

FY26 SELECT BOARD/ TOWN MANAGER GOALS

STATUS REPORT – JANUARY 8, 2026

PAUL E. COHEN, TOWN MANAGER

FISCAL MANAGEMENT & VISIBILITY



EARLY NOTIFICATION OF FINANCIAL ISSUES

- The Town Manager presented information regarding the Town's employee and retiree health insurance claims at the Select Board's September 8th meeting.
- Finance Director John Sousa presented a five-year financial forecast at the Fall Annual Town Meeting.
- Tri-Board (Select Board, School Committee, and Finance Committee) meetings occurred on November 10 and December 8.

FEE STRUCTURE EVALUATION

- The Town Manager presented a department fee study and adjustments at the Select Board's September 22 meeting. Since that time, the Town Manager has continued to evaluate fees. Fees will be adjusted when appropriate based upon market comparisons and the cost of providing services.

ADDITIONAL REVENUE OPTIONS

- The Town Manager reported at the September 8 Select Board meeting that the FY27 budgetary process is underway and that options under consideration include revenue from a solid waste and recycling collection fee. Revenue options were discussed at the Tri-Board budgetary meetings. They remain under consideration.

OPERATIONAL SAVINGS OPTIONS

The Town Manager reported at the September 8th Select Board meeting that he is working with Department Heads to explore alternatives to achieve cost efficiencies and service changes such as:

- the Town joining the Northern Middlesex Regional Communications Center for public safety dispatch and the Town providing regional public safety dispatch services to a neighboring community.
- the Town ending solid waste and recycling collection at condominiums,
- utilizing Town employees/vehicles to collect solid waste and/or recycling.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

- Three-year collective bargaining agreements have been reached with all of the Town's General Government and School Department employee labor unions, with the exception of the firefighters' union. A mediation session with the firefighters union is scheduled for the third week of February.

SEWER/ STORM WATER/ DRAINAGE/WATER



SEWER INFLOW AND INFILTRATION REDUCTIONS

- The Department of Public Works is conducting a \$475K manhole lining project to reduce sewer infiltration.
- The Department of Public Works obtained \$500K in funding at the Fall Annual Town Meeting to extend drainage along Westford Street to remove inflow into the sewer system.
- The Department of Public Works is preparing a second smoke testing project to detect sewer inflow from sump pumps.

SEWER RESERVE CAPACITY

- Due to the extended drought, the Town's sewer flow is below the level of recent years. The Town has allocated sewer capacity to commercial development projects for the renovation of the former Radisson hotel site and for the creation of a new restaurant in Drum Hill.

SEWER CAPACITY EXPANSION OPTIONS

Weston & Sampson Engineers presented a report on the feasibility analysis of a sewer connection to the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority at the Select Board's September 8th meeting. The Town Manager has contacted the Bedford and Burlington Town Managers but has not received any interest in exploring options for a regional sewer main project.

WATER SUPPLY CAPACITY EXPANSION OPTIONS

- The MWRA sewer capacity expansion study briefly examined the option of connecting to MWRA water. Since water and sewer lines need to be placed in separate trenches for sanitary purposes, the cost to connect to MWRA water would be significantly greater than the cost to obtain additional water from the Lowell Regional Water Utility.

WATER DISTRICT CONSOLIDATION

- At the September 8th Select Board meeting, the Board approved a contract with Capital Strategic Solutions to conduct an independent assessment regarding the potential consolidation of the three water districts. The study will assess whether consolidation may improve efficiency, equity, and service delivery for ratepayers. The water districts have provided data to the consultant. An initial assessment is expected within the next several weeks. The study is not intended for a Town absorption of the water districts.

SEWER INFRASTRUCTURE MAINTENANCE

- The Department of Public Works completed the \$495K phase two of the Kensington pump station improvement project.
- The Department of Public Works is drafting a request for proposals for a sewer force main assessment.
- The Department of Public Works is preparing sewer infrastructure capital improvements for consideration at the 2026 Spring Annual Town Meeting.

INFRASTRUCTURE



ROADS/SIDEWALK CONSTRUCTION AND PLANNING

- The Department of Public Works completed a \$3.1M construction plan along 8.7 miles of 35 roadways for the past construction season.
- Design plans are advancing for the reconstruction of 1.2 miles of Main Street from School Street to Groton Road, Chelmsford Street from Alpine Lane to Golden Cove Road, Route 3A from Technology Drive to Richardson Road, and for Vinal Square.
- Construction of the new brick sidewalk along Cushing Place has been completed.
- Construction of an additional 2,500 feet of sidewalk along Turnpike Road is partially completed and is scheduled to be finished this spring.

