



Chelmsford Planning Board
Town of Chelmsford
50 Billerica Road
Chelmsford, MA 01824

MEETING MINUTES

January 28, 2026

(Approved February 25, 2026)

TIME: 7:00 p.m.

LOCATION: Town Offices

ROOM: 204

Members Present:

Chris Lavallee, Chair
John Sousa, Jr., Vice Chair
Joel Luna, Clerk
Michael Raisbeck
Deirdre Connolly
Annita Tanini
Marcie Comtois
Ceretha Fernandes, Associate Member

Others Present:

Evan Belansky, Community Development Director

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Chair Lavallee called the public meeting to order at approximately 7:00 p.m.

PUBLIC INPUT – None

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW: None

PUBLIC HEARINGS – CONTINUED:

1. **50 Orleans Street – Chelmsford Water District /Riverneck Water Treatment Facility** application for site plan review per section 195-104 and special permit per section 195-74 to construct new PFAS treatment building, access driveway, and associated site improvements. The site is located in the Public (P) zoning district and is shown as Assessor's Parcel ID: Map 74/ Block 275/ Lots 1.

Justin Rosenberg from AECOM provided a presentation reviewing the project status and responding to questions raised at the previous meeting from the planning board, town departments, and members of the public.

Rosenberg explained that the district will handle snow and ice removal during the project, limiting salt use due to proximity to the existing well field. He reported that a revised stormwater report was submitted with increased width of stone infiltration trenches from two feet to four feet, now meeting all Massachusetts stormwater standards and full compliance with state and town regulations.

Regarding turtle protection, Rosenberg stated that information on wood turtle and box turtle would be included in the approved turtle protection plan as a supplement and provided as contract documents for bidders. The design calls for riprap stabilization on slopes of two-to-one or steeper, with loam and seed for slopes of three-to-one or less. Construction is expected to begin in August 2026, with the Blanding's turtle active season running from April 15 to November 1.

Rosenberg addressed building heights, noting the existing building is approximately 33 feet above finished grade at elevation 149, with an existing aeration tower at 37 feet above grade at elevation 153. The new PFAS building peak will be approximately 33.7 feet above finished grade at elevation 148.5, in compliance with Chelmsford's maximum building height requirements.

Regarding tree clearing, Rosenberg reported that approximately 35 trees with diameters of 8-16 inches, mostly red maple and eastern white pine, will be cut. He explained that tree clearing is limited to the minimum extent possible. The proposed PFAS building is approximately 130 feet from the abutter's property line at 233 River Neck Road, which is over three times the required setback.

No new overhead lighting poles or up lighting will be installed; small downward-facing lights at exterior doors can be motion-activated. Rosenberg clarified that noise from the existing treatment plant comes from the aeration tower blowers, and the new PFAS building will generate no additional noise as there are no blowers.

The project timeline shows construction expected to start in August 2026 with completion in June 2028. Rosenberg addressed DPW comments regarding use of existing dumpster, sewer separation requirements, signage for no snow storage in the detention basin, cut and fill calculations, slope stabilization, and backup power to the new sewage pump station via existing generator. Fire department comments were addressed including compliance with building codes and addition of a Knox box to the PFAS Building exterior door.

Board member Luna asked about the infiltration basin and concerns about underdrain documentation. Rosenberg explained that the sentence in the original stormwater report was an error and confirmed there is no underdrain, with the existing outlets being the only sources of conveyance. The two-foot riser addition provides greater storage capacity.

Board member Sousa asked about opportunities for tree plantings. Rosenberg explained there is not sufficient room on-site and introducing trees would risk damage to the building, road, process, or stormwater BMPs.

Board member Tanini asked about elevation perspective and visibility from 233 Riverneck Road. Chair Lavallee noted that based on GIS review, the peak of the building is only about eight feet above the road and the Smart property elevation.

Board member Fernandes asked clarifying questions about tree removal areas and the access road location. Steve DeFrancesco from AECOM explained that going around the back of the existing building would require expansion into wetlands, so the proposed location stays away from wetlands while providing fire department access.

Luna requested that instructions for construction workers include not turning turtles on their backs, as this can asphyxiate them. Rosenberg confirmed this would be addressed through biologist training of workers. Chair Lavallee confirmed the turtle protection plan is only applicable during construction, not ongoing during facility operation.

