



TOWN OF
CHESTER, MASSACHUSETTS

01011

PLANNING BOARD
15 Middlefield Road Chester, MA
01011

Planning Board Meeting Minutes July 16th, 2025 at 6:00 pm
Chester Town Hall (Basement) COA Room 15 Middlefield Road, Chester, MA 01011

Meeting Called to order at 6:10 pm by Liz Massa, Chair

*Attendees: Planning Board Members: Rich Holzman (RH), Bob Daley (BD), Nick Chiusano (NC), Elizabeth Massa (EM) Chair, Muriel Hall (MH) Clerk Absent: Veronica Marr (VM) Alternate
Guests: Nate Bolduc, Chester Fire Chief, Richie Small, Former Chester Fire Chief, Lora Wade, Chair
Chester Conservation Commission*

Agenda

Approve last meeting minutes of June 26, 2025. Motion to approve, BD, 2nd LM, 5 aye votes

New Business

1. Proposed Battery Storage Bylaw – LM shared opening comments regarding the Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) By-laws proposed for Chester. The conversation is a continuation from the PB meeting 6/26/2025 meeting where the concerns for BESS facilities, particularly those using lithium-ion batteries, can pose significant safety risks including thermal runaway, explosions, and the release of toxic gases. NB and RS reiterated their concerns for fire and emergency responses to BESS conditions. The expanded equipment and training demands on towns and adjacent properties without any financial support or source.

LM referenced a draft bylaw document introduced for discussion. The draft used the Rochester BESS bylaw as a format. The Blandford Bylaw and Agawam Article-Bylaw also served as templates for regulations and specific language used in drafting the Chester document. LM strongly supports the Blandford Bylaw implemented in 12/2023 and revised in 8/2025, Blandford has experienced development of 2 large-scale solar photovoltaic projects. Sunpin with 4.7 MW (DC) and Solar Project is 7.4 MW (DC). The draft is distributed for additions, edits and comments.

BD updated legislative action proposed by Pease & Sabadosa; HD 4557, An Act requiring local approval for battery storage facility permitting. The bill could help create BESS moratorium. BD contacted and heard from both legislators. Bill now in House Rules Committee, is not on Docket. They expressed concern that it won't pass even if it gets a Hearing. BD shared his short-term BESS concern..." we are in no man's land, between no By-Law & possible pending Law/moratorium",

developer could make a proposal soon with an obscene amount of \$\$ to throw at landowners, and the risk of fire that cannot be controlled.

RH stated his concerns regarding the municipal shared services. If there is an emergency at the Blanford locations, Chester will be called on, regardless of service not being in our town. The equipment, training and added risk and demands, are not addressed. Additionally, the potential for the abandonment or decommissioning of a site must be specific and comprehensive and should be covered by surety and financial guarantees. Damages and risks are not confined and add to the concerns of the Fire Department. The impact on the surrounding property, including those in Chester, must be addressed. LW, the Conservation Commission mentioned several supportive regulations which can be incorporated or used in verbiage of surrounding properties or impact.

NC discussed the state law which requires BESS systems are allowed statewide. No exceptions. The idea of BESS in Chester may not be possible due to lack of electrical infrastructure. The discussion of BESS and a Chester bylaw cannot be informed without the input and understanding of Chester Municipal Electric plans.

It was agreed by all in attendance that CMELD representatives be invited to the next Planning Board meeting to assist in providing important information to the BESS bylaw. The CMELD representatives will be invited by the Planning Board to attend a meeting on either July 30th or August 13th.

Old Business

NB was asked and shared the Selectboard discussion regarding the enforcement of numbers in visible locations for safety reasons and in compliance with state and town regulations being supported. Enforcement was placed with ? Discussion about ways to make the town support the need and the adherence. Provide standard number plate tags for a donation to Fire Prevention / Emergency Funds for Chester.

Planning Board updates, revision and recommended Bylaws

- 1. Marijuana bylaw redo per town clerk - LM has reviewed and updated the bylaw with LS for resubmission to the town for approval. The bylaw was originally voted on at the Annual Meeting June 10, 2019. No recorded minutes or votes are in town files.*
- 2. Amend Glamping bylaw to **require Building Permit for All Structures** as an addition to current bylaw: A Building Permit will be required for all Glamping structures including buildings, decks, and modular structures no matter the square footage. Final amendment language to be reviewed by legal, Building Inspection, Select Board and administration.*
- 3. Stormwater bylaw - Stormwater management, Flood Plain Bylaw- runoff and flooding concerns including Driveways, re slope/grade and review of Wetlands regulations requiring updates. MH compiled recommendations and requirements from Hazard Mitigation report. LS notes and reference. Identify examples and/or appropriate templates. LW has contributed significant reference materials on all topics. A primary draft will be compiled for review and modification.*
- 4. Parking bylaw in the village (need similar examples bylaws and PD chief input)*

5. Public Events on Private Property-*No further action*
6. Yard Nuisance Bylaw (need similar bylaws) *Prefer calling this "Property Betterment" Bylaw. Mirroring a bylaw approved and enforced in Easthampton.*
7. Right to Farm Bylaw – *The purpose and intent of this By-law is to state with emphasis the Right to Farm accorded to all citizens of the Commonwealth under Article 97, of the Constitution, and all state statutes and regulations thereunder including but not limited to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40A, Section 3, Paragraph 1; Chapter 90, Section 9, Chapter 111, Section 125A and Chapter 128 Section 1A. Advocates proposed the right-to-farm law in Massachusetts as a tool to prevent the loss of farmland and to protect farmers, particularly from "nuisance law suits". Since enacting its RTF law in 1990, Massachusetts's farm operations have grown by 12 percent while the state has lost 22 percent of its acreage in farms. Chester is identified as Right to Farm (Requires Bylaws) and an AgCom Municipality – Town authorized commission which promotes and develops the agricultural resources of the municipality.*

There being no further business.

A motion to adjourn was made by LM, 2nd RH, All aye votes. Meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm

Minutes prepared by Muriel Hall, Clerk

Approved on _____ by _____

*Approved
August 7, 2025
J. Masie*

