

**Chelmsford Parker School Building Committee**

Town of Chelmsford  
Chelmsford School Department's Administrative Office  
230 North Road  
Chelmsford, MA 01824  
Meeting Minutes  
December 18, 2025

**Members Present:** Select Board Member, Chair Patrick Maloney  
Town Finance Director, John Sousa  
CPS Finance Director, Joanna Johnson-Collins  
School Committee Member, Dennis King  
Town Manager, Paul Cohen  
CPS Superintendent, Dr. Jay Lang  
CPS Facilities Director, Brian Curley  
Town DPW Facilities Manager, Matthew Schweitzer  
Town DPW Director, Christine Clancy  
Town Finance Committee, James Clancy  
Parker School Principal, Joshua Blagg

**Members Absent:** Town Permanent Building Committee, Timothy Powderly  
Resident, Brandon Kelly

**Others Present:** David Saindon, Project Director, LeftField PM, LLC  
Hamdi Cobanoglu, Sr. Project Manager, LeftField PM, LLC  
Troy Randall, Ai3 Architects  
Julie Rivera, Ai3 Architects  
Tori Geier, Ai3 Architects

All documents referenced in these minutes are available for review at the Chelmsford School Department's Administrative Office, located at 230 North Road. This meeting was hand-recorded via the Recording Secretary and recorded through Chelmsford Telemedia.

**1. Call to Order**

Chair Maloney called the Meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

## **2. Approval of Meeting Minutes**

November 20, 2025

**Motion:** by Mr. Cohen to approve the Meeting Minutes of November 20, 2025, as presented. Seconded by Mr. Schweitzer. Mr. Curley, Mrs. Clancy, Mr. Blagg, Mr. Sousa, and Mr. King abstained; all others in favor. **Motion carried, 6-5.**

## **3. Approval of Monthly Project Invoices**

Mr. Saindon summarized the budget to date and presented the invoices and invoice packet, which contained project invoices through November 30, 2025. The invoice for Leftfield was \$20,859.00, the invoice for Ai3 was \$71,875.00, and there was a reimbursement for soil testing for 4,319.15, for a total invoice packet value of \$97,053.15.

**Motion:** by Mr. King to approve the invoice packet #7, dated December 5, 2025, for a total invoice packet value of \$97,053.15, as presented. Seconded by Mrs. Clancy.

**Motion carried, unanimous, 7-0**

## **4. Schedule Overview**

Ms. Rivera announced that they are very close to completing the Preliminary Design Program (PDP), and the submission will be completed in late January.

Preliminary cost estimates will be prepared by the designer's estimator and are planned to be ready by January 8, 2026. Ai3 and LeftField met with the School Committee earlier this week, and the School Committee will receive a draft of the Educational Program Report for approval at their next meeting on January 5, 2026. Ai3 also shared/ presented the Evaluation Matrix to be utilized for assessment and scoring/ ranking of the various design and enrollment options. All Committee members will fill this out, and the results will be shared in the next meeting on January 15, 2026. This PDP report is slated to be submitted to the MSBA on January 22, 2026.

- Cost data is expected by January 8 or 9, 2026.
- The Evaluation Matrix forms are due back from the committee members to LeftField by January 13, 2026.

## **5. Update on Evaluation of Existing Conditions**

Ms. Rivera presented the results of the hazardous materials inspections. Hazardous materials were detected inside the schools, but they are contained, which is not uncommon for a building of this age. Abatement costs were estimated at \$3.15 million for the removal of all hazardous materials.

A Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) was completed for the Parker Middle School. An ESA report for the McCarthy site will be done later this week. Reports on both sites will include historical photos. As the project moves into subsequent phases, additional exploratory work will be conducted regarding the former presence of fuel oil tanks on the Parker Middle School property and the asbestos identified but contained within the facility. A soil management plan will be developed, and additional assessments may be conducted.

Ai3 presented a summary of the wetlands delineation for the Parker School site. The investigation, conducted in early November 2025, identified two non-tidal wetlands (red maple swamps), designated Wetland A and Wetland B. The wetlands are connected by a stream that passes through an existing culvert beneath the school building. It was noted that the wetlands are regulated under the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act and the Chelmsford Wetlands Bylaw, requiring a 100-foot buffer zone. Any work within the buffer zone will require the filing of a Notice of Intent with the Chelmsford Conservation Commission.