During public comment, Frank Smart from 223 Riverneck Road asked about slope modifications and tree cutting. Rosenberg explained the riprap swale area with 1.5-to-1 slope and confirmed areas around the PFAS building would be 3:1 or less with loam and seeding. Jeff Smart emphasized that the new facility being built closer to their house and the access road removing trees would result in seeing more of both the existing and new facilities.

Leah Deangelis from 217 Riverneck Road asked if the 35 trees to be cut could be marked for visual inspection. DeFrancesco confirmed the trees are located downslope.

Chair Lavallee proposed special conditions including: motion-activated lights on buildings, annual turtle reports copied to the Planning Board, maintenance of snow storage signs in the O&M manual, and submission of erosion and sediment control plan and stormwater pollution prevention plan prior to the preconstruction meeting. DPW also noted construction hours would typically be seven to three, consistent with union working hours. The applicant confirmed receipt of clean letters of approval from DPW and fire.

Motion: by Raisbeck to CLOSE the public hearing.
Motion seconded by Tanini. **Motion carries, unanimously, 7-0.**

Motion: by Raisbeck to APPROVE the Special Permit per section 195-74 for 50 Orleans Street, with the special conditions as discussed. Motion seconded by Tanini. **Motion carries, unanimously, 7-0.**

Motion: by Raisbeck to APPROVE the Site Plan for 50 Orleans Street, with the special conditions. Motion seconded by Tanini. **Motion carries, unanimously, 7-0.**

PUBLIC HEARINGS – NEW:

- 1. Zoning Amendments for Annual Town Meeting:** For purposes of receiving public comment to amend The Town Code, Chapter 195, “Zoning Bylaw” article XXI, Community Enhancement & Investment Overlay District (CEIOD) section 195-11.C (2) to revise by-right projects, 195- 112 Use regulations to provide clarity, 195-118 Performance Standard. A & B, to require compliance with Article VII, 195-119 Application Review Procedures A(6) to add “structure”, 195-119 B(d) to provide clarity, 195-119 D to add a new (5) and renumber, 195 Attachment 1, Use Table, line D.16, Commercial 16 (Parking Garage/Structure) from BA to PB, Table of Dimensional Requirements (195 Attachment 2) change minimum depth from 0 to N/A in the CB, CD & CX districts, CEIOD Site and Bldg Requirements Table (195 Attachment 3) to change minimum depth from 0 to N/A in the CB & CD districts, dimensional requirements for facilitated and independent senior living facilities (195-88) change minimum depth from 0 to N/A in the CB, CD & CV districts, dimensional standards for Center Village Zoning (Article XVIIA 195-98.2) change minimum depth from 0 to N/A, 195-108 to revise the definition of “Boarding House” and add a new definition for “Bed and Breakfast”, 195 Attachment 1, Use Table, to add a new line D.39, “Bed and Breakfast”, section 195-34 Outdoor Illumination to delete in conjunction with a proposed General bylaw for Outdoor Lighting.

Chair Lavallee explained the board would not go through presentations again but would address questions and provide public comment opportunity before voting on recommendations for each article.

CEIOD Overlay Changes:

Board member Luna presented a slide he prepared illustrating why footprint requirements are needed in addition to gross floor area requirements in the CEIOD. The slide demonstrated that without footprint limitations, a developer could build a one-story building with the height of two floors covering a much

larger area than intended. Chair Lavallee confirmed this addresses the three-dimensional aspect of development and stated Luna's illustration would be added to presentation slides.

Luna discussed the performance standards question raised by Belansky at the previous meeting regarding water quality and air quality requirements. After reviewing section 195-38, Luna concluded the board should keep these provisions as they give the planning board the ability to ask for quantifiable studies if concerns arise, similar to authority the building inspector already has. He noted air quality studies have been done, such as for Newport Aggregate.

Belansky cautioned the board that air quality is regulated at the local level through the board of health, with certain uses requiring state approval. He noted this provision only applies to CEIOD and the standards are very technical in nature. He explained that once something becomes part of planning board regulatory authority, abutters may request the board exercise that authority. He noted the current practice uses an affidavit attested by the project engineer and boilerplate conditions requiring all federal, state, and regional permits be obtained.

Tanini suggested marijuana manufacturing facilities with distinct odors as a potential example where these provisions might be useful. Luna emphasized this gives the board the ability to ask for quantifiable evidence to support positions if needed. Chair Lavallee noted it could also provide applicants protection if they can quantify no impact exists.

No members of the public wished to speak on this article.

