

NEEDHAM PLANNING BOARD

Tuesday April 15, 2025

7:00 p.m.

Great Plain Room

Needham Town Hall, 1471 Highland Avenue, Needham, MA

AND

Virtual Meeting using Zoom

Meeting ID: **880 4672 5264**

(Instructions for accessing below)

To view and participate in this virtual meeting on your phone, download the “Zoom Cloud Meetings” app in any app store or at www.zoom.us. At the above date and time, click on “Join a Meeting” and enter the following Meeting ID: **880 4672 5264**

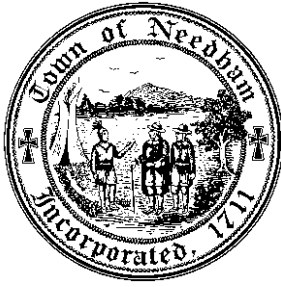
To view and participate in this virtual meeting on your computer, at the above date and time, go to www.zoom.us click “Join a Meeting” and enter the following ID: **880 4672 5264**

Or to Listen by Telephone: Dial (for higher quality, dial a number based on your current location):
US: +1 312 626 6799 or +1 646 558 8656 or +1 301 715 8592 or +1 346 248 7799 or +1 669 900 9128 or +1 253 215 8782 Then enter ID: **880 4672 5264**

Direct Link to meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88046725264>

1. Heather Lane Definitive Subdivision and Heather Lane Extension Definitive Subdivision/Residential Compound Special Permit Bond Reduction.
2. Update from the Large House Review (LHR) Committee.
3. Zoning Article Assignments for the Annual and Special Town Meetings and further Board discussion on Warrant Articles.
4. Minutes.
5. Summer Schedule.
6. Report from Planning Director and Board members.
7. Correspondence.

(Items for which a specific time has not been assigned may be taken out of order.)



PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
PLANNING DIVISION

MEMORANDUM

TO: Thomas Ryder –Engineering Department

CC: Carys Lustig – Public Works Department

FROM: Planning Department 

DATE: March 26, 2025

SUBJECT: **Reduction of Surety - DEFINITIVE SUBDIVISION PLANS**
Heather Lane Definitive Subdivision
764, 766, 768-768A & 768B Chestnut Street, Needham, MA

Enclosed please find a copy of an email from Bill Piersiak, directed to Lee Newman, Director of Planning and Community Development, dated March 13, 2025. Mr. Piersiak is requesting the reduction of the surety being held for roadway improvements on the Heather Lane Definitive Subdivision.

The Town is presently holding \$29,000.00. This amount includes \$15,000.00 for street maintenance purposes in accordance with the recommendations of the Needham Public Works Department and \$14,000.00 for off-street drainage surety for Lots 1, Lot 3, Lot 5 and Lot 6 in accordance with the recommendations of the Board of Health.

Please review this request and provide the Planning Board with a recommendation relative to the reduction of the above-described performance surety. The Planning Board will be considering this request at its meeting of Tuesday, April 15, 2025, and would appreciate receiving your recommendation by Wednesday April 9, 2025.

For your review I have enclosed your prior bond estimates and Mr. Piersiak's request.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

From: [WILLIAM PIERSIK](#)
To: [Alexandra Clee](#); [Lee Newman](#); [Thomas Ryder](#); [Robert T. Smart, Jr.](#)
Subject: Heather Lane & Heather Lane Extension Bond Release
Date: Thursday, March 13, 2025 9:50:03 AM

Dear All,

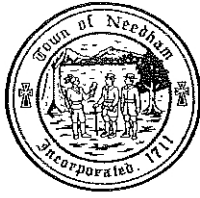
I would like to formally request the final outstanding bond money be released regarding the above mentioned development.

I met with Tom Ryder on March 12, 2025 and discussed what if any information was required of his office. As of this morning the as-built plan he requested has been submitted to him.

Letters from Tom Ryder dated November 18, 2024 to the Needham Planning Board indicate amounts still held of \$8,500.00 and \$15,000.00 for Heather Lane Extension and Heather Lane, respectively.

Best,

Bill Piersiak
617 759 9820



**TOWN OF NEEDHAM, MASSACHUSETTS
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
500 Dedham Avenue, Needham, MA 02492
Telephone (781) 455-7550 FAX (781) 449-9023**

November 18, 2024

Needham Planning Board
Public Service Administration Building
Needham, MA 02492

RE: Definitive Subdivision- Heather Lane
Off Chestnut Street-Request for Bond to release Lots

Dear Members of the Board:

The Department of Public Works has conducted several inspections of the subdivision. Per your request the following is an updated estimate of the remaining work required for the above referenced project.

Our estimate to complete this work is calculated as follows:

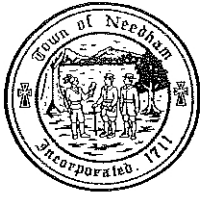
<u>Item</u>	<u>Unit</u>	<u>Unit Price</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Bounds	LS	\$5,500	\$5,500
Asbuilt Plans/NPDES	LS	\$6,000	<u>\$7,000</u>
		Subtotal	\$12,500
~ 15% Engineering and Contingency			<u>\$14,500</u>
		Subtotal	\$14,500
~ 2.0% inflation per year for 2-years		TOTAL:	\$15,000

If you have any questions regarding the above, please contact our office at 781-455-7538.

Truly yours,

Sincerely,

Thomas A Ryder
Town Engineer



**TOWN OF NEEDHAM, MASSACHUSETTS
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
500 Dedham Avenue, Needham, MA 02492
Telephone (781) 455-7550 FAX (781) 449-9023**

April 10, 2025

Needham Planning Board
Public Service Administration Building
Needham, MA 02492

RE: Definitive Subdivision- Heather Lane
Off Chestnut Street-Request to release Bond

Dear Members of the Board:

The Department of Public Works has conducted several inspections of the subdivision.

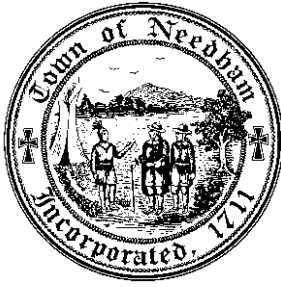
We do not object to the release of the remaining bond amount of \$15,000. If you have any questions regarding the above, please contact our office at 781-455-7550.

If you have any questions regarding the above, please contact our office at 781-455-7538.

Truly yours,

Sincerely,

Thomas A Ryder
Town Engineer



PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
PLANNING DIVISION

MEMORANDUM

TO: Thomas Ryder –Engineering Department

CC: Carys Lustig – Public Works Department

FROM: Planning Department 

DATE: March 26, 2025

SUBJECT: **Reduction of Surety - DEFINITIVE SUBDIVISION PLANS**
Heather Lane EXTENSION Definitive Subdivision
768 and 768A Chestnut Street, Needham, MA

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The Town is presently holding \$26,000.00. This amount includes \$8,500.00 for street maintenance purposes in accordance with the recommendations of the Needham Public Works Department and \$17,500.00 for off-street drainage surety RC-Lot 1, RC-Lot 2, RC-Lot 3, RC-Lot 4, and RC-Lot 5 in accordance with the recommendations of the Board of Health.

Please review this request and provide the Planning Board with a recommendation relative to the reduction of the above-described performance surety. The Planning Board will be considering this request at its meeting of Tuesday, April 15, 2025, and would appreciate receiving your recommendation by Wednesday April 9, 2025.

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November 18, 2024

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RE: Definitive Subdivision- Heather Lane Extension
768 and 768A Chestnut Street-Request for Bond to release Lots

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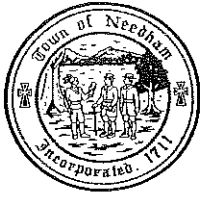
<u>Item</u>	<u>Unit</u>	<u>Unit Price</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Asbuilt Plans/NPDES	LS	\$7,000	<u>\$7,000</u>
		Subtotal	\$7,000
~ 15% Engineering and Contingency			<u>\$8,000</u>
		Subtotal	\$8,000
~ 2.0% inflation per year for 2-years		TOTAL:	\$8,500

If you have any questions regarding the above, please contact our office at 781-455-7538.

Truly yours,

Sincerely,

Thomas A Ryder
Town Engineer



**TOWN OF NEEDHAM, MASSACHUSETTS
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
500 Dedham Avenue, Needham, MA 02492
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April 10, 2025

Needham Planning Board
Public Service Administration Building
Needham, MA 02492

RE: Definitive Subdivision- Heather Lane Extension
768 and 768A Chestnut Street-Request release Bond

Dear Members of the Board:

The Department of Public Works has conducted several inspections of Heather Lane Extension.

We do not object to the release of the remaining bond amount of \$8,500. If you have any questions regarding the above, please contact our office at 781-455-7550.

If you have any questions regarding the above, please contact our office at 781-455-7538.

Truly yours,

Sincerely,

Thomas A Ryder
Town Engineer

Preliminary Report - LHRSC

APRIL 2025

Dimensional regulations for consideration

- **Floor Area Ratio** – change definition, reduce
- **Garage** – include in FAR calculation
- **Setbacks** – no consensus
- **Height limit** – desire for lower height
- **Lot coverage** – likely need to reduce
- **Design rules** – possible design changes, but perhaps not within scope
- **Lot size** – N/A
- **Tree by-law** – N/A (other committee)
- **Stormwater/drainage regulation** – N/A (other committee)

4.2.3 Table of Regulations for Rural Residence-Conservation, Single Residence A, Single Residence B, and General Residence Districts, for Buildings and Structures Created Through New Construction on any Lot

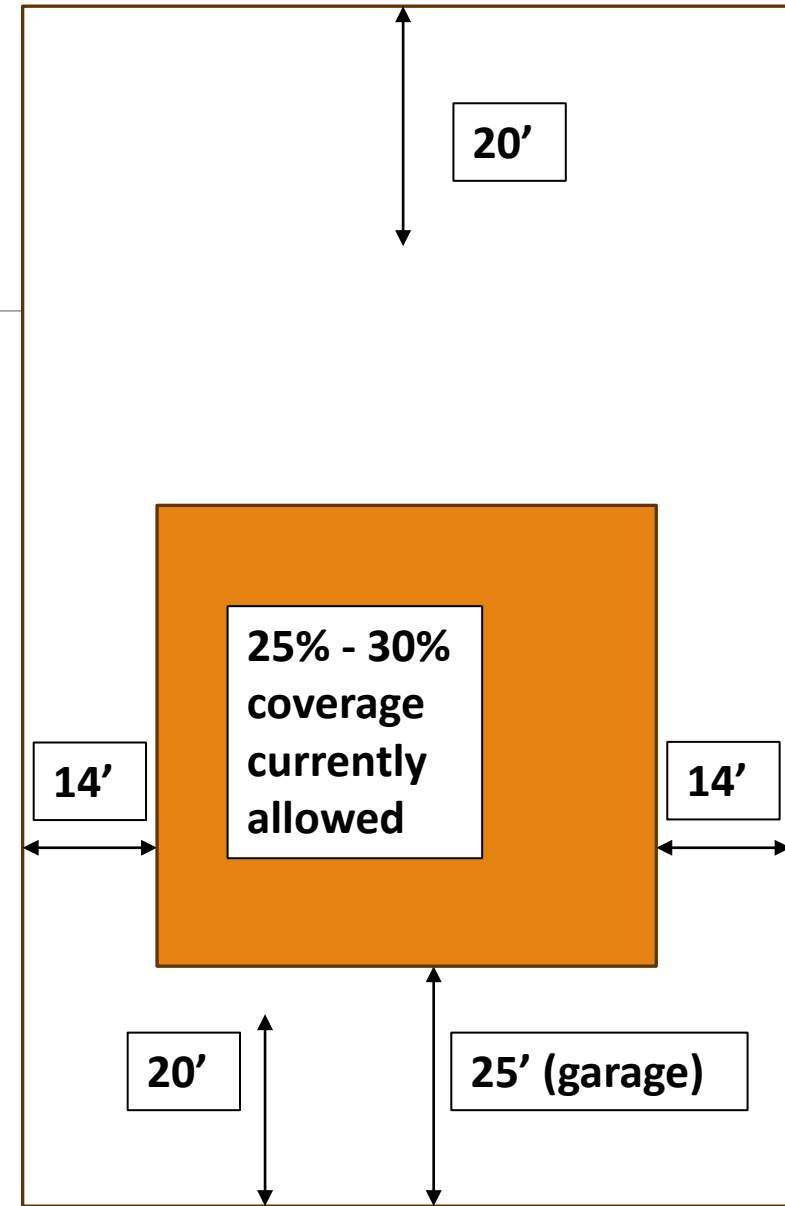
Except as otherwise provided in Section 4.2.4 for public, semi-public and institutional uses, no building or structure created through New Construction shall be constructed, altered, or relocated on any lot except in conformance with these regulations:

District	Min. Lot Area (sf)	Min. Frontage (ft)	Front Setback (ft)	Side Setback (ft)	Rear Setback (ft)	Max. Floor Area Ratio (F.A.R.)	Max. % Lot Coverage	Max. Stories	Max. Height (ft)
Rural Residence Conservation	43,560	150	50	25	25	NR	15%	2-1/2	35
Single Residence A	43,560	150	30	25	15	NR	NR	2-1/2	35
Single Residence B	10,000	80	20 (h) (i)	14 (a) (j)	20	.36-.38 (g)	25%-30% (b)	2-1/2	35 (e) (f)
General Residence	10,000	80	20 (h) (i)	14 (a) (j)	20	NR	30%-35% (c)	2-1/2	35 (e) (f)

Setbacks

- **Side setbacks:** Some interest; potentially tie side setbacks to lot frontage for new construction
- **Front setbacks:** some interest, but nothing definitive
- **Back setbacks:** desire for bigger backyards, but no specific ideas

• Note: 12' side yard setback for non-conforming lots.



