

CHARLTON



PERMITTING GUIDE





Acknowledgements:

This permitting guide was prepared by the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) in collaboration with the Town of Charlton. CMRPC's Economic Development Team worked closely with Charlton Town staff to develop the guide.

The guide was made possible by a Fiscal Year 2024 Community Compact Economic Development Best Practice grant awarded to the Town of Charlton by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Image Sources: CMRPC, Massachusetts Municipal Association, Pexels, and the Town of Charlton.



KEY CONTACTS

Town Administrator's Office

37 Main Street
Charlton, MA 01507
Phone: 508-248-2206
Administrator@townofcharlton.net

Highway Department

100 Flint Road, PO Box 421
Charlton, MA 01507
Phone: 508-248-2212
Highway@townofcharlton.net

Building Inspectional Services

37 Main Street
Charlton, MA 01507
Phone: 508-248-2241
Building.ZEO@townofcharlton.net

Water / Sewer Commission

8A Worcester Road
Charlton, MA 01507
Phone: 508-248-4953*
Sewer@townofcharlton.net
*On-Call Emergency Phone: 1-857-278-1599

Planning Board/Planning Dept.

37 Main Street
Charlton, MA 01507
Phone: 508-248-2237
Planning@townofcharlton.net

Zoning Board of Appeals

37 Main Street
Charlton, MA 01507
Phone: 508-248-2214
ZBA@townofcharlton.net

Board of Health/Health Dept.

37 Main Street
Charlton, MA 01507
Phone: 508-248-2210
Health@townofcharlton.net

Fire Department

10 Power Station Road
Charlton, MA 01507
Phone: 508-248-2299
Fire.Inspector@townofcharlton.net

Conservation Commission

37 Main Street
Charlton, MA 01507
Phone: 508-248-2247
Con.Comm@townofcharlton.net

Town Clerk's Office

37 Main Street
Charlton, MA 01507
Phone: 508-248-2249
Town.Clerk@townofcharlton.net

Town Office Hours/Website

Monday / Wednesday / Thursday, 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Tuesday, 7:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.
Friday: Closed

<https://www.townofcharlton.net>

INTRODUCTION

The goal of this guidebook is to provide small business owners, homeowners, and developers with guidance on the project development and permitting process in the Town of Charlton. The guidebook can also be used by applicants to determine the feasibility of a project by identifying basic timeframes and expenses associated with the permitting process.

The guidebook does not cover all approvals, permits, and licenses issued by the Town. Instead, it provides an overview of the typical steps that must be taken to open a business and/or develop property. Consult Town staff to confirm specific requirements for your project. Town staff are available to answer any questions. However, you will benefit from hiring licensed professionals and consultants who are versed in the requirements and nuances of the process. In most cases, you will need professional help in areas such as land surveys, engineering, and law. Additionally, the guide addresses local approvals and permitting in detail only. Some land use developments also require state and/or federal permits, which are referenced in Part III.

Disclaimer: This permitting guide is for informational purposes only. The content contained in this guide should not be considered legal advice, nor is it binding on future decisions. The information is also subject to change. Please refer to the applicable Town bylaws and regulations for specific technical and procedural requirements. Online tools and links referenced in the guide are provided for convenience only. Official documents are on file with the Town and/or the Worcester Registry of Deeds. It is always the applicant's responsibility to ensure the proposed work, use, or activity complies with all applicable laws, regulations, and licensing / permit requirements. Applicants are also responsible for employing any licensed professionals needed to submit documentation or information required as part of the application submission process.

How to Use this Guide

The permitting guide is organized into the following parts. Click on a numeral to jump to that part of the guide.

Part I. Step-by-Step Guide to Local Permitting

Part I walks you through the steps you will need to take to open a business and/or develop property in town.



Part I is divided into the chapters shown in the flow chart at right. Press on a chapter to jump to it.



Some chapters are marked with **stars**. These chapters only apply to parties planning to open a business. If this category does not apply to you, skip these chapters when you reach them. There will be a reminder to this effect at the beginning of each chapter marked with a star at right.



Some steps in the permitting process may take place at the same time as others, as indicated by the **blue dashes**.





Starting Your Business

SKIP THIS CHAPTER IF YOU ARE NOT OPENING A BUSINESS

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts offers [guidance and resources](#) for parties looking to start a business in the State. If you have not done so already, the Town of Charlton encourages you to review these guidelines and resources. Topics covered include:

- Conducting market research
- Writing a business plan
- Choosing your business structure
- Filing with the state (if applicable)
- Obtaining an Employer Identification Number (EIN)
- Registering with MassTaxConnect to pay business taxes

The Town recommends that applicants complete these steps before selecting a business location and entering a contract to purchase property and/or space for lease.

Note: This step does not require any licenses or permitting approvals from the Town of Charlton.



Identify a Location / Preliminary Site Research

Consult the Town Zoning Bylaw

Before purchasing property, entering into a property lease, or finalizing development plans, the Town of Charlton strongly encourages you to conduct preliminary research on the site(s) in question. The first step in this process is consulting the [Charlton Zoning Bylaw](#).

Allowed Uses: The Charlton Zoning Bylaw regulates the types of property uses that are allowed in different locations in town. Reference the Zoning Bylaw to ensure your proposed use is allowed in the desired location.