Motion: by Raisbeck to RECOMMEND all zoning article changes to the CEIOD to Town Meeting. Motion seconded by Tanini. **Motion carries, unanimously, 7-0.**

Parking Garage/Structure Use Table Change:

Chair Lavallee noted there were no changes since the last meeting. No members of the public wished to speak.

Motion: by Raisbeck to RECOMMEND the zoning articles concerning the parking to Town Meeting. Motion seconded by Tanini. **Motion carries, unanimously, 7-0.**

Dimensional Requirements (Minimum Depth Changes):

Chair Lavallee noted there were no changes since the last meeting regarding changing minimum depth from zero to N/A in all applicable tables. No members of the public wished to speak.

Motion: by Raisbeck to RECOMMEND the zoning articles concerning replacing the zero frontage with "N/A". Motion seconded by Tanini. **Motion carries, unanimously, 7-0.**

Boarding House Definition:

Chair Lavallee noted there were no changes since the last meeting. No members of the public wished to speak.

Motion: by Raisbeck to RECOMMEND the zoning article concerning changing the definition of "boarding house". Motion seconded by Tanini. **Motion carries, unanimously, 7-0.**

Bed and Breakfast Definition:

Chair Lavallee noted there were no changes since the last meeting regarding the bed and breakfast definition and addition to the use table. No members of the public wished to speak.

Motion: by Raisbeck to RECOMMEND the zoning article concerning changes to the definition of “bed and breakfast,” or the addition of the definition of “bed and breakfast,” and its entrance into the Use Tables. Motion seconded by Tanini. **Motion carries, unanimously, 7-0.**

Outdoor Illumination/Lighting Bylaw:

Kelly Beatty from 117 Park Road presented on the outdoor lighting bylaw changes. Beatty explained three main differences from the spring 2025 version: 1) Commercial and residential requirements have been disentangled with residential requirements changed to recommendations rather than requirements; 2) A nuisance component was added for egregiously over lighting residential property; 3) Municipal requirements were scrubbed, removing the color temperature requirement which means existing streetlights do not need to be changed.

Beatty explained the bylaw remains complaint-driven for enforcement. He noted conversations with Building Commissioner Jose Negrón who found the requirements tractable, including ability to assess lighting compliance during daytime visits.

Chair Lavallee noted Beatty will not be able to attend the second night of Town Meeting in person and expressed concern about presenting the technical article without Beatty present. Belansky agreed to coordinate with the manager and moderator to potentially schedule this article for the first night. If not possible, Chair Lavallee recommended pushing it to the next town meeting.

Luna requested clarifying slides showing differences between the existing bylaw and the proposed bylaw, noting technology has changed since the original bylaw and the new bylaw incorporates color temperature and specifies an enforcement process.

Beatty explained the existing bylaw has no specifics about enforcement, the new bylaw includes a lighting enforcement officer position (defaulting to the Building Commissioner), and residential and commercial are now treated separately with different standards.

No members of the public wished to speak on this article.

Motion: by Raisbeck to RECOMMEND the zoning articles concerning the lighting bylaw as proposed and to delete the existing town lighting zoning bylaw. Motion seconded by Tanini. **Motion carries, 6-0-1** (Tanini abstained).

- 2. Zoning Amendments for Annual Town Meeting:** For purposes of receiving public comment to amend The Town Code, Chapter 195, “Zoning Bylaw,” section 195-3 to amend the zoning map, Rezone existing IA parcels to RM, 13-36-2 & 13-36-4, rezone the following parcel to RC, 13-19-15, 13-19-16, 13-19-17, 13-19-18, 13-19-19, 13-19-21, 13-19-22, 13-19-23, 13-35-1, 14-19-6, 14-19-9, 14-19-13, rezone parcel 14-19-8 to CB and rezone the following parcels from IA, limited Industrial to CBLT, 13-19-20, 13-36-1, 13-36-3, 13-36-5, 13-36-8, 13-36-10, 14-19-1, 14-19-2, 14-19-3, 14-19-4 and 14-19-5.

Chair Lavallee opened the public hearing for amending the zoning map for the Middlesex Street mills area. He explained the background, noting that in 2022 the board worked with NMCOG to identify zoning conflicts in town. Options included overlays, changing the map, changing the use table, combinations, and creating new zones. The board decided to create the CB Light (CBLT) zone passed at the fall 2025 town meeting, using Kate's Corner as a model and the Middlesex Street area as a stress test.