Height limit

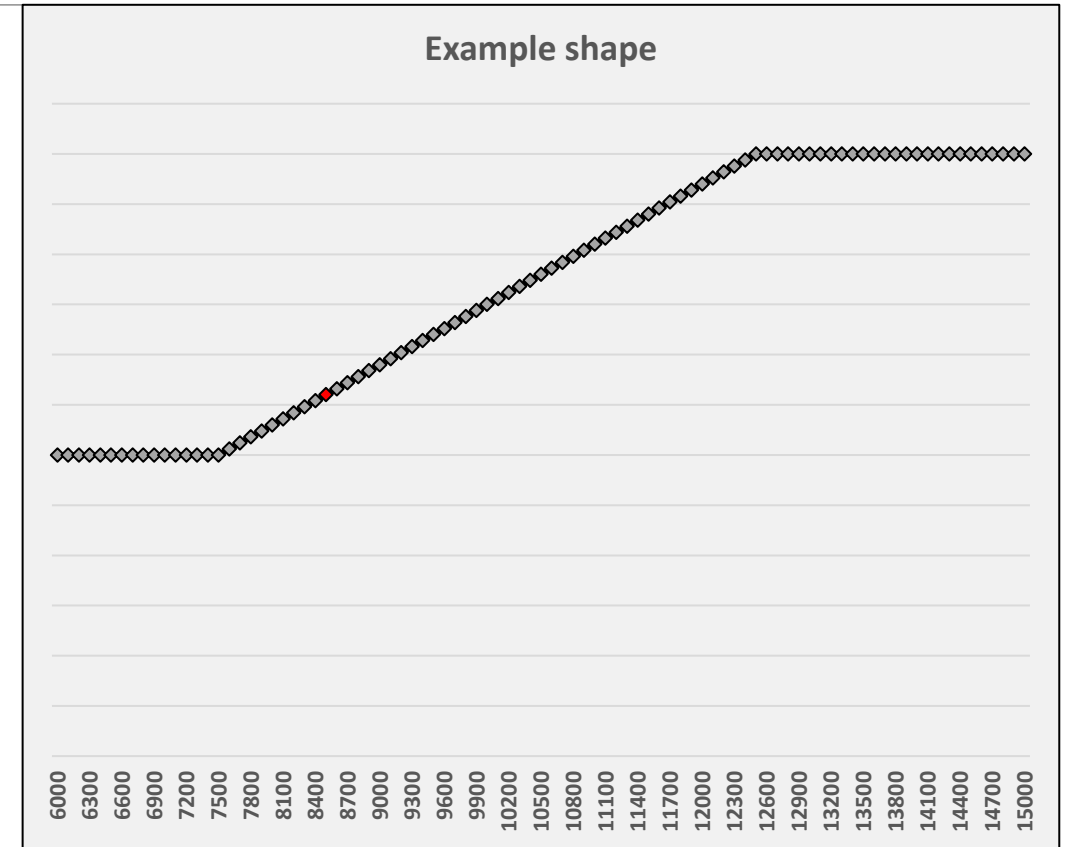
- **Height limit:** Clear interest in reducing height limit from 35' (current limit).
 - Reduction to 33' would have little functional impact on house. To 32'/31' begins to create some functional/design changes. Below that begins to prevent habitable third floor spaces.
- **Designs:** Interest in fixing definition of half story to ensure that sides have 2-story limit and/or sloping roofs. Flat roof third floors are limited to no more than half the size of second floor. (see sample house of undesirable design).
 - Some interest in controlling gables/dormers to reduce size perception of house
- **Lot grading height changing/retaining walls:** interest in more regulation of manipulation of finished grade height to create taller house.
 - However, can be addressed apart from dimensional regulations.

Lot coverage

- Some interest in reducing lot coverage given review of smaller lots. All the examples were well below the current coverage limit of 30% for lots under 12K, and below 25% for lots over 12K.
- Could be interest in reducing limits, particularly for the smaller lots, but will need to examine some houses on medium and larger lots.
- No specific numbers put out for a reduction.

Floor Area Ratio

- Apparent agreement on counting 3rd floor space
- Divided on whether to count basement. Could be a moot point regardless as “shape” of FAR limit is likely to be redone.
- Question: best way to count FAR?
 - Interior space of 5’ or greater is done in several towns. Confirmed to be able to achieve goal.
 - Strong consideration to use Wellesley’s definition (TLAG)
- The main question: where is the limit going to be?
- Example new curve. Includes minimum allowance at low end of lots and maximum allowance at higher end.
- More parity between smaller and larger lots.



Example showing sliding scale: house sizes related to lot sizes

Summary of LHR Considerations

Proposal

- 3rd floor space with interior ceiling height of 5' or greater and garages count towards FAR
- FAR limits changed to reduce the bulk of homes in comparison to what is allowed currently
- FAR limits changed using a measuring method that is graduated based on the actual size of the lot (*house sizes to be more appropriately scaled to the size of the lot*)
- Lot coverage limit reduced
- Height limit reduced – Adjust maximum ridge height and refine definition of “half story” for sloping and flat roof house designs, particularly along the side elevations abutting neighbors
- Setbacks unchanged may have minor adjustment for new construction, potentially tied to frontage of the lot

Ideas from Wellesley

- The current approach is to have firm as-of-right limits for all lots. Wellesley introduces another option – soft limits coupled with more permissive limits under a review process.
 - Working group did not favor the “tiered” approach of Wellesley’s limits - dimensional regulations like FAR should be tied to square footage of lot (similar concept to Concord).
- A Wellesley-like approach using a Large House Review process is time intensive, requiring hiring of additional staff and/or establishment of an appointed/elected entity to evaluate new construction.
- A process for evaluation would have to be created. Wellesley offers a blueprint, but there has not yet been a discussion on whether that was seen as desirable for Needham.
- Wellesley offers a successful example that controlled numbers and sizes of large homes on similar 10K and 15K lot districts – similarities include lot sizes, strong property values, and community support for a LHR process.
- The downside is the increased complexity and need for additional staff and/or volunteers.

Research on recent construction

Large House Study - FAR Rules/Tests - Summary Houses <10,000 SF (Non-Conforming Lots) 3/26/2025

Address	Lot Size SF	Lot Cov. Limit %	Lot Area Actual %	Floors	Livable Area		FAR Limit	Calculated Floor Area Ratio					Max Livable Floor Area (See Note 1)			
					As Designed N.I.	Garage		Floor 1,2	Floor 1,2,3	Floor 1,2,3,B	Floor 1,2,3,+G1	Floor 1,2 +G	Based On FAR Floor 1,2,3,+G1	Based on TLAG	Based On Lot Coverage Limit	
House 1	7,000	30%	23.4%	2.5	5,458	38%	38%	46.0%	62.4%	78.0%	62.4%	52.5%	3,750	-31.3%	4,368	26.3%
House 2	7,000	30%	24.1%	2.5	4,004	38%	38%	37.9%	48.0%	57.2%	55.3%	45.2%	3,306	-17.4%	3,870	70.8%
House 3	7,274	30%	22.4%	2.0	3,759	38%	38%	37.9%	37.9%	51.7%	37.9%	45.1%	3,767	0.2%	2,756	89.2%
House 4	7,353	30%	25.0%	2.5	4,245	38%	38%	35.1%	41.4%	57.7%	49.2%	42.9%	3,992	-6.0%	3,620	68.4%
House 5	7,828	30%	24.8%	2.5	5,276	38%	38%	38.0%	51.5%	67.4%	57.0%	43.5%	4,219	-20.0%	4,465	47.6%
House 6	8,159	30%	22.3%	2.5	4,857	38%	38%	37.9%	49.8%	59.5%	55.5%	43.7%	3,895	-19.8%	4,532	66.7%
House 7	8,171	30%	21.7%	2.5	4,722	38%	38%	37.4%	45.7%	57.8%	50.6%	42.3%	4,095	-13.3%	4,132	73.2%
House 8	8,250	30%	22.1%	2.5	4,962	38%	38%	37.7%	48.0%	60.1%	54.5%	44.2%	4,135	-16.7%	4,495	63.8%
House 9	9,191	30%	24.4%	2.5	5,858	38%	38%	37.6%	49.8%	63.7%	56.0%	43.8%	4,776	-18.5%	5,148	55.0%
House 10	9,801	30%	23.1%	2.5	6,417	38%	38%	37.7%	53.3%	65.5%	58.1%	42.4%	4,914	-23.4%	5,692	53.1%
House 11	9,953	30%	20.1%	2.5	5,349	38%	38%	31.1%	40.9%	53.7%	46.3%	36.5%	5,063	-5.3%	4,604	85.4%
House 12	7,932	30%	22.2%	2.0	4,023	38%	38%	38.7%	38.7%	50.7%	44.6%	44.6%	3,968	-1.4%	3,539	95.3%
House 13	8,300	30%	23.1%	2.5	5,360	38%	38%	38.4%	49.7%	64.6%	55.3%	44.1%	4,392	-18.1%	4,593	53.8%
House 14	7,000	30%	24.9%	2.5	5,081	38%	38%	40.3%	61.1%	72.6%	68.1%	47.4%	3,466	-31.8%	4,770	34.9%
House 15	8,844	30%	21.3%	2.5	4,713	38%	38%	33.8%	39.3%	53.3%	44.7%	39.2%	4,598	-2.4%	3,950	87.0%
23.0% Ave					4,939 Ave			Ave.=					4,156	-15.9%	4,302	63.0%

Bylaw Requirements

X = FAR Changeover	12,000 SF
FAR for lot < X	38%
FAR for lot >= X	36%
Lot Coverage Limit when < X	30%
Lot Coverage Limit when >= X	25%

= Adjustable for Testing alternate values

Note 1: Includes livable area on ALL floors, not including garage (typ of R.E. Listing)

TLAG = 1+2+3+G but NI B

Real Estate Research Goals

We are performing a value analysis to understand how potential changes in the zoning code affect anticipated selling prices of existing smaller homes. This includes a review of smaller homes that were sold to a developer and torn down as well as smaller homes sold to homeowners who have remained in the current structure. The intent is to understand the impact to prospective sellers if developers are restricted on the proposed house size and what magnitude, if any, that changes the current market value of the house.

Schedule and next steps

- **April/May** – Meet with Planning Board, discuss how to update Town Meeting
- **June 2025** – first community meeting primarily for listening and collecting concerns
- **Summer 2025** – LHRSC continues to meet to research and refine
- **September 2025** – second community meeting to present initial proposal and collect feedback
- **Fall 2025** – Integrate feedback for final proposals
- **November 2025** – third community meeting to present final LHR proposal
- **November/December 2025** – hand-off to Planning Board

MEMORANDUM

TO: Needham Planning Board
FROM: Katie King, Deputy Town Manager
SUBJECT: Capital Impacts Assessment of Proposed MBTA Communities Act Zoning
DATE: April 11, 2025

Methodology for Capital Impacts Assessment

One component of the Housing Needham (HONE) Advisory Group's charge was to "evaluate buildouts, projections, and analyses of fiscal, school enrollment, and infrastructure impacts provided by staff and consultants." The Town's consultant, RKG Associates, projected the likely number of housing units and school-aged children under the proposed zoning scenario.

