



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

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TOWN OF CHELMSFORD
PATRICIA E. DZURIS
TOWN CLERK

MEETING MINUTES
January 14, 2026
(Approved January 28, 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
Marcie Comtois
Ceretha Fernandes, Associate Member

Member Present via Zoom:

Annita Tanini

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

Dale Crandall Jr., trustee of Riverneck Road Realty Trust and direct abutter of 243 Riverneck Road, approached to speak but his questions related to the water department's PFAS treatment plant, so Chair Lavallee advised him that those questions would be addressed during that agenda item's public hearing.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW: None

PUBLIC HEARINGS – NEW:

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, joined by colleague Steve DeFrancesco and representatives Brandon Cannata and John from the Chelmsford Water District, presented the application. Rosenberg explained the project is similar to the previously completed Crooked Spring PFAS project. The Riverneck Plant exceeds state PFAS drinking water limits and the district was placed under a consent order to treat and remove

PFAS. The improvements include a new approximately 6,200 square foot masonry PFAS treatment building to house carbon filters, an electrical room, and mechanical room. Unlike Crooked Spring, this project will reuse the existing backwash tank on-site, minimizing disturbance. Rosenberg showed the site plan indicating the new building location and access road coming off the existing road. He noted the building is over 180 feet from the closest abutter on Riverneck Road and 230 feet setback from Riverneck Road. The building roof peak is about 1.5 feet below the 35-foot height requirement.

Rosenberg highlighted that the main difference from Crooked Spring is that this site is in NHESP priority habitat for Blanding's Turtle. A turtle protection plan was developed and approved by the state in November 2025. There will be minimal tree clearing for the new building and access road. There is no change in use, no new treatment chemicals, no additional traffic, staff, or parking. Underground infiltration trenches will handle runoff from structures, and the existing detention basin will also be utilized. There will be no additional site lighting, noise, or odors. The project is not disturbing greater than an acre of land. The Conservation Commission determined no jurisdictional areas are impacted and no flood plain impacts were identified. The Fire Prevention Office determined no sprinklers are needed and current site access is acceptable.

Joel Luna read letters from town departments. The DPW Engineering letter from Sheila Joyce noted outstanding issues including: provisions for an enclosed dumpster pad should be depicted on plans, maintaining 10-foot horizontal separation between sewer and water services during construction, signage for no snow storage in detention basin should be posted, construction entrance should be shown and detailed with riprap, cut and fill calculations must be submitted, and areas with slopes exceeding 3 to 1 must have stabilization. The letter noted Stormwater Standard 2 (peak rate control and flood prevention) was not met, as post-development peak runoff rate exceeds pre-development for certain storm events. Other stormwater standards were met. The Fire Prevention Office letter from Captain Josh Abbott required code compliance, Knox box installation, and noted that truck turning plans utilizing Chelmsford Ladder 1 and snow storage plans need to be submitted. The Conservation Commission noted the project does not require their approval but does require NHESP approval since it is in mapped species habitat. The Building Commissioner Jose Negron advised the applicant must meet all zoning bylaws and yard requirements. Police and Chelmsford Water District had no comments. A private resident letter was also attached to the agenda.

Board member Raisbeck noted he would support adding wood turtles to the turtle protection list. Luna raised several questions: concern about de-icers on the steep graded road near the new building (Cannata responded they plow and maintain snow removal, sometimes using salt but typically not near wells); questions about the stormwater infiltration basin and whether its status was fully understood given the drainage concerns; and the need to include wood turtles in protection materials since only Blanding's turtles were pictured. Rosenberg confirmed the turtle protection plan was state-approved and stated they would instruct workers to protect any turtle. Jillian Flanagan from AECOM, participating via Zoom, confirmed they submit annual reports and would record any state-listed turtle regardless of species. Luna requested photos of wood turtles be added to materials for workers and expressed interest in receiving summaries of biweekly turtle inspections. Luna also raised concerns about slope instability due to sand, as experienced during construction of the original plant. DeFrancesco explained the slope had to be steepened to accommodate fire truck turning radius and will be stabilized with riprap.

