

Falmouth exhausts its building permits for the year, but may still issue more

 [pressherald.com/2021/06/01/falmouth-exhausts-its-building-permits-for-the-year-but-may-still-issue-more/](https://www.pressherald.com/2021/06/01/falmouth-exhausts-its-building-permits-for-the-year-but-may-still-issue-more/)

By Kristen McNerney

June 1, 2021

After giving out all of its 2021 building permits for single or two-family homes already this year, the Falmouth Town Council is considering issuing 10 that were allocated for 2022 to those who were denied permits.

The 65 permits allotted for 2021 have all been issued, marking the third time since the town set a cap 21 years ago and the third time in the past five years that the permits have run out early, according to Community Development Director Ethan Croce. The yearly allotment also ran out early in 2018 and 2020, he said, but this year's ran out sooner.

"This is a way to provide assurance that people shut out will actually get their permits," Falmouth Town Council Chairperson Amy Kuhn said. "We could run out again, but we want to put this on the table now to be fair and transparent."

Councilor Hope Cahan said the measure was "a good temporary solution," but that a long-term solution may be needed sooner rather than later depending on how next year's permitting plays out.

Borrowing 10 permits from 2022 would mean only 55 could be issued next year.

About 75% of the 2021 permits are "disproportionately" for homes that will be built in subdivisions, Croce said. The town defines a subdivision as three or more housing units on a development property built within a five-year period. Croce called this year's subdivision distribution an anomaly.

Of the six applicants who couldn't get permits this year because the town had run out, two plan to build in subdivisions.

Seven of the 10 borrowed permits would be reserved for non-subdivision homes, while three will be reserved for subdivisions.

"What I like is that we are limiting the subdivision permits to prevent one developer from grabbing them all," Councilor Janice DeLima said.

Developers don't typically receive a number of building permits at one time but permits this year have gone to a number of different people to build within the same two subdivisions, Croce said.

In West Falmouth, the Homestead Acres 69-unit condominium complex and the 20-unit Meadow Winds duplexes have contributed to a faster rate of growth than seen in previous years, with 30 permits and 16 permits issued respectively in 2021 to the two developments, Croce said.

Priority will be given to those who have had their applications in by May 24, Kuhn said, taking care of the six who were so far denied permits in 2021 and would like to build this year.

Councilor Tommy Johnson said he thinks the 10 permits shouldn't be divided between non-subdivision or subdivision so as to not deny anyone a permit who would like to build.

"I wouldn't want to shut anyone out," he said.

Councilor Peter Lafond was in favor of the plan.

"This proposal strikes a balance between keeping our policies in place while trying to be as fair as possible," Lafond said.

The council scheduled a public comment period for the first meeting in July to discuss the proposal.

© 2021