Table 1. Likely and maximum build out under each plan including units, students, and residents.

RKG Projections	Units	Students	Residents ¹
Base Compliance Plan: Likely Build	411	55	637 – 1,233
Base Compliance Plan: Full Build	1,870	236	2,899 – 5,610

Table 2. Existing unit capacity compared to proposed zoning.

Existing Units	Existing Zoning As of Right Unit Capacity	Existing Zoning with Overlay Special Permit Unit Capacity	Base Compliance Plan Unit Capacity
775	1,019	1,636	1,870

Town departments, including the Finance Department, Needham Public Schools, Department of Public Works (including Engineering, Highway Division, and Water, Sewer, and Drains Division), Building Department, Police Department, and Fire Department, reviewed the RKG Associates analyses to assess potential capital impacts of the zoning.

Staff compared anticipated development growth, including projected number of housing units, student enrollment, and population growth, with known Town capital infrastructure needs. Departments assessed anticipated impacts on capital projects that are already being planned for² and new capital projects that may result from development under the zoning scenario, informed by their professional expertise and the source documents cited in this memo. The conclusions from those departmental reviews follow, except for the Needham Public Schools, which are addressed in a separate April 2025 memo titled "Proposed MBTA Communities Act Zoning: School Enrollment & Capacity Analysis." This memo has been updated since the October 2024 Special Town Meeting to reflect the Town's FY2026 – 2030 Capital Improvement Plan. All FY2026 capital budget proposals are subject to Town Meeting appropriation.

¹ Resident estimates are based on a low and high assumption of people living in each unit type: Studio with 1–2 people, one-bed with 1-2 people, two-bed with 2-4 people, and 3-bed with 3–5 people. These were then applied to RKG Associates' build out assumptions of 10% studios, 45% one-beds, 35% two-beds, and 10% three-bed units.

² FY2026-2030 Capital Plan: <https://www.needhamma.gov/5633/FY2026-2030-Capital-Improvement-Plan>

POLICE & FIRE

Background: The Town of Needham has recently made significant investments in the capital needs of the Police and Fire Departments. The Town opened a new Fire Station 2 in Needham Heights, at the intersection of Highland Avenue and Webster Street, in the Fall 2021. The Public Safety Building on Chestnut Street, which houses the Needham Police Department and Fire Station 1, opened in 2022. These stations are near the areas proposed for multi-family housing zoning. The Fire Department's vehicles and apparatus can serve the height and density of the buildings that would be allowed under the proposed zoning, as buildings of this size (and larger) exist in town.

Conclusion: Needham Police and Needham Fire do not anticipate any significant impact on their current operations. There may be a need for a small increase to staff over time as the Town's population grows, which is something that both departments monitor regularly. There are no anticipated public safety capital needs (e.g., new stations or equipment) because of these proposals.

Proposed developments would be required to comply with all fire code and building codes. Under the Massachusetts Building Code, new multi-family buildings with three or more units will be required to have fire sprinklers. To properly design the system, the project applicant must ascertain, through flow tests, that there is sufficient water available for the system to work. If the flow tests show there is not, the applicant must identify alternatives, such as an on-site water tank, to ensure the fire suppression system meets code.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS (DPW)

The DPW does not anticipate that the proposed MBTA zoning will result in a need for new capital projects to expand existing water or sewer capacity for the following reasons:

- The proposed areas for rezoning are already developed and have existing water and sewer infrastructure throughout to support buildings with residential, medical, retail, restaurant and commercial uses.
- The main factors that will drive the need for Town capital investments are the age and condition of the existing infrastructure. When those projects are undertaken, new or anticipated development will be factored into the project scope.
- Under site plan review, all proposed developments must show there is adequate water, sewer, and utility service provided to serve the project. The Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities' regulations state that "compliance with G.L. c. 40A Section 3A does not require a municipality to install new water or wastewater infrastructure, or add to the capacity of existing infrastructure, to accommodate future multi-family housing production within the multi-family zoning district."³ The Town is not required to make any capital investment needed to make a specific project viable.
- At some sites, new housing development may reduce pressure on the Town's water, sewer, and drain systems due to a change in use and/or the benefits of new developments being required to meet more stringent local requirements to reduce infiltration and inflow, increase energy efficiency, and manage stormwater on-site compared to when the existing buildings were built.

³ Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, 760 CMR 72.00: Multi-family zoning requirement for MBTA communities, dated 01/31/2025, effective 01/14/2025. <https://www.mass.gov/regulations/760-CMR-7200-multi-family-zoning-requirement-for-mbta-communities>

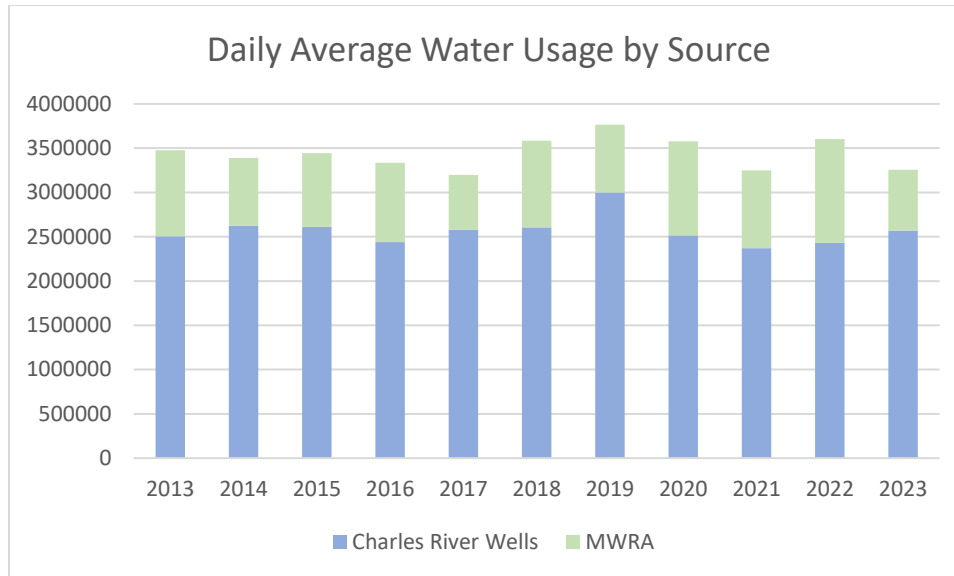
DPW is both proactive in its planning around potential development and reactive to each development as they are built. DPW has master plans for stormwater and transportation planning underway now, with funds requested for Fiscal Year 2026 to undertake master plans for the Town's water distribution system and to conduct an Infiltration and Inflow (I/I) conditions assessment of the Town's sewer system. These plans will provide the department with a comprehensive study of the age and condition of our infrastructure, identify locations for needed replacements and upgrades, and inform the prioritization of these projects. DPW will also be undertaking drainage, sewer, and transportation capital projects in the plan areas in upcoming years. The funding needed for these plans and anticipated projects are detailed below. These projects are necessary given the current conditions and any changes in zoning will be factored in to adjust the project scopes, as needed.

WATER

Background: The Town's water distribution system is a single service pressure zone system supplied by two sources. The Town's primary source of water is the Charles River Well Field. The well field consists of three groundwater-pumping stations. Needham's second water source is a connection to the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) surface water supply originating at the Quabbin Reservoir and delivered through the Metrowest Tunnel and the Hultman Aqueduct. This water is pumped into the Needham system at the St. Mary's Pumping Station located at the corner of St. Mary Street and Central Avenue. This supply is used when the Town's demand for water is greater than the local supply and serves as a backup should the Town's wells need to be taken off-line. The Town can supply 100% of its water through the MWRA, if necessary.

Water Division staff operate the water treatment plant and operate, maintain, and repair the townwide water distribution system. The system is comprised of more than 143.5 miles of water mains, 1,344 public and private hydrants, 3,231 water gate valves, and 10,294 water service connections. This system supports 15,714 installed meters as of September 2024. The Water Enterprise Fund operating budget is a self-supporting account. Water user fees and charges cover the entire cost of operations.

The components of the Town's infrastructure that most limit water distribution capacity are the pump stations, which are designed to handle 7 million gallons per day (mgpd). The State can also set limits on local water production based on drought conditions, conservation policies, etc. Between 2013 – 2023, the Town's average daily water usage has ranged from 3.2 mgpd - 4.4 mgpd and averaged 3.7 mgpd. In the winter months, the average is 2.3 - 2.6 mgpd. Overall water usage increases substantially in the summer months due to irrigation/landscaping. Days that exceed 6 mgpd are due to outdoor watering. On average, 75% of the Town's water has been generated locally and 25% provided by the MWRA.



Source: Town of Needham Department of Public Works; Division of Water, Sewer, and Drains, 2024

The Town has been investing in the Town’s water treatment, storage, and distribution systems over the past several years and the work continues. Planning is underway to add redundancy to Needham’s water system. Town Meeting appropriated design funding in FY2024 to create a fourth well at the Charles River Well Field, to add reliability to the Town water supply. Funding for construction is requested for Fiscal Year 2027. The MWRA is advancing their Metropolitan Water Tunnel Program to create redundancy of the water distribution system to the Metropolitan Boston area, with construction planned for 2027 – 2040. The Town is also investigating a secondary connection to MWRA with Natick and Wellesley to increase water redundancy before the MWRA tunnel project is completed to ensure access in the interim.

FY26 – 30 Water Capital Project Requests:

Project	FY26	FY27	FY28	FY29	FY30
Water Distribution Master Plan	\$250,000				
Charles River Water Treatment Plant HVAC Upgrades	\$405,000				
Water Service Connections	\$500,000				
Water Distribution System Improvements: Mills Road from Sachem to Davenport; and Mayo Avenue from Harris to Great Plain	\$49,500	\$470,500			
Water Distribution System Improvements: Kingsbury Street from Oakland to Webster		\$122,000	\$555,000		
Water Distribution System Improvements: Oakland Avenue from May to Highland			\$380,000	\$500,000	
Water Supply Development: Construction of 4 th well		3,050,000			

Conclusion: The Town believes it has enough water capacity to support housing developments that may result from the proposed zoning. Needham has capacity in its local water supply in the off-season and augments that local supply with additional water available through the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority. Irrespective of this zoning, the Town is working on redundancy systems for its local water supply and the MWRA is undertaking a redundancy project for their regional supply system.

DPW has requested \$250,000 in FY2026 for a water distribution system master plan to study and prioritize potential water distribution system improvements townwide. This study will inform future water capital projects and how they will be prioritized. At this time, DPW does not anticipate any new capital projects resulting from the proposed zoning, but may adjust the scope of projects (e.g., replace with a larger diameter pipe) to factor in any anticipated population growth.

For a specific development, the property owner/developer would be required to pay for the materials and construction to connect the pipes from their building into the existing water system. They must show there is adequate water, sewer, and utility service provided to serve the project.

SEWER

Background: The Town's sewage collection system consists of more than 130 miles of collector and interceptor sewers, 3,700 sewer manholes, and ten sewer pump stations. The Town's sewer system is a collection system that discharges its wastewater to the MWRA system for treatment. Approximately 65% of the Town's sewer collection system is a gravity-only system, and 35% of the sewer system is pumped into the gravity system. Needham has two principal points of discharge into the MWRA system and nineteen other public locations where subdivisions discharge to the MWRA system. DPW personnel maintain and operate 24 sewer pumps, motors, switchgear, gates, valves, buildings, and grounds contained in ten pumping facilities located throughout Town. The Sewer Enterprise Fund budget is a self-supporting account. Sewer user fees and charges cover the cost of the sewer operations.

The Town has been preparing for several major sewer system infrastructure replacement and upgrade projects. As noted in *Needham 2025: Commercial and Residential Growth Impact Study*, "Overall, the current sewer system is reliable and can accommodate development on either side of I-95."⁴ However, the study noted the largest challenge facing Needham's current sewer capacity and reliability is existing deficiencies with the Greendale Avenue/Route 128 sewer interceptor from Cheney Street to Great Plain Avenue. This is a trunk sewer that collects and conveys wastewater from numerous surrounding sewer lines and plays a critical role in the operation of the Town's sewer system. The existing interceptor sewer line is deteriorating and in need of rehabilitation to remain functional. This multi-phase project would consist of replacing or relining the 12,000 feet (2.5 miles) of 18-inch reinforced concrete gravity sewer main. Design funding was provided in FY2023, and Phase 1 of construction is currently underway, funded via the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Town Meeting appropriated \$13.6 million at the 2024 Annual Town Meeting to begin Phase 2, which will go out to bid this summer. Funding for Phase 3 construction (\$14 million) is currently requested in FY2028 and Phase 4 (\$6 million) in FY2029. Due to the investment required to complete the remaining phases, the Town continues to explore sources of outside funding (including MWRA and MassDEP programs) to reduce the local funding required.

