

Town of Carlisle

MASSACHUSETTS 01741

Office of
PLANNING BOARD
Minutes
January 12, 2026

66 Westford Street
Carlisle, Massachusetts 01741
Tel. (978) 369-9702
nbeland@carlislema.gov

Vice Chair Adelaide Grady called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Present were members: Chair Sara Smith (virtually), Stacy Lennon, Joe Gushue, Dwight DeMay, Town Planner Julie Mercier, and Planning and Land Use Coordinator Noelle Beland. Absent were Eric Adams and Chris Geggis.

As well as members of the public: Chris Roberts (106 Maple Street)

Continued Public Hearing, Site Plan Review - Accessory Dwelling Unit, 163 Sunset Road (Parcel 27-7E-20), Applicant: Shell Yu

Ms. Lennon moved to continue the public hearing for 163 Sunset Road to February 9th at 7:00 PM. Mr. DeMay seconded the motion, and it was passed by roll call vote (5-0-0).

Discuss Purchasing NearMap with GIS Funds

Megan Sullivan, the Conservation Administrator, presented a detailed overview of the NearMap service, an advanced tool offering high-resolution aerial imagery that is regularly updated several times a year. The purpose of her presentation was to elucidate the benefits that NearMap could bring to the town's operations, specifically highlighting three major areas of improvement:

1. **Enhanced Property Reviews:** NearMap would facilitate more accurate and efficient property reviews by allowing planning staff to access current and high-quality imagery. Ms. Sullivan illustrated how this feature would streamline processes that are traditionally time-consuming and reliant on less frequent updates.
2. **Efficient Project Monitoring:** The imagery would support the prompt and effective monitoring of construction projects that are actively underway within the town. Meghan emphasized that this capability would significantly reduce the need for time-intensive site visits, contributing to quicker compliance checks and reduced fieldwork.
3. **Improved Detection of Wetlands Violations:** NearMap would allow for the swift identification of Wetlands Protection Act violations by enabling staff to confirm unpermitted activities remotely. This feature is particularly critical as it eliminates the need for physical access to private properties, thereby respecting privacy while ensuring regulation adherence.

To provide a more comprehensive understanding, Ms. Sullivan navigated through a real-time demonstration of NearMap's capabilities, showcasing several features including area measurement tools, the ability to toggle between different historical imagery through split-screen comparisons, and high-resolution oblique views that offer different perspectives of the same location. The demonstration included examples of changes in familiar town sites, such as the new dog park at Banta Davis, allowing the Board to witness firsthand the level of detail and the frequency of updates, with the latest imagery being from September 2025. This comparison highlighted the enhanced resolution compared to the town's existing Access GIS aerial photography.

Ms. Sullivan further pointed out that NearMap is currently utilized by 157 municipalities across Massachusetts, underscoring its credibility and the successful integration of this tool by other conservation and planning departments similar to Carlisle's. Communities like Walpole, Norwell, Canton, and Littleton were mentioned among those leveraging NearMap's functionalities for their planning and conservation activities.

Discussion among the Board members followed Meghan's presentation, focusing on the financial implications and strategic alignment of adopting NearMap for at least a trial period. The Board considered the annual subscription cost of \$8,300, which Ms. Mercier assured could be absorbed by the town's GIS strategic plan funds already earmarked at Town Meeting for such technological upgrades. The consensus was to utilize existing funds to embark on a one-year trial to evaluate NearMap's impact on town operations before committing additional town budget resources for longer-term use.

Mr. Gushue moved to authorize the use of GIS funding for a one-year subscription to NearMap. Chair Smith seconded to motion, and it was approved (5-0-0).

Continued Public Hearing, Site Plan Review - Accessory Dwelling Unit, 106 Maple Street (Parcel 13-75-2), Applicants: Johanna Wetmore & Chris Robert

Vice Chair Grady opened the continued public hearing regarding the site plan review for the Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) at 106 Maple Street. During the dialogue, the applicant provided an in-depth update on the significant challenges encountered with

the septic system requirements mandated by the Board of Health. Mr. Roberts notably conveyed their frustration with the intricate and costly process they had undergone. Despite having an oversized leach field designed to accommodate their property's needs, the applicants were informed that both their septic tank and leach field needed complete replacement. This requirement stemmed largely from the previous use of a garbage disposal system in their household, which had initially been permitted, but was now being reconsidered in light of new Board of Health Regulations. The cost of these septic system modifications alone was projected to range between \$60,000 and \$80,000, vastly increasing the total expenditure for their ADU project, which was already estimated around \$200,000.

Ms. Mercier took the opportunity to present the draft decision that had been prepared and updated to adhere to the current bylaw stipulations. The draft outlined specific conditions, particularly emphasizing that the applicants must fulfill all Board of Health requirements before being granted a building permit.