Sousa received communications from two residents regarding turtles. Fernandes agreed with comments about turtles and questioned whether riprap is acceptable stabilization on steep grades and expressed concern about Stormwater Standard 2 not being met. DeFrancesco explained that for slopes of 1.5 to 1 or steeper, riprap is acceptable engineering practice. The applicants noted they had not had time to review DPW's comments, which were received only a few hours before the meeting.

During public comment, Frank Smart of 223 Riverneck Road, the most direct abutter, stated the GIS map of his property is not accurate and that his recently surveyed property is closer to the project than shown. He requested information about tree cutting, building height, and expressed concern about the view from his property if trees are cut. He asked if the building could be moved to reduce clearing near his property. He also expressed concern about lighting on his side of the building.

Jeff, interested in purchasing a property directly impacted, asked for clarification on lighting (the presentation indicated no additional site lighting), traffic (turning radius was for fire trucks), and building placement relative to the flood line. He requested more precision in language regarding noise, as the existing plant does have some noise.

Dale Crandall Jr. of 243 Riverneck Road, whose property previously had a 40B comprehensive permit, asked about impact on abutters' development rights, whether new wells were being drilled (Chair Lavallee confirmed no new wells, just an additional building), and about turtle study requirements. Lavallee clarified the project should have no impact on Crandall's property development rights, as the issues are separate.

Regarding turtles, most regulation comes from the state, not local boards, and since there is no building in the buffer zone, there is no Conservation Commission jurisdiction. DeFrancesco stated the project timeline is about a year behind Crooked Springs, expecting to break ground around August 2026 with a two-year duration.

Fernandes asked if the applicants could identify where the building would go on the aerial photo and expressed concern about significant mature tree loss that had not been discussed. Connolly asked about Conservation Commission's view on tree loss outside the buffer zone, but Lavallee noted they have no jurisdiction. Connolly requested the project developers look at what trees would come down, provide an approximate count and types, and consider mitigation such as planting native trees elsewhere or helping with the view shed from abutters.

Chair Lavallee summarized additional information needed for the next meeting: work on the O&M plan for snow storage, potential count and types of tree loss, positioning of the building on the GIS map as an overlay, a rendering comparing the two buildings in context of topography, more detailed discussion about the infiltration basin status, and inclusion of turtle photos (including wood turtles) in protection materials. Rosenberg and DeFrancesco agreed to provide the materials for the January 28 meeting.

Motion: by Raisbeck to CONTINUE the public hearing to January 28, 2026.

Motion seconded by Connolly. **Motion carries, unanimously, 7-0.**

(Roll call: Raisbeck, Luna, Sousa, Connolly, Comtois, Tanini, and Lavallee voted in favor.)

- 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, correction: 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 XVIII 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 presented the zoning amendments, explaining he would go through them in the order and batches planned for Town Meeting presentation, pausing after each article for comments and questions from the board and public.

CEIOD Amendments: Lavallee presented proposed changes to Section 195-111 (Applicability), adding language for projects involving change of use from one category to another, requiring that both gross square footage and square footage of the building footprint not exceed the original use. Luna explained this is intended to capture cases like Mercury where a multi-story building could be replaced with a single-story warehouse that has the same gross square footage but double the footprint. Fernandes and Connolly had questions about the "and" conjunction and whether the language captured the intent. Tanini requested a visual diagram with math for the next meeting to help visualize how this works. Luna agreed to prepare a diagram.

For Section 195-112 (Use regulations), language was added stating that the planning board may consider whether proposed combinations of primary uses in the same building or on the same lot are compatible with each other and with surrounding parcels. This relates to discussions about potentially incompatible combinations of uses.

