

2017 LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY



RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION - DIVISION OF PLANNING

This is an overview of what was heard before the Rhode Island General Assembly regular session in 2017. When the General Assembly is in session, the Division of Planning reviews planning related and other proposed bills. As the central planning agency for Rhode Island, the Division recommends policy positions for bills to the Director of Administration (DOA) and the Governor's Policy Office. This Summary has been prepared for information and use by the Division and other interested persons.



The session closed on June 29, 2017. A total of 2,352 bills were introduced between the two chambers of the House and the Senate. The House (H) introduced more bills with 1,351 bills introduced as opposed to 1,001 bills for the Senate(S). The Division reviewed all proposed bills and recommended 102 various policy positions to the Director's and Governors Policy Offices on a range of topics.

This summary does not represent a complete listing of the more than 100 bills the Division analyzed and followed. It highlights a selection of interesting bills concerning land use and regional planning, and transportation related issues. Bills (with links) directly affecting the Division and their final statuses are summarized on the following page. Other selected bills (with links) follow. They are presented together with the appropriate companion bill, where applicable, and their final status under the following subject headings:



State Affairs and Government



Public Utilities and Carriers



Towns and Cities

2017 Bills Related to the Division of Planning



Enacted

Bills: [S 108 as amended](#) / [H 6305](#)

RI General Law Affected: Chapter 42-6.2 *Resilient Rhode Island Act of 2014 - Climate Change Coordinating Council* - Directs the Council to develop a plan for a carbon pricing program for institutions and industry to reduce carbon emissions by identifying revenues for targeted efficiency measures, and to study potential economic benefits and or impacts to the State's economic competitiveness if the Plan is implemented. 07.17.17 Signed by Governor

Bill: [Senate Resolution No. 887](#)

RI General Laws Affected: Multiple Chapters, particularly Chapter 46, *Waters and Navigation* - Creates a special 15-member legislative commission to review the Water Resources Board functions and recommend to the Senate ways to strengthen the oversight, protection and conservation of the State's water supply. 06.08.17 Senate read and passed

Bill: [House Resolution No. 6051 SUB A](#)

RI General Laws Affected: [Chapter 42-98 Energy Facility Siting Act](#) - Creates a 14-member special legislative study commission whose purpose is to study/review the Energy Facility Siting Act, and report back to the House no later than 1/31/18. The Commission would expire on 6/2/18, DOP is a designee to the Commission. 06/28/2017 House passed Sub A



Proposed

Bill: [H 5234](#)

RI General Law Affected: Chapter 45-22.2 *Rhode Island Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Act* - Would require municipal comprehensive plans to include present and future interests of the municipal school system, including, but not limited to, curriculum and instruction needs. Held for further study

Bill: [H 5802](#)

RI General Law Affected: Chapter 42-11 *Department of Administration* - Would require the DOP create a checklist of environmental and energy issues for certain state construction projects more than ten million dollars would need to consider and address. Held for Further Study

Bill: [S 769 SUB A](#)

RI General Law Affected: Chapter 42-98 *Energy Facility Siting Act* - Would amend sections for application reviews by the Energy Facility Siting Board and require the DOP to certify the consistency of applications with the community comprehensive plan of a host community. Held for further study

Bills: [S 810 SUB A](#) / [H 6122](#)

RI General Laws Affected: Chapter 46 *Waters and Navigation*, possibly others - Proposed Rhode Island Cooperative Water Authority Act - Would have established a regional water authority as separate and apart from the State and the Water Resources Board. The Authority would absorb the Providence Water Supply Board and have the powers to acquire, lease, manage, sell, contract, develop, operate and maintain properties, water and water supply systems. Held for further study



2017 Bills Related to Public Utilities and Carriers

ENACTED

Bills: [S 163 SUB A as amended](#) / [H 5868 SUB A](#)

RI General Law Affected: Chapter 36-19 *Kent County Water District* - Adds two members to the Board of the Kent County Water Authority increasing the membership of the host communities. 07/26/2017 Effective without Governor's signature

Bills: [S 558](#) / [H 5484](#)

RI General Law Affected: Chapter 42-64.10-6 *Quonset Development Corporation* - Provides that the Quonset Development Corporation may purchase and obtain water service from any city, town, water district, or other water supply authority. 06/19/2017 Signed by Governor

Bill: [H 5241 SUB A](#)

RI General Law Affected: Chapter 39-18 *Transportation Investment and Debt Reduction Act of 2011*- Requires that five million dollars be appropriated to the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2019 for the purposes of development through a coordinating council of stakeholders and implementation of a federally required Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan. 07.05.17 Signed by Governor