To find the zoning designation for the property / area in question, use the [Town's Online Property Database](#) or [Online Mapping Tool](#). Consult the [MassMapper User Guide](#) for instructions on how to use the Online Mapping Tool. The [Town's official Zoning Map](#) may also be a helpful resource. See [Section 200-3.1 \(Zoning districts\)](#) and [Section 200-3.2 \(Use regulations\)](#) of the Zoning Bylaw to understand what uses are allowed in each zoning district.

Disclaimer: Online property database and mapping tools are provided for convenience only. They do not supersede official documents on file with the Town of Charlton or the [Worcester Registry of Deeds](#).

The [Use Regulation Schedule](#) (i.e., the table summarizing allowed uses) is presented in an exclusionary format. That means if the proposed use is not shown in the table, it is not allowed. If the proposed use is identical to or closely resembles one of the listed uses, then it follows the letter guide under the appropriate zoning district.

[Continue to the table on the next page].

Use Regulation Schedule Symbol	Planning Board Approval Process
N	Not allowed use ¹
Y	Allowed use ²
P	Allowed use; Site Plan Review ³
SP	Allowed only at the discretion of the Planning Board; Special Permit ³

Table Notes:

(1) If your use is not allowed, you will need to reconsider your project or its location. Use variances (i.e., a waiver from certain zoning use regulations; see the [Variance section](#)) are not allowed per [Section 200-7.3 B \(1\)](#) of the Charlton Zoning Bylaw.

(2) Applicants still must comply with all applicable zoning and other regulations and apply for a [Building Permit](#) and/or [Certificate of Occupancy](#) from the Department of Building Inspectional Services.

(3) More details are available in the [Zoning Approvals chapter](#).

Dimensional Requirements: You should also review the [Intensity of Use Schedule](#) in the Charlton Zoning Bylaw to determine if the proposed site(s) can accommodate the scope of your project. The Intensity of Use Schedule regulates development density of property parcels in each zoning district by prescribing dimensional requirements such as minimum setbacks and maximum lot coverage. You can use the measurement tools on the Town's [Online Mapping Tool](#) to see how these requirements may impact your ability to develop a property.

If an existing structure does not comply with the dimensional requirements of the Zoning Bylaw, it may be pre-existing nonconforming. Improvements to pre-existing nonconforming structures may require Special Permit approval from the Zoning Board of Appeals. See the [Pre-existing Nonconforming Structures or Uses section](#).

If dimensional requirements compromise your ability to develop a property, you may need to file for a variance (See the [Variance section](#)).

Conduct Additional Due Diligence on the Site:

You should also consider the following before purchasing a property or planning a development project:

Deed Restrictions: Check the [Worcester Registry of Deeds](#) to discover if any deed restrictions apply. Deed restrictions may limit what uses / activities are allowed on a property (e.g., the sale of alcoholic beverages).

Historic / Preservation Regulations: Most exterior changes to structures in the Northside Historic District require approval from the Charlton Historic Districts Commission. See [Chapter 147](#) of the Zoning Bylaw for more details. You can use the Town's [Online Mapping Tool](#) to view zoning overlay districts, such as the Charlton Northside Historic District.

Environmental Regulations: Environmental regulations may impose constraints or limitations on your ability to develop a site. This may be the case if wetlands resource areas (i.e., bogs, swamps, rivers, streams, etc.) or floodplains are located on or near the property. You can research whether wetlands are potentially present on your property using the Town's [Online Mapping Tool](#) (See "Water Related" --> "DEP Wetlands"). Floodplains can also be viewed on the [MassMapper Tool](#) (See "Regulated Areas" --> "FEMA Flood Data").

Contact the Conservation Commission for more details / assistance.

Health / Sanitation Requirements and Infrastructure: Talk to the Health Department and the Water / Sewer Commission to assess the feasibility of your project regarding health and safety regulations, water requirements, and sewage / septic infrastructure.

If you are undertaking new construction and have no access to Town sewer, you will need to conduct a percolation test to determine the feasibility/design of an on-site septic system.

Other Utilities: Check to see if the property in question is serviced by other utilities (i.e., electric, internet, etc.). If the answer is no or the property requires upgrades, contact National Grid or Spectrum to receive a cost estimate for this work. There is no natural gas service in Charlton.

Consult with Town Staff



Primary Contact: Building Inspectional Services Dept.
Address: 37 Main Street, Charlton, MA 01507
Contacts: 508-248-2241; Building.ZEO@townofcharlton.net

Zoning Advisory Letter


Once you have completed your preliminary research, you should contact the [Building Inspectional Services Department](#). Building Inspectional Services can help confirm the accuracy of your preliminary research and provide guidance on the timeframe and necessary permitting approvals you can expect for the project.

The Building Commissioner serves as the Zoning Enforcement Officer for the Town, and issues Zoning Advisory Letters. Zoning Advisory Letters include the following information:

- Zoning district(s) that apply to the property
- Current use of the property
- Development potential of the parcel
- Nonconforming structures / uses

This information is critical to confirming 1) whether or not your intended use is allowed in the applicable zoning district and 2) what zoning approvals you will need to receive from the Charlton Planning Board and/or Zoning Board of Appeals.

