



January 30, 2013

The Honorable Edward Butler, Chair  
House Commerce and Consumer Affairs Committee  
Legislative Office Building, Room 302  
Concord, NH 03301

***Subject: HB 278, relative to voluntary installation of fire suppression sprinklers.***

Dear Representative Butler:

HB 278 seeks to address a deficiency in current law by enabling planning boards, as part of their subdivision and site plan review processes, to enforce as conditions of approval fire suppression sprinklers that are voluntarily offered by an applicant. The New Hampshire Planners Association, representing over 200 land use planning professionals in our state, working at all levels of government and in the private sector, takes this opportunity to express its support for this legislation.

As you are aware, over the past few years the Legislature has changed the law relating to sprinkler systems in residential structures. As the law stands at present, a planning board has the legal authority to require a developer to install a cistern for the purpose of providing an adequate water supply for fire-fighting purposes. But if a developer would prefer to install sprinkler systems in the residences to be built, the planning board is unable to include this as a condition of approval that is enforceable by local officials. As a result, the planning must resort to requiring a cistern even if the board itself acknowledges that sprinklers would be preferable.

HB 278 corrects that problem by allowing planning boards the option of requiring sprinklers, but only in those situations where the applicant voluntarily offers them as part of a development proposal. This language seems to strike a good balance between the interests of developers and those of local officials whose interest is the safety and welfare of the residents of the community.

For these reasons, we urge your committee to recommend HB 278 as “ought to pass.” Thank you for this opportunity to provide comment on the bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Timothy J. Corwin", is located below the word "Sincerely,". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Timothy J. Corwin, Esq.  
NHPA Legislative Liaison