For Sections 195-118 A and B (Performance Standards), language was added to allow the board to require documentation and technical evidence for environmental impacts when commercial and industrial uses abut residential. Belansky questioned how water quality and air quality would be applied, noting noise has a direct connection but water quality is regulated by stormwater and the board has no authority on air quality. Luna agreed to investigate and possibly restrict the language to noise if water and air quality are not workable.

For Section 195-119 A(6) (Application Review Procedures), the term "structure" was added. Discussion ensued about whether this would protect stone walls, with Luna noting that by definition, structures must be over 4 feet, so most stone walls would not qualify. Belansky questioned what the board would do with information about structures if they lack legal authority to protect them.

For Section 195-119 B(d), language was added requiring detailed evidence in project narratives that standards are being met.

For Section 195-119 D, substantial changes to stormwater system or site elevation was added as a trigger for modification requiring a hearing. Fernandes asked about the definition of "substantial" and Lavallee noted it is a judgment call but is used in existing regulations.

Parking Garage/Structure Use Table Change: Lavallee explained the proposal to change the approving board from ZBA to Planning Board for commercial parking garages/structures (line D.16), aligning with accessory parking garages and lots. Lavallee noted he reached out to the ZBA but had not heard back. Luna suggested the ZBA liaison (Tanini) bring this up with them.

Dimensional Tables Changes: Lavallee explained the proposal to change minimum depth from 0 to N/A in various dimensional tables for consistency, as minimum depth of 0 essentially means no minimum required.

Boarding House Definition Revision: Lavallee presented the revised definition of boarding house, which was updated based on state definition and other towns to address overlap with the family definition. The new definition clarifies that occupancy is on an individual room basis with separate agreements or fees, the building does not contain self-contained dwellings, and is not considered single family, two family, or multifamily dwelling. Luna asked about fraternity houses and Lavallee explained the individual lease requirement addresses this.

Bed and Breakfast Definition and Use Table: Lavallee presented the new definition for bed and breakfast, based on the state definition. For the use table, he proposed adding bed and breakfast with mapping similar to hotels/motels, initially including RC district. Tanini expressed concern about bed and breakfasts in RC district, noting it is still very residential and neighbors might object to short-term lodgers. Discussion ensued about the difference between bed and breakfasts (state-licensed lodging facilities) and Airbnbs (short-term rentals not currently allowed in residential districts). Luna questioned why RM was excluded. After discussion, the board agreed to remove RC from the initial proposal to take a baby steps approach and avoid potential conflict at town meeting.

Kelly Beatty of 117 Park Road appeared to ask that boarding houses, bed and breakfasts, and Airbnbs be treated with the same set of standards since they all have similar business models as commercial entities in residential areas. Lavallee noted he had considered adding boarding house adjustments but due to the number of articles, it might be more prudent for the next town meeting.

Outdoor Lighting Bylaw: Kelly Beatty presented the revised outdoor lighting general bylaw. He explained the history of the existing bylaw from 2000, which regulates newly installed lights but has no enforcement mechanism and is outdated given the prevalence of LEDs. The new version is a general bylaw (not zoning) that identifies existing bad lighting as nonconforming with a 10-year grace period for compliance unless triggers occur (construction, lighting changes). The bylaw separates residential (recommendations only) from commercial (requirements essentially unchanged from previous version). Commercial requirements address shielding and glare. A nuisance component is included, similar to the noise bylaw, with measurement changed from property line to 15 feet inside or at the building wall. Color temperature requirements are included due to environmental concerns about blue wavelengths. Municipal/town street lighting and right-of-way lighting is removed from requirements. Exemptions include walkway lighting, landscape lighting, and holiday lighting. Enforcement would be by the planning department, with Beatty having had productive conversations with Building Commissioner Jose Negron.