UNDERGROUND UTILITY PHASE 2 PROJECT IN TOWN CENTER

- A site walk has occurred with representatives from National Grid and Verizon to clearly define the scope of the project.
- A survey of existing roadway utilities is being performed to determine the pathways for the underground trenching, including the crossing of the brook.

TOWN GOVERNMENT FOCUS AREAS



54 RICHARDSON ROAD PFAS REMEDIATION

- Weston and Sampson Engineers continues to conduct quarterly water quality sampling of the monitoring wells, followed by data analysis, and public presentations.
- The upgrade to the PFAS remedial system with the installation of two additional treatment vessels has been completed.
- Additional remedial efforts at the dog park area are being developed.
- Regulatory reporting with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection is occurring in a timely manner.

WARREN-POHL CONSERVATION RESTRICTION

- The Town is awaiting the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs Division of Conservation Services review of the draft conservation restriction.

KOULAS FARM CONSERVATION RESTRICTION

- The Conservation Commission is awaiting the receipt of the wetland and perimeter survey plans and baseline condition report, which serves as the basis for the preparation of the conservation restriction document.

TRAFFIC – MAJOR ISSUES

- The Town Manager's traffic safety advisory committee meets monthly to consider and address traffic safety concerns.
- The committee has coordinated with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation and the contractor to monitor and adjust the traffic detour plans/routes pertaining to the replacement of the Interstate 495 bridges over Gorham Street and Westford Road.

TREE PLANTING & INVASIVE MANAGEMENT

- The Department of Public Works has worked closely with the Tree Committee to plant over 100 trees across the community at the dog park, Chelmsford high school, and other locations.
- The Tree Committee and Public Works Director have launched a memorial tree program to foster additional plantings.
- The Conservation Commission is conducting a pilot invasive species management program at the Warren-Pohl conservation land.

CONSOLIDATED/REGIONAL SERVICES

- The Town's regional Sealer of Weights and Measures program with the Towns of Tewksbury and Westford is approaching the successful completed its first year.
- The Town serves as the lead community with the Town of Billerica for the clean energy advocate program.
- The Town is exploring regional public safety dispatching alternative programs. One option is to join the Northern Middlesex Regional Emergency Communications Center, which is in Tewksbury. Another option is for the Town of Chelmsford to provide public safety dispatching for another community.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT UPDATES

- An announcement is expected to be made soon regarding a manufacturing company relocating/expanding into Chelmsford.
- The Town continues its involvement with the Middlesex 3 coalition to promote economic development, job creation, and workforce training.
- The Town hosts job fairs with MassHire.
- The Town continues its ribbon-cutting plans to promote new businesses.

BOARD & COMMITTEE INITIATIVES



MSBA – PARKER MIDDLE SCHOOL PROJECT

- The Parker School Building Committee has completed the procurement process with the Massachusetts School Building Authority, which resulted in the selection of Ai3 Architects for designer services.
- The project website has been launched.
- Public outreach sessions occurred in October, November, and December. The schedule is to reach consensus on a middle school grade configuration and educational plan by the end of January.

FIRE STATIONS CONSTRUCTION

- Preliminary design for the replacement West Chelmsford (Roberts Field) and South Chelmsford (295 Acton Road) fire station has been completed.
- Land use boards permitting has been completed.
- Construction cost estimates have been completed
- The Town obtained a \$1M grant to provide geothermal and solar energy sources for the fire stations.
- The project is scheduled for construction bidding next month.

LEDGE ROAD COMMERCIAL TRUCKING

- The Massachusetts Land Court is adjudicating the zoning complaint pertaining to the expansion of the volume of commercial trucking along Ledge Road.
- The Building Commissioner has amended the enforcement order. The Zoning Board of Appeals is scheduled to hold a public hearing on the appeal of the amended enforcement order at its February 5th meeting.

OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN, ACCESSIBILITY

- The Town obtained approval of its revised Open Space and Recreation Plan from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs Division of Conservation Services.
- The Department of Public Works has obtained a \$65,000 grant and is advancing plans for accessibility improvements on open space plans at Sunny Meadow Farm, Heart Pond, and other locations.

CLEAN ENERGY AND SUSTAINABILITY

- The Town has launched the regional clean energy advocate program with the Town of Billerica.
- The Town is working with the Clean Energy and Sustainability Committee to obtain a Massachusetts Clean Energy Commission grant for building envelope thermal imaging.

