

Planning Board Meeting
7:00 p.m. August 26, 2025 at the Meeting House

Members Present: Brendan O'Donnell (Chair), Rich Marcou (Vice-Chair), Greg Meeh, Logan Snyder, Megan Portnoy, Joshua Gordon, Scott Doherty (Selectboard Rep)

Members Absent: Clifton Mathieu (Alternate), Hillary Nelson (Alternate)

Others Present: Kal McKay (Admin Assistant), Keith Anastasy (Applicant), Sam Foisie (Meridian), Tim McGibbon (Meridian), Tim Scheedy (Applicant's Attorney), A. Eli Leino (Applicant's Attorney), Nicolo Anastasy (Meridian), Calvin Todd (Selectboard), Beth Blair (Selectboard), Beryl Boisvert

Call to Order

The Planning Board meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m.

Scott moved to address the previous minutes after the 114 West Road hearing. Logan seconded. All in favor, motion carried.

114 West Road Hearing

This hearing was continued from the Planning Board meeting on July 22, 2025.

The applicant submitted a new set of plans on 8/25/25.

Mr. Foisie explained the differences in the new plan. The previous plan had the wrong acreage, and it is now corrected to 34.37 acres. The acreage correction has adjusted the density calculation, so their corrected calculation (including a 15% density bonus that they hope to receive) allows 34 total units. They also moved some of the residential units and storm water basins and adjusted the location of the pumphouse to allow for a shorter access road. The new design will not need any additional fill to be brought to the site.

Mr. Foisie reviewed several conceptual plans for types of commercial uses that could go in the front and back commercial units. The front lot could potentially fit a coffee shop, a 5,800 sq ft office/retail space, or a restaurant (but the septic requirements would need to be doublechecked). The back lot could potentially fit storage units, recreational outdoor space, two 18K sq ft office/retail buildings, an assisted living facility, or a hotel. Several of the back lot designs could also fit a billboard facing I-93.

Mr. Foisie explained that the outdoor recreation layout was in response to a letter from Sam Papps (resident/Town Clerk). They used the layout of a similar space in Amherst. This would be in lieu of a commercial business and the Town or another party would need to buy the unit to install this.

Mr. Foisie showed an example for the billboard. It would be a light-up screen with rotating images. The Town could negotiate for reserved time in the rotation for Canterbury events and

there would be an override for amber/silver alerts. This is something that they would be able to install right away, but they have not yet checked the ordinance to see if it is allowed.

The assisted living facility they showed uses the footprint of a facility in Milford. The hotel they showed would easily have space even with the building height cap, but they doubt anyone would want to place one here due to the lack of nearby attractions.

In Phase 1, Meridian plans to build the residential units and install the pad for the front commercial unit. If they proceed with a billboard, that will also be in Phase 1.

The applicants went before the Conservation Commission on 8/14/25. The CCC had concerns about the pumphouse and access path being included in the Designated Open Space calculation, but were alright with the stormwater basins being included. Even without the pumphouse and access path, the current plan can meet the minimum open space requirements.

The CCC are alright with the location of the access road, but had questions about the material. Mr. Foisie explained that they just need to be able to drive a vehicle over it to do maintenance at the pumphouse. They will likely lay down some gravel initially and just let it grow in like a woods road.

The Designated Open Space could be used for foot traffic, but no motorized vehicles. Unless the Board specifically allows it, the condo association documents would prohibit putting a playground in the open space.

The applicant intends to install a fence behind the backyards and pond in the residential area so people will be able to see where their yards end. This will likely be a split rail fence in multiple segments so you can still see past the fence and walk through to the open space.

The applicant intends to install a chain-link fence around the rear commercial unit when it is built in Phase 2. This will delineate the open space and catch trash. Until Phase 2 is implemented, the 2nd commercial lot would be delineated with property markers.

Greg asked that third party review be conducted for engineering, code compliance, and traffic studies.

Mr. Foisie explained that they already have draft traffic and fiscal reviews ready, but don't want to release them until they can confirm with the Board what the unit count will be. They also don't think the Board should do a traffic study since it is a State road and thus the jurisdiction of DOT. The applicant will be working with DOT to get a driveway permit. The other suggested reviews are standard and they agree to those.

Greg suggested considering CNHRPC for the code compliance review since they have an engineer on staff who does this type of review regularly. There was discussion about what would be included in such a review.