⁴ Needham 2025: Commercial and Residential Growth Impact Study, prepared for the Town by Urban Partners, June 30, 2020. <https://needhamma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/22924/Needham-2025-Report-Final-Compressed?bidId=>

The Town of Needham is also under Administrative Orders from MassDEP to identify and remove Infiltration and Inflow (I/I) in its existing sewer systems. I/I is groundwater and stormwater that enters the sewer system, rather than into stormwater drains, limiting the capacity to process sewer wastewater. Failure to address I/I will result in increases in the percentage of sewer costs from the MWRA borne by the Town as well as additional administrative requirements. The Town completed a study in 2016 that identified target areas for I/I removal over ten years. DPW has been undertaking these projects using funds appropriated at Town Meeting, supplemented by funding from private development and grant funding secured from the MWRA, and all projects identified in the 2016 study have been completed. DPW has requested \$1M in FY2026 to formulate a new plan and cost estimates for the continuation of the I/I removal program. Most of the funding for the implementation of this updated plan will be sourced from private entities and developments, as required by the Town's Sewer System Impact Program Regulations.⁵

FY26 – 30 Sewer Capital Project Requests:

Project	FY26	FY27	FY28	FY29	FY30
Cooks Bridge Sewer Pump Station Replacement	\$195,000	\$3,859,000			
Sewer System Infiltration & Inflow Assessment	\$1,000,000				
128-Interceptor Phase 3			\$14,000,000		
128-Interceptor Phase 4				\$6,000,000	

Conclusion: Sewer infrastructure is in place throughout the areas proposed for rezoning. DPW has requested \$1M in FY2026 for a townwide sewer system infiltration and inflow assessment to identify priority capital projects with cost estimates. At this time, DPW does not anticipate any new sewer capital projects resulting from the proposed zoning but may adjust the scope of priority projects identified in the I/I assessment if they fall in the area of the proposed rezoning. Current conditions require the Town's investment in rehabilitating the Route 128 sewer interceptor. The proposed zoning will not impact the scope, timeline, or estimated cost of that project.

Individual housing developments will be subject to DPW's Sewer System Impact Program Regulations to reduce Infiltration and Inflow, thereby decreasing the volume of water processed through the sewer system. Applicants must show there is adequate sewer service provided to serve the project.

STORMWATER

Background: The DPW Water, Sewer, and Drains division oversees the collection and transport of stormwater (drains program) originating from rain and snowstorms for discharge into streams, brooks, rivers, ponds, lakes, flood plains and wetlands throughout Town. The Town's drainage infrastructure consists of approximately 100 miles of various size drainage pipes, 4,300 catch basins, 1,500 drainage manholes, and 295 drainage discharges. DPW's oversight includes managing both the quality and the quantity of stormwater in Needham. In terms of quality, stormwater and associated discharges are now considered by the federal government as potentially contaminated and have come under increasingly severe discharge performance standards. The intention is to reduce or eliminate contaminants

⁵ DPW Sewer System Impact Program: <https://www.needhamma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/25715/Sewer-System-Impact-Program-Requirements-Final-2016>

contained in the flow washed from ground surfaces considered to be harmful to the environment. In terms of quantity, Needham has experienced increased levels of flooding during intense rainfall events. The Town is focused on strengthening infrastructure, protecting critical assets, and educating residents about flood protection best practices. The Town is looking at two sets of strategies for stormwater management. The first are the system-wide improvements needed in the Town's stormwater drainage system. The second are site-specific improvements required of developments under the Town's Stormwater Bylaw.⁶

For system-wide improvements, 2024 Annual Town Meeting appropriated \$250,000 in Public Works Infrastructure funds to supplement \$250,000 in ARPA funds to support a Stormwater Master Plan. This plan is underway to evaluate the capacity and condition of the existing townwide stormwater drainage system, as well as identify, prioritize, and address the health and safety, regulatory, and capacity concerns associated with future stormwater management. It will also provide estimates for the financial investments that would be required for the construction and maintenance of future storm drain improvement projects, including storage areas for discharge (e.g., retention ponds, vaults, dry wells).

The Stormwater Plan will be closely tied to the ongoing master planning of the Town's brooks and culverts, which function as another important component of the stormwater network capacity by controlling the flow of surging water during heavy rains/storms. Destructive flooding in the summer of 2023 continued a pattern of increasingly erratic weather that is expected to worsen over time, further illustrating the need to continuously maintain and improve stormwater management infrastructure through holistic planning.

In addition to the capacity and resiliency considerations, the Stormwater Plan would allow the Town to identify ways to improve surface water quality by mitigating pollutants through the stormwater drainage system. This portion of the Stormwater Master Plan would assist the Town's efforts to comply with standards set by the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit. To meet these permit obligations, the Town must increase its investment in stormwater infrastructure management.

In April 2023, the Needham Select Board approved a Stormwater Utility Fee Program,⁷ which will spread a portion of the cost of this public service across property owners. Properties in Needham which have more than 200 square feet of impervious surface incur a stormwater utility assessment included in water/sewer bills. Impervious surfaces are hard areas such as roofs, concrete, asphalt driveways, and patios that do not allow water to soak into the ground easily. Instead, water runs off the impervious surfaces and then flows into a storm drain or a nearby body of water taking with it everything on that surface (pollution, trash, animal waste, etc.). Properties with more impervious surface create more runoff and have a larger impact on water quality and quantity, therefore the fee charged is related to the amount of impervious area on the property. As every property generates runoff and benefits from a stormwater program, the utility model is a recommended method of collecting revenue from those who place a demand on the stormwater management system. The revenue generated by the stormwater

⁶ Needham General Bylaws Article 7, <https://www.needhamma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/17787/Stormwater-By-Law-OTM-for-warrant-9192018-Clean-FINAL?bidId=>

⁷ Stormwater Fee: [https://www.needhamma.gov/5548/Stormwater-Utility-Fee?ct=t\(EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_5_25_2021_14_31_COPY_01\)](https://www.needhamma.gov/5548/Stormwater-Utility-Fee?ct=t(EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_5_25_2021_14_31_COPY_01))

utility fee will be used to manage and upgrade our Town's public stormwater drainage system to enhance stormwater quality as required in the Town's NPDES permit.

Site-specific improvements required of developments fall under the Town's Stormwater Bylaw, which requires new construction to collect and infiltrate 1-inch of water runoff from the roof. If a new building is located on a site with more than 4,000 square feet of impervious surface, that development is required to ensure that there is no impact from water runoff to abutting properties. The original focus of the Town's Stormwater Bylaw was on water quality and reducing pollutants. The Select Board has appointed a Stormwater Bylaw Working Group⁸ to make recommendations for revisions to the Town's Bylaws to strengthen requirements related to stormwater capacity. Recommendations from this working group are anticipated in 2025. Efforts to educate and encourage designing new buildings and hardening existing buildings against flood risk are ongoing.

FY26 - 30 Stormwater Capital Project Requests:

Project	FY26	FY27	FY28	FY29	FY30
NPDES Support Projects	\$500,000	\$1,026,500	\$1,223,000	\$1,279,000	\$1,350,000
Public Works Infrastructure: Brooks and Culverts		\$1,125,000	\$250,000		
Public Works Infrastructure: Storm Drain Capacity				\$250,000	

Conclusion: As projected flood risk continues to increase, addressing stormwater quality and capacity will be a Town priority for the foreseeable future. There has been flooding throughout Needham, including in some of the areas proposed for multi-family housing zoning. DPW has a variety of stormwater improvement projects⁹ completed, in process, and planned throughout town. These and future investments will be informed by a townwide master plan and individual project scopes will be adjusted based on any zoning changes.

Housing developments under this proposed zoning are subject to the Town's Stormwater Utility Fee and Stormwater Bylaw, and to any future amendments of the Stormwater Bylaw adopted by Town Meeting to strengthen on-site requirements for stormwater retention. New developments will also be subject to local and state wetlands regulations and the Town's Flood Plain District requirements.

ROADWAYS

Background: The Town engaged GPI to conduct a traffic analysis to assess the impacts of the Housing Needham (HONE) Working Group's April 2024 recommended zoning proposals.¹⁰ GPI analyzed 15 key intersections in the plan area. They took existing traffic conditions and applied an annual growth rate of 1% per year compounded, to project anticipated traffic conditions in 2034, assuming that there was no additional development. The traffic operations analysis used conservative rates for growth rate, trip generation, and mode share (cars vs. walk/bike/transit) to present a worst-case scenario.

GPI then compared this "no build" scenario with anticipated traffic conditions in 2034 under Scenario A, the Base Compliance Plan likely build out of 222 units. Amendments to the proposed zoning in the Avery

⁸ Stormwater Bylaw Working Group: <https://www.needhamma.gov/5492/Stormwater-By-Law-Working-Group>

⁹ <https://www.needhamma.gov/5527/Town-Stormwater-Projects>

¹⁰ GPI, MBTA Communities Traffic Impact Analysis, July 19, 2024,
https://www.needhamma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/46197/2024-08-23_-Traffic-Analysis

Square Business subdistrict subsequently added 189 units at 100 West Street to the likely build out analysis, for a total of 411 likely units under the Base Compliance Plan. GPI's traffic study also included an analysis of Scenario B, the Neighborhood Housing Plan, with a likely build out of 1,099 units. While Scenario B is no longer proposed, the conclusions of this analysis are included in the summary below to provide a perspective on a build out greater than 222 units.

GPI concluded that Scenario A (Base Compliance) is expected to have little to no impact compared to the "no build" scenario, while Scenario B (Neighborhood Housing Plan) is expected to cause localized impacts at key intersections (i.e. Chestnut Street at Great Plain Ave and Highland Avenue at West Street) if no mitigation measures are taken.

GPI then identified potential mitigation measures that could be applied to the intersections with unacceptable levels of service, including signal timing optimizations, roadway restriping, adjustments to pedestrian timings, and new signalization. GPI concluded that, with recommended mitigation measures, the traffic system will maintain an acceptable level of service under both Scenario A (Base Compliance) and Scenario B (Neighborhood Housing). Despite increased traffic volumes, intersections will operate within acceptable level of service thresholds; mitigation measures would ensure efficient traffic flow, supporting the planned development.

GPI recommended mitigation strategies for 9 of the 15 intersections included in the study. Of those, the Department of Public Works is currently working on capital projects that would address 7 of those 9 intersections: a redesign of Great Plain Avenue from Linden Street to Warren Street (known as Envision Needham Center¹¹) and Highland Avenue between Webster Street and Great Plain Avenue¹². The goals for these roadway improvement projects are to design with a Complete Streets approach, to slow car speeds, better accommodate bicycles and pedestrians, and improve traffic flow. The redesign of Great Plain Ave will be funded by Chapter 90. A temporary pilot of the proposed concept design will be undertaken in 2025, funded by a Safe Streets for All grant. If the pilot is successful, funding would be sought to complete the permanent design and construction. The Highland Avenue project is estimated in the next 5 – 7 years to be funded by the State's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). This project will be designed with Chapter 90 funds, with a goal of having construction funded by the TIP. The designs of both projects are in an early enough stage that they will incorporate the anticipated traffic volumes associated with any adopted zoning. The Town has been made aware that compliance with the MBTA Communities Act will be taken into consideration when state entities are evaluating projects for inclusion in their TIP programs.

DPW is currently in the procurement process to complete a Transportation Master Plan. This master plan will analyze Needham's existing transportation infrastructure from a holistic perspective, not just in terms of infrastructure maintenance but also in terms of safety considerations, use patterns and traffic flows, community connectivity, walking and biking accommodations, and how to best bridge gaps. The plan will be a foundational document from which the Town's Mobility Planning & Coordination Committee will establish transportation goals, set standards governing when and where to install bike lanes, identify target areas for improvement, and cost out solutions. The study will also investigate how

¹¹ Envision Needham Center Project Page: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/8daee7edb83b4855a27a6bcd2c7146e8>

¹² Highland Avenue Improvement Project: <https://highlandaveroadwayimprovements.com/>

the Town's transportation network integrates with surrounding communities to improve multimodal connectivity throughout the region.