Disclaimer: Zoning Advisory Letters are advisory in nature only. No determination is final until approvals have been issued by all applicable boards, commissions, and departments and a Building Permit has been issued.



Official decisions of the Zoning Enforcement Officer and Town boards may be subject to appeal in accordance with applicable statutes and regulations.

Pre-Application Meeting

At this point, if you are undertaking a construction project, you should hire a licensed professional, such as an architect or engineer, and have them complete a conceptual plan of the proposed project. This plan can be shared with Town staff at a pre-application meeting. This meeting provides an opportunity for Town staff to identify zoning and land use regulations that apply to the project and to highlight any potential issues before it is reviewed by Town boards or commissions. Town departments in attendance will vary depending on the nature of the project.



Zoning Approvals



Primary Contact: Building Inspectional Services Dept.
Address: 37 Main Street, Charlton, MA 01507
Contacts: 508-248-2241; Building.ZEO@townofcharlton.net

Your project may require specific zoning approvals from the Charlton Planning Board or Zoning Board of Appeals. For guidance on what specific zoning approvals are required for your project, please contact the Building Commissioner/Zoning Enforcement Officer.

Important Reminders

Reminders about the zoning approval process:

Hiring Licensed Professionals and Consultants: If your project involves Site Plan Review, Special Permit approval, or a Variance, you will need to hire licensed professionals, such as architects or engineers, to prepare plans. Especially in the case of a variance, you should also consider hiring a lawyer who has experience with land use regulations.

Public Hearings: Some permits and approvals require a public hearing before the permit or approval can be granted (See [Part II](#) for details). You or your representative must attend the hearing to present the application and state the reason(s) why the permit or approval should be granted by the applicable Town board or commission. Public hearings also provide other citizens, particularly abutters and neighbors, with a forum to comment on your project.

The Town recommends that you proactively reach out to abutters and neighbors well before a public hearing. You can create a preliminary abutters list (most projects require notification within 300 ft. of the property boundary) on the Town's [Online Mapping Tool](#) by following these [instructions](#).

Disclaimer: For hearings before Town boards and commissions, formal notification of abutters is required. For this, you will need an abutters list prepared and certified by the Assessor's Office. The Online Mapping Tool should only be used for proactive outreach in advance of formal notification of abutters.

Planning Board

There are different types of [Planning Board](#) approval depending on the symbol that applies to your intended use (and the zoning district in question) on the [Use Regulation Schedule](#).

Use Regulation Schedule Symbol	Planning Board Approval Process
Y	No hearings
P	Site Plan Review
SP	Special Permit

No Hearings: No public hearings before the Planning Board are required. The Building Inspectional Services Department will review the project for compliance with the Zoning Bylaw when an application for a building permit is submitted.

Site Plan Review: Site Plan Review concerns uses that are allowed by right in a zoning district (i.e., as long as the project complies with the Zoning Bylaw) but require additional scrutiny by the Planning Board. Site Plan Review involves reviewing a property's design and layout (including traffic, parking, architectural design, signs, etc.) and future site management. The Planning Board may negotiate with the applicant to place conditions upon these features to ensure development projects do not harm public safety / welfare.

If your property use is identified with a "P" symbol on the Town's Use Regulation Schedule, your project may need to undergo Site Plan Review if the project involves:

- New construction
- Floor space expansion of an existing structure
- Change of use

See [Section 200-7.1 D \(Administration\)](#) of the Zoning Bylaw for more details.

Special Permits: Special Permits apply to uses which are not allowed by right but instead only approved at the discretion of the Planning Board. Under the Special Permit process, the Planning Board considers the impact of the project on the Town and the surrounding area and verifies whether special criteria are met. If the Planning Board decides to grant a special permit, it may place strict conditions on the project's site plan

and buildings, including building exteriors. See [Section 200-7.2 \(Granting authority\)](#) for more details.

Repurposing Existing Commercial Building / Space: Site Plan Review or Special Permit approval may not be required if you are opening a business in an existing building where the previous occupant operated the same or a similar type of business and when no construction work is taking place. However, not all “commercial uses” are equal, meaning your business may require action under zoning regulations or other regulations even if the new use is similar to the previous one. Talk to the Building Commissioner / Zoning Enforcement Officer if any of these scenarios apply to you.

Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA)

Certain projects also require approval from the [ZBA](#). Special permit applications before the ZBA follow a similar process as those before the Planning Board (See the [Special Permits section](#)).

Variance: A Variance is a waiver from certain requirements of the Zoning Bylaw. A Variance may be sought by a property owner if the proposed project does not meet a dimensional or other numerical requirement of the Zoning Bylaw.

The ZBA may grant a variance if after a public hearing, it:

“specifically finds that owing to circumstances relating to the soil conditions, shape, or topography of such land or structures and especially affecting such land or structures but not affecting generally the zoning district in which it is located, a literal enforcement of the provisions of the ordinance or by-law would involve substantial hardship,... and that desirable relief may be granted without substantial detriment to the public good and without nullifying or substantially derogating from the intent or purpose of such ordinance or by- law” ([MGL c. 40A Section 10](#)).

The Town recommends that you consult with a lawyer experienced in land use regulation before applying for a variance.

