

# Floodplain Zoning\*

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Proposed Bylaw Rewrite for 2025 Town Meeting

\*MANDATORY bylaw update



# THIS IS A MANDATORY UPDATE TO OUR BYLAW!

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- **FEMA requires** the update to stay in the **National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)**.
- Without it, homeowners could lose flood insurance or face higher costs.
- The town could lose federal disaster aid and recovery funds.
- Updating the bylaw protects homes, keeps insurance affordable, and ensures FEMA compliance.
- Action is needed to keep Medfield safe and prepared for future floods.
- **This draft has been approved by DCR, and is largely the same as their FEMA Model Bylaw.**



# Summary of the Bylaw

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1. This bylaw **protects people and property from flood damage** in Medfield's high-risk areas.
2. **Special permits** are needed for most construction or land changes in flood zones.
3. Buildings **must** follow strict **flood protection standards**.
4. **The town must follow FEMA guidelines** and report any major floodplain changes.
5. If someone gets a **variance**, they will be **warned about higher flood insurance costs**.
6. **This bylaw does not override state building codes** but ensures stricter flood safety rules apply when needed.



## § 300-10.1 Purpose

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This bylaw is meant to:

- Protect people and property from flooding in Medfield, especially in areas near the Charles and Stop Rivers.
- Maintain the natural ability of floodplains to store water and control floods.
- Prevent problems like sewage leaks, power outages, and dangerous conditions caused by flooding.
- Reduce costs of emergency response and property damage due to floods.

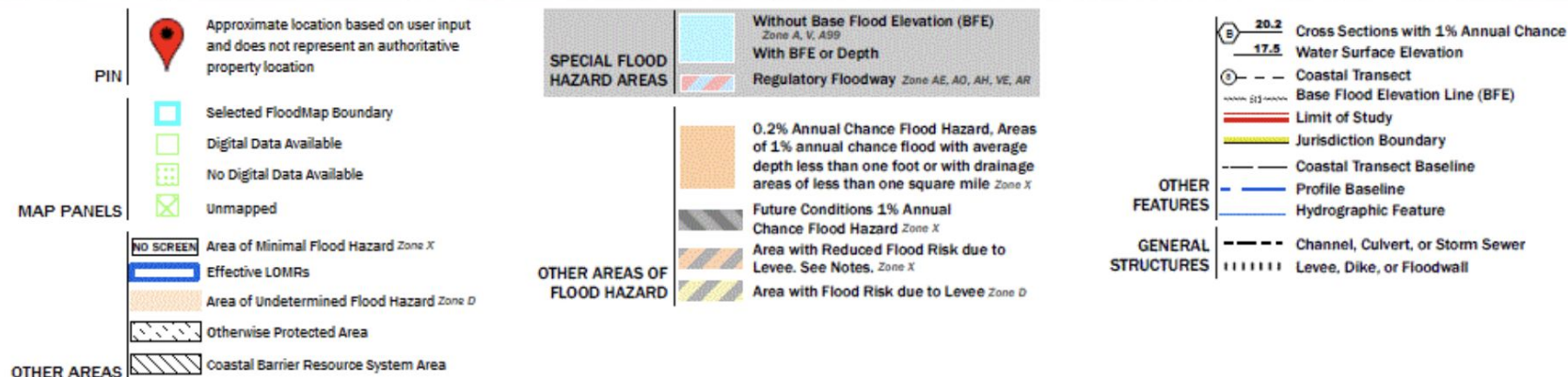
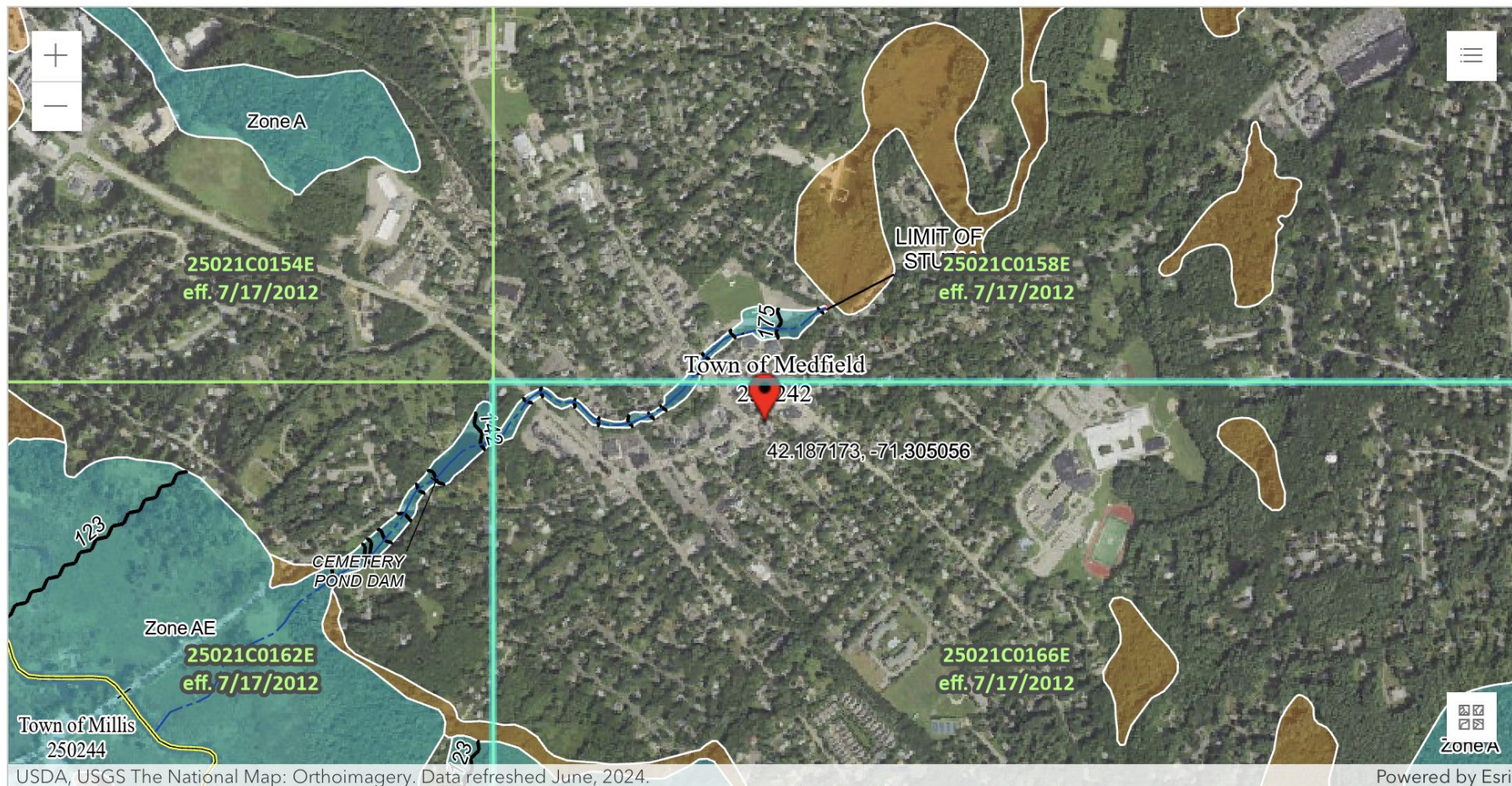