FY26 – 30 Roadway Capital Project Requests:

Project	FY26	FY27	FY28	FY29	FY30
Public Works Infrastructure: Street Resurfacing	\$1,775,000	\$1,855,000	\$1,950,000	\$2,040,000	\$2,040,000
Public Works Infrastructure: Sidewalks	\$1,055,000	\$1,105,000	\$1,155,000	\$1,210,000	\$1,210,000
Public Works Infrastructure: ADA Ramp Upgrades	\$450,000	\$465,750	\$482,100	\$499,000	\$517,000
Public Works Infrastructure: Intersection Improvements	\$1,789,000	\$405,500	\$802,500	\$444,000	\$3,000,000

Conclusion: The GPI traffic analysis of the proposed zoning concluded that, with recommended mitigation measures, the traffic system will maintain an acceptable level of service under the Base Compliance Plan. DPW is in the design phase of two major roadway reconstruction projects (Great Plain Avenue and Highland Avenue) that would address 7 of the 9 intersections where GPI recommended mitigation strategies.

Improvements to Chestnut Street are not currently in the Town's FY26-30 capital improvement plan and may become a priority, depending on where multi-family development occurs. There has not been a feasibility study nor design of what a major roadway improvement project of this corridor would cost, but DPW has suggested \$10 - \$20 million as an order-of-magnitude estimate to undertake a major redesign of Chestnut Street, including drainage infrastructure, bicycle accommodations, wider sidewalks, new pavement, and other amenities.

The Town has also studied the build-out of additional segments of the Rail Trail, between High Rock Street to Needham Junction and from Needham Heights to Newton. Funding for these projects, or alternative networks of bicycle accommodation on our roadways, are not currently in the Town's FY26-30 capital improvement plan. Investing in the rail trail may become a higher priority with an increase in nearby transit-oriented development or if all municipalities along the trail align on project goals.

PARKING

Background: Needham's current zoning by-law requires 1.5 parking spaces per housing unit. The proposed zoning reduces that requirement to 1 parking spot per unit for multi-family residential uses in the overlay area only. This is informed by two parking studies: the Metropolitan Area Planning Council's Perfect Fit Parking study¹³ and the Needham Center & Needham Heights Parking Study conducted for the Town by Stantec in 2023.¹⁴

¹³ MAPC Parking Study: <https://perfectfitparking.mapc.org/>

¹⁴ Stantec Parking 2023 Study: <https://www.needhamma.gov/5383/Needham-Center-and-Needham-Heights-Parki>

MAPC has completed four phases of their study, conducting overnight weeknight parking counts at multi-family housing sites in Greater Boston to get data on peak parking utilization. Phases 1 and 2 examined nearly 200 sites and found that “only 70% of the off-street parking spaces provided at multifamily developments were occupied during peak hours (in the middle of the night), while Phase 3 similarly found only 76% parking utilization during peak hours.” Needham participated in Phase 4 of the study, which focused on communities west of Boston (Bedford, Belmont, Brookline, Concord, Framingham, Lexington, Natick, Needham, Newton, Sudbury, Waltham, Watertown, and Wayland). Parking counts were conducted at 37 multi-family housing sites and concluded that the parking supply was 1.45 spaces/unit while the parking demand was 0.92 spaces/unit. This is a parking utilization rate of 62%. The data collected in Needham showed a parking utilization rate of 57%, with a parking supply of 1.20 spaces/unit and parking demand of 0.57 spaces/unit.

As part of a comprehensive parking study undertaken by the Town of Needham, Stantec provided a zoning analysis comparing Needham’s requirements for parking in comparison to best practice national standards. In nearly all categories of land use, including residential, office, medical office, and retail, Needham’s zoning requirement is higher than the national standards. For residential developments, the national standard is 1.15 spaces per unit.

Conclusion: The parking requirement of a minimum of 1 space per unit is expected to be sufficient. A multi-family housing developer may choose to build additional parking, if they believe that a higher ratio is necessary to successfully rent or sell each unit based on market demand. The proposed zoning maintains the Town’s on-street overnight parking ban.

ENVIRONMENTAL

Housing more people in denser homes has net positives for the Town’s per-capita emissions. The areas that have been selected for rezoning are largely already developed and seek to promote “in-fill” development or redevelopment that takes advantage of the fact that there is already utility infrastructure and a pre-existing building footprint that limits the need to add additional impervious surfaces. In addition, increasing public transit ridership and reducing transit-related emissions is one of the goals of Needham’s Climate Action Roadmap, which is why revising local zoning requirements to ensure compliance with the MBTA Communities Act is one of the stated actions in the roadmap.

Neither the MBTA Communities Act nor the proposed local zoning override state or local environmental regulations. The Town’s existing bylaws (e.g., stormwater, floodplain, and wetlands) will still be applicable to any new development that occurs in these rezoned areas. This proposal does not rezone any Town-owned open space for housing.

Needham adopted the Opt-In Specialized Energy Code at the October 2023 Special Town Meeting, which took effect on July 1, 2024. Any new multi-family housing over 12,000 square feet will need to meet Passive House standards and any new multi-family housing under 12,000 square feet will need to be all-electric or, if using fossil fuel combustion systems, will need to provide pre-wiring for future appliances and HVAC electrification and install solar to offset energy usage.

Sources

1. Resident estimates are based on a low and high assumption of people living in each unit type: Studio with 1–2 people, one-bed with 1-2 people, two-bed with 2-4 people, and 3-bed with 3–5 people. These were then applied to RKG Associates’ build out assumptions of 10% studios, 45% one-beds, 35% two-beds, and 10% three-bed units.
2. Town of Needham, *FY2026-2030 Capital Improvement Plan*, January 2025.
<https://www.needhamma.gov/5633/FY2026-2030-Capital-Improvement-Plan>
3. Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, 760 CMR 72.00: Multi-family zoning requirement for MBTA communities, dated 01/31/2025, effective 01/14/2025.
<https://www.mass.gov/regulations/760-CMR-7200-multi-family-zoning-requirement-for-mbta-communities>
4. Urban Partners, *Needham 2025: Commercial and Residential Growth Impact Study*, June 30, 2020. <https://needhamma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/22924/Needham-2025-Report-Final-Compressed?bidId=>
5. Town of Needham Department of Public Works Sewer System Impact Program:
<https://www.needhamma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/25715/Sewer-System-Impact-Program-Requirements-Final-2016>
6. Needham General Bylaws Article 7, Stormwater Bylaw:
<https://www.needhamma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/17787/Stormwater-By-Law-OTM-for-warrant-9192018-Clean-FINAL?bidId=>
7. Stormwater Fee: [https://www.needhamma.gov/5548/Stormwater-Utility-Fee?ct=t\(EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_5_25_2021_14_31_COPY_01\)](https://www.needhamma.gov/5548/Stormwater-Utility-Fee?ct=t(EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_5_25_2021_14_31_COPY_01))
8. Stormwater Bylaw Working Group: <https://www.needhamma.gov/5492/Stormwater-By-Law-Working-Group>
9. Town Stormwater Projects: <https://www.needhamma.gov/5527/Town-Stormwater-Projects>
10. GPI, MBTA Communities Traffic Impact Analysis, July 19, 2024,
https://www.needhamma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/46197/2024-08-23_-Traffic-Analysis
11. Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), *Perfect Fit Parking Study*, July 2023:
<https://perfectfitparking.mapc.org/>
12. Stantec, *Needham Center and Needham Heights Parking Study*, 2023:
<https://www.needhamma.gov/5383/Needham-Center-and-Needham-Heights-Parki>
13. RKG Associates and Innes Associates, *Town of Needham, MA MBTA Communities Summary Report*, April 2024. https://www.needhamma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/45811/2024-04-26_Final-Report_Needham-MBTA

MEMORANDUM

TO: Needham Planning Board
FROM: Katie King, Deputy Town Manager
SUBJECT: MBTA Communities Act and Funding at Risk
DATE: April 11, 2025

On February 14, 2025, the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) filed emergency regulations (760 CMR 72.00) to implement the MBTA Communities Act (MGL c.40A Section 3A). The regulations are substantially similar to the zoning requirements set forth in EOHLC's previously issued guidelines, except that the regulations provided additional time for MBTA communities that failed to meet prior deadlines to come into compliance with the law. Under the regulations, Needham met its deadline to submit an action plan by February 13, 2025, placing the Town in interim compliance status. The Town now has until July 14, 2025, to submit a district compliance plan with adopted zoning.

Below and Attachment A summarize known sources of funding that are at risk if the Town of Needham is not compliant with the MBTA Communities Act by July 14, 2025. Non-compliant municipalities are either ineligible to apply, or compliance status is taken into consideration when discretionary funding decisions are made, making it unlikely that any non-compliant applications will be funded. Some items of note:

- This is not an exhaustive list. Various awarding authorities continue to update discretionary grant programs to factor in compliance status. The Town is often not aware if compliance will be taken into consideration until details of a new funding round are released.
- Many of these funds support infrastructure projects (e.g. roadways, stormwater, energy efficiency) that the Town has identified as a capital need or priority, unrelated to multi-family zoning.
- Most notable are two high-value funding opportunities that Needham is well positioned for:
 - **The Highland Avenue Improvement Project** from Webster Street to Great Plain Ave. The Town has applied to the Boston Regional Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for state and federal funds to cover most of the estimated \$20 million in project costs.
 - **Climate and infrastructure projects funded via Congressman Auchincloss' Community Project Funding (CPF) requests.** This is a flexible source of federal funding that can be used to advance priority water, sewer, roadway, stormwater, and other infrastructure projects that would otherwise be funded by local tax revenue. In FY23, Congressman Auchincloss secured \$2 million for the design of the Centre Street/Central Avenue Bridge. In FY25, the Congressman supported Needham's \$3 million request for stormwater management. The Town is applying again for FY26 funding for \$3 million to support stormwater management and flood mitigation projects.
- Some of the funding sources that take compliance into consideration allow local housing authorities, non-profit organizations, and others to apply. The Town of Needham's compliance status relating to the MBTA Communities Act impacts those applications. This includes pending requests for state funding to support Needham Housing Authority's redevelopment of Linden Chambers and an anticipated request from the Charles River Center to support the E. Militia Heights development.

MBTA Communities Act
Funds at Risk for Municipalities not in Compliance

Category	Funding Source	Funder	Types of Projects (NOTE: Needham projects are highlighted in blue)	Typical Grant Amounts
1 - MGL Chp 40A Sec 3A	Housing Choice Grant Program	Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC)	These funds support planning and zoning initiatives and public infrastructure construction projects in municipalities designated as Housing Choice Communities. Needham received a 5-year designation as a Housing Choice Community for 2022-2027. The Needham Housing Authority was awarded \$500,000 in FY25 for the redevelopment of Linden Street.	up to \$500,000
1 - MGL Chp 40A Sec 3A	HousingWorks Infrastructure Program	Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC)	Fund municipal infrastructure projects (roads, sidewalks, water, sewer, stormwater) to support and unlock housing opportunities. This grant program awards funds based on the project's nexus with housing, transportation, infrastructure, and community development needs.	\$300,000 - \$5 million
1 - MGL Chp 40A Sec 3A	Local Capital Projects Fund	Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC)	Funds a portion of the subsidies provided to housing authorities and nonprofit organizations needed due to reduced rentals in housing for the elderly, handicapped, veterans, families and relocated persons.	a formula determines funding amounts
1 - MGL Chp 40A Sec 3A	MassWorks Infrastructure Program	Executive Office of Economic Development (EOED)	In FY16, Needham received a \$1.7M grant for infrastructure improvements to 1st Avenue. This program is one of the State's most flexible source of capital funds for municipal infrastructure projects (roads, water, sewer, stormwater, etc.). Grants support municipal projects that spur housing production, new jobs, or private development.	\$500,000 - \$5 million
2 - EOHLC Regulations (760 CMR 72.00)	Collaborative Workspace Program	MassDevelopment	Matching grants for the planning, development, and build-out of collaborative workspaces for entrepreneurs, artists, designers, scientists, inventors, and small business owners.	up to \$100,000
2 - EOHLC Regulations (760 CMR 72.00)	Commonwealth Places Programs	MassDevelopment	To help communities implement placemaking projects that improve public spaces, create foot traffic, and stimulate economic activity.	up to \$25,000
2 - EOHLC Regulations (760 CMR 72.00)	Community Planning Grants	Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC)	In 2023, Needham received \$70,000 to support direct community engagement efforts in the Housing Needham (HONE) Working Group visioning process and the creation of zoning for multi-family housing.	up to \$150,000
2 - EOHLC Regulations (760 CMR 72.00)	Land Use Planning Grants	Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA)	In 2024, Needham applied for \$45,000 to assist in the Planning Board's review of current parking requirements to reduce impervious cover and implement Low Impact Development (LID) practices. Award decision is pending.	up to \$50,000
2 - EOHLC Regulations (760 CMR 72.00)	Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (LAND) Grants	Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA)	Funding to purchase land for conservation and passive recreation or to purchase a Conservation Restriction.	up to \$500,000
2 - EOHLC Regulations (760 CMR 72.00)	Massachusetts Downtown Initiative	Executive Office of Economic Development (EOED)	In 2022, Needham received \$25,000 in technical assistance/consulting services to develop a marketing strategy aimed at promoting small businesses in Needham Center. Grants can be used to support Business Improvement Districts, placemaking, wayfinding, small business support, and more.	up to \$25,000

