

SUMMARY - Revised Version April 14, 2025

Since early 2024, the Planning Board has been developing a proposal, commonly known as Multi-Family Conservation Cluster (MFCC), to comply with the MBTA Communities legislation, M.G.L. ch 40A Section 3A. The MFCC proposes to rezone approximately ten times more land than the minimum requirement - 64 acres as opposed to six and one-third acres. The purpose of this warrant article is to ask the Town to advise the Planning Board that it should present additional alternatives to the Town. These alternatives should include a fully-developed proposal for satisfying the MBTA Communities legislation that minimizes the amount of land to be rezoned. Such alternative proposals will ensure that the Town's voters are presented with a true choice regarding how to implement the MBTA Communities mandate.

This article is non-binding. It is an opportunity to give the Planning Board the sense of the Town as to how the MBTA Communities mandate should be approached. To date, there has been no opportunity for substantive public engagement, and the Planning Board has never asked the Town, broadly, which direction it would like to go and which values should be prioritized.

The MFCC, because it relies on including so much acreage (ten times as much as required) proposes to rezone existing Carlisle neighborhoods. However, other alternatives, including selecting one approximately six and one-third acre site, would better protect the unique and special character of Carlisle. Carlisle is unique because of its abundance of nature, its mix of wooded and agricultural areas, and its long-standing commitment to preserving historic and natural vistas. Carlisle's existing neighborhoods lack infrastructure and suitable roads. Many are served by private roads and/or narrow and scenic roads. Spreading the MBTA Communities development across town on the existing road network will increase traffic and use of automobiles. Other alternatives may use main roads or lead to the development of improved public transportation options. Finally, the MFCC plan appears to rely on utilizing existing septic, water, and storm water infrastructure, with the attendant risk that these systems may become over-burdened, while other options, such as choosing a six and one-third acre site, increase the likelihood that better infrastructure will be built to support any new development. Preventing groundwater contamination and ensuring an adequate supply of drinking water should be of paramount importance to the Town. Choosing a smaller site would allow the Town to carry out water testing prior to rezoning, whereas the greater amount of acreage proposed for the MFCC plan may render it economically and practically infeasible to perform water testing. The Planning Board should also explore selecting a site that complies with the MBTA Communities mandate without optimizing for full development.