AIA Massachusetts

a chapter of The American Institute of Architects

MEMORANDUM

To: All Members of AIA MA
From: John Nunnari
Date: 11/09/26
Re: Legislative and Regulatory Update

Legislative Update:

Since the last Update

Since the October 12th Legislative Update, political activity in Massachusetts has been dominated by the November 3rd general election, continued concerns over affordability, and the Legislature's efforts to address unfinished business from the 2025–2026 session. In the weeks leading up to the election, Beacon Hill remained largely inactive, with approximately a dozen major bills stalled in conference committees, including measures addressing energy affordability, economic development, artificial intelligence, data privacy, and healthcare. During the October 15th gubernatorial debate, Governor Maura Healey and Republican challenger Mike Minogue focused heavily on energy costs, housing, government accountability, and economic pressures facing residents. The Governor continued advocating for temporary gasoline tax relief and accelerated utility refunds, while House leadership rejected the proposed gas tax suspension, citing concerns about its effectiveness and the loss of transportation funding.

Legislative activity resumed on October 21st when the House convened its first formal session since July 31st to advance a $2.35 billion supplemental budget closing out fiscal year 2026. The House rejected the Governor's proposed two-month gasoline tax suspension and removed several other administration initiatives, while retaining funding for outstanding state obligations. The Senate subsequently developed its own approximately $2.61 billion spending proposal, setting the stage for further negotiations. The supplemental budget also included provisions addressing Massachusetts' treatment of federal research and experimental (R&E) expenditures, an issue of particular concern to architectural and engineering firms. On November 5th, the Senate debated the legislation, considered 123 amendments, and advanced its version of the closeout budget. The debate highlighted continuing disagreements over tax relief, state spending, healthcare obligations, and proposed changes to the Commonwealth's emergency family shelter program.

The November 3rd election produced relatively little change in Massachusetts' political leadership. Governor Healey secured a second term, defeating Minogue by approximately 62% to 35%, while U.S. Senator Ed Markey and the remaining statewide Democratic officeholders also won reelection. Democrats retained overwhelming majorities in both legislative chambers, with Republicans losing a net three House seats and the Senate's partisan composition remaining unchanged. Voters, however, delivered several significant policy decisions through nine statewide ballot questions. Question 1, extending public records requirements to the Legislature and Governor's office, passed with more than 85% support, while voters also approved Election Day voter registration and a dedicated funding mechanism for water and land conservation. Proposals to limit state tax collections and establish an all-party primary system were rejected. Question 7, which would have permitted single-family homes on lots as small as 5,000 square feet, narrowly failed, with approximately 50.7% opposed. The results highlighted continued public interest in government transparency, fiscal policy, and housing development, even as voters largely returned incumbent officeholders to Beacon Hill.

With the election concluded, attention has shifted to the final weeks of the legislative session, which ends in early January 2027. Unlike previous sessions, revised legislative rules now permit lawmakers

to consider major legislation following the November election, creating an opportunity to resolve outstanding conference committee negotiations before the new General Court convenes. Significant differences remain on energy affordability, economic development, data privacy, social media protections for minors, and healthcare reform. Legislative leaders are also considering how to implement the overwhelmingly approved public records ballot initiative, potentially through alternative statutory language. Governor Healey has identified several of these unresolved issues as priorities for the remainder of the session and the beginning of her second term. For AIA Massachusetts, the coming weeks will be particularly important for monitoring the energy and economic development bills, the supplemental budget's R&E tax provisions, and other legislation affecting housing, sustainability, and professional practice, while preparing advocacy priorities and legislative relationships for the 2027–2028 session.

Looking Forward

With the November 3rd general election concluded, Massachusetts lawmakers have approximately eight weeks remaining in the 2025–2026 legislative session to address substantial unfinished business. A dozen conference committees continue negotiating major legislation involving energy affordability, economic development, healthcare, artificial intelligence, data privacy, and other statewide priorities. Revised legislative rules permit formal action during the post-election period, creating an opportunity for significant legislation to advance before the new General Court convenes in January. However, substantial differences remain between House and Senate proposals, and the approaching holiday season further compresses the time available to reach agreement.