MBTA Communities Act
Funds at Risk for Municipalities not in Compliance

Category	Funding Source	Funder	Types of Projects (NOTE: Needham projects are highlighted in blue)	Typical Grant Amounts
2 - EOHLC Regulations (760 CMR 72.00)	Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Planning and Project Grants	Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA)	In FY19, Needham received \$33,000 to complete a vulnerability assessment to prepare for the impacts of climate change and develop action-oriented resiliency plans. With this completed plan, Needham is eligible for future MVP Action project grants. Staff are currently shaping the Town's application for FY26.	up to \$100,000
2 - EOHLC Regulations (760 CMR 72.00)	Real Estate Services Technical Assistance	MassDevelopment	Technical assistance for municipalities to explore the redevelopment of a public surplus property or to address streetscape and infrastructure needs in a specific district to plan for growth.	
2 - EOHLC Regulations (760 CMR 72.00)	Rural and Small Town Development Fund	Executive Office of Economic Development (EOED)	Needham is not eligible to apply due to Town population.	n/a
2 - EOHLC Regulations (760 CMR 72.00)	Urban Agenda Grant Program	Executive Office of Economic Development (EOED)	General operating support for innovative and collaborative community economic development projects.	up to \$100,000
2 - EOHLC Regulations (760 CMR 72.00) and 3 - Chapter 238 Acts of 2024	Brownfields Redevelopment Fund	MassDevelopment	Environmental assessment and remediation of brownfield sites (contaminated land)	Up to \$100,000 for site assessment; up to \$250,000 for remediation
2 - EOHLC Regulations (760 CMR 72.00) and 3 - Chapter 238 Acts of 2024	Site Readiness Program	MassDevelopment	Funds municipal due diligence work, master planning, pre-permitting and permitting, engineering studies, capital improvements, demolition, and/or property acquisition, that enhances a site's readiness for commercial, industrial, or mixed-use development. The Needham Housing Authority was awarded \$500,000 in FY25 for the redevelopment of Linden Street.	\$50,000 - \$500,000
2 - EOHLC Regulations (760 CMR 72.00) and 3 - Chapter 238 Acts of 2024	Underutilized Properties Program	MassDevelopment	Funds projects to improve or redevelop blighted, abandoned, vacant, or underutilized properties.	\$50,000 to \$1 million
3 - Chapter 238 Acts of 2024	Local Economic Development Grants			
3 - Chapter 238 Acts of 2024	Library Capital Funds	Mass Board of Library Commissioners	Provides access to capital funds for Library building renovation, construction and repair.	
3 - Chapter 238 Acts of 2024	Mass. Cultural Facilities Fund	Massachusetts Cultural Council	Provides major facilities improvement grants to nonprofit cultural organizations.	\$8,000 - \$200,000
3 - Chapter 238 Acts of 2024	Historic Preservation Grant Program	Massachusetts Historic Commission	A 50% reimbursable matching grant program to support the preservation of properties, landscapes, and sites (cultural resources) listed in the State Register of Historic Places.	up to \$75,000
3 - Chapter 238 Acts of 2024	Impact Grant Program	Mass Board of Library Commissioners	Provides a grant to eligible libraries for the establishment of new services or enhancement of existing services. Impact grants assist libraries in responding effectively to local needs and align services with local community initiatives or impact areas.	\$5,000 - \$50,000
3 - Chapter 238 Acts of 2024	Destination Development Grant	Mass Office of Travel and Tourism	Grants provide funding for projects that expand, construct, restore, or renovate Massachusetts tourism destinations and attractions, and aid in destination recovery and resiliency.	up to \$250,000
3 - Chapter 238 Acts of 2024	Priority Development Site Program	MassDevelopment		

MBTA Communities Act
Funds at Risk for Municipalities not in Compliance

Category	Funding Source	Funder	Types of Projects (NOTE: Needham projects are highlighted in blue)	Typical Grant Amounts
3 - Chapter 238 Acts of 2024	Seaport Economic Council Grants	Seaport Economic Council	Grants help the economic growth of coastal communities. Grants help to create jobs and build resilience to the impacts of climate change.	up to \$1 million
4 - Funder Discretion	Decarbonization Technical Assistance	Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA)	In 2024, Needham was awarded technical assistance equivalent to \$30,000 to create a municipal building decarbonization roadmap in support of Climate Leader Communities designation and future funding opportunities.	
4 - Funder Discretion	Federal Community Project Funding	Congress via Congressman Auchincloss	In FY24, Dover & Needham received \$2 million to fund design for replacement of the Centre St/Central Ave Bridge. Staff are preparing to submit an updated FY26 request for \$3 million to fund stormwater management and flood mitigation projects.	In FY25, Congressman Auchincloss submitted 15 projects requests ranging from \$600,000 to \$14 million.
4 - Funder Discretion	Green Communities Competitive Grant	Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA)	This year, Needham was awarded \$162,848 for conversion of lighting at Eliot Elementary School to LEDs and the purchase and installation of heat pump hot water heaters at Town Hall and 470 Dedham Avenue (DPW). The Town previously received \$148,143 to fund energy conservation measures, lighting, in municipal facilities including Pollard Middle, Mitchell, and Newman Schools. Staff are preparing to submit an updated FY26 proposal for \$180,701 for LED lighting upgrades at Broadmeadow and attic insulation at Mitchell.	up to \$500,000
4 - Funder Discretion	MBTA Catalyst Fund	Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC)	Available to municipalities that have received an MBTA Communities Act district compliance determination letter from EOHLC. The Catalyst Fund will support activities related to housing creation, infrastructure projects associated with housing, and acquisition of property to promote housing.	\$250,000 – \$1 million
4 - Funder Discretion	Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)	Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)	Needham has submitted a TIP application for the design and construction of Highland Avenue from Webster Street to Great Plain Avenue. The project cost is estimated at \$20 million. Major state, regional, and local transportation improvement projects are funded through the TIP. The MPO is responsible for evaluating applications to receive federal and state funding through inclusion on the TIP.	Project scopes vary widely; regionally significant projects can receive \$50 million or more.

UPDATED: 04/08/2025

MEMORANDUM

TO: Needham Planning Board
FROM: Katie King, Deputy Town Manager
SUBJECT: Proposed MBTA Communities Act Zoning: School Enrollment & Capacity Analysis
DATE: April 11, 2025

Needham Public Schools Enrollment Forecasting

Annually, the Needham Public Schools (NPS) hire a consultant (McKibben Demographic Associates) to complete a demographic study and to forecast changes in Needham's population and the school district's student enrollment over the next fifteen years. Needham's Future School Needs Committee, including members from the School Committee, Select Board, and Finance Committee, meets annually with the School Superintendent and the Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Operations to review enrollment projection assumptions that will be used to generate updated enrollment forecasts for the district. Known or anticipated housing development is one factor, of many, that informs these projections. The Future School Needs Committee meets again to review McKibben's final reports.

In McKibben's final FY26 – FY40 report,¹ the "low scenario" projects changes in Needham's school enrollment without any impact from the proposed MBTA Communities Act zoning. Under this scenario, McKibben predicts that the Needham Public Schools enrollment will remain between 5,450 – 5,500 students for the entire fifteen-year period. This enrollment level is similar to the 2020/21 School Year and is 216 fewer students than NPS enrolled pre-pandemic in the 2018/19 School Year. Excluding any effects of zoning, McKibben projects that NPS will gain just 16 students over the current year district enrollment over the next 15 years. These projections are driven by dropping household size in Needham and the Greater Boston area, fewer households with school-aged children moving into Needham than in the past, and a slight decrease in the percentage of Needham students enrolling in public schools.²

Multi-family Zoning Student Projections

Zoning bylaws establish options of what an owner can do with their property, but ultimately it is up to each owner to decide, within the scope of the zoning bylaws, if they will develop their property and how. Given these unknown variables, the goal of analyzing a zoning proposal is to provide the Town with projections, not exact predictions. However, the Town can make reasonable assumptions about these variables to give a directional sense of what to anticipate in the future.

The Town of Needham hired RKG Associates to do several analyses of the potential impacts of the proposed multi-family housing zoning to comply with the MBTA Communities Act, including anticipated students generated from new housing units. Addendum A: Student Projections vs. Actuals, April 2025 provides details of this analysis. RKG Associates utilized four primary factors to derive student generation projections:

¹ McKibben Demographic Research. *Population & Enrollment Forecasts FY26-40*, December 2024.
https://www.needham.k12.ma.us/departments/business_operations/business_office/enrollment_growth_forecasts

² Gulati, Anne. FY26 Enrollment Report to the School Committee, December 2024.
https://www.needham.k12.ma.us/departments/business_operations/business_office/enrollment_growth_forecasts

1. Number of units that are likely to be built under the Base Compliance Plan (411) and the maximum possible units allowed under the zoning (1,870).
2. Unit type distribution across buildings (i.e. number of studios, one-bedroom, two-bedroom, and three-bedroom units), based on regional development data from CoStar.
3. Percentage of units that will be affordable (12.5%) versus market rate (87.5%), as determined by the proposed zoning language.
4. Student generation rates set by unit type and affordability level sourced from Residential Demographic Multipliers and Needham Public Schools enrollment data.

Town and NPS staff met with McKibben Demographics to affirm RKG's assumptions and pupil generation multipliers. RKG's student projections for the Base Compliance Plan are consistent with the student generation rates that Needham has experienced over the last five years from large multi-family housing developments in town.

RKG Projections: Base Compliance Plan	Units	Students
Likely Build	411	55
Full Build	1,870	236

School Capacity Analysis

Addendum B: School Capacity Analysis, April 2025 puts the underlying enrollment forecast and zoning-related student projections into the context of the Needham Public School's Master Plan to better understand potential capital impacts. The methodology used to project if the School Master Plan would be able to accommodate additional students is as follows:

- Begin with McKibben's peak enrollment for NPS over the next 15 years for each school level.
- Add 130% of the RKG student projections to get a conservative total enrollment estimate. This methodology overestimates the likely impact, providing a worst-case scenario.
- Compare total enrollment projection to existing school capacity.
- Compare total enrollment projection to the school capacity of the preferred School Master Plan Scenario C1a (renovate Pollard for grades 6-8, High Rock becomes a 6th elementary school, Mitchell renovated as 3-section school).

The analysis concludes that the School Committee's preferred master plan scenario (C1a) would accommodate the student projections of the Base Compliance Plan likely build out at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Looking Ahead

These projections help inform decision makers and the public about potential trade-offs and benefits of the zoning proposals. The specific numbers in these analyses will shift over time, as McKibben updates enrollment forecasts annually, the School Master Plan evolves into more concrete projects, and zoning possibilities materialize into actual projects. The Town and the Needham Public Schools will use these projections as a starting point for operational and capital planning and will update assumptions in student forecasts annually as new and more specific information is known.

RKG Associates' student projections for the Base Compliance Plan are consistent with the student generation rates that Needham has experienced over the last five years from large multi-family housing developments in town.

RKG Student Projections	Students	Units	Rate per Unit
Base Compliance Plan Likely Build	55	411	0.13
Base Compliance Plan Full Build	236	1870	0.13

RKG Student Generation Rates	Market	Affordable
Studios & One-bed	0	0
Two-bed	0.16	0.38
Three-Bed	0.50	1.20

RKG Unit Distribution Assumptions	studio & one-bed	two-bed	three-bed
	55%	35%	10%

Source: CoStar

Sources: Residential Demographic Multipliers and Needham Public Schools actuals. Assumptions affirmed by McKibben Demographics (NPS forecaster).