Joshua brought up the need for cisterns and fire suppression in the residential units. Mr. Foisie explained that they haven't seen anything from the Fire Chief yet and sprinklers are not required in single-family homes or duplexes, so they do not intend to install those.

Joshua asked how they plan to build this number of units with the 3% building permit cap in Canterbury. In some towns, developers will build the units over several years to stay under the cap. Mr. Foisie and Mr. Leino explained that right now they are focused on getting the project approved and the number of units set. They would only be trying to build all of the units at once if they could sell them all at once.

The calculations for number of units were reviewed. 29.28 units would be allowed as a baseline, and an additional 4.39 units would be allowed if the Board grants a 15% density bonus. This would result in a total of 34 units. 32 would be residential and 2 would be commercial.

The commercial units could have multiple businesses in them, but each unit would be owned by one person. Joshua expressed concern about the power balance between the residential and commercial interests if one unit equals one vote in the condo association bylaws. Mr. Foisie and Mr. Leino said that they would address that issue in the condo association bylaws and the Board would have approval. They used the example of a shared driveway being maintained by multiple households as an example of how to balance priorities.

Megan expressed concern over the applicant not knowing what commercial use will end up being installed in the rear commercial unit and that they are prioritizing housing over commercial development in the commercial zone.

Brendan stated that the issues the Board needed to address tonight are the density bonus, total amount of units, and what studies the Board may want.

Greg asked about the design issues that came up at the previous meeting. Mr. Foisie showed some examples of designs. They are leaning towards a generic New England style and will incorporate the feedback from last time about front porches.

Calvin Todd spoke as a resident and expressed his concerns that the development doesn't fit in with Canterbury or reflect the Master Plan. He suggested putting in fewer houses so there was space to add things that would give it more of a community feel such as sidewalks, pavilion, playground, etc.

Joshua agreed with Calvin and added that the road to the commercial unit in back will be busy and dangerous for residents.

Mr. Foisie explained that Meridian has been trying to follow the Master Plan. He read aloud a portion of page 2.5 of the 2025 Canterbury Master Plan, "Support a mix of housing densities and types in Canterbury. Promote the use of cluster subdivisions and other zoning tools to increase the availability of housing. Encourage the development of additional residential units that are smaller and more affordable to accommodate downsizing seniors and young families." They believe they are successfully following this guidance and creating housing that can help with the

housing crisis. The commercial components are not in Phase 1, but they are trying to make them as ready to go as possible so they can contribute to the taxbase and offset the perceived costs of the additional residences.

Greg stated that he believes Meridian is picking and choosing which parts of the Master Plan to listen to. Mr. Foisie disagreed and stated they are trying their best to solve a problem.

Megan asked how much one of the residential houses would be sold for. The applicants don't know yet, just that the more units they are able to build, the lower the price would be. Megan countered that this means they aren't building affordable housing.

Mr. Leino explained that they aren't trying to build workforce or affordable housing, but something that is attainable. Economies of scale would allow for lower prices. He understands the Board wanting to make sure that the limited resource of land is used well, but he disagrees with the Board's skepticism that Phase 2 will happen. They are monetarily incentivized to build the commercial units and sell them as quickly as possible rather than sit on the parcels and pay condo association fees. He quoted the opinion of Justice Batchelder in the 1991 case *Britton v. Town of Chester*, "Towns may not refuse to confront the future by building a moat around themselves and pulling up the drawbridge." Mr. Leino said he understands that the Board would like to keep Canterbury the way it is, but this is right next to I-93, not the Shaker Village. He spoke about the efforts Meridian has gone through to work with the Board.

Megan disagreed with Mr. Leino's characterization of Canterbury as a town "pulling up the drawbridge". The Board has developed clusters to attract housing; the issue is where not what.

Brendan spoke about how he doesn't feel the application deserves a density bonus. He feels the plans Meridian has submitted are designed only for maximum profit. Since they don't have a definite answer on what the commercial uses will be, they can't evaluate the entire plan. There was a problem with the ordinance that has since been fixed, and this plan is taking advantage of that. The ratio of residential to commercial is allowed, but the Board doesn't need to grant the density bonus.

Rich asked if Meridian had considered doing residential in the back and putting all of the commercial up front. That would allow the residential area to be safer and more secluded. He also pointed out that the town already has several storage unit businesses and there have been a lot of issues with people living in the units and police having to get involved.