Pre-existing Nonconforming Structures or Uses: Pre-existing nonconforming structures or uses” refers to structures / uses that complied with land use regulations at the time of their creation but have since been rendered non-compliant by subsequent changes to zoning code. A special permit from the ZBA is needed to make certain “extensions, alterations, or changes to” to these pre-existing nonconforming structures / uses. See [Section 200-3.4 \(Nonconforming Conditions\)](#) for more details.

Business / DBA Certificate



Primary Contact: Town Clerk's Office
Address: 37 Main Street, Charlton, MA 01507
Contacts: 508-248-2249; Clerk@townofcharlton.net

SKIP THIS CHAPTER IF YOU ARE NOT OPENING A BUSINESS

Most businesses, including all unincorporated businesses which are conducting business under a name other than one's own name and any corporation not registered in Massachusetts, must file a [Business Certificate](#) with the Town Clerk's Office. This certificate is commonly known as a "Doing Business As" (DBA) certificate. The certificate is valid for four years from the date of issue. A Business Certificate registers that a business is conducting activity within the Town of Charlton. Its purpose is primarily for consumer protection and public information.

Home Occupations: Home occupations (i.e., home-based businesses) also require a Business Certificate. Typically, a home occupation is carried out by the resident of a property and does not result in the production of offensive noise, vibration, heat, dust, or other objectional conditions such as on-street parking. Home occupations must receive a [Home Occupation Certificate of Compliance](#) from the Building Inspectional Services Department before filing a DBA Certificate.

Business-Specific Permits and Licenses



Primary Contact: Building Inspectional Services Dept.
Address: 37 Main Street, Charlton, MA 01507
Contacts: 508-248-2241; Building.ZEO@townofcharlton.net

SKIP THIS CHAPTER IF YOU ARE NOT OPENING A BUSINESS

Some businesses require permits specific to their type of business activity. Consult the table below to identify which permits may apply to your business. This list is not comprehensive; consult the departments referenced in the table to ensure that you identify all permits required for your business. The Building Inspectional Services Department can help you identify the permits and licenses required to operate your business.

[Certain professions / business activities](#) also require a license from the State to practice in Massachusetts. This includes many personal care businesses such as barbershops and salons.

[Continue to the table on the next page].

Common Permits by Business Activity:

See [Part II](#) for information on public hearings (if applicable) and fees.

Business Activity	Permit or License Required	Issuing Authority
Serve or sell food directly to consumers	Food Establishment Permit ¹	Board of Health
Operate a hotel or motel	Hotel or Motel Permit	
Sell tobacco products	Tobacco Permit	
Sell marijuana products	Marijuana Establishment Permit ²	
Provide tattoo or body art services	Body Art Establishment / Practitioner Permit	
Serve or sell food and non-alcoholic beverages for consumption on premises	Common Victualler's License	Select Board *Permitting contact is the Town Administrator's Office
Serve alcohol or liquor to be consumed on premises	Retail Alcohol License (Pouring License) ³	
Serve alcohol or liquor to be consumed off premises	Retail Alcohol License (Package Store License) ³	
Host dancing, comedy, live music, and other performances	Entertainment License	
Sell new or used automobiles	Class I and II License	
Operate a junk / salvage car dealership	Class III License	Fire Department
Have a permanent dumpster that is six cubic yards or more	Dumpster Permit	
Using weighing and measuring devices (e.g., a cash register)	Weights and Measures Seal ⁴	Sealer of Weights and Measures

Table Notes:

(1) Food Establishment Permit (Board of Health): Food Establishments Permits are required for any business that serves or sells food directly to consumers in town, with limited exceptions. Selling time / temperature controlled for safety (TCS) foods requires a Food Establishment Permit. Allergen Awareness and ServSafe certifications are required to obtain a permit. Architectural drawings of the establishment and a food / drink menu must also be submitted.

Mobile food vendors also require a Food Establishment Permit to operate in town. An annual permit is valid for multiple events in town throughout the calendar year. A temporary permit is valid for one event, up to 4 days in town.

Sanitation standards for food establishments are governed by the [Merged Food Code](#), which incorporates the State Sanitary Code (105 CMR 590) and the 2013 FDA Food Code.

(2) Marijuana Establishment Permit (Board of Health): Marijuana establishments must also receive a Special Permit from the Planning Board. Establishments must comply with [Section 200-5.20 \(Marijuana establishments\)](#) of the Charlton Zoning Bylaw and state laws / regulations ([MGL c. 94G](#) & [935 CMR 500](#)).

(3) Alcoholic Beverage License (Select Board): There are many different types of licenses to sell alcoholic beverages. The Select Board issues retail licenses for on-premises alcohol consumption (i.e., Pouring License) and off-premises alcohol consumption (e.g., Package Store License), subject to the approval of the Massachusetts Alcoholic Beverages Control Commission (ABCC). Details on the process of obtaining a license and Retail License Applications are available on the [ABCC website](#). Please consult with the Town Administrator's Office first about the availability of Town alcoholic beverage licenses.

(4) Weights and Measures Seal (Sealer of Weights and Measures): A Weights and Measures Seal may be required for weighing and measuring devices (e.g., scales, pumps, and meters) if you are selling items based on unit of measurement (e.g., weight, volume, length, or time). In addition, if you have three or more cash registers, you may need to have your price scanners verified. See [MGL c. 98](#) for more information.

