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# Residential Sewer Connection and Hardship Policy

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## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish clear, consistent, and equitable standards for permitting residential sewer connections. The policy seeks to balance responsible growth and public health protection with the Town's obligation to manage limited wastewater treatment capacity. It defines when residential properties may connect by right, when hardship connections may be considered, and the conditions under which non-residential and multifamily connections may be approved. The goal is to ensure that new connections occur in a manner that safeguards system integrity, supports environmental compliance, and aligns with community infrastructure planning.

## INTRODUCTION

The Town provides sewer service to a significant portion of the community. However, inflow and infiltration (I&I) issues have historically limited the Town's wastewater treatment capacity. While the first major I&I reduction project has been completed, insufficient data exists to determine whether adequate capacity exists under normal rainfall conditions.

Accordingly, the Town continues to exercise caution in approving new sewer connections. This policy establishes clear guidelines for evaluating all residential sewer connection requests, distinguishing between:

1. By-Right Connections — for eligible single-family and duplex residential properties located along existing sewer mains;
2. Hardship Connections — for other properties that qualify under defined environmental or financial hardship criteria; and
3. Non-Residential and Multifamily Connections — which remain restricted and subject to case-by-case review and sewer capacity offset requirements.

## APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to all new or expanded residential sewer connection requests within the Town.

It is intended to:

- Clarify which properties may connect by right;
- Define hardship connection eligibility and process;
- Maintain equitable and consistent standards for review by the Department of Public Works (DPW), Town Administrator, and Select Board; and
- Protect the integrity and long-term capacity of the town's sewer system.



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## I. BY-RIGHT CONNECTIONS

A “by-right” connection may be approved for any individual single-family or duplex residential property that meets all of the following conditions:

1. Proximity: The property is situated along an existing, active Town sewer main.
2. Capacity: The DPW Director confirms sufficient system capacity at the time of application.
3. Compliance: The proposed connection complies with all applicable local, state, and federal regulations, including those of the Plumbing Inspector, Board of Health, and Conservation Commission.
4. Engineering Documentation: A stamped plan and detailed connection specifications are submitted for review and approval by the DPW Director or designee.
5. Fees and Assessments: The applicant pays all applicable sewer connection, capacity, and I&I mitigation fees as established by the Town.

The DPW Director and Town Administrator administratively approve by-right connections once compliance and available capacity are verified. These applications do not require a hardship finding. The Select Board shall be notified of all approvals and rejections.

## II. HARDSHIP CONNECTIONS

All other residential properties not qualifying for a by-right connection must demonstrate hardship to be eligible for connection. Hardship connections are limited and contingent upon available sewer system capacity.

Hardship requests are classified as follows:

- Environmental Hardship
- Financial Hardship

### A. Environmental Hardship

An Environmental Hardship exists when a property cannot feasibly support an on-site septic system due to one or more of the following:

- Previously failed or failing septic systems.
- Inadequate soil drainage, permeability, or lot size for new or replacement systems.
- Insufficient setbacks from wetlands, wells, or other protected resources.



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Applicants must submit documentation from one or more of the following:

- Health Agent or Board of Health.
- Conservation Agent or Conservation Commission.

### **B. Financial Hardship**

Financial Hardship exists when an applicant demonstrates a severe economic limitation that significantly impacts their ability to install a septic system. Applicants must meet at least one of the following criteria:

#### **Income-Based Qualification and Public Assistance Qualification:**

Household income at or below 60% of the median household income for the Town of Plainville, as defined annually by the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities (DPU).

Applicants receiving assistance through one or more of the following programs may qualify:

- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC)
- Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled, and Children (EAEDC)
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Massachusetts Health Care Program (MassHealth)
- Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
- National School Lunch or School Breakfast Program
- Massachusetts Veterans' Benefits Program
- Other recognized state or federal hardship assistance programs

#### **Owner-Occupied vs. Rental Properties:**

Eligibility is generally limited to owner-occupied properties. However, hardship applications for small landlords (two or fewer rental units within the Town) may be considered if the applicant can demonstrate that relief will maintain habitable and affordable conditions for tenants.

### **III. NON-RESIDENTIAL AND MULTIFAMILY CONNECTIONS**

This policy primarily governs residential connections.

Commercial, industrial, and multifamily (three or more units) properties are not eligible for by-right connections and must obtain Select Board approval.



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Such connections shall require:

- Demonstrated available sewer capacity, verified by the DPW Director;
- Submission of detailed engineering plans for review;
- Sewer capacity offsets or I&I mitigation measures of equivalent or greater value to the projected flow increase; and
- Payment of all applicable fees and assessments.

Approval of non-residential and multifamily connections will be made on a case-by-case basis by the Select Board upon recommendation of the Town Administrator and DPW Director.

### IV. SEWER CAPACITY OFFSETS

Applicants, whether by-right, hardship, or non-residential, may be required to provide an I&I mitigation plan or a sewer capacity offset as a condition of approval.

Acceptable mitigation measures include:

- Rehabilitation or replacement of leaky mains or laterals;
- Elimination of sump pump or stormwater inflow connections;
- Installation of water-efficient plumbing fixtures or flow-reducing devices.

All offsets must be verified by engineering documentation and approved by the DPW Director and Town Administrator before connection activation.

### V. APPROVAL PROCESS

By-Right Connections:

- Administrative approval by the DPW Director and Town Administrator upon verification of compliance and capacity.
- Notification provided to the Select Board for informational purposes.

Hardship Connections:

- Reviewed by the DPW Director and Town Administrator for compliance with this policy.
- If denied, the applicant may appeal to the Select Board, which will conduct a final review and issue a determination.

Non-Residential or Multifamily Connections, including Residential Subdivisions:

- Require formal approval by the Select Board following recommendation from the Town Administrator and DPW Director.



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All decisions shall be documented in writing and maintained in the Town's official records.

### **VI. CAPACITY REVIEW AND POLICY UPDATES**

The Town shall periodically review sewer capacity, considering I&I reduction efforts, infrastructure improvements, and changes in wastewater demand.

If capacity increases as a result of successful I&I reductions or infrastructure expansion, the Town may consider further liberalization of connection eligibility.

ADOPTED BY THE SELECT BOARD IN REGULAR SESSION ON NOVEMBER 24, 2025  
AMENDED BY THE SELECT BOARD IN REGULAR SESSION ON DECEMBER 8, 2025