Logan questioned why they don't have sidewalks in their design. Mr. Foisie explained that those generally aren't needed in an inner loop, but could be added to the road that goes back to the rear commercial unit. Adding sidewalks increases the impervious area so the stormwater basins would need to be bigger. Sidewalks would also be a maintenance cost that the condo association would need to handle. Logan and Megan disagreed with this reasoning.

Brendan requested a plan that doesn't include the density bonus and doesn't have 4 houses on the other side of the commercial driveway.

Greg stated that he does not feel the Board is following the ordinance correctly in their baseline density calculation. At the previous hearing the Board decided how to interpret the ordinance. This issue was not reopened.

Mr. Foisie explained that from the previous meeting, they thought the Board wanted them to show that the commercial units would be developable for a variety of uses. They didn't realize the Board wanted the number of units reduced.

Brendan felt that was due to a communication issue. He would like a proposal that focuses on commercial more.

Mr. Leino explained that getting mixed use that resembles Concord's Main Street is impossible without a dense mass of people. In Canterbury, these businesses are only reachable by car.

Brendan spoke about how the ability to have this much residential in the commercial zone was a mistake in the ordinance. To get the density bonus, he would like Meridian to design something that fits the rural farming community it is in. He reminded that this land is vacant now, but it was once a farm, which is a commercial use.

Mr. Foisie asked if there were any specific aspects (such as sidewalk and moving the residential units to the back) that would make the Board more inclined to grant the bonus?

There was some discussion about how long this process has taken and what questions the Board is obligated to provide advanced answers to. NH law requires Planning Boards to assist citizens by letting them know if their applications are substantively acceptable and technically in order.

Megan asked if they could build ranches instead of 2-story houses for the aging population. Meridian replied that ranches are 30-35% more costly to build because of the increased footprint.

Joshua repeated his concerns from the previous meeting that the rear commercial lot will never materialize because once residents have moved into the front units, they will block that rear development from being built. He feels that if the rear commercial unit is never occupied, this will have amounted to rezoning the lot in violation of the ordinance. He would like further reassurance that the property will be developed.

Scott echoed the idea of putting the houses in the rear so they could be further away from the gun club across the street. Mr. Foisie agreed to put the existence of the club in the deeds.

Logan agreed with the idea of putting the residential area in the back. They would also like to see a plan with sidewalks and community spaces within the housing development. They do not consider the open space to be useable for walking since it is very wet and when they visited at the 7/22/25 site-walk it was full of ticks.

Brendan closed this portion of the hearing and opened it up to public comment. No one spoke, so he began the Board-only portion of the hearing.

The Board decided to get an engineer on standby so that engineering and code compliance studies could be conducted quickly when the time comes. A traffic study isn't needed since the property is on a state road. The Fire Chief will also be alerted, so that when a final plan is ready, he can give his opinion.

Scott spoke about the importance of residential sprinklers. Canterbury has a volunteer Fire Department, so it takes longer to arrive at fires and there is less time to perform rescues. New construction burns faster and hotter and in a densely built area like this, it could spread easier. Neither of the mutual aid providers (Concord and Northfield) would be able to reach this development faster. He strongly encourages a cistern and residential sprinklers.

The Board would like Meridian to present a new plan at the September 23rd meeting.

Megan asked about school impact and condo docs. Mr. Foisie said that school impact is included in the fiscal study, and they can provide it with the next set of plans. The condo documents won't be written until later, but they can do a letter of intent to protect the interests of the commercial units.

The Board agreed that if Meridian wishes to bring multiple plans with different options, they don't need to provide a full set of plans for each one.

Logan moved to extend the hearing to September 23rd, 2025 at 7 p.m. Scott seconded. All in favor by roll call, motion carried.

Other Business

Joshua asked for an updated contact info sheet for Board members. Kal will arrange that.

Brendan caught Megan up with a summary of what was discussed about the public input session for the 9/23/25 meeting. Megan decided to join Josh and Greg at the Cluster station.

Brendan will draft an ordinance to circulate before discussion at the 9/9/25 meeting.

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

Rich made a motion to approve the public minutes for the Planning Board meeting on August 12, 2025. Josh seconded. All in favor by roll call, Megan abstained since she was not at the meeting in question. Motion carried.

Adjournment

The Board decided to postpone the discussion of the Contaminated Soil Ordinance due to the late hour.

Logan made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:51 p.m. Rich seconded. All in favor by roll call, motion carried.

Next Meeting: 2025 September 9, 7:00 p.m. at the Meeting House
Minutes submitted by Kathleen McKay, Administrative Assistant