Commercial weighing and measuring devices must be tested and certified annually. Cash registers and consumer price scanners must be tested and certified at least once every two years.

The Sealer of Weights and Measures performs regular visits to businesses to test and certify regulated equipment. If you would like to schedule an inspection because you have purchased new equipment or other reasons, contact the [Sealer of Weights and Measures](#). The Sealer will schedule an inspection as soon as possible, likely within a few days.

Environmental, Health / Safety, Historic Preservation, and Infrastructure Permits



Contact the relevant Town board or department if you have questions. Contact info is available on the Key Contacts Page (pg. 2).

You will also likely need to receive permits from Town departments to ensure the project complies with environmental, health and safety, and historic preservation regulations. Permits are also required to connect to Town water and sewer infrastructure.

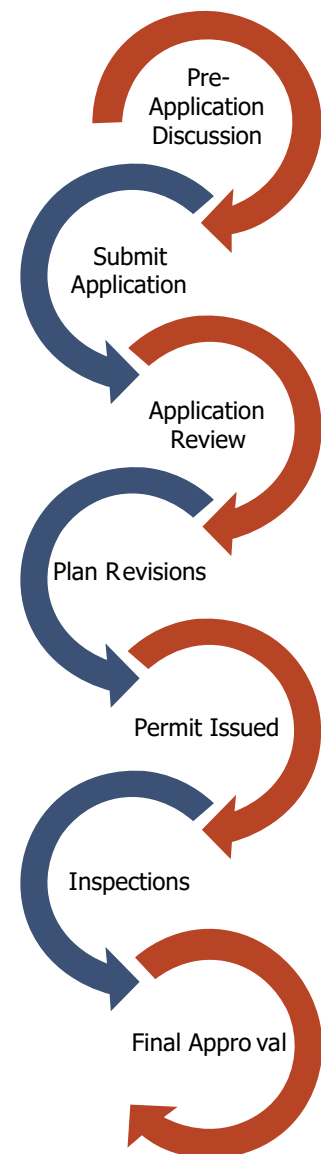
The Permit Application Process

The graphic to the right identifies the general process for most types of permits. However, each permit is unique, and the Town encourages you to speak with the departments detailed below throughout the permitting and inspection process to minimize the potential for delays. See [Part II](#) for information on public hearings (if applicable) and fees.

Conservation Commission

The [Conservation Commission](#) issues the following environmental permits:

Wetlands Protection: The Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act (WPA; [M.G.L. c.131 §40](#)) and its applicable state regulations ([310 CMR 10](#)) require permits to be granted for development activity in and around wetlands resource areas.



Examples of WPA resource areas include swamps, bogs, lakes, streams, rivers, etc. Some resource areas also include protective buffer zones that extend beyond the resource area.

If you are uncertain whether these regulations apply to your project or suspect that they do, contact the Conservation Commission.

Land Disturbance / Stormwater Management: All land disturbance activities that result in the disturbance of 43,560 sq. ft of land (i.e., one acre) or more require the filing of a Land Disturbance / Stormwater Management Permit with the Charlton Conservation Commission. Regulated activities include "Development or redevelopment involving multiple separate activities in discontinuous locations or on different schedules if the activities are part of a larger common plan of development . . ." See [Section 175-4 \(Applicability\)](#) of the Town's General Bylaws for more details and other regulated activities.

Floodplain Development: A permit is required for all proposed construction or other development in Charlton's Floodplain Overlay District. This includes:

- New construction
- Changes to existing buildings
- Placement of manufactured homes
- Placement of agricultural facilities
- Fences
- Sheds
- Storage facilities
- Drilling
- Mining
- Paving

Any other development that might increase flooding or adversely impact flood risks to other properties also requires a permit. See [Section 200-6.4 \(Permits . . . in the Floodplain Overlay District\)](#) for more details.

The Conservation Director is the Town's designated Floodplain Administrator. The Floodplain Administrator coordinates with other Town departments to ensure that all construction projects in floodplains obtain necessary local, state, and federal permits and comply with floodplain development standards.

If you have any questions related to development within a designated floodplain, please contact the Conservation Commission office.

Highway Department

The Highway Department is responsible for issuing permits related to public road access (i.e., public right-of-way access). Common [Highway Department permits](#) include:

Driveway Permit: New or altered driveways on any Town road require a Driveway Permit from the Highway Department. A cash bond is required to ensure completion of the work.

Road Opening Permit: Utility connection work that requires access to Town roads must receive a Road Opening Permit from the Highway Department. A cash bond is required to ensure completion of the work.

Note: If your property requires access to a State road, you will need to receive a [Highway Access Permit](#) from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT). The Town advises early coordination with MassDOT District 3 to obtain a Highway Access Permit.

Water / Sewer Commission

The Water / Sewer Commission oversees [permits for water and sewer connections and related earthwork activities](#). Common Water / Sewer Commission permits include:

Water Tie-In Permit: Tying into Charlton's water system to receive potable water or water for fire suppression requires a Water Tie-In permit.