Following the presentation, the Board invited any public members present to voice their comments or concerns. Upon confirming that there were no further remarks from the public, Mr. Gushue moved to close the public hearing for the Site Plan Review for an Accessory Dwelling Unit at 106 Maple Street. This was seconded by Ms. Grady and approved (4-0-0) Mr. DeMay abstained from voting.

Upon closing the hearing, the Board deliberated briefly on the submitted plans and the terms stipulated in the draft decision. Mr. Gushue moved to approve the Site Plan Review decision for the Protected Use ADU at 106 Maple Street. This was seconded by Ms. Lennon and approved (4-0-0). Mr. DeMay abstained from voting.

Minutes

The Board reviewed the minutes from December 8, 2025, with Chair Smith suggesting minor amendments. Ms. Lennon moved to approve the meeting minutes as amended. Mr. Gushue seconded the motion, and it was approved (5-0-0).

Invoices

The Board reviewed an invoice from Nitsch Engineering for East Street Common Drive construction oversight. Ms. Mercier explained that the work included ensuring that the constructed site matched the approved plans.

Mr. DeMay moved to approve of the invoice and have the Town Planner sign on behalf of the Board. This was seconded by Mr. Gushue and approved by roll call vote (5-0-0)

Liaison reports

Ms. Grady reported on the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) meeting held on December 15, 2025. The committee received preliminary proposals for CPA funding, including a potential request from the Affordable Housing Trust related to the Bog House project. The applications are due in February, with a CPC meeting scheduled for January 20th.

Public Hearing - Scenic Road Petition, 532 South Street (Parcel 5-53-0), Applicant: Rick West

Vice Chair Grady opened the continued hearing for the scenic road petition for 532 South Street.

The Board had been reviewing plans found at Town Hall that showed the location of a stone wall in relation to the right-of-way. The key question was whether portions of the stone wall were within the public right-of-way (and thus under the Board's jurisdiction) or on private property.

Based on the available plans, it appeared that the "tails" of the stone wall (the ends perpendicular to the road) were clearly within the right-of-way, while the portion running parallel to the road might be partially on private property. Without a precise survey, the Board could not make a definitive determination about the parallel portion.

Board members explained to the applicant that:

1. The portions of the stone wall clearly within the right-of-way (the "tails") would need to remain in place
2. If the applicant wanted to remove the portion potentially on private property, he would need a survey to definitively establish property boundaries
3. Only the portion verified to be on private property could be removed without Board approval

Mr. West expressed concern about the cost of conducting a formal survey, noting that this had started as a simple landscaping project and the survey would push the project into "five figures" of expense. After discussion, the applicant decided to withdraw the application without prejudice, giving him the option to return with more definitive information in the future if desired.

Mr. DeMay moved to accept the withdrawal without prejudice of the Scenic Road Petition for 532 South Street. This was seconded by Mr. Gushue and approved (4-0-0). Ms. Grady abstained from voting.

Zoning Discussion with Town Counsel

Town Counsel, Ethan Dively, joined the meeting to discuss potential zoning changes the Board was considering and how they might interact with pending state legislation. The Board had been working on updates to the Residential Open Space Community (ROSC) Bylaw to allow for more clustered development, potentially with density bonuses.

Mr. Dively provided an overview of pending state legislation, known as the "Yes In My Backyard" bill, which could significantly change zoning across Massachusetts. He highlighted several key provisions, including the potential expansion of the Dover Amendment to protect multifamily housing, allowances for up to three dwelling units on residentially zoned lots as of right, potential elimination of minimum lot size requirements for residential development, and limits on Board of Health regulations that exceed state Title 5 requirements for septic systems.

The discussion revealed that the pending legislation could impact local zoning control significantly. Mr. Dively emphasized that while the proposed changes were still under consideration and variances existed between the House and Senate versions, the Board should prioritize developing zoning regulations tailored to Carlisle's specific needs. The uncertainty around the legislation's final form meant the Board needed a proactive approach to manage zoning effectively.

He acknowledged the Board's concerns about overlapping or conflicting zoning regulations if the state laws were enacted but assured members that creating local zoning that addresses Carlisle's particular challenges was advisable. The Board considered the guidance, mindful that some legislative proposals appeared extreme and might face challenges securing approval in their current state.

In the context of the ROSC bylaw amendments, the Board engaged in a substantial discussion on establishing baseline density allowances, evaluating whether to begin at the town's current density levels and use bonuses to encourage compact development that aligns with community objectives. They discussed the feasibility of the proposed changes given existing land use patterns and infrastructure, recognizing the ongoing legislative environment.

With an acknowledgment of the complexity involved in intertwining local initiatives with potential state mandates, Ms. Mercier committed to distributing an updated draft of the ROSC amendments for Board review by Thursday, January 16. The intended timeline was to invite comments by January 29, allowing ample opportunity for revisions ahead of the subsequent meeting. This next step was part of their ongoing efforts to accommodate housing diversity while preserving valuable open spaces in Carlisle, amidst a landscape of evolving statewide regulations.