Actuals: Children Attending NPS from Specific	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	Average	Units	student generation rate per unit
Charles River Landing (300 2nd Avenue)	18	14	14	17	21	16.8	350	0.048
Kendrick (275 2nd Avenue)	46	50	58	50	45	49.8	390	0.128
Modera (700 Greendale Ave)	41	41	38	45	45	42	136	0.309
Hamilton Highlands (757 Highland Avenue)	8	12	22	27	31	20	79	0.253
Rosemary Ridge (100 Rosemary Way)	0	1	4	6	7	3.6	105	0.034
Rosemary Lake Apts (multiple addresses)	22	27	29	37	46	32.2	204	0.158
Total	135	145	165	182	195	164.4	1264	0.130

Source: Needham Public Schools

Actuals: Unit Distribution	studio & one-bed	%	two-bed	%	three-bed	%	Total Units	
Charles River Landing (300 2nd Avenue)	244	70	106	30	0	0	350	25% affordable
Kendrick (275 2nd Avenue)	202	52	149	38	39	10	390	25% affordable
Modera (700 Greendale Ave)	19	14	103	76	14	10	136	25% affordable
Hamilton Highlands (757 Highland Avenue)	3	4	76	96	0	0	79	
Rosemary Ridge (100 Rosemary Way)	30	29	75	71	0	0	105	
Rosemary Lake Apts (multiple addresses)	102	50	80	39	22	11	204	
Total	600	47%	589	47%	75	6%	1264	

Source: Town of Needham

The Needham Public Schools' preferred master plan scenario can accommodate the student projections of the Base Compliance Plan likely build out at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Data & Assumptions	Elementary	Middle	High School	Sources
Current NPS enrollment projection (McKibben, FY26-40)	2634	1305	1694	McKibben Report, Dec 2024; elementary peak is 2039-40, middle peak is 2028-29, high school peak is 2027-28.
Additional projections from zoning (RKG Associates)	see below*			Likely Build = 55 students total; Full Build = 236 total
% NPS student enrollment by level (2025-26)	46%	24%	30%	McKibben Report, Dec 2024.
% of total RKG student projections added to peak McKibben year, assumes all enter same year*	56%	34%	40%	Increased each school level by 10% over actual to provide a conservative analysis. This assumes 130% of the projected students are realized to increase confidence about the potential impacts on our school capital plans.
Current School Capacity	2634	1419	1800	The current capacities of Needham's elementary and middle schools are 2,634 students at elementary (assuming an average class size of 22.7) and 1,419 students at middle school (based on an average class size of 16.48 students.)
Proposed Capacity of the School Committee's preferred master plan scenarios: renovate Pollard for grades 6-8, High Rock becomes a 6th elementary school, Mitchell renovated as 3-section school.	2854	1335	1800	Elementary Capacity from School Master Plan Scenario C1a (Dore & Whittier). Middle capacity from Massachusetts School Building Authority enrollment capacity for Pollard Middle School project. High School figure is current capacity.

BASE COMPLIANCE PLAN LIKELY BUILD	Elementary	Middle	High School
Current NPS enrollment projection (McKibben, FY26-40)	2634	1305	1694
Additional projections from zoning (RKG Associates)	31	19	22
Total Enrollment Projection	2665	1324	1716
Current School Capacity	2634	1419	1800
Current Capacity vs. Enrollment	(31)	95	84
Proposed School Capacity	2854	1335	1800
Proposed Capacity vs. Enrollment	189	11	84

*Note: 55 total students are projected, 72 students included in analysis.

From: [Alexandra Clee](#)
To: [Elin Soderholm](#)
Cc: [Lee Newman](#)
Subject: RE: Planning Board representation at LWV Warrant Meetings
Date: Tuesday, April 1, 2025 7:18:00 PM

Please see below.

Thanks, alex.

Alexandra Clee
Assistant Town Planner
Needham, MA
781-455-7550 ext. 72271
www.needhamma.gov

From: Elin Soderholm <esoderholm54@comcast.net>
Sent: Wednesday, March 26, 2025 11:06 AM
To: Alexandra Clee <aclee@needhamma.gov>
Subject: Planning Board representation at LWV Warrant Meetings

Hello, Alexandra!

Please put a Save the Date event on the Planning Board calendar for the annual **Needham League of Women Voters Warrant Meetings on Monday, April 28 at 7:30 p.m. at The Center at the Heights.**

We will follow the same format as in previous years: five rooms, four for in-person attendees and one room for a virtual option. The virtual option will be hosted in the Conference Room at the Center and will allow for a Planning Board representative to be present to address questions Zoom attendees may have. But this could also accommodate a representative to attend on Zoom instead of in person, if needed. The other four rooms will require actual in-person representation.

If you could let me know by **Friday, April 18** who will be representing the Planning Board in each room to help address questions on individual Warrant Articles, that would be extremely helpful for our planning purposes. The rooms at The Center at the Heights are:

Room 211 (upstairs) - Precincts A/B/C **Natasha Espada**
Room 217 (upstairs) - Precincts D/E **Justin McCullen**
Room 219 (upstairs) - Precincts F/G **Adam Block**
Room 104A (the Cafe, first floor) - Precincts H/I/J **Artie Crocker**
Conference Room A (upstairs) - Zoom option representative, either in person or by Zoom. (Zoom link to be sent later, if representative will attend by Zoom.) **Lee Newman and whoever is elected.**

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me.

Thanks for your help!

Elin Soderholm
Needham League of Women Voters
Warrant Meeting Coordinator
508-626-6403

NEEDHAM PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

March 18, 2025

The Needham Planning Board meeting, held in the Charles River Room of the Public Services Administration Building, and virtually using Zoom, was called to order by Natasha Espada, Chairman, on Tuesday, March 18, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. with Messrs. Crocker, Alpert, Block and McCullen, Planner, Ms. Newman and Assistant Planner, Ms. Clee.

Ms. Espada noted this is an open meeting that is being held in a hybrid manner per state guidelines. She reviewed the rules of conduct for all meetings. This meeting does include one public hearing and public comment will be allowed. If any votes are taken at the meeting the vote will be conducted by roll call.

Joe Prondak – Discussion of the Definition and Interpretation of Floor Area Ratio (FAR) as relates its Application to Commercial and Residential Property.

Building Commissioner Joe Prondak stated a question came up as to how he intended to apply FAR. Over the years it has been applied one way for residential and one for commercial. There is one definition which is to measure to the 2 existing faces of the wall. A residential builder recently wanted a discount on the second floor where there were a couple of open spaces. He called former Building Commissioner Dave Roche who said he always counted to the exterior wall. He did not say he counted actual floor area. In commercial buildings, in a large atrium area, counting to the exterior wall would have a big impact on parking. He is looking for some consensus on how to apply this.

Mr. Block asked if he has checked with other towns. Mr. Prondak stated Milton feels it is a minimal factor and does not count it much. Mr. Crocker stated, with an exterior shell, he does not care if there is a full first floor or balcony. The Board needs to define bulk. He can appreciate it from a builder's point why they would not want to count it. He suggested counting floors going across. That is an issue with larger commercial buildings. He feels it would be helpful to have 2 definitions. Ms. Espada stated commercial does not count the stairs twice because of atriums. She suggested "The sum of areas and the sum of floors of each building on a lot including areas used for human occupancy in basements, attics and penthouses as measured from the exterior faces of the wall." It should exclude cellars if not finished, unenclosed porches, balconies and attics. Open space cannot be occupied. Mr. Block asked if the Large House Review Committee revised to include attic and basements. Ms. Espada noted only one floor can be occupied if open. Mr. Prondak stated he does not see language that refers to human occupancy. Ms. Espada stated there are 2 different definitions.

Mr. Block commented areas like open space below cannot be occupied so the second 500 square feet on the second floor does not seem applicable. Ms. Newman stated residential is different from commercial. Mr. Alpert noted it is the same definition but different exclusions. It differs by district also. It is not a question of the definition of floor area. The idea is to limit bulk. A discussion ensued. Ms. Newman stated the FAR would work if calculated the other way. The parking calculation is based on human occupancy. Ms. Espada noted FAR gross and floor area. Ms. Newman stated it is tied to parking and how much gross floor area you have. Floor area is to the walls but there is no definition for it. Mr. Alpert noted floor area gross as measured for exterior faces of the walls but then exclusions. Mr. Block stated the commercial application is significantly different from residential.

Mr. Prondak showed the impact on a single-family home. Ms. Espada feels it is confusing as written and will need to be looked at in the future. Mr. Crocker asked if the previous Building Commissioner was counting it and was informed he was. He noted the language needs to be cleaned up. Mr. Prondak stated, for commercial, if he can clearly see the open atrium portion, he could consider it a one-story portion. Mr. Alpert noted the Floor Area gross for human occupancy. He reads the use of human occupancy does not apply to the entire building. It only applies to basements, attics and penthouses, so only finished main floors are wall to wall. Mr. Block noted if they resolve that Floor Area ratio refers to bulk then what is in, whether finished or unfinished, is irrelevant. Mr. Alpert stated it was not included because it excludes basement and attics. Mr. Block stated it was intentionally designed to exclude those areas. Mr. Alpert noted the question for Town

Meeting is whether the Board members want to change that. Ms. Espada feels Mr. Prondaks' interpretation is correct. Mr. Prondak has a meeting with the Large House Review Committee on Friday and he feels this will come up.

Public Hearing:

7:15 p.m. – Scenic Road Act and Public Shade Tree Act: The Town of Needham, 1471 Highland Avenue, Needham, MA, Petitioner (Property located at 1285 and 1307 South Street (Assessor's Map 211, Parcel 5); across from 12 Fisher Street/0 South Street (Assessor's Map 209, Parcel 1); and 1115 South Street (Assessor's Map 207, Parcel 3).

Upon a motion made by Mr. McCullen, and seconded by Mr. Block, it was by a vote of the five members present unanimously:

VOTED: to waive the reading of the public hearing notice.

Ms. Espada noted correspondence from the Police and Building Commissioner who both had no issues. There is nothing from the Fire or Board of Health. Justin Savignano, Assistant Town Engineer, stated the town is working on water main replacement and storm water improvements on some areas of South Street. In 2 locations there are trees that need to come down to accommodate the underground structures that are being put in and in a third location 2 trees in the right of way need to be taken down on private property as the existing water main is running underneath it. There are 15 trees in total. They have gone to the Select Board and the Conservation Commission and have worked with Ed Olsen of Parks and Forestry to examine the trees and determine the condition of the trees. Of the 15 trees, 3 are in good condition. There will be a 2 to 1 replacement but not necessarily in the same place. He is working with the residents at those locations.

Mr. Block noted, of the grouping of trees, some are good, some are fair, and some are poor. What impact will the removal of those trees have on storm water management if not replaced in those locations? Mr. Savignano stated they have identified these as the best possible locations to put these structures with the least impact to trees and for storm water management. It is a balance. The storm water needs to be treated before going back into the environment. Mr. Crocker asked if it was that some would be replanted in the same general locations and some will not be. Mr. Savignano stated some will be planted in the area and others will be planted around town. They cannot plant a tree and have the root system destroy what they are trying to do. He will work with the residents. Mr. McCullen asked, of the 30 trees to be planted, about how many will be in this area and how many across town. Mr. Savignano would want to consult with the Tree Warden but feels maybe one third.

Mr. Block asked if there was feedback from the property owners. Mr. Savignano noted, in general, the ones they spoke to seemed ok with it once they explained. Ms. Newman stated this is a scenic road. When taking down trees they will need to put at least the same number of trees back on the scenic road. Ms. Espada wants to make sure the property owners agree with the placement of the trees. Tree Warden Ed Olsen stated a lot of these trees were not planted but just sprung up. A lot of elms are dying of disease and the areas are a hot mess. These places were chosen to clean up the mess and replant natural species. Black locus regenerate so they will regrow. It is poisonous and not a desirable landscape tree. They will work with the neighbors. Ms. Espada commented it seems thorough and well thought through. She opened the hearing for public comment.

Dwight Alwon, of 1125 South Street, stated he got a notice in the mailbox. He asked if people whose trees are being taken down were notified and he was informed they were. Mr. Olson stated there is only one resident being affected with a white pine and a dying red maple. The rest are on public land.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Block, and seconded by Mr. Crocker, it was by a vote of the five members present unanimously:
VOTED: to close the hearing.

Ms. Newman will prepare the documents for the next meeting.

Presentation on M.G.L. Chapter 40B Project: Needham Enterprises, LLC, 105 Chestnut Street, Needham, MA 02492, Petitioner (Property located at 339 Chestnut Street, Needham, MA in the Chestnut Street Business Zoning District).