ADU/HOUSING

- The Town's accessory dwelling unit (ADU) bylaw was approved by the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office.
- The Planning Board obtained approval of a technical amendment to the Town's ADU bylaw at the Fall Annual Town Meeting.
- The Building Department has issued its first 13 building permits for ADUs and is reviewing/assisting other applications.

PET CEMETERY EVALUATION

- The Town Manager visited the Town of Littleton's Pet Cemetery and researched municipal pet cemeteries in Massachusetts.
- The Town Manager explored the placement of a columbarium for pet cremains at the dog park and obtained the support of the Dog Park Advisory Committee.
- The pet cemetery proponent remains insistent on a pet cemetery that will inter un-cremated animals.
- The Town Manager has been unable to locate a viable location for such a pet cemetery.

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATION



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- The Town Manager's monthly newsletter is expanding news coverage to inform residents of governmental activity.
- The Town has modified its website to meet the new federal accessibility guidelines.
- The Community Engagement Task Force presented their recommendations to the Select Board on November 17th. Recommendations are currently being implemented.
- A website for the Parker Middle School project has been created.

HIGH PERFORMING GOVERNMENT

- Police Chief Colin Spence secured agreements with police personnel and applied for a grant for police body-worn cameras.
- Police Chief Colin Spence has released a new emergency communications system.
- The Town is expanding its in-person wellness programs.
- The Town has reviewed and is adjusting its fee schedules.
- The Community Development Director, Health Director, and Conservation Agent continue to refine the land use permitting groundwater protection standards.

INFRASTRUCTURE

- The new fire stations construction project is in the construction drawings phase.
- The Parker Middle School Building Committee has completed public outreach sessions and will narrow options by the end of this month.
- Weston and Sampson completed and presented to the Select Board its engineering assessment of a connection to the MWRA sewer system in Bedford and Burlington.
- The Department of Public Works completed its 2025 road and sidewalk construction program and is preparing its 2026 plan.
- The Community Development Director, Health Director, and Conservation Agent are nearing the completion of the aquifer protection gap analysis.
- The Department of Public Works conducted a weed harvesting program at Freeman Lake and is awaiting State regulatory review of a lake water quality program.

MANAGING GROWTH

- The Planning Board has appointed a growth management strategy committee, conducted its initial meeting, and obtained \$20,000 in grant funding from NMCOG to assist the committee.
- The Planning Board obtained approval of a new commercial zoning district at the Fall Annual Town Meeting to address zoning conflicts with residential neighborhoods.
- The revised Housing Production Plan has been endorsed by the Planning Board and the Select Board.
- The Department of Public Works is working with the Tree Committee to implement a tree canopy restoration program by planting trees at the dog park, high school, and other areas.

QUALITY OF LIFE

- The Age Friendly Chelmsford committee continues its efforts to refine its program activities including enhanced transportation options for seniors.
- The Health Department conducted another successful Fall Festival that brought thousands to the town common.

PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS



GAP ANALYSIS

- The Community Development Director, Health Director, and Conservation Agent are nearing the completion of the aquifer protection gap analysis.

REPORTING ON PROJECTS AND METRICS

- The Public Works Director has provided periodic reports to the Select Board of the ARPA-funded and Town-funded infrastructure projects.
- Weston and Sampson Engineers provides quarterly reports on the PFAS mitigation system at 54 Richardson Road.
- The Town Accountant provided the Select Board with a report on the closeout of the prior fiscal year.
- The Finance Director presented a five-year financial forecast for presentation at the Fall Annual Town Meeting.

POLICY UPDATES



TOWN ACCOUNTANT HIRING PROCESS/TIMELINE

- Completed at the August 11, 2025 meeting

MINUTES POLICY

- This is scheduled to occur during the last quarter of this fiscal year.

CREATE COMMITTEE MANUAL

- This work is scheduled for the third quarter of this fiscal year.

VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION



RECOGNIZE MUNICIPAL VOLUNTEERISM

- A volunteer recognition fair will be scheduled for March 2026.

CIVIC ACADEMY

- The initial civic academy is scheduled to begin on January 27th.
- The academy will include eight sessions through the month of March.
- Over 20 residents are scheduled to participate.

CHARTER UPDATE



LANGUAGE REGARDING COMMITTEES

- No action. With difficulties in obtaining members to serve on the 4th of July parade committee, holiday prelude committee, and other community events, it may be worth maintaining the ability to appoint a Public Celebrations Committee, which would oversee all public celebrations.