Review Draft ROSC Zoning Bylaw

The Board engaged in a substantive discussion regarding amendments to the draft Residential Open Space Community (ROSC) Zoning Bylaw. The conversation primarily focused on potential density allowances and how these could be structured to encourage development while maintaining the town's open space. Board members considered beginning the baseline density at 0.5 units per acre, equivalent to the current zoning per acre for traditional developments and offering density bonuses to encourage more compact development designs. These bonuses could potentially allow density to increase up to 1 unit per acre, contingent upon projects meeting specific town-defined criteria.

These criteria might include the integration of smaller unit designs, the incorporation of multifamily structures, or the creation of a significant portion of preserved open space. With the current housing strategy focusing on diverse community needs, the Board considered incentives for developers to opt for clustered housing arrangements rather than sprawling single-family homes, thereby achieving a balance between housing diversity and land conservation.

A key part of the discussion addressed minimum tract sizes for developments under the ROSC bylaw. There was recognition that aligning this with the town's open space goals might support larger community planning needs. The possibility of allowing such developments on smaller tracts of land was a consideration, with suggestions for aligning these allowances with calculated fiscal outlooks and community growth projections.

Ms. Mercier agreed to revise the draft, incorporating these insights and the potential zoning implications brought up during the discussion. The revised draft, set for circulation by January 16, will allow the Board and other stakeholders to further analyze and

refine the proposed amendments, ensuring that future regulations aptly support Carlisle's housing objectives in tandem with ecological preservation efforts. This ongoing dialogue aimed to provide the framework necessary for informed decision-making at subsequent meetings, leading to implementation strategies that fit within Carlisle's unique landscape.

Draft Protected Use ADU Site Plan Review Regulations

The Board engaged in a comprehensive review of the draft Protected Use ADU Site Plan Rules and Regulations. Ms. Mercier, the Town Planner, indicated that having consulted with Town Counsel, there was an advisement to maintain clear separations between the Board of Health and Planning Board jurisdictions. This approach would ensure that the processes remained distinct, with a specific condition requiring applicants to meet all Board of Health requirements independently.

The discussion on refining the document included several key suggestions aimed at enhancing its clarity and usability:

1. **Incorporating Hyperlinks:** There was a consensus on the value of including hyperlinks within the document to directly connect readers to relevant bylaws and regulations. This addition is expected to simplify navigation and provide instant access to necessary legal texts, thereby supporting applicants in complying with all legal requirements more efficiently.
2. **Creating a Flowchart:** The Board saw potential in developing a flowchart to visually clarify the application process. Such an illustration would guide applicants through the steps necessary, highlighting when and where different approvals intersect, especially emphasizing the order and simultaneous steps that could be pursued.
3. **Reformatting for User-Friendliness:** A need was identified to adjust the application form's format, aiming to make it more intuitive and approachable for applicants. This reformulation would enhance user experience, potentially reducing errors and streamlining the completion process.
4. **Clarifying Terminology:** Specific attention was given to the definitions used within the regulations, notably concerning "enclosed porches" and criteria for gross floor area calculations. The Board members discussed how certain terms might cause confusion, such as what constitutes an "enclosed porch" and the implications of heated spaces, suggesting a review for clearer definitions.
5. **Revising Applicant Information:** Ms. Mercier pointed to the importance of adjusting how applicant relationships were defined within the forms. A more comprehensive listing or categorization would reflect the possible roles an applicant might possess, such as owner, representative, or agent, ensuring that all potential applicant scenarios were appropriately addressed.

Moreover, during the deliberation, it became evident that a streamlined process was necessary to prevent overlap while ensuring compliance across all jurisdictional requirements. Engaging applicants with informed guidance and a well-structured application process would be pivotal. Ms. Mercier committed to integrating these proposed changes and planned to present the revised document to the Board for further consideration at the February meeting. The updates aim to balance regulatory compliance with practical accessibility, supporting effective governance and applicant clarity.

Bog House Update

Ms. Mercier provided an update on the Bog House affordable housing project. Key points included:

- The project requires an Article 97 land disposition process that could take up to two years
- A housing consultant has been engaged to assist with the process
- The town is investigating whether a waiver from the replacement land requirement might be possible
- Work in 2026 will focus on developing schematic designs and site plans to determine the exact land area needed
- The town will need to decide whether to pursue local zoning changes or wait for the Article 97 process to complete before seeking permits
- Best case scenario for breaking ground would be 2028

Ms. Mercier noted that several Town Meeting votes would be required throughout the process, and that funding for the initial design work would come from existing sources.

Respectfully Submitted,
Noelle Beland
Planning & Land Use Coordinator

List of documents associated with this meeting (available via the Planning office):

- 1/12/26 Agenda & Invoices.
- Draft minutes for 12/8/25
- [Planning-Board-Meeting-Packets | Carlisle, MA](#)

These minutes were approved on Monday, February 9th, 2026.