HARFORD COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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HARFORD COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT REQUIREMENTS FOR PRELIMINARY APPROVAL OF COTTAGE HOUSING

The Harford County Health Department considers requests for cottage housing based on the ability of a parcel to provide adequate facilities for private sewage disposal and a potable water supply for the present and the future use. There are no provisions within the state code for approval based upon a medical hardship. The Harford County Health Department has delegated authority from the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) for all matter related to on-site disposal systems (septic systems) and private water wells. Cottage Housing is a Department of Planning and Zoning use designation with no equivalent use in the Health Code.

A request for cottage housing is reviewed by the Health Department similarly to any permit application that has the potential to increase capacity or use to the on-site system. The Department will review not only plumbing modification, but the room use designation and the square footage of living space to be added. The decision to grant cottage housing will not be based on a medical hardship, and the Health Department does not consider cottage housing as relief for financial difficulties. Cottage housing provisions are considered temporary in nature intended for use by the individual(s) identified in the request, and some improvements, such as a second kitchen, separate home, etc., must be eliminated once the housing is no longer needed. The use of separate facilities (well and septic system) is typically not permitted.

The Department of Planning and Zoning requires the applicant to obtain preliminary approval from the Health Department for any site serviced by on-site facilities. The following information is required by the Health Department to initiate an evaluation of the cottage housing proposal. Please submit the following information for evaluation to the Harford County Health Department, 120 S. Hays Street, Suite 200, P.O. Box 797, Bel Air, MD. 21014-0797. The Health Department recommends that you keep a copy of the material submitted for your records.

1. A request, in writing, to include such information as the owner of the property, address, subdivision and lot number, name of the person(s) who will occupy the cottage housing unit, age, relationship to property owner, number of occupants in the existing dwelling, and proposed type of cottage housing (trailer, addition, etc.).
2. A plat of property including the boundaries and locations of the primary dwelling, and other improvements, the existing well and/or on-site disposal system, driveway(s), and proposed cottage housing unit or addition.
3. If an addition to the dwelling is proposed, a floor plan of the existing and proposed construction is required.
4. Information on how the cottage housing would be remodeled or eliminated after the individuals requiring the housing no longer live in the cottage housing unit.

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After the above information is received, a field inspection will be made to determine if the existing facilities are adequate, or if additional requirements are needed to satisfy State and Local Health Department codes. Often, soil percolation tests, an evaluation of the on-site disposal system by a pumper/contractor who meets the Maryland Department of the Environment requirements, and water quality tests are required to complete this review.

Upon completion of the above, a staff report will be prepared and submitted with the cottage housing request to the Director of the Bureau of Environmental Health. If approved, an approval letter will be forwarded to the applicant(s) who should then submit the letter to the Department of Planning and Zoning with all appropriate information. If the request is denied, the reason(s) for the disapproval will once again be forwarded to the applicant(s) and when applicable, recommendations will be drafted that may assist in a positive outcome with a modified plan.

Any questions regarding this Health Department policy may be directed to the Resource Protection Division at 410-877-2300.

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