The CBLT (Commercial Business Light) zone creates a new zoning district, defines ultralight manufacturing as a new use, clarifies light manufacturing, and updates use tables to allow more commercial uses and fewer industrial uses that might negatively impact neighborhoods. Chair Lavallee described ultralight manufacturing as high-value production processes like precision manufacturing, artisanal food production, clothing and apparel, prototyping, 3D printing, and small-scale fabrication.

The proposal includes rezoning parcels to various districts: CD (general commercial), RM (residential multifamily), IA (industrial area), RC (medium density residence), and CB (roadside commercial). The presentation included a proposed map and listing of all parcels to be rezoned.

During public comment, Stephen Mann from 70 Middlesex Street asked about potential impacts to his property, which is being rezoned from IA (industrial) to RC (residential). Board member Raisbeck explained he is grandfathered and existing uses do not need to change. Luna noted that RC allows two-family dwellings, which IA does not. Tanini explained that the rezoning protects him from potential industrial uses like distribution centers being built next door. Mann asked about property value impacts. Raisbeck and Luna noted property values are speculative and unlikely to change significantly. Belansky confirmed assessed value and tax bills would not change. Chair Lavallee noted the overall intent is to rezone parcels to match what is actually on the ground and in use. Mann asked how his property was originally zoned industrial. Luna and Tanini noted there are places all over town with similar issues and this is the second area being addressed. Board members encouraged Mann to consider becoming a town meeting representative, explaining the process and low time commitment.

Chair Lavallee stated the board likes to keep public hearings open for two meetings in case people cannot attend the first one.

Motion: by Raisbeck to CONTINUE the public hearing until February 11th.
Motion seconded by Tanini. **Motion carries, unanimously, 7-0.**

- 3. Citizens Petition:** To overturn Article 29 as adopted at the Fall 2025 Town Meeting by reverting to the original definition of "Family".

Chair Lavallee explained that Brian Latina, the author of the citizens petition, was invited to present but was not able to attend. Chair Lavallee stated he offered several dates. Tanini suggested tabling the item. Chair Lavallee noted he would reach out to Latina again to see if he can present on February 11 or another date. Chair Lavallee explained this article does not require a board vote before town meeting article submission, so there is no urgency and it could continue until town meeting if necessary.

Motion: by Raisbeck to CONTINUE the public hearing to February 11th.
Motion seconded by Connolly. **Motion carries, unanimously, 7-0.**

DISCUSSIONS:

- 1. Community Development Director's Report**

Evan Belansky reported on four items: 1) He appeared on Sam Chase's "Chasing the Facts" show discussing planning and zoning matters and the managed growth strategy. Chair Lavallee commented it was a good interview. 2) The Citizen Planner Training Collaborative annual conference is coming up in March, typically the Saturday of Saint Patrick's Day weekend at Holy Cross. He encouraged members to attend and submit for reimbursement. Raisbeck strongly recommended the conference. 3) The gap analysis final draft is scheduled for internal staff review on February 4th, which will set the stage for the Town Manager to likely request a multi-board and committee meeting to hear the consultant's presentation. 4) February 5th at the senior center, the Zoning Board of Appeals is opening the second administrative appeal for Ledge Road truck traffic. February 26th at the library at 6:30 p.m., the Center Village Master Planning Committee with NMCOG will conduct a second public presentation input session on Chelmsford Street and Center Village conceptual transportation and streetscape modifications. Belansky explained the committee identified a one-way "bow tie" traffic layout concept, with the existing one-way circulation around the library as one side and potentially making Chelmsford Street to Fletcher one-way (Chelmsford Street outbound, Fletcher inbound) as the second side. This is being presented to the Traffic Advisory Committee on February 4th, and the Center Village Master Planning Committee meets February 12th in preparation for the February 26th public session.