Among the most closely watched issues will be implementation of Question 1, overwhelmingly approved by voters to extend public records requirements to the Legislature and Governor's office. More than 2.2 million voters supported the measure, although legislative leaders have indicated that implementation details remain to be resolved. Lawmakers have also been negotiating a separate, more limited public records proposal, raising questions about how the voter-approved measure will ultimately be implemented. Meanwhile, Governor Healey will be looking to advance several outstanding legislative priorities before beginning her second term, including measures addressing energy costs, healthcare access, artificial intelligence, and protections for minors using social media. The Administration will also begin preparing its FY 2028 budget and establishing priorities for the 2027–2028 term.

Healthcare is expected to receive particular attention in the coming weeks as policymakers confront rising costs, uncertainty surrounding federal Medicaid funding, and ongoing labor disputes involving major healthcare providers. More broadly, the Legislature's ability to resolve outstanding conference committee negotiations will determine how much of its remaining agenda advances before the session concludes. For AIA Massachusetts, particular attention will remain on the energy affordability legislation, economic development proposals, and final disposition of the FY 2026 supplemental budget, including provisions addressing research and experimental (R&E) tax expenditures affecting architectural and engineering firms. AIA MA will continue monitoring these developments while preparing its legislative and regulatory advocacy priorities for the 2027–2028 session.

AIA MA Bill Tracking

To view the current status of all AIA MA tracked legislation, **please click here** (Files located under the banner ***Bills Tracked for the 2025–2026 Legislative Session***)

A schedule of all Legislative Events can be found on the **Legislative Events** of AIA MA's website.

To review previous Legislative or Regulatory Reports or minutes from GAC meetings, please click **here**

Regulatory Update:

A schedule of all construction board regulatory meetings can be found on the **Regulatory Events Calendar** of AIA MA's website.

Notices of Public Review of Prospective Regulations (10/13/26 – 11/06/26)
225 CMR 16.00: Alternative Energy Portfolio Standard

- October 23, 2026 - **225 CMR 16.00: Alternative Energy Portfolio Standard.** The cost of the APS is recovered through electric rates and therefore provides an opportunity to quickly reduce costs for ratepayers. DOER is recommending reducing the Minimum Standard of the program, beginning in 2027, which will reduce the cost of the APS program by 77% between 2027 and 2029 and save ratepayers up to $238 million. To support a smaller APS market, term limits will also be implemented for Gasification, Combined Heat and Power, Flywheel Storage Unit, Paper-derived Fuel, Efficient Steam Technology, Woody Biomass, Biogas, Liquid Biofuels, Combined Heat Exchange Systems, Fuel Cell, and Thermal Waste-to-Energy systems. Projects that fall under the technologies listed will have their APS qualification sunset after up to 10 years, beginning in 2027. Air source heat pumps, ground source heat pumps, and solar hot water systems will not have term limits implemented**.** – **Notice of Public Hearing** – Hearing to be held on 11/13/26 @ 10:00 AM. Written comments accepted until 11/13/26 by 5:00 P.M.

New Regulations (10/13/2026 – 11/06/26)
225 CMR – Department of Energy Resources

- October 23, 2026 - **225 CMR 16.00 - Alternative Energy Portfolio Standard.** The Alternative Energy Portfolio Standard (APS) provides incentives for non-renewable technologies that reduce fossil fuel use. – **Emergency Regulations** – **Effective Date: 10/07/2026. Expires: 1/7/2027**
  Part 1
  Part 2

CMR's tracked include: 105 CMR - State Sanitary Code; 225 CMR 22.00 – 26.00 – Energy Codes; 248 CMR – Plumbing/Gas Fitting Code; 257 CMR – Water Treatment; 271 CMR – Sheet Metal; 310 CMR – DEP; 314 CMR – Water Pollution Control; 521 CMR – Architectural Access; 522 CMR – Boiler Rules; 524 CMR – Elevator; 527 CMR – Fire Code; 528 CMR – Pipefitter and Refrigeration; 780 CMR – Building Code

Copies of all codes listed above can be found on the **State Boards and Construction Regulations** page of AIA MA's website

Board of Building Regulation and Standards
At its **October 13th** meeting, the BBRS approved the **September 8th** BBRS meeting minutes, **September 1st** Building Official Certification Committee (BOCC) minutes, and multiple sets of minutes from the Climate Resiliency, Fire Prevention and Fire Protection (FPFP), and Residential Code subcommittees. The Board continued its practice of grouping technical subcommittee minutes for approval to streamline its meetings. Board Counsel Charles Kilb had no separate report.

