



Memorandum

To: OSTAB
From: Luke Bolinger, Director of Parks & Recreation
Date: June 9, 2026
Re: Clarification on Agricultural/Open Space (AG/OS) and Reserved Open Space (RO) Zoning Districts

The AG/OS and RO zone districts both fall within the Town's "Other Districts" category, but they serve different purposes and carry different legal implications. The stated purposes of the AG/OS district "is to provide areas to be used for agricultural and open space purposes and to recognize and preserve lands suitable for long-term production of agricultural commodities, lands suitable for grazing, animal husbandry, view protection, passive and active recreation, and conservation uses." Uses permitted by right in the AG/OS district include: open space, park, certain utility facilities, agricultural cultivation, grazing, and breeding, and animal hospitals, as well as various special review uses. This district provides a mechanism to preserve rural, agricultural, recreational, and open space characteristics while still maintaining a broader range of potential public and land use options.

By contrast, the stated purposes of the RO district is more narrowly tailored as it is designed to provide areas that are dedicated to open space and trails as specified in Article 11 of the Home Rule Charter." Uses in the RO district are more limited and directly tied to open space and trail purposes, with parks permitted by right and parking lots allowed through special review. As a result, RO zoning provides stronger long-term protection for open space properties, but it also reduces future flexibility compared to AG/OS.

This distinction matters because rezoning property to RO does more than regulate allowable land uses. Based on the Town Attorney's Office interpretation, rezoning a property to RO constitutes formal "open space designation" under the Charter. Once that designation occurs, Section 11.02(3) restricts the Town from selling, rezoning, redesignating, or placing the property into another land use category without prior voter approval. For example, if the Town wanted to lease a property for temporary agricultural use, unique events, or utilize a site for something similar to Schofield Farm, this would require a vote.

In practical terms, AG/OS allows the Town to protect land for agricultural, recreational, conservation, and open space purposes while retaining the ability to consider future rezoning through the standard public process. RO provides a higher level of protection because it formally designates the property as open space under the Charter and limits the property to certain uses, but that designation also limits future Council discretion and requires voter approval before the Town could change the property's status.