



RHODE
ISLAND

Vacant School Building Report

Special Legislative Commission

October 30, 2023

Vacant School Building Legislation Overview

RIGL § 45-53-10 was enacted **June 30, 2022**, with the purpose of providing guidance and assistance in repurposing of vacant and unused school buildings each year.

- Each **October 1st**, RIDE provides a list of all school buildings that have been abandoned or are no longer in use.
- By **February 28th**, a task force conducts a feasibility of each property, including the anticipated costs to renovate the building, to determine suitability. Findings are published for prospective developers to review.
- By **December 31st** each year, the Secretary of Housing publishes a report on the developments of all identified properties.



Vacant School Building Legislation Approach

RIDE has used a phased approach to quickly provide information to the General Assembly and Secretary of Housing.

Phase I

- Provide Initial List of Known Properties
- Create Reporting Mechanisms

Phase II

- Provide Official List
- Collaborate with Housing Office on Processes

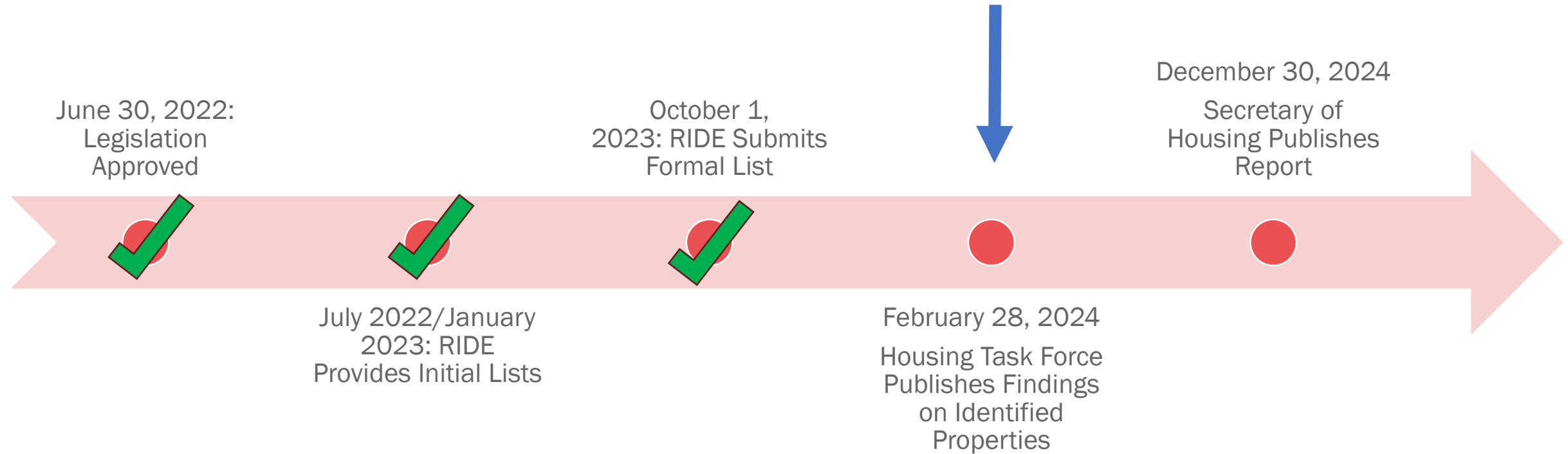
Phase III

- Comprehensive Statewide Assessment
- Create Regulations on Implementation and Enforcement



Vacant School Building Timeline

To comply with the Act, there are several items that must occur.



Vacant Building Reporting Form

In December 2022, RIDE created a new Vacant Building form, which is now part of the School Housing Aid collection that occurs each summer.

- Pursuant to RIGL 45-53-10, the form asks for:
 - Existing vacant and unused buildings,
 - Buildings that **will become available** in the next six months.
- The form is signed by both the **School District** and the **Municipality** (Enclosure 2).
- Responses were received from **over 45 LEAs** this past summer.



RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
School Housing Aid

F-120-2024 Vacant Building Report
pursuant to R.I.G.L. 45-53-10

1. LEA: _____
2. Does your LEA/municipality have any school buildings under school district, municipal, or charter school control which have been abandoned or are no longer being used **as of July 1, 2023**?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No

If "Yes", list them along with any outstanding bonds tied to projects at those buildings:

Building Name and Address	Outstanding Bonds for projects at the building

Potential Properties

RIDE has provided the Secretary of Housing with 23 potential vacant school buildings.

- In July 2022, an initial list identified **12 potential properties** throughout Rhode Island, based on schools that had closed the previous 10 years (Enclosure 2).
- In January 2023, the form was sent out to all districts, and revealed **3 more properties** (Enclosure 3).
- The October 2023 Vacant Building Report revealed **8 additional potential properties** (Enclosure 4).
- RIDE anticipates many more buildings becoming available over the next five years, as school districts utilize a “**newer and fewer**” strategy, pursuant to RIGL 16-7-40(h).



Vacant School Building Regulations

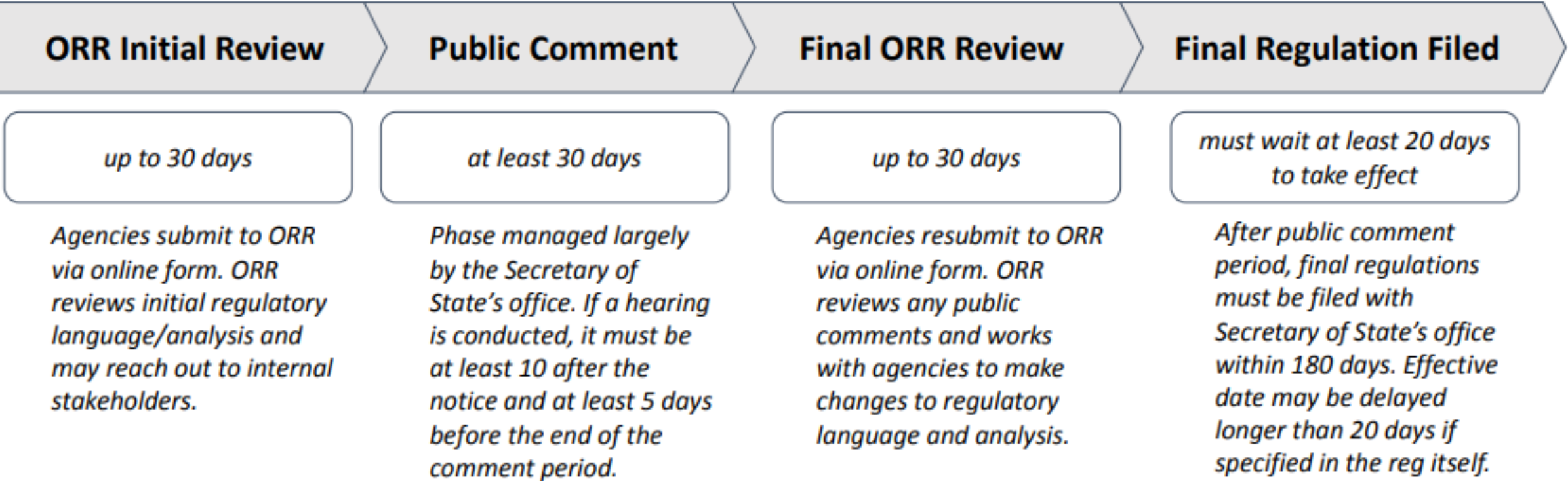
While the repurposing of vacant school buildings program is administered by the Secretary of Housing, RIDE is responsible for promulgating the rules and regulations.

- RIDE and the Housing Office are discussing the scope of these regulations and the following topics:
 - **Availability** – When does a building become unused or vacant building?
 - **Care and Control** – Town or District?
 - **Enforcement** – What happens if a municipality or a district do not comply?
 - **Charter Schools** – These LEAs also seek vacant school buildings.
 - **Responsibility** – Which office should be responsible?



Regulations Timeline

Once the Vacant Building Regulations are drafted, they must be approved by the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education and comply with the Office of Regulatory Reform process.





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Questions?

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Thank you!