3) Apply for a zoning permit from the Beaver Island Zoning Administrator,

****Decision Point****

After steps one, two, and three are completed, you can begin the next phase of your project by hiring a licensed and insured builder/ contractor or by completing the work yourself. Per the Charlevoix County Building and Safety website, "Warning: Homeowner acting as a General Contractor," the Charlevoix County Building Safety Department cannot assist you in any cause of action against an unlicensed contractor you have hired to perform work under the building permit you obtained.

- 4) An application for a building permit from the Charlevoix County Building Safety Department needs to be submitted by you or your licensed contractor,
- 5) An application for a septic to Northwest Michigan Health Department needs to be submitted by you or your licensed contractor. The location of your septic also determines the location of your water well,
- 6) An application for a water well to Northwest Michigan Health Department needs to be submitted by you or your licensed contractor,
- 7) Apply for an electrical connection with Great Lakes Energy,
- 8) Other permits are required related to mechanical, plumbing, and electrical work. This work must be done by licensed individuals/firms who are also responsible to obtain these licenses and conform to the required expectations.

Keep in mind that whoever completes the work (yourself or a contractor), all inspections must be performed by the appropriate county officials and zoning administrator.

This information will be placed on both townships' websites under planning and zoning.