## 300-10.2 Floodplain Overlay District Boundary (Where this applies)

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- The Floodplain District includes all high-risk flood areas in Medfield as identified by FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency).
- The exact boundaries are based on FEMA's Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) and Flood Insurance Study (FIS), both effective as of July 8, 2025.







## § 300-10.3 Floodplain Administrator (Who is in charge?)

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- The Town Administrator (or someone they assign) is responsible for enforcing floodplain rules in Medfield.

# § 300-10.4 Definitions Relating to Floodplain Zoning

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This section defines key terms like:

- **Development** – Any change to land, such as construction, paving, or digging.
- **Floodway** – The part of a river or stream that needs to stay clear so floodwaters can flow without causing problems.
- **New Construction** – Any building that started after floodplain rules were first put in place.
- **Special Flood Hazard Area** – Areas marked on FEMA maps as high flood risk zones.
- **Start of Construction** – The date construction officially begins (e.g., pouring a foundation).



## § 300-10.5 Applicability

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Any building or land change in flood zones **A, AE, AH, AO, or A99** must follow strict flood regulations.

- ◆ Construction **cannot** make flood risks worse for the community.
- ◆ Developers must use **the best available flood data** to make safe building decisions.
- ◆ **Recreational vehicles (RVs)** in flood zones must be elevated, securely anchored, or only be on-site temporarily (less than 180 days).



## § 300-10.6 Permitted Uses

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You **must** get a permit before doing any construction or land modification in a flood zone.

Special permits are required for:

- Building new structures.
- Digging, filling, or moving earth.
- Changing water flow (e.g., creating a pond).
- Constructing new **dams or water control devices**.

Routine **maintenance** of town-owned infrastructure is **allowed** without a permit.

# § 300-10.7 Application for Special Permit

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To get a **special permit from the Board of Appeals**, you must submit:

- A detailed site plan showing existing and planned construction.
- Contour maps showing changes in land elevation.
- Copies of the application must be sent to multiple town boards, to give them an opportunity to weigh in on the approval (Building Commissioner, Board of Health, and Conservation Commission).
- Prior to submitting an application to the ZBA, ConComm approval is required

All plans must be **certified by a professional engineer or land surveyor**.

# § 300-10.8 Issuance of Special Permits

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A **special permit** will only be granted if:

- **Safe access** for vehicles and pedestrians is available.
- **No pollution risks** to water supplies exist.
- **Utilities (sewage, gas, electricity, etc.)** are protected from flood hazards.
- The project has **proper drainage** and does not harm surrounding properties.
- The project follows **state groundwater level regulations**.

A **certificate of occupancy** (approval to use a building) will not be issued until:

- The project meets all permit requirements.
- A final certified plan confirms the building meets flood standards.



## § 300-10.9 Obligations of Applicant

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- The builder is responsible for **submitting all required documents** and getting approvals from local, state, and federal agencies.
- The town uses a **permit checklist** to ensure all necessary approvals are in place before work begins.

## § 300-10.8 Variances (Exceptions to the Rules)

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If someone **can't** meet flood-resistant building rules, they **can** apply to the State for a **variance** (special permission to build differently).

The town will:

- Keep **records of all variances**.
- Warn property owners that **ignoring flood protection rules may increase their flood insurance rates** (up to \$25 for every \$100 of coverage!).
- Notify FEMA **within 6 months** if new flood data changes the base flood elevation.





## § 300-10.11 Limits of Authority (What this bylaw does NOT control)

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This bylaw does **not** override:

- The authority of the **Board of Health**.
- The **Massachusetts State Building Code**.



## § 300-10.12 Abrogation and Greater Restriction (Which rules take priority?)

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If any local laws **conflict** with this bylaw, **the stricter rule applies** to ensure maximum flood protection.



## § 300-10.13 Disclaimer of Liability (What this bylaw does NOT guarantee)

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- This bylaw helps protect against floods but **does NOT promise complete flood safety.**



## § 300-10.14 Severability (What happens if part of this bylaw is invalid?)

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- If any section of this bylaw is found **unconstitutional** or **invalid**, the rest of the bylaw still remains in effect.