Important Notes (Water Tie-In Permit):

- **Mandatory Water Connection:** On lots that abut a public water supply pipe, "any building constructed, reconstructed, substantially enlarged or substantially altered" must be connected to Town water prior to occupancy. See [Chapter 190 Article IV](#) of the Town's General Bylaws for more details.
- **Submission Procedure:** Step 1) Obtain approvals / signatures from Charlton Town departments to complete [Charlton's Application for Water Tie-In](#). Step 2) Fill out and submit a Water Connection Permit application to the [Southbridge Department of Public Works](#). The Town of Southbridge is Charlton's water system operator.

Sewer Connection Permit: All construction, alteration, or disruption of any new or existing residential or non-residential connection to public sanitary sewer requires a sewer permit.

Trench Permit: All excavators must obtain a permit prior to the creation of a trench made for a construction-related purpose on public or private land or rights of way.

Drain Layers Permit: Plumbers and contractors must be licensed by the Town of Charlton and bonded to lay drains in the Town. *Water connections must be made by a Charlton and Southbridge licensed drain layer.

Note: All permit applications shall comply with the Town of Charlton Water and Sewer Department Construction Standards.

Board of Health

The Board of Health enforces a variety of state and/or local public health, sanitation, and environmental codes. You can find and apply for Board of Health permits on the Town's [Online Permitting System](#). You can also download Board of Health applications on the [Town website](#).

Well Permits: Any construction of a new well or the decommissioning of an existing well requires a permit. All well construction and/or decommissioning work must comply with Board of Health Well Regulations. A water quality test is also required prior to using any well as a drinking water source.

Septic System Permits: Any construction or repair of a septic system requires permits from the Board of Health.

Note: New construction or repair of an existing system involves several stages: 1) percolation test; 2) Plan Review; 3) Disposal Works Construction Permit [installation]; 4) Inspections; 5) Certificate of Compliance.

Fire Department

The Fire Department oversees compliance with [M.G.L. c. 148](#) and [527 CMR 1](#), which cover fire prevention regulations. [Common Fire Department permits](#) include:

Smoke / Carbon Monoxide Alarm Permit: The Fire Department inspects residences and commercial buildings for compliance with smoke / carbon monoxide alarm requirements. In Massachusetts, a smoke and carbon monoxide detection certificate is required upon sale or transfer of residential property.

Fire Protection System Permit: The installation of or modification to fire protection systems requires a Building Permit from the Building Inspectional Services Department with review by the Fire Department.

Oil Burner / Tank Permit (Installation of an oil burner and oil tank and/or the removal of an oil tank).

LNG / LPG Tank Permit (Installation of an LNG / LPG tank requires a permit).

Blasting Permit (Blasting operations).

Cutting and Welding Permit (Cutting and welding operations).

Historic Districts Commission

Projects located within the Northside Historic District are referred to the Historic Districts Commission for review and comment. Changes to the exterior appearance of a natural or built feature within the District require either a **Certificate of Appropriateness**, a **Certificate of Non-Applicability**, or a **Certificate of Hardship**. This process is designed to preserve the historic and architectural integrity of the district. See [Chapter 147](#) of the Zoning Bylaw for more details, including what improvements are exempt ([Section 147-7 \[Exceptions\]](#)) from Historic Districts Commission review.

Contact information and applications are available on the [Historic Districts Commission webpage](#).

Select Board

In addition to its role as a policymaking body for the Town and other duties, the Select Board also act as a licensing authority in several areas. Common Select Board permits include:

Earth Removal Permit: The removal of more than 500 cubic yards of earth material (e.g., soil, sand, gravel, etc.) from a property within ten consecutive years requires a permit. See [Chapter 130 \(Earth Removal\)](#) of the General Bylaws for more details.

Planning Board

The [Planning Board](#) also enforces the Town's **Scenic Roads Bylaw**. The bylaw requires that property abutters may not cut / remove trees or remove stone walls along designated scenic roads without the consent of the Planning Board. See [Section 200-5.4 \(Scenic roads\)](#) of the Zoning Bylaw for more details.

The following roads in Charlton have been designated as scenic roads:

- Buteau Road
- Cemetery Road
- Gould Road
- Horne Homestead Road
- Jones Road
- McIntyre Road
- North Sturbridge Road
- Smith Road
- Tucker Road
- Wheelock Road

Building Permit



Primary Contact: Building Inspectional Services Dept.
Address: 37 Main Street, Charlton, MA 01507
Contacts: 508-248-2241; Building.ZEO@townofcharlton.net

Per the Massachusetts State Building Code ([780 CMR](#)), a Building Permit is required to perform most construction work. This includes, but is not limited to:

- New structures
- Additions
- Renovations
- Alterations
- Dormers
- Chimneys
- Woodstoves
- Decks
- Roofing
- Siding
- Swimming Pools
- Antennae
- Sheds
- Change of Use or Occupancy**

The Building Permit is the last permit you receive before starting construction. As part of the process, the [Building Inspectional Services Department](#) reviews your project for compliance with the Charlton Zoning Bylaw and the Massachusetts Building Code. Building Inspectional Services also consults with other Town boards and departments to ensure the project complies with all environmental, health, safety, and other standards.

**Your project may require a Building Permit even if it involves no major physical changes to a building. The Building Code may require work to an existing space if there is a change in property use group or occupancy classification. Some changes in commodities or intensity of use may also require additional evaluation of a building's features and/or systems.

