



Town of Bristol, Rhode Island

Department of Community Development

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June 29, 2026

Memo to Members of the HDC

RE: Revisions to Historic District Administrative Review Procedure

Commissioners:

As we have seen over the last few years, the agendas before this commission are becoming unwieldy. Meetings have routinely go for more than 3 hours and frequently cause friction with applicants.

The first item is to officially put a cap on the number of agenda items that can be heard by the commission. Staff would make the recommendation of no more than 12 items, with the chair having discretion to reduce further should large projects be on the agenda all at once.

This has been discussed before, but the concern from the staff has been that it would only serve to force repeated continuances and create massive backlogs – or cause a number of items to be automatically approved due to the 45 day time limit the town ordinance on review. To combat this, I would propose using the recently submitted and soon to be adopted standards guide to allow expansion of the administrative approval powers granted to staff, or at the very least add a number of frequent applications to the list to reign in these massive agendas.

Several items that could be explored are as follows:

1. All fences more than 15 feet from street frontage, as well as those not on street frontage
2. All replacements of demonstrably non-historic windows in-kind (i.e. Vinyl for Vinyl, Clad for Clad)
3. All replacements of doors in-kind
4. Replacement of signs provided they meet the same dimensions of existing signage OR allow for administrative approval of all signs
5. Installation of Sheds or small out buildings provided they are below the threshold for a building permit
6. Re-Authorization of expired approvals, provided no items have changed.

I will conduct additional research to determine additional items when this comes to the commission for official action.