



TOWN OF MERRIMAC INSPECTIONAL SERVICES

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FENCE “GOOD NEIGHBOR” POLICY

Each year, Inspectional Services Department receives calls from residents considering the installation of a new fence or repair of an existing one. The “*good neighbor policy*” we advocate includes the following:

- 1 Before doing any work, discuss your plan with abutters. If there are doubts as to the accuracy of the property line, hire a registered land surveyor to verify and stake the site. Settling a private property line dispute can become costly once legal action is initiated.
- 2 Consider a stockade or other wooden fence requires attention from time to time. Constructing the fence about one foot in from the property line should allow room for maintenance chores.
- 3 A fence must not pose a danger to passersby. Posts must be installed to provide stability and resistance to gusting wind loads.
- 4 The finish or “good” side of wooden fence pickets should face out. Fence made with two “good” sides or post and rail fence systems can be installed without this concern.
- 5 There should be no nail points penetrating through the wood surface and no diagonal braces blocking a walkway.
- 6 Massachusetts Building Code defines a fence as six feet or less in height. Over six feet, the fence becomes a “structure.” As such, it requires a building permit, adherence to zoning setback distances, and is subject to Appeals Board hearings.
- 7 Fences may not obscure sight lines for safe roadway travel. For instance, a stockade fence at a street corner location must be constructed no higher than three feet above grade for a minimum distance of thirty feet back in each direction from the corner.
- 8 For residential purposes, barbed wire fencing is not allowed.

Please call 978-346-0525 if you have questions.