Applications for Building Permits may be submitted via the [Town's Online Permitting System](#), as well as in paper form. You can find PDF copies of the different building permits using the links in the table below.

Be aware that there are many different Building Permit applications:

Application Type	Applicable Projects
Additions, Remodeling, and New Dwelling Permit (One- and Two-Family Homes)	Additions, Interior remodeling and improvement, Decks and porches, Garages, Major remodeling, New homes (up to two-family), Screen rooms, & Sunrooms
Accessory Permit (One- and Two-Family Homes)	Fences, Retaining walls, Pools, Roofing, Siding, Replacement windows, Sheds, & Solid fuel burning appliances (i.e., pellet, wood, and coal stoves)
Building Permit (Other than One- and Two-Family Homes)	All non-residential development (e.g., commercial) and Residential buildings larger than two-family
Sign Permit	All signs except those exempted in Section 200-5.6 (H)
Demolition Permit	Demolition of an existing structure
Gas Fitting Permit	All work except minor repairs (See Consumer Fact Sheet)
Plumbing Permit	
Electrical Work Permit	All electrical renovations, additions, removals, or changes (See Consumer Fact Sheet)
Sheet Metal Permit	Sheet metal work

Note: During construction, Town staff are required to conduct inspections of sites to ensure compliance with the Massachusetts Building Code and other environmental and safety regulations.



Certificate of Occupancy



Primary Contact: Building Inspectional Services Dept.
Address: 37 Main Street, Charlton, MA 01507
Contacts: 508-248-2241; Building.ZEO@townofcharlton.net

No building or structure subject to a Building Permit (this includes changes in existing occupancy classification) can be used or occupied until the [Building Inspectional Services Department](#) issues a Certificate of Occupancy. A Certificate of Occupancy indicates that a building / structure is safe to inhabit and complies with applicable regulations. A Certificate of Occupancy is only issued once all relevant Town departments, boards, and commissions conduct inspections of the site in question and sign off that all finished work complies with the standards they enforce and any specific conditions attached to permit awards.

Project proponents / property owners do not need to apply for a Certificate of Occupancy; a certificate will be issued by the Building Inspectional Services Department once the conditions described above are met.

Part II. Permit Timelines and Fees

Part II details the timelines and fees you can expect when applying for different permits, licenses, or approvals. This includes information on which applications require public hearings before Town boards and/or commissions.

Permit Timelines

The tables provided in Part II do not consist of all approvals issued by the Town. Consult Town staff to determine the timelines for permits, licenses, or approvals not included in Part II. Many of the timeframes presented in this chapter are based on State law and cannot be altered by local boards or commissions. Otherwise, presented timelines are approximate and may vary depending on the scope of a project. All time frames do not begin until a complete application is submitted; applications missing required documents or information do not start the timeline.

Timeline information is divided into two tables:

- **Table I:** Business Permits ([pg. 27](#))
- **Table II:** Land Development and Construction Permits ([pg. 28](#))

Permit Fees

Board and department fee schedules are available on the Town website. Click on the entries below to find where you can view and/or download each fee schedule.

- [Building Inspectional Services](#)
- [Fire Department](#)
- [Board of Health](#)
- [Highway Department](#)
- [Planning Board](#)
- [Sealer of Weights and Measures](#)
- [Select Board](#)
- [Water / Sewer Commission](#)

Conservation Commission permit fees can be found in [Wetlands Protection Act forms](#) and the [Charlton Stormwater Management Rules and Regulations](#).

Table I: Business Permits

Permits / Licenses	Responsible Town Department or Board					Timeline Information	
	Town Clerk's Office	Board of Health	Select Board	Fire Dept.	Sealer of Weights and Measures	Time until Public Hearing	Time Until Decision
Business Certificate (DBA)	X					N/A	Issued same day of filing
Body Art Establishment / Practitioner Permit		X				N/A	Varies
Food Establishment Permit		X				N/A	Within 30 days of filing
Hotel or Motel Permit		X				N/A	Varies
Tobacco Permit		X				N/A	Varies
Marijuana Establishment Permit		X				N/A	Varies
Class I and II License (automobiles)			X			Within 30 days of filing	Within 30 days of filing
Class III License (automobiles)			X			Same as above	Same as above
Common Victualler's License			X			N/A	Same as above
Entertainment License			X			Within 30 days of filing	Same as above
Retail Alcohol License (off-premises consumption)			X			Same as above	Same as above
Retail Alcohol License (on-premises consumption)			X			Same as above	Same as above
Dumpster Permit				X		N/A	10 days notification for inspection
Weights and Measures Seal					X	N/A	See pg. 18

Table II: Land Development & Construction Permits

Permit / Approval	Responsible Town Department or Board						Timeline Information	
	Planning Board	Zoning Board of Appeals	Conserv. Comm.	Select Board	Highway Dept.	Water / Sewer Comm.	Time until Public Hearing	Time Until Decision
ZONING								
Site Plan Review	X						Within 65 days of filing	Within 90 days from close of hearing
Special Permit	X	X					Same as above	Same as above
Variance (zoning)		X					Same as above	100 days from filing
ENVIRONMENTAL								
Notice of Intent (NOI) - Wetlands			X				Within 21 days of filing	Within 21 days of close of hearing
Request for Determination of Applicability (RDA) – Wetlands			X				N/A	Within 21 days of filing
Stormwater and Erosion Control Permit			X				N/A	Within 30 days of filing
Earth Removal Permit				X			Within 30 days of filing	Same as above
INFRASTRUCTURE & UTILITIES								
Driveway Permit					X		N/A	Within 10 business days of filing
Road Opening Permit					X		N/A	Same as above
Sewer Connection Permit						X	N/A	Varies
Water Tie-In Permit						X	N/A	Varies
Trench Permit						X	N/A	Varies