Ai3 presented a summary of the Traffic Impact Analysis conducted in early November 2025. The analysis included observations of existing traffic conditions at all three site options and associated intersections, as well as a review of crash data, traffic volumes, and roadway capacity. The consultant reported that school arrival and dismissal operations generally functioned as designed, with predictable peak-period congestion and queuing, particularly within parent pick-up and drop-off areas. No significant traffic spillback onto public roadways was observed at the middle school sites; however, spillback onto adjacent roadways was noted at the high school location. It was noted that a full capacity analysis for future build conditions cannot be completed until the final site selection and enrollment projections are determined. Recommendations included separating vehicle and bus circulation to reduce conflicts and improve safety, and providing sufficient on-site queuing to prevent spillback onto public roadways.

## **6. Educational Program Update**

Ms. Geier presented an update on the District's educational program as part of the ongoing feasibility study. She noted that, to be responsive to District needs, the study requires documentation of the existing educational program and definition of future instructional activities to inform a building design that supports current objectives and allows flexibility over the facility's lifespan. The comprehensive educational program, subject to School Committee review and approval, will be documented in an extensive report addressing grade configurations, class sizes, security, special education, and related policies.

Ms. Geier highlighted that significant constraints in the existing building limit the District's ability to implement modern educational programming, particularly in STEM/STEAM, maker spaces, special education, and small-group instruction. The proposed design vision emphasizes

equitable, safe, and flexible learning environments to address overcrowding and circulation challenges, support strong student–staff relationships, and accommodate diverse learning needs. Conceptual design strategies include grade-level academic neighborhoods, a central corridor, and dedicated shared spaces such as enhanced music facilities, integrated media/broadcast areas, and a wellness zone, with architectural techniques to appropriately scale larger shared spaces. The project schedule anticipates further addressing programmatic inequities and submitting a preferred option for funding consideration by April 2027.

## **7. Grade Configuration Analysis**

The Committee reviewed three potential grade configuration options (Grades 5–6, 4–6, and 5–8), informed by input from students and staff during visioning sessions. For each option, the discussion focused on developmental fit, educational advantages, and operational challenges.

- Grades 5–6 (930 students)  
This option groups two developmentally similar grades, allowing for an aligned curriculum and age-appropriate programming. Advantages include simpler scheduling, a close age range, and continuity within the broader District (Grades 5–12). Challenges noted include limited leadership opportunities for students, lack of resolution of elementary space pressures, frequent grade transitions, reduced continuity for specialized programs, and operational constraints related to staffing, scheduling, and transportation.
- Grades 4–6 (1,390 students)  
This configuration was noted as developmentally cohesive and supportive of longer student–staff relationships, with opportunities for leadership, peer mentoring, and improved continuity for special education and specialized services. Advantages include fewer transitions, better use of space, and relief from overcrowding in elementary schools. Challenges include concerns about the readiness of Grade 4 students for a more middle-school model.
- Grades 5–8 (1,885 students)  
This option emphasizes extended relationships, mentorship across age groups, fewer overall school transitions, and strong continuity for specialized programs. Advantages include reduced transitions district-wide and opportunities to build long-term community and culture. Challenges identified include the very large school size, differing developmental and behavioral needs across grades, complex scheduling and lunch logistics, transportation and safety considerations, curriculum alignment, and concerns about student comfort and parental perception.

In summary, there are educational trade-offs, developmental considerations, and operational impacts associated with each grade configuration, which the Committee will deliberate on in the coming weeks.

Ms. Rivera presented a capacity analysis for Byam Elementary School, Center Elementary School, Harrington Elementary School, and South Row Elementary School. Each analysis was conducted without the use of modular classrooms and utilized three capacity methodologies: the MSBA Space Summary Template, gross square footage per student, and students per classroom.

For Byam Elementary School, the analysis showed that under the current Grades K–4 configuration, the school enrolls approximately 508 students and is overcrowded under all three evaluation methods. Specifically, the building falls below recommended standards for square footage per student and exceeds DESE guidelines for students per classroom. A comparative Grades K–3 scenario, assuming the removal of Grade 4, resulted in approximately 404 students enrolled. While the building would remain undersized in terms of square footage, classroom utilization would fall within DESE-recommended ranges, allowing for smaller class sizes and improved instructional conditions.

Similar findings were presented for Center, Harrington, and South Row Elementary Schools, where current Grades K–4 configurations exceed recommended capacity thresholds. In each case, removing Grade 4 resulted in improved student-per-classroom ratios that were consistent with DESE standards, though overall building square footage deficiencies would remain.

Ms. Rivera also presented a district-wide resolution scenario establishing a Grades 4–6 configuration for a future Parker Middle School project, with an anticipated enrollment of approximately 1,390 students. This option would relocate Grade 4 students from all elementary schools to the Parker facility, maintain McCarthy Middle School as a Grades 7–8 school, and address overcrowding across the District by better aligning enrollment with existing and proposed building capacities. This concept of removing 4<sup>th</sup> grade from elementary schools was also introduced in the Town's 2016 Master Plan.