Subcommittee reports reflected continued progress toward completion of the 11th Edition Massachusetts State Building Code. The FPFP Subcommittee completed and forwarded its Chapter 4 recommendations to the BBRS and is finalizing Chapter 9 amendments before addressing

additional code-change proposals. The Residential Code Subcommittee continued reviewing the 2024 IRC, including Appendix BO (formerly Appendix J), Chapters 1 and 3, and potential relocation of short-term rental and periodic residential inspection provisions into a separate appendix. The Energy Advisory Committee reported that it is nearing completion of the commercial energy-code amendments and several residential provisions. A previously referred proposal concerning demand-controlled parking garage ventilation is being withdrawn from the current process while its proponent works with ASHRAE committees on consensus language. The Climate Resiliency Subcommittee completed its substantive review and approved its recommendations for transmission to the BBRS, subject to final formatting. The Manufactured Buildings Subcommittee held its first two meetings, focusing on the existing program and the roles and responsibilities of participating parties. The BOCC reported ongoing certification, examination, training, and enforcement-related activity. In the Executive Director's report, staff reported 172 Construction Supervisor Licenses issued and 1,344 renewed during **September 2026**.

The Board considered Request for Interpretation (RFI) 2026-23 concerning snow-load requirements for curved roofs under 780 CMR Section 1608.4. The request identified potentially confusing terminology introduced between the 9th and 10th Editions, particularly the distinction between concave and convex roofs and the application of ASCE 7 provisions. Members generally agreed that the revised language may not have been intended to change the underlying requirements but acknowledged the need for additional technical review. Because the Structural Advisory Committee is not expected to reconvene until approximately March 2027, Board member Lisa Davey agreed to review the matter and provide a recommendation at the next meeting. Staff will also attempt to identify the original intent of the amendment. No formal interpretation was issued.

Three code-change proposals were considered. The first, submitted by W. Mott of MDA Architecture, proposed clarifying Section 101.4.7 regarding the relationship between accessibility provisions in 780 CMR and the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board regulations (521 CMR). Members discussed whether the existing language creates confusion about which accessibility requirements remain within the building code, particularly provisions outside Chapter 11, and whether the proposed clarification could affect appeals jurisdiction. Following discussion, the Board voted to accept the revised language for incorporation into the 11th Edition, without referring it to a subcommittee. Board Counsel clarified that code-change votes are being considered for the 11th Edition unless an emergency amendment to the current code is specifically proposed.

The second proposal, submitted by R. Patel and N. Jain, addressed fire and life-safety requirements for domestic autonomous mobile robots, including docking, charging, battery protection, and containment. The proposal contemplated requirements for larger battery-powered robots, including detection, ventilation, charging shutoffs, fire-resistant construction, and protection of means of egress. Members acknowledged the emerging fire-safety concerns associated with increasingly powerful lithium-ion batteries but questioned whether the proposed requirements should apply more broadly to battery-powered equipment, including e-bikes and other mobile devices. Following discussion, the Board voted to refer the proposal to the FPFP Subcommittee for technical review, with potential input from energy specialists and consideration of related fire-code provisions.
The third proposal, submitted by S. Newman of the Responsible Energy Codes Alliance (RECA), addressed automated shading load-management credits under Section C406.3.4 of the 2024 IECC. The proposal sought to clarify how partial energy credits would apply to existing commercial buildings undergoing additions or alterations, particularly in light of amendments already approved by the Energy Advisory Committee. Members discussed the complexity of the 2024 IECC credit system and the Committee's efforts to simplify compliance requirements without weakening the code. The Board voted to refer the proposal to the Energy Advisory Committee for further review and incorporation into its forthcoming recommendations.

The Board deferred discussion of the overall 11th Edition subcommittee timeline to a future meeting. During matters not reasonably anticipated by the Chair, members discussed the need for additional BBRS representation on the Manufactured Buildings Subcommittee and the anticipated Greenhouse/Cannabis Subcommittee. The Board subsequently voted to close its public meeting and enter a quasi-judicial session, with no return to open session planned. The next scheduled BBRS meeting is **November 10, 2026**.

