

Town of Danbury

Home Occupation & Cottage Industry Regulations

There are four categories of “business entities” recognized by the Town of Danbury: Exempt Businesses, Home Occupations, Cottage Industries and Commercial Businesses. Each category requires different levels of approvals from Town Boards. These regulations are intended to define the differences between each category and establish practical procedures for town officials and applicants to follow.

The Board of Selectmen will be responsible for the processing of all applications from prospective business owners and will administer the regulations and associated processes.

Exempt Businesses

Generally speaking, there are many residents who work from home or are self-employed. Additionally they may have a commercial vehicle that they use for their business and keep at their residence, and/or may have a home office where they conduct a variety of administrative tasks (phone calls, scheduling, planning, billing, etc.).

Such professionals do not:

- conduct their business at their residence
- have customers coming to their residence
- have any employees who conduct any work at the residence
- store large quantities of bulk materials and/or equipment and machinery such as construction/excavation vehicles at their residence.

The following professions are several examples of exempt businesses.

- Carpenters
- Electricians
- Plumbers
- Masons
- Landscapers
- Sales Reps
- Telecommuters

Exempt businesses are not required to register and be ‘permitted’ by the Town. However, should any individuals meet the guidelines for an exempt business, a completed application approved by the Selectmen should be placed in their property file for future reference.

Home Occupation

- The business must be incidental and clearly secondary to the use of the property as a dwelling for residential purposes.
- There must be no alteration of the residential appearance of the dwelling or the lot on which the business is located.
- There must be no impact to the character of the neighborhood.
- The property owner/resident of the premises must be the owner/operator of the business.
- The business may have no more than four (4) employees, including the business owner, performing on-site work.
- The business must not result in the production of any offensive noise, light, odor, dust, smoke or other pollution not associated with the primary use of the property as a residential dwelling.
- Non-employee vehicle traffic must not exceed ten (10) business trips per day.
- Any signage must meet existing sign regulations.
- No outside storage of any business related materials is allowed.
- The business must be conducted entirely within the home structure and/or other on-site structures (garage, barn).
- Over-the-counter retail sales operations (drive-by walk-ins) are not permitted.
- The business must not require service by heavy commercial delivery trucks over 26K GVWR.
- Adequate off-street parking must be provided for customer and employee parking.
- Must have no more than two commercial vehicles of no more than 26K GVWR kept on-site overnight, unless shielded from sight by garaging, fencing, etc..

Cottage Industries

- Will require a Special Exception Permit “SEP” granted and approved by the Zoning Board of Adjustment “ZBA”.
- The business must be incidental and clearly secondary to the use of the property as a dwelling for residential purposes.
- There must be no alteration of the residential appearance of the dwelling or the lot on which it is located.
- There may be an impact on the character of the neighborhood.
- The property owner/resident of the premises must be the owner/operator of the business.
- The business must have no more than nine (9) employees performing on-site work.
- Non-employee customer traffic will not exceed twenty (20) business trips per day.
- All parking, lighting, signage, neighborhood impacts and other potential concerns will be reviewed as part of the Special Exception Permit process by the ZBA.

The process:

Any individual or business entity inquiring about starting and/or being permitted for a business operation in town will complete an “application”, unless the applicant is an Exempt Business. If the business qualifies as “exempt” the owner may request that a copy of the application be placed in the property file.

Any individual or applicant who meets the exempt criteria requires no further action.

The completed application will be reviewed by the Selectmen’s office for action.

If it is determined that the business meets the criteria for a “Home Occupation”, no further action is required, and the Selectmen’s Office will notify the applicant. The Selectmen’s office will sign/approve the application and return the original to the applicant, place a copy in the property file, as well as send a copy of the approved application to the PB & ZBA (as an fyi only).

If it is determined by the Selectmen’s office that the business should be reviewed as a “Cottage Industry” the applicant will be directed to contact the ZBA to schedule a hearing for a Special Exception Permit. The ZBA will be notified at the same time of the pending application.

Any significant change in volume and/or type of business activity by any Exempt Business, Home Occupation or Cottage Industry will require re-application by the business owner for review by the appropriate town Boards.

All applications for Commercial Businesses will be directed to the Zoning Board of Adjustment for a Special Exception Permit and forwarded to the Planning Board for Site Plan Review.