Adopting an Ordinance: A Step-By-Step Guide

1. Ordinance/Amendment Proposal
   Generally, ordinance proposals are drafted by the zoning administrator, planning and zoning staff, corporation counsel or a regional planning commission at the request of the local governing body.

2. Notice of Public Hearing
   Communities must provide notice of the public hearing to be conducted on the proposed ordinance/amendment. Publication of the notice of public hearing must meet the Class 2 legal requirements (under Ch. 985, Stats.) in order for the zoning ordinance or amendment to be valid. Posting notice of public hearing is permitted in lieu of publication only if the municipality is not required to have an official newspaper.

3. Public Hearing
   In cities and villages, the hearing may be held before the designated planning and zoning committee or before the municipal governing body. In counties, hearings on proposed zoning ordinances or amendments are held by the county zoning committee before consideration of an ordinance or amendment by the county board.

4. Decision by Governing Body
   If the municipality is not required to have an official newspaper published in the municipality that meets the requirements.

5. Ordinance Publication
   6. Prepare for DNR Approval:
      • Affidavit of Publication of Notice
      • Certified Copy of Final Ordinance Text
      • Affidavit of Publication of Enacted Ordinance

7. Approval by DNR
   • This is the last step, but to speed the approval process up, submit the draft proposal to DNR before starting the ordinance adoption process.

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
The DNR reviews ordinances for compliance with the minimum state standards. Both the ordinance and adoption procedures are reviewed. When it is determined that all the requirements are met, a formal approval letter is sent to the adopting community. Floodplain zoning ordinances and amendments do not become effective until approved by the DNR; thus formal approvals are issued each time the ordinance is amended. DNR approvals are required by FEMA for a community to maintain their flood insurance.

To minimize the time and expense associated with ordinance revisions, communities should submit a draft of the proposed language to DNRFLOODPLAIN@wi.gov. Once the DNR has reviewed the draft and the community has made any needed revisions, please follow the complete adoption process outlined in this guide. If you have questions regarding floodplain ordinance adoption, please contact DNR Floodplain staff at DNRFLOODPLAIN@wi.gov or 608-220-5633.