Table II (Continued)

Permit / Approval	Responsible Town Department or Board					Timeline Information	
	Board of Health	Fire Dept.	Bldg. Inspctl. Services	Historic Districts Comm.	Planning Board	Time until Public Hearing	Time Until Decision
HEALTH & SAFETY							
Well Permit	X					N/A	Varies
Percolation Test (septic)	X					N/A	Varies
Plan Review (septic and well)	X					N/A	Within 45 days of filing
Disposal Works Construction Permit (septic)	X					N/A	Varies
FIRE							
Smoke/Carbon Monoxide Alarm Permit		X				N/A	10 business days notification for inspection
Fire Protection System Permit		X				N/A	Within 30 days of filing
Oil Burner / Tank Permit		X				N/A	Same as above
LNG / LPG Tank Permit		X				N/A	Same as above
Blasting Permit		X				N/A	Same as above
Cutting & Welding Permit		X				N/A	Same as above
BUILDING							
Building Permit (all types)			X			N/A	Within 30 days of filing
Certificate of Occupancy			X			N/A	10 days after final inspection
Demolition Permit			X			N/A	Within 30 days of filing
Electrical Work Permit			X			N/A	Same as above
Gas Fitting / Plumbing Permit			X			N/A	Same as above
Sign Permit			X			N/A	Same as above

Table II (Continued)

Permit / Approval	Responsible Town Department or Board		Timeline Information	
	Historic Districts Commission	Planning Board	Time until Public Hearing	Time Until Decision
HISTORICAL PRESERVATION				
Historic District Certificate of Appropriateness	X		At least 14 days	Project applicability: within 14 days of filing Approval / Disapproval: within 60 days of close of hearing
Scenic Road Permit		X	Within 65 days of filing	Within 65 days of filing

Part III. State and Federal Permits

Background

In addition to local permits and approvals, some development projects also require state and/or federal permits. Many of these permits only apply to projects of considerable scale or that meet defined criteria. Part III does not include all state and federal permits that may apply to a project.

The Town of Charlton does not issue state / federal permits and is not responsible for the decisions and timelines of state or federal agencies.

Obtaining most state / federal permits will require project proponents to hire professional consultants to guide them through the process and prepare necessary documents and reports.

Common State Permits:

State Highway Access Permit - Highway Access Permits are required when physical work or activities take place within, or impact, the State Highway Right-of-Way or property owned or under the custody and control of MassDOT-Highway. Common types of work and activities that require a Highway Access Permit include driveways (curb cuts), roadway improvements, utility work, and landscaping activities.

Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA) Review – MESA prohibits the “taking” or possession of any plant or animal species listed as Endangered, Threatened, or Special Concern under the act. To this effect, it regulates activities located within Priority and Estimated Habitat of Rare Species. Project developers should consult MassWildlife’s [interactive map viewer](#) to determine if their project overlaps with a Priority and Estimated Habitat of Rare Species. Projects located in such areas require regulatory review by MassWildlife’s Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program.

Notification Prior to Construction / Demolition - MassDEP requires any person responsible for construction or demolition of a building, excluding residential buildings with less than 20 units, to submit notification 10 working days prior to the start of work. The federal Environmental Protection Agency requires the owner/operator to submit notification 10 working days prior to the demolition of any building, except a residential structure with less than four (4) units. Submitting notification to MassDEP satisfies both the state and federal requirements. This notification requirement is designed to protect public health and the environment by ensuring that the release of dust or other

potentially hazardous air pollutants to the ambient air will be prevented.

Other State Permits:

- [Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act \(MEPA\) Review](#)
- [Clean Water Act, Section 401 Water Quality Certification](#)
- [Massachusetts Historical Commission Review](#)
- [Sewer System Extension and Connection Permit](#)
- [Groundwater Discharge Permit](#)
- [Waterways Permitting](#)

Common Federal Permits:

[National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System \(NPDES\) Construction Stormwater Permitting Program](#) – The Environmental Protection Agency’s NPDES stormwater program “authorizes the discharge of stormwater (and certain authorized non-stormwater discharges) from construction sites that disturb one acre or more of land, and from smaller sites that are part of a larger, common plan of development.”

[Flood Insurance Mandatory Purchase Requirement](#) – A combination of federal laws concerning flood insurance require that lending institutions not make, extend, or review any loan secured by improved real estate located in special flood hazards areas (i.e., FEMA 100-year floodplains) in communities participating in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) unless the building securing the loan is covered by flood insurance. This usually requires submitting flood certification forms to the lender.

Other Federal Permits:

- [National Environmental Policy Act \(NEPA\) Review](#)
- [Clean Water Act, Section 404 Permit](#)
- [Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899, Section 10 Permit](#) (often applied for in conjunction with CWA Section 404 Permit)
- [National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 Review](#)