MA Board of Registration of Architects (MBRA)
At its **October 13th** meeting, the Massachusetts Board of Registration of Architects convened in open session and approved the **August 11th** open and executive session meeting minutes, with minor corrections. In the Executive Director's report, staff reported 7,012 active architect licenses and 274 emeritus licenses, including 65 new architect licenses and 27 new emeritus licenses issued during August and September. Staff also reported 6,720 approved license renewals and 92 reinstatements processed since **August 1st.** Regarding NCARB's Centralized Disciplinary Database, staff confirmed that participation is voluntary, free of charge, and currently includes approximately 60% of licensing jurisdictions. While the database could assist staff in identifying disciplinary actions taken in other states, its usefulness is limited by incomplete participation. Massachusetts currently relies primarily on applicant self-reporting for out-of-state disciplinary histories. Staff will continue discussions with NCARB and provide additional information at a future meeting.

The Board received updates from NCARB's **October 9–10** leadership meeting in Memphis, Tennessee, including ongoing development of the *Pathways to Practice* initiative. NCARB is working toward implementation in fiscal year 2029, subject to approval by more than two-thirds of its member jurisdictions. The initiative proposes a competency-based approach allowing candidates to demonstrate 16 professional competencies through combinations of education, experience, and examination. NCARB intends to work individually with jurisdictions to develop implementation roadmaps, and the Board anticipates further discussion at its December meeting. Members also noted upcoming NCARB meetings in Portland, Maine (**November 13–14, 2026**), Providence, Rhode Island (**February 25–27, 2027**), and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (**June 24–26, 2027**). The Board subsequently approved its proposed 2027 meeting schedule, including plans for an in-person Boston meeting on **April 13** and a tentative in-person meeting in Central or Western Massachusetts in October, subject to logistical arrangements.

The Board revisited Alyson Wright's reinstatement application and request for continuing education credit associated with teaching two architectural design studios at Northeastern University. Following her presentation describing course development, instructional responsibilities, and Health, Safety, and Welfare (HSW) content involving accessibility, egress, site planning, and environmental considerations, members discussed the distinction between academic accreditation standards and Massachusetts' continuing education requirements. The Board emphasized that qualifying coursework must satisfy applicable HSW criteria and that teaching credit generally recognizes the initial development and delivery of a course rather than repeated instruction. Following discussion, the Board voted to recognize 12 HSW continuing education credits for Wright's fall 2025 course and 12 credits for her spring 2026 course, satisfying the continuing education requirements associated with her reinstatement application. Staff indicated that her reinstatement would be completed upon payment of the required fee.

During public comment, AIA Massachusetts Executive Director John Nunnari conveyed questions raised by GAC members concerning the state's new eLIPSE licensing system, including possible grace periods for renewal difficulties, continuing education requirements for newly licensed architects, and communications with Massachusetts licensees residing outside the Commonwealth. Staff clarified that renewal difficulties are being addressed individually, including possible waivers of

late fees, rather than through a blanket grace period. Newly licensed architects are not required to begin continuing education until September 1 following their first full year of licensure; however, because eLIPSE requires a document upload, affected licensees may submit a brief statement indicating that continuing education is not yet required. Staff also confirmed that renewal notifications are primarily distributed electronically to the email address associated with a licensee's eLIPSE account. In response to Nunnari's question regarding the relationship between Massachusetts' recently adopted alternative licensure pathways and NCARB's proposed Pathways to Practice initiative, Chair Aelan Tierney indicated that the state's existing policy may align with the national framework but could require future revisions as NCARB's proposal develops. No final determination has been made. The Board concluded its open-session business and voted to enter a closed investigative session without returning to open session. The Board's next scheduled meeting is **December 8, 2026**.

Board of Fire Prevention Regulations (BFPR)
The **November 11th** meeting was cancelled. The next meeting is scheduled for **December 3rd**.

Board of Elevator Regulation
The **October 20th** Board of Elevator Regulations was cancelled. The next meeting is scheduled for **October 27th.**

At its **October 27th** meeting, the Board considered four variance matters involving sprinkler installations at the Holyoke Veterans Home, an outdoor residential elevator, existing hydraulic piping at the Museum of Science, and a residential vehicle lift in Cambridge. Two variances were approved, one was placed on a 90-day hold, and the remaining matter was discussed with the understanding that additional documentation would be necessary before the Board could act.