George Giunta Jr., representative for the applicant, noted this is a small project. It will be going to the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) in April. The property is at 339 Chestnut Street across from McDonalds. It was a ReMax office and was used for an office before that. It appears it was built as a residential house in the early 1900s and the lot was created as a single, separate lot around 1911. It is an old lot with an old structure. It has been used for commercial purposes for a long time. The structure will be knocked down and the site will be completely rebuilt. A brand new 3-story building will be built to contain 6 residential units. There will be 2 residential units on each floor and 2 units will be affordable, one on the first floor and one on the third floor. Both first floor units will be accessible. All units will be 2-bed, 2-bath except for one on the first floor. One unit on the first floor will be one-bed, one bath. There will be common laundry facilities on each floor. Originally there was going to be unit/tenant storage in the basement but that is changed to building maintenance storage. Mr. Alpert noted there is no elevator and was informed that is correct.

Mr. Giunta Jr. discussed the nature of the property. There is only 40 feet of frontage and 6,200 square feet of area. There was a similar project across the street at 32 Junction Street. There was an issue in the By-Law identified years ago which regarded being a fully non-conforming lot with insufficient frontage and insufficient area. Unless the By-Law is addressed or recognized as being an error, it poses a distinct problem for redevelopment unlike with residential. It could be redeveloped as a 40B and that could sidestep the non-conforming. Mr. Alpert asked if the defect could be remedied if the MBTA Basic Plan were passed, then it becomes residential under the MBTA. Mr. Giunta Jr. noted it may or may not but he would not count on that. It will take some time to play out. He noted the property will provide a benefit. He noted the building is set back 75 feet from Chestnut Street to put parking on the site that is reasonably compliant. Currently the parking is behind the building. The maneuvering aisle to get back there is substandard and all the spaces are compact spaces. Because the parking is so narrow, putting parking in front they can get 6 full size spaces. The maneuvering aisle is still a little compact but is more than the existing. One space can be a handicap space and 2 will be compact. The building is proposed to be setback approximately 5 feet from the side and rear. There is no issue with the underlying zoning.

Mr. Giunta Jr. noted the building is just over 34 feet high and is a 3-story building. The underlying zoning only allows 2½ stories. The use of the first floor as residential is a departure from the underlying zoning. It does not allow residential on the first floor. There is a maximum of 8 units per acre for density and the FAR is .7. This is a 1.0 FAR but would be revised as it does not take into account the basement. It will be within the zoning. He noted, as an aside, if addressing bulk, why include a basement that is below grade and no one can see. Mr. Block agreed. Mr. Crocker asked the housing density here and Ms. Espada asked about site plans and the landscape plan. Mr. Giunta Jr. noted, basically parking takes up the front of the lot and there are only 5 feet around the front and back. There is not much you can do for landscape. One side needs to be clear for emergency access.

Ms. Newman asked if it was possible to remove one parking space and create some landscaping. Mr. Giunta Jr. stated it is a tradeoff. It is less than 300 feet to the Junction Station, so it is very walkable. Scott Melching, of Scott Melching Architect LLC, stated he never counts the accessible spot but he feels there should be a visitor spot. Mr. McCullen noted 2 units are listed as accessible but there is only one handicap spot. He asked if the parking will be dedicated spots? Matt Borrelli, owner, stated 2 spots could be assigned. There were originally 8 units but it was changed to 6 units due to parking. Mr. Alpert asked if there was on street parking here. Mr. Giunta Jr. stated there is no parking on Chestnut Street but there is widely available parking at the Junction on the off hours. Mr. Melching stated the building is in line with Roche Bros and the bank at a 75-foot setback.

Mr. Crocker noted in between the buildings there is some fairly good foliage. He asked if the foliage was going to stay and what would be done to preserve the trees. Mr. Borrelli stated he knows the neighbor well. His intent is to protect the trees. Mr. Block stated it would be helpful to those on the Board who have not gone through a 40B before to explain what brings the applicant here now and why a 40B. Mr. Giunta Jr. explained there are 2 big reasons to do this as a 40B. First is the zoning matter. Due to the small size of the lot, lack of adequate frontage and lack of adequate area it makes it difficult and questionable under the underlying zoning. Under the base zoning it either requires some real configuring or reuse of the

existing building. The second is there is no way to do residential on the first floor under the base zoning so you have to go the 40B route. A 40B is basically a comprehensive permit and is administered by the Zoning Board of Appeals who take recommendations from every other Board and Committee in town. Mr. Alpert stated the Planning Board still reviews all applications in front of the ZBA.

Mr. Giunta Jr. noted this is a LIP (Local Initiative Project). He does not know if there have been any others in Needham as they are unusual. A LIP is a lot like a co-project between the developer and the town. The big difference is in the LIP the town gets a lot more say than a regular 40B project if they want. Ms. Espada appreciates the multi-family housing. Her concern is a 75 foot setback. The minimum side yard setback requirement is 10 feet on the plan. Mr. Giunta Jr. stated that is an error. There is no setback on the side. Ms. Espada asked if it was possible to move the building up to get the parking in the back to go along with what the Planning Board is trying to do for the streetscape. Mr. Melching saw no success in attempts to do that. It was detrimental to the footprint anytime they tried to go past the building and no turning radius worked for the back parking. Mr. Giunta Jr. stated the bank and Roche Bros are set way back. This building is a little less of an issue. It works better with those building setbacks. This is the best building for the property.

Mr. McCullen stated parking in back would make it unsafe for ambulance/emergency vehicles. It is better and easier in front for safety. Mr. Melching noted there is no change from what was shown to the state. He was surprised when the letter came back with misinformation. One unit is fixed affordable and one unit will not be a fixed unit. Mr. Block commented it is a benefit to the town allowing for 2 affordable units. He commends the thoughtfulness of the entire project. This will go through the ordinary hearing process with the ZBA. They are not ignoring the other departments. Mr. Borrelli stated he is showing the abutting landscaping for reference purposes. He is happy to work with the abutter on the landscaping. Mr. Crocker noted there are fairly large trees between the properties. Ms. Espada noted it is a narrow lot but asked if there is any way to screen with some landscaping. Anything to make walking down the street a little nicer. Mr. Alpert suggested talking to the abutters about allowing visitor parking during the off hours. Mr. Giunta Jr. will check. It was agreed it made sense to limit the number of cars to one car per unit. Mr. Crocker stated it makes sense to designate parking spots. Ms. Newman has no concerns. She would like to see some landscaping along the street edge but understands the restrictions.

The Board discussed the recommendations. Mr. Alpert does not feel the Board should have a recommendation to the ZBA without a formal petition. Ms. Newman noted the applicant has formally applied for it. Ms. Espada asked what if the building came up closer and had some parking in back and some in front. She feels a 75-foot setback on Chestnut Street is a bad idea. Ms. Newman stated the goal is to not have it 75 feet back. Ms. Espada commented she has not seen any studies so they are basing this on what the applicant is saying. She asked if there could be a 2-foot setback to have a little buffer of something in the front. The purpose is to walk down the street but this is unappealing. Mr. Block feels 3 feet of shrubbery is not going to change things. Mr. Alpert noted the town wants walkable but there is no place to walk to here. The problem is there is no housing here to begin with. Ms. Espada does not feel they need to explore the entire building to create an opportunity for a better pedestrian experience. Pushing the building back 5 feet to the back line would be better than what is there.

Upon a motion made by Mr. McCullen, and seconded by Mr. Block, it was by a vote of the five members present unanimously:

VOTED: to recommend to the ZBA they consider having the building and parking lot moved back, possibly as far as the property line, to create a landscape buffer along Chestnut Street and except for that recommendation the Planning Board is in agreement with the plan.

A motion was made to call out the Board's concern that the landscape around the building will be damaged during construction and to the extent possible the property owner can work with the abutter to replace anything that is damaged. Mr. Block suggested adding "to the extent practical based on the MEP engineer and the project architect. Mr. Crocker noted it would be based on a conversation with the ZBA. Ms. Newman noted the Board is just making a recommendation for the ZBA to take under advisement. Mr. McCullen asked if the recommendation is for the ZBA to require replacement of trees not on their property. Mr. Alpert asked Ms. Newman if the permitting authority can have a requirement that the petitioner replace any trees on neighboring properties that are destroyed or damaged by the construction. Ms. Newman does not know

the answer. Mr. Block does not think they should go ahead with that motion as that would require an agreement with another property owner. All agreed.

Board of Appeals – March 20, 2025.

76 Fair Oaks Park – Geoffrey R. Urquhart and Kate P. McDavitt Urquhart, Trustees

Upon a motion made by Mr. Alpert, and seconded by Mr. Block, it was by a vote of the five members present unanimously:
VOTED: “No comment.”

Appointment Recommendation to Stephen Palmer Reuse Development Committee.

Ms. Newman will get clarification on the time commitment and the Board can vote next time.

Minutes

Upon a motion made by Mr. Block, and seconded by Mr. McCullen, it was by a vote of the five members present unanimously:

VOTED: to adopt the minutes of 2/13/25 as they appear in the packet.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Block, and seconded by Mr. McCullen, it was by a vote of the five members present unanimously:

VOTED: to adopt the minutes of 2/25/25 as they appear in the packet.

Report from Planning Director and Board members

Mr. Crocker gave an update on the Large House Review Committee. They are continuing to look at non-conforming lots and doing an in-depth study. They looked at height reductions and other considerations. Of the 15 or so houses they looked at height was a big issue. It would have some impact but not a great impact on value. They have not finished with the discussion. Mr. Block asked what are the options that are being looked at – 35 feet to 28 feet? Mr. Crocker stated around 30-34 feet but it has not been modeled out yet. Mr. Block asked what the FAR considerations are. Mr. Crocker stated they are looking at bulk and may refine what gets counted toward FAR. Ms. Newman noted they have not agreed on an ideal bulk. Wellesley is coming it to discuss how they structure it, what is working and what is not. Mr. Alpert reminded the Board of the Dover Amendment, M.G.L 40 A, Section 3 says “no zoning ordinance or By-Law shall regulate or restrict the interior area of a single-family building.” Defining it based on finished or unfinished is putting a restriction on it. Ms. Newman will clarify with Town Counsel Chris Heep. Mr. Block asked Ms. Newman to report back to the whole Board the outcome of their discussion with Mr. Heep. That is a material impact on the discussion of FAR.

Ms. Newman noted she, Ms. Espada and Mr. Crocker are going to the Finance Committee to talk about the Base Zoning Plan. The Select Board has invited the Planning Board in on 4/15 to talk about the Flood Plain Zoning. She got some technical comments they incorporated in, sent it back and got more comments back. They are trying to finalize to satisfy it. The comments are only technical and nothing substantive. Mr. Alpert stated his job on the Town Manager selection committee is almost done. They had an Executive Session to interview a few candidates. Some were chosen to recommend to the Select Board. He checked with town employee Tatiana Swanson. The recommended candidates were sent to the Select Board today and they will probably be made public Thursday. Every interview lasted longer than an hour. All solid candidates were sent to the Select Board. There will be one more quick meeting to approve the minutes of the Executive Session. He added the 4/1 meeting will be his last meeting.

Mr. McCullen noted the Mobility Planning and Coordinating Committee continues to meet. They are cycling interconnections with bike paths, either individual or dedicated bike paths throughout town. There will be more to come on that. For the Downtown Streetscape Improvements the QR codes are still open for feedback. They will come back with recommendations for a pilot in the summer that will either change some land configurations from temporary paint wise and

would be incorporated into the permanent design. They are big on multi-modality and pedestrian safety. Mr. Block noted the CPC makes recommendations to the Select Board for the town Warrant tomorrow. All are excellent projects. The ask is about \$7.5 million and the funds are about \$6.5 million. There are 2 housing projects. One is the Charles River Center Militia Heights property. They will demolish what is there and build about 40 units of affordable housing.

The second is the Needham Housing Authority has gone through a number of iterations for Seabeds Way and Captain Robert Cook. It was so expensive they separated Cook out and just have Seabeds Way. They are looking for about \$3.5 million for that and there is a recreational item for \$300,000 for an action park/pickle ball area. Also, some improved signage on trails. He would recommend that be funded. It is unclear of the zoning process for the Charles River Center. He asked if that was a 40B and was informed it was. He noted the CEA conducted additional engagement with business owners and brokers as the market is changing. There has been some feedback. He will report back. Mr. Crocker stated Militia Heights is a private venture. He noted the Tree Committee had their first meeting and there is nothing to report.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Block, and seconded by Mr. McCullen, it was by a vote of the five members present unanimously:

VOTED: to adjourn the meeting at 9:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna J. Kalinowski, Notetaker

Artie Crocker, Vice-Chairman and Clerk