## **8. Conceptual Design Options**

Ai3 presented the Committee with a comprehensive range of potential project options for submission to the MSBA Project Development Program, organized by site, grade configuration, and construction type (code upgrades, addition/renovation, and new construction). Based on work completed with district staff and administration as part of the feasibility study, Ai3 reported that code-only upgrade options would not address documented space deficiencies, while addition/renovation options would provide limited improvements but leave significant functional constraints. New construction options were identified as fully addressing educational, spatial, and programmatic needs in alignment with MSBA guidelines and 21st-century learning standards.

Spatial assessments confirmed that instructional spaces at both Parker and McCarthy Middle Schools are undersized relative to MSBA standards. Conceptual designs were presented for

representative options at the Parker Middle School site, Graniteville Fields, and the McCarthy Middle School site, illustrating relative building sizes, site circulation, construction phasing, and estimated project durations.

Ms. Geier presented detailed conceptual design options for renovation and new construction scenarios at each site. At the Parker Middle School site, renovation options identified areas of demolition, proposed additions, and building system upgrades. Data were presented for Grades 4–6 and Grades 5–6 configurations, noting that the Grades 4–6 option would require adding a third floor, while a four-grade configuration (Grades 5–8) would require a four-story building. Exterior improvements, enhanced drop-off areas, site circulation upgrades, and estimated construction durations were reviewed, including one option incorporating an auditorium.

A new construction concept for the Parker site was also presented, demonstrating building organization, internal program adjacencies, and vehicular circulation, enabling construction of the new facility while the existing school remains operational. Existing parking was identified as approximately 120 car spaces and 27 bus spaces, with final parking quantities still under development.

For the Graniteville Fields site, all options presented were new construction, requiring relocation of existing athletic fields. Concepts included three academic wings, telemedia and public spaces, shared facilities such as a gymnasium, auditorium, cafeteria, and support spaces, as well as associated parking, utilities, and site infrastructure.

At the McCarthy Middle School site, two addition/renovation options were reviewed, including a minor addition/major renovation scenario designed to avoid impacts to wetlands and existing track and field facilities. Building sizes, construction durations, and key differences between the alternatives were presented. An additional full new construction option was also reviewed, which would preserve the existing building, wetlands, and athletic fields, but would require construction within an existing parking area, resulting in a constrained site.

The presentation concluded with a summary of conceptual design options developed for preliminary cost estimating. It was noted that cost estimates remain preliminary and do not include geothermal or solar systems, demolition of the existing Parker Middle School, or certain alternate scopes. Additional data and refinements are anticipated for review at the January meeting.

A small three-dimensional model of the Parker Middle School site was also provided for Committee review. Committee members were able to manipulate the model to better understand building massing and site relationships. A larger, more detailed model will be presented at a future meeting

## **9. Project Evaluation Matrix**

Ai3 presented the evaluation matrix that Committee members will complete in advance of the January meeting.

Ai3 also reported that, as part of the Third Community Forum held in December, a poll was conducted to gather attendee feedback on preferred grade configurations based on the project status and educational programming presented at the third forum and prior forums. The results indicated an overwhelming preference for the Grades 4–6 configuration.

LeftField advised that the presentation materials would be posted to the project website and may be used by Committee members to assist in completing the evaluation matrix.

It was noted that the current Project Development Program (PDP) submission is nearing 1,500 pages and is available for Committee review. LeftField will provide a link to a shared file for access.

Following submission of the PDP to the MSBA, the MSBA is expected to provide written feedback within approximately 21 calendar days. The District will then be required to submit a formal response to the MSBA's comments within 14 calendar days of receipt.

Mrs. Clancy shared lessons learned from geothermal system analyses conducted for recent fire station upgrade projects. It was noted that no geothermal cost estimates are currently included in the Parker feasibility study; however, geothermal systems may be evaluated and added later if determined to be feasible. Ai3 noted that the Town of Canton is currently installing a geothermal system in a similarly sized building and that related analysis may be shared as it becomes available.

Mr. King inquired whether input from the School Committee would be helpful to the Committee's work. Mr. Saindon responded that School Committee input is critical, particularly regarding enrollment configuration decisions, and that broader feedback would be welcome.

The Committee confirmed that future meetings will continue to be held on the third Thursday of each month. It was anticipated that the fourth public forum would be held in March 2026.

#### **10. Public Comment**

No one was present at this time.

#### **11. Adjournment**

**Motion:** by Mr. King to adjourn the meeting at 7:05 PM. Seconded by Mr. Clancy.

**Motion carried, unanimous, 11-0.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Vivian W. Merrill

Supporting documents:

- Draft Minutes
- LeftField Slide Presentation on Agenda topics
- Ai3 Slide Presentation