For 120 Cherry Street, Holyoke (VAR26-0059, VAR26-0063, VAR26-0064, and VAR26-0065), the petitioner returned following the Board's October 7th meeting seeking relief from 524 CMR 35.00, Section 2.8.3.3, to permit sprinkler installations in elevator hoistways, machine rooms, and associated spaces at the new Holyoke Veterans Home. Representatives of the Executive Office of Veterans Services explained that federal Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) requirements necessitate these installations to obtain federal certification and reimbursement. Although the facility could technically be occupied without the sprinklers, doing so would jeopardize federal funding for resident care. Board members questioned whether the petitioner had received a formal federal citation, as had been customary in similar cases. The petitioner explained that the request was intended to avoid such a citation and associated delays, consistent with the approach taken at the Chelsea Veterans Home. Following discussion, the Board unanimously approved the four variances to permit sprinkler installations consistent with applicable VA and CMS requirements.

For the Staying Home Corporation Outlook Outdoor Elevator (VAR26-0056), the manufacturer sought a product variance from ASME A17.1, Section 5.3.1.1.2(b), for a shaftless residential elevator intended for exterior installations serving decks and porches. Unlike conventional through-the-floor elevators, the product travels alongside a building and does not require a floor-opening hatch cover. The manufacturer explained that the elevator has been installed in other states but has not yet been introduced in Massachusetts. Board members emphasized that Massachusetts regulates these installations under 524 CMR, which modifies and supplements the referenced ASME standards, and noted that the petitioner had not reviewed the applicable Massachusetts amendments. The Board also discussed the distinction between individual variances, prototype approvals, and product approvals, explaining that new equipment may require a broader evaluation of applicable code provisions and safety measures. The Board unanimously placed the matter on a 90-day hold, through **January 25, 2027**, allowing the manufacturer to review the Massachusetts requirements, identify all necessary variances, and submit a revised application for consideration.

For 1 Science Park, Cambridge (VAR26-0053), the Museum of Science requested temporary relief from 524 CMR, Section 3.7.1.11, to continue using existing underground hydraulic piping serving a freight elevator until **December 2028**. The Board had previously granted a variance in November 2024 concerning the distance between the elevator machine room and hoistway, subject to conditions governing hydraulic piping. During modernization, the project team discovered that existing structural conditions prevented installation of the piping as originally proposed. The Museum plans to relocate the machine room adjacent to the elevator as part of its Theater of Electricity renovation, scheduled for completion in **December 2028**. Board members questioned the age and inaccessible condition of the existing piping, alternatives for routing a replacement line, and safeguards against hydraulic failure. The petitioner explained that installing exposed piping through the heavily used freight corridor could introduce additional risks and confirmed that a rupture valve had already been installed as part of the modernization. Following discussion, the Board unanimously approved the variance permitting continued use of the existing piping through **December 2028**, finding that the installed rupture valve provided an acceptable level of elevator safety during the interim period.

For 7 Blanchard Road, Cambridge (VAR26-0055), the petitioner sought clarification concerning the regulatory classification of a residential vehicle lift installed in a new single-family home. The equipment, identified as a Vasari car lift, transports an unoccupied vehicle between garage and basement levels using manually maintained controls and various safety devices. The petitioner maintained that the equipment should not be classified as an elevator under 524 CMR Chapter 26 because its operation is not fully automated. Board members disagreed, explaining that Massachusetts considers these vehicle-lifting devices regulated conveyances, even when the operator does not ride on the platform and movement requires constant-pressure controls. The Board emphasized that compliance with applicable elevator regulations, including permitting, installation qualifications, enclosures, and safety provisions, remains necessary. Where conventional requirements cannot be met, the petitioner may request specific variances supported by alternative safety measures. The petitioner was advised to obtain qualified technical assistance, identify the applicable code provisions, and supplement the existing variance application rather than initiate a new case. The Board discussed allowing up to 90 days, through **January 25, 2027**, for the submission of additional information. No final variance approval was recorded in the transcript.

Administratively, the Board's discussions highlighted the importance of evaluating new and unconventional elevator technologies against Massachusetts-specific requirements rather than relying exclusively on national standards or practices accepted in other jurisdictions. The Board also reiterated that variances must identify specific code provisions and demonstrate an acceptable alternative level of safety. The previously continued 25 Northern Avenue, Boston (VAR26-0042 and VAR26-0043) safety-zone matter remained listed as old business, with its existing 120-day hold extending through **November 4, 2026**; the Board did not substantively address the matter during this meeting.