Fernandes expressed support for the bylaw and hope for stricter residential regulations in the future. Beatty noted the bylaw could be revisited in five years. Sousa expressed concern about municipal lighting and asked for confirmation from Director Clancy about comfort with the bylaw. Luna requested a slide showing how the new bylaw differs from the current bylaw. Comtois asked about the lighting standards officer, which Lavallee confirmed is Jose Negron (who also enforces the current bylaw, though rarely used). Tanini asked if the CBA had been consulted, and Beatty confirmed they are content with the commercial requirements and not opposing it.

Motion: by Raisbeck to CONTINUE the public hearing to January 28, 2026.

Motion seconded by Connolly. **Motion carries, unanimously, 7-0.**

(Roll call: Raisbeck, Luna, Sousa, Connolly, Comtois, Tanini, and Lavallee voted in favor.)

PUBLIC HEARINGS – CONTINUED: None

DISCUSSIONS:

1. Middlesex Street neighborhood rezoning area (*Public Hearing scheduled for January 28th*)

Chair Lavallee presented the Middlesex Street neighborhood rezoning proposal, noting this follows the same procedure used for Kate's Corner where an informal opportunity for neighborhood input occurs before the official public hearing. He reported presenting this to the Vinyl Square committee on Monday and receiving positive feedback, including from a resident in the area.

Lavallee explained this area was identified in the 2022 NMCOG zoning conflict study. The CBLT zone was created at the last town meeting and applied to Kate's Corner. The proposal for Middlesex Street includes: the top left corner parcels remaining CD; parcels to the right changing to RC; residential areas currently zoned IA changing to RC; the main core of IA for mills and railroad area changing to CBLT; IA abutting RC in the middle right changing to RC; and a swath of IA near the right side changing to CB to align with adjacent CB.

Ralph Block of 2 Edwards Place raised concern about parcel 13-19-20 along Stony Brook, which houses remnants of an original mill building. He suggested it should be deemed open space rather than rezoned to allow development. Extensive discussion ensued about whether the parcel could be zoned residential, public, or remain as proposed CBLT. Lavallee explained that public zoning is for public land and this is privately owned. Belansky noted the property appears to be in common ownership with a mill property and is used for staging, parking, or storage of vehicles/trailers. Luna and others noted that conservation commission jurisdiction through riverfront protection (200-foot buffer) provides significant protection regardless of zoning. The board discussed that making it residential could create new zoning conflicts by creating two CBLT pockets, and that CBLT might actually provide better protection since development would require stormwater controls and other protections. Block was convinced by the arguments and the board recommended he follow up with Conservation Agent David Koonce about current conditions including dumping concerns.

Virginia Timmins of 28 Lovett Lane thanked Lavallee for communication efforts and relayed a question about whether new front setbacks, building heights, number of stories, or coverage changes might affect existing structures or create nonconformities. Lavallee addressed this, noting that is a potential risk in any rezoning but going from IA to residential, nonconforming structures would be evaluated by ZBA in context of other houses in the area, and going to CBLT would likely make properties less nonconforming since IA setbacks are typically larger than CBLT.

Belansky noted letters went out to abutters the week of January 5th prior to the Vinyl Square meeting on January 12th. He has received calls from residents, interestingly from properties not proposed to be rezoned. The Vinyl Square committee also posted multiple notices on Facebook.

2. Community Development Director's Report

Belansky presented the town's ADU Annual Report to the state, which was also presented at the Select Board meeting on Monday. For calendar year 2025, seven detached ADU applications were submitted (four approved, none with occupancy yet) and eleven attached/within applications were submitted (nine received building permits, one received CO), totaling 18 applications over approximately eight to nine months. Belansky estimated 20 to 25 applications per year is a reasonable expectation going forward.

Belansky distributed a handout about the state's commitment to advancing ADUs. The state announced a construction loan program for income-eligible people and is conducting a design contest with the intent of preapproving ADU designs for building permit purposes to reduce entry costs. Belansky noted the state will likely also monitor whether local zoning is hindering ADU development.