PROPOSED

Bills: [S 703](#) / [H 6062](#)

RI General Law Affected: Chapter 2-23.3-1 *Agriculture and Forestry* - Would have expanded the definitions of farmland, and farm units and provided standards for the siting and operation of farm-based renewable energy facilities such as but no limited to solar, wind, small hydro, biomass, or waste-to-energy facilities as allowed agricultural accessory uses in all communities. Held for further study



2017 Bills Related to State Affairs and Government

ENACTED

Bills: [S 95 SUB A](#) / [H 6296](#)

RI General Law Affected: Chapter 42-64 *Rhode Island Regulatory Reform Act* - Requires the Office of Regulatory Reform, in consultation with various state departments and plant-based and agriculture industry representatives, to reduce burdensome regulations and to facilitate economic growth within plant-based industries and agriculture. 07.18.17 Signed by Governor

Bills: [S 381](#) / [H 6323](#)

RI General Law Affected: Chapter 42-46 *Open Meetings* - Excludes weekends and state holidays from the calculation of the forty-eight (48) hour public notice requirement, and requires all public bodies to keep minutes of open meetings and file their minutes with the Secretary of State. 07.18.17 Signed by Governor

PROPOSED:

Bills: [S 442 SUB A](#) / [H 5808](#)

RI General Law Affected: Chapter 46 *Waters and Navigation - Climate Change and Coastal Adaptation Trust Fund* - Would have established a trust fund for grants to fund projects to adapt infrastructure on public lands to address the impacts of climate change. 05/18/2017 Senate passed Sub A & Referred to House Finance - Held for further study

S 443 / H 5893

RI General Law Affected: Chapter 42 *State Affairs and Government - Rhode Island Municipal Infrastructure Grant Program* - Would have created a municipal grant program within the DOA for municipal and other public infrastructure projects to design, construct, acquire land, rehabilitate, repair and make other improvements to publicly-owned infrastructure such as roads, and utilities. 06/28/2017 Senate read and passed & 06/30/2017 Referred to House Finance



2017 Bills related to Towns and Cities

ENACTED:

Bills: [S 158](#) / [H 5271](#)

RI General Law Affected: Chapter 45-22 *Local Planning Board or Commission* - Permits the Barrington Town Council to appoint two alternate members to the Planning Board. 05/18/2017 Effective without Governor's signature

Bills: [S 333](#) / [H 5655](#)

RI General Law Affected: Chapter 45-22.4 *RI Development Impact Fee Act* - Amends several sections of the Act pertaining to the calculation of impact fees by municipalities in the State by requiring that needs assessments of the fees be conducted every 5 years with certain exceptions. 06/27/2017 Signed by Governor

Bills: [S 481 SUB A](#) / [H 5475 SUB A](#)

RI General Law Affected: Chapter 45-23 *Subdivision of Land* - Shortens the time periods related to certifications, decision-making and recordings of decisions for major land development and major subdivision master and preliminary plans. 06/30/2017 Signed by Governor

Bills: [S 570 SUB A](#) / [H 6095 SUB A as amended](#)

RI General Law Affected: Chapter 44-27 *Taxation of Farm, Forest, and Open Space Land* - Exempts land previously classified as farm, forest or open space land from land use change tax if the landowner converts no more than twenty percent (20%) acreage to install a renewable energy system. 07.05.17 Signed by Governor

PROPOSED:

Bills: [S 480](#) / [H 5573](#)

RI General Law Affected: Chapter 45-24-52 *Zoning Ordinances* – Would require municipalities to provide notice to owners and holders of conservation and preservation restrictions, whose property is in an area proposed for a zoning ordinance amendment that includes changes to dimensional requirements. Held for further study

Bills: [S 653](#) / [H 5476](#)

RI General Law Affected: Chapter 45-24 *Zoning Ordinances* - (*Sponsored by the Department of Administration*) – Would establish a separate municipal variance process for certain properties that sustain damages from a state or local disaster emergency. Held for further study

Bills: [S 1005](#) / [H 5042 as amended](#)

RI General Law Affected: Chapter 45-22 *Local Planning Board or Commission* – Would require that members of local planning boards and commissions receive 2 hours of training on issues related to development in flood plains and the effects of sea level rise once every 2 years. H 5042 05/16/2017 House passed & 06/28/2017 Senate Judiciary recommends passage as amended in concurrence / S 1005 Senate read and passed

If you should have any questions regarding any of the bills listed above, please contact any one of the following:

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