Massachusetts Sheet Metal Board
The Board's next scheduled meeting is **November 10th**.

Bureau of Pipefitters, Refrigeration Technicians, and Sprinkler Fitters
At its **October 21st** meeting, the Bureau addressed upcoming changes to licensing requirements, educational program compliance, and administrative procedures. The Bureau approved its **September 16th** meeting minutes, and neither the Executive Director nor Board Counsel reported additional substantive matters.

The Bureau's primary discussion concerned revised licensing requirements for journeyman pipefitters and refrigeration technicians, scheduled to take effect **November 9, 2026**. A representative of MotoRing Technical Training Institute (MTTI) expressed concerns that students

enrolled under the previous requirements were not adequately informed of the changes, potentially requiring them to complete additional practical experience before qualifying for licensure. MTTI requested that students enrolled before the regulatory changes be grandfathered under the previous requirements. Bureau members acknowledged these concerns, but Board Counsel explained that existing regulations permit hardship waivers only through **May 9, 2027**, and that any further extension would require a formal regulatory amendment. No changes were proposed or approved.

The Bureau also reviewed its efforts to verify compliance among approved educational providers. Following repeated unsuccessful outreach, members unanimously voted to remove two programs from the approved list: Page School, which reportedly closed, and New England Institute of Technology (NEIT), which had not responded to compliance requests. The Bureau subsequently approved a delegation of authority allowing the Chair and designated staff to add compliant educational programs, remove programs that fail to respond to verification requests, and reinstate programs upon receipt of satisfactory documentation.

The Bureau concluded its meeting without additional substantive business.

Board of State Examiners of Plumbers and Gas Fitters
At its **November 4th** meeting, the Board approved its October 7th regular and executive session minutes, received administrative and code-review updates, and considered a vocational-school project, three plumbing-code variance requests, and a product-acceptance application. The Executive Director reported that staff had reviewed and accepted 2,318 products and continued processing licensing applications despite staffing limitations. The Board also welcomed a new state plumbing and gas inspector assigned to western Massachusetts.

The Board received an update on its ongoing review of 248 CMR. The Plumbing Code Subcommittee met **October 27th** and voted to close out its review of Sections 10.01 through 10.05 as written. Its next meeting is scheduled for **November 17th** at 10:00 a.m. Board counsel acknowledged the lengthy regulatory amendment process but indicated that a complete package of proposed code revisions could potentially be ready to enter the formal approval process by mid-2027. Efforts to reconvene the Gas Code Subcommittee are also anticipated.

The Board approved Shawsheen Valley Technical High School's request to undertake an off-campus vocational plumbing project at the American Legion facility at 357 Great Road in Bedford. The work involves replacing plumbing fixtures in three existing restrooms, undertaken in phases to maintain restroom availability, along with limited piping upgrades necessary to meet applicable code requirements.

Among the plumbing variances, the Board denied a request to eliminate the required second-floor mop sink in an administrative building at a private school in Belmont. Although the applicant argued that the predominantly carpeted second floor did not require a mop sink and that facilities were available elsewhere in the building, members expressed concern about cleaning the second-floor restroom and maintaining required plumbing facilities. For a 956-square-foot marine upholstery business in West Yarmouth, the Board considered a request to waive required shower and drinking-water facilities. Although the local plumbing inspector supported the request, the Board voted to table the matter after determining that the applicant had not properly notified the local Board of Health, a statutory prerequisite for granting a variance. The applicant agreed to provide the required notification before the matter is reconsidered.

The Board also denied a variance request for an approximately 1,500-square-foot restaurant in Taunton seeking to accommodate 14 dine-in patrons without providing a compliant customer restroom. The existing restroom was accessible only through the kitchen, and the applicant cited

limited space as a hardship. Representatives of the Department of Public Health and the local plumbing inspector raised concerns regarding public-health requirements and compliance with the plumbing code. The Board concluded that the proposed arrangement did not justify relief from the applicable requirements.