Luna commented that he wished the state would put more motivation into helping towns with infrastructure to handle this. Tanini asked about owner-occupied versus non-owner-occupied applications, but Belansky explained they cannot require that information per state law. Fernandes noted none of the applications have been rejected, and Belansky confirmed all have been compliant with setbacks (with one driveway exception), indicating people are designing to comply.

Belansky also reported that the first meeting of the managed growth strategy committee has been scheduled with NMCOG for January 22. Following the state denial, the town pivoted to NMCOG and applied for a grant to assist with scoping and managing. The January 22 meeting will be the first of three meetings as part of an approximately \$10,000 grant through NMCOG focusing on scoping and budgeting. The meeting will be posted and open to the public.

3. Liaison updates

- Raisbeck reported the one meeting he had lacked quorum due to three people with the flu.
- Fernandes reported that Vinyl Square and North Chelmsford are looking at doing a spring event, discussing shutting down the road for a trolley to bring people to the mills and possibly a movie at the park, with a lot of energy but uncertain feasibility.
- Comtois reported Center Village meets tomorrow and they will discuss NMCOG plans for roadways and sidewalk expansions on Chelmsford Street (Route 110). They are planning another public hearing at the library in February to discuss potential plans.
- Sousa reported the next NMCOG council meeting will be next Wednesday, which he will attend.
- Luna reported on the Board of Health meeting. There were health inspections of restaurants with violations, usually training issues being fixed, including Pressed Cafe due to management changes. The main discussion was about a regulation on connecting to sewer and timing of pumping and inspection, with more stringent requirements for high aquifer areas as systems age. Chelmsford has 101 septic systems, 29 in high aquifer areas. They would look for those with aging systems to consider public sewer but there are complications with the sewer moratorium, so they want to discuss this matter with the Select Board. Luna also reported flu cases jumped from six to 103 between months. The next Board of Health meeting is February 3.
- Lavallee reported Conservation Commission met yesterday with no regulatory hearings. They are considering bringing forward a bylaw change regarding buffer to floodplain, still being discussed in subcommittee.

4. New Business – None

5. Old Business – Managed Growth Strategy – No updates

6. Other

Luna asked to add the Chelmsford Inn discussion to a future agenda to discuss whether they are complying with zoning and ensure that whatever happens after they close is not a continuation of the same kind of use. Connolly thought the board had decided not to pursue since they are closing in March. Luna clarified it would be useful to ensure the same issues do not continue with a new operator. Lavallee agreed to add it to the next meeting's agenda as a discussion. Belansky noted it will be a very short discussion.

Lavallee asked about the gap analysis follow-up meeting that was supposed to occur mid to late January. Luna indicated he did not expect it to happen in January and will ask at the next Board of Health meeting, noting he lets them know each time it is of interest to the Planning Board.

MEETING MINUTES: 11/12/2025, 12/10/2025

Lavallee noted the agenda had a typo listing November 6 instead of November 12.

Motion: by Connolly to APPROVE the meeting minutes for November 12, 2025, as drafted. Motion seconded by Raisbeck. **Motion carries, unanimously, 8-0.**
(Roll call: Raisbeck, Luna, Sousa, Connolly, Comtois, Fernandes, Tanini, and Lavallee voted in favor.)

On the December 10, 2025, the minutes were revised to correct that Ceretha Fernandes was on Zoom. Comtois identified an error on page 2, paragraph 2 under motion, where the roll call listed Sousa twice.

Motion: by Raisbeck to APPROVE the meeting minutes for December 10, 2025, as corrected. Motion seconded by Connolly. **Motion carries, unanimously, 8-0.**
(Roll call: Raisbeck, Luna, Sousa, Connolly, Comtois, Fernandes, Tanini, and Lavallee voted in favor.)

NEXT MEETING DATE(S): January 28, 2026.

ADJOURN

Motion: by Connolly to ADJOURN at approximately 9:50 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.