2. Liaison updates

- Comtois Board member Comtois reported on the Center Village meeting, noting NMCOG presented six potential drawings for Chelmsford Street which were narrowed to three. They are evaluating whether these qualify for grants based on bike lanes and sidewalk widths. NMCOG is reaching out to Chelmsford Street businesses for input.
- Connolly reported on CPC, noting Bill Vines presented a request for approximately \$14,000 for fence work at Crooked Spring Farm, which was approved. The community garden advisory committee requested \$3,500 for water system upgrades at the Wotton Street community garden, also approved. Both come from open space capital maintenance accounts.
- Tanini had no updates.
- Sousa reported on the NMCOG council meeting on January 21st, covering two topics: a homelessness summit held in December which emphasized the need for regional solutions, with a video available on the NMCOG website; and a presentation on MILUS (Massachusetts Integrated Land Use Strategy) from the Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, a GIS tool to help reconcile competing state goals and award grants. Sousa also reported on the January 22nd kickoff meeting of the managed growth task force. Town Manager Cohen attended the homelessness summit along with select board members. The task force kickoff had excellent attendance with all but one member present. Mike Asiola and Chris Hayes from NMCOG gave a presentation.
- Raisbeck agreed the managed growth task force kickoff was good and noted the next meeting will look at various managed growth scenarios. He noted despite the large committee size, it was managed well. Raisbeck also reported the historical commission meeting could not make quorum due to flu.
- Luna had no updates.
- Lavallee reported on Conservation Commission, noting a light meeting that discussed possible wetland bylaw regulation changes, specifically adding a 100-foot buffer zone to bordering land subject to flooding (100-year flood plain). Town Counsel is drafting wording. Currently there is no buffer so people can build right up to the flood plain border. Lavallee noted FEMA data is old and not always accurate, other towns are implementing similar buffers, and MACC recommends the 100-foot buffer. The commission is seeking town engineer review and examining how many projects might have been impacted. Lavallee also noted from reviewing the Riverneck project that he would like to start having DPW and the Traffic Committee review traffic mitigation measures for larger projects before making special conditions, to ensure feasibility. He has reached out to Christine and Paul, who are on board.

3. New Business – 187 Chelmsford Street – Hotel / shelter

Belansky explained this matter has not come before the Planning Board and likely will not be a Planning Board matter. The Building Commissioner issued a zoning determination letter indicating it is a state use or extension of state use, which is exempt under the State Zoning Act. The shelter program typically starts with a state RFP, and community-based nonprofits like CTI (Community Teamwork Incorporated) submit proposals and receive awards with contracts.

CTI has operated at this location since approximately 2015 through various state contracts and extensions. CTI provided a letter indicating their contract expires in June and they are building a shelter in Lowell, expecting to adhere to those timeframes.

Luna asked about the scope and timeline of the state exemption. Belansky explained CTI initially arrived in 2015 and continued operating via various state contracts. The state's RFPs are not geographically specific; local organizations propose specific locations. The Board of Health adopted an emergency regulation because the state was not doing habitability inspections.

Raisbeck summarized that there is essentially nothing preventing the state from issuing RFPs for such uses. Lavallee suggested when contracts end, the town should ensure return to zoning compliance. Belansky noted if the contract needs extension because the Lowell facility is not complete, it would likely be extended.

Luna requested notification when such changes of use occur. Belansky noted similar exemptions apply to group homes and other Dover-exempt uses, where the Town may not receive formal notification, particularly when moving into existing structures rather than new construction.

Belansky explained the matter ended up on the Planning Board agenda because Town Counsel stated at a Board of Health meeting that it was a land use and zoning matter. The interested party subsequently engaged with the Building Commissioner and Town Manager, received the formal zoning determination, and any aggrieved party can appeal to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

4. Old Business – Managed Growth Strategy

Belansky noted the next managed growth task force meeting is February 17th at 6 p.m. in Room 205. Meetings are open to the public but not video recorded and minutes will be taken.

5. Other

MEETING MINUTES: 1/14/2026

Motion: by Raisbeck to APPROVE the meeting minutes for January 14, 2026, as drafted. Motion seconded by Tanini. **Motion carries, unanimously, 8-0.**

NEXT MEETING DATE(S): February 11, 2026

Belansky reported the February 11th meeting will include a new public hearing for a definitive subdivision for 191-195 Riverneck Road. The package will be emailed to board members. The proposal is for three industrial lots on a fully compliant new roadway with no waivers requested. The primary purpose is likely to freeze zoning, though if approved nothing prevents building the roadway and creating three industrial lots. Luna recalled a preliminary subdivision was previously approved for part of this property.

ADJOURN

Motion: by Raisbeck to ADJOURN at approximately 9:20 p.m.
Motion carries, unanimously, 8-0.

Meeting minutes respectfully submitted by Becky DaSilva-Conde, Community Development Department Assistant, using MuniTrac (AI Program) by InstaTrac, Inc. All related documents discussed were attached to the posted meeting agenda.