Finally, the Board considered Striem Manufacturing's request for acceptance of its Neutral Zone NZ-1 point-of-use acid-waste neutralizer, intended primarily for laboratory sinks in schools and similar facilities. The manufacturer explained that the compact system uses magnesium oxide rather than conventional limestone media, potentially reducing installation costs and simplifying maintenance. Board members raised questions concerning pH monitoring, trap arrangements, sewer-gas protection, and performance during extended periods of nonuse. Rather than granting unrestricted product acceptance, the Board approved a one-year test program involving up to six installations at locations selected by the manufacturer, with a separate trap requirement and quarterly performance reporting from the facilities using the equipment. The manufacturer was directed to coordinate the implementation details with Board staff.

The meeting concluded with confirmation that the Plumbing Code Subcommittee will meet **November 17th** and that the Board's next regular meeting is scheduled for **December 2, 2026**.

MAAB (Subcommittee on Regulations)
At its **October 28th** meeting, the Subcommittee on Regulations continued its comprehensive revision of 521 CMR, focusing primarily on residential accessibility requirements, parking, signage, and other outstanding provisions. Vice Chair Carol Steinberg chaired the meeting, and Kay Bell was welcomed as a new Subcommittee member. The Subcommittee voted 4–1 to retain the traditional International Symbol of Accessibility (ISA), rather than permit the alternative dynamic symbol. Discussion centered on consistency with federal accessibility standards, potential conflicts with accessible parking enforcement requirements, and the goal of obtaining federal recognition of substantial equivalency. Although several members expressed support for the dynamic symbol, the Subcommittee agreed to maintain the existing requirement, recognizing that the issue could be revisited if federal standards change.

The Subcommittee approved several revisions to residential parking requirements under Section 208. For Group Two dwelling units, members agreed that designated parking spaces should provide the width and access aisle required for van-accessible parking, while limiting the full 8-foot-2-inch vertical clearance requirement to the proportion of spaces otherwise required to accommodate vans. The change is intended to preserve accessibility while avoiding unnecessary increases in parking garage construction costs. Members also approved clarification of signage requirements for residential parking spaces reserved for specific units or individuals, distinguishing those spaces from generally available accessible parking. Discussion then returned to Section 233, particularly the unresolved question of vertical access within multi-story Group One dwelling units. Members considered three approaches: requiring provisions for a future lift, requiring access only to essential facilities on the entrance level, or requiring full vertical access at initial construction. Concerns focused on balancing accessibility, housing production, construction costs, and the potential impact of more restrictive requirements on the Administration's review of the regulations. A motion to require only entrance-level access failed on a 3–3 vote. The Subcommittee subsequently voted to defer a decision until January 2027 while soliciting additional public comments and information regarding potential costs and design implications.

Additional housing-related revisions were considered under Section 233. The Subcommittee approved an exception allowing a fully accessible, single-story Group Two dwelling unit to substitute for a multi-story unit, provided it is located within the same facility and offers equivalent floor area and bedroom capacity. Members also supported revisions treating residential additions separately

when determining accessible-unit requirements, helping avoid situations in which additions to existing developments could trigger disproportionate accessibility obligations. Regarding alterations to existing housing, staff identified the need to distinguish federally covered housing from other residential properties. The Subcommittee directed staff to prepare revised language addressing applicable federal accessibility requirements while retaining the existing 30% threshold for determining when Group Two accessibility requirements apply to other existing residential buildings. Staff will return with revised language for further consideration.

The Subcommittee also revisited previously proposed automatic door opener requirements and agreed to retain its earlier approach without adding a proposed 5,000-square-foot minimum building size. Discussion of accessible parking space dimensions, including whether all accessible spaces should accommodate vans, was deferred pending preparation of alternative regulatory language. The September 23rd meeting minutes were approved. During public comment, AIA Massachusetts emphasized the importance of considering housing construction costs and the Healey Administration's housing production priorities as the regulatory rewrite advances. AIA MA encouraged outreach to architects, home builders, developers, and other stakeholders to obtain practical feedback on the proposed multi-story dwelling-unit requirements before final decisions are made. Staff indicated that the revised regulations remain targeted for presentation to the full Architectural Access Board during the first quarter of 2027, potentially followed by the formal public hearing process, subject to required administrative review. The Subcommittee will explore an additional meeting in **November** or **December**, with **January 2027** remaining the anticipated timeframe for reconsidering the unresolved Group One accessibility provisions.

- END -