

Town of Canterbury, NH
All Boards Meeting
Date: 2025 September 4
Location: Meeting House

Scott Doherty (Selectboard Chair), Beth Blair (Selectboard), Calvin Todd (Selectboard), John Goegel (Cemetery Trustees Chair), Brendan O'Donnell (Planning Board Chair), Frank Tupper (Former Selectman), Brenda Murray (Supervisors of the Checklist Chair), Mark Stevens (Agricultural Commission Chair), Jim Weick (Zoning Board Chair), Ken Folsom (Town Administrator), Kal McKay (Administrative Assistant), Kelly Short (Conservation Commission Co-Chair), Ken Stern (Conservation Commission Co-Chair), Lisa Carlson (Zoning Board Secretary and Alternate), Megan Portnoy (Planning Board), Kevin Bragg (Historic District Commission Chair)

1. Call to Order

- a. The meeting was called to order at 6 p.m.

2. Code of Conduct

- a. Scott began with an introduction about how the Code of Conduct came to be, its purpose, and the values it lists. It was originally proposed by a resident two years ago. Beth worked on creating the document, and the final copy was approved on June 23rd. It is meant to be guidance for public officials in Canterbury. It can be hard to be a public official because of the scrutiny, but as representatives of the town, it is important to conduct oneself professionally and make decisions that are in the best interests of town.
- b. Scott quoted former Moderator Jim Miller, "it is okay to disagree, but not to be disagreeable."
- c. Ken discussed how it is important for everyone to be responsive to their emails. This is how important information like notices and meeting documents get distributed. If something is really important, follow up with a text to ensure the recipient checks their email right away.
- d. Kal asked that people let them know right away if there is an email problem. They discussed the Right to Know (RTK) law and why proper email usage is important.
- e. Scott reviewed most of the points in the Code of Conduct.
- f. There was discussion about maintaining confidentiality and what documents must be kept for RTK purposes. The RTK law doesn't require the creation of documents, just the disclosure of documents that already exist.
- g. Scott encouraged the Chairs to have new members (and some older ones too) attend the NHMA trainings.
- h. Scott encouraged Chairs to use a practice that Brendan has been doing, where he goes around the table and solicits opinions from all Planning Board members. This encourages participation and gives everyone a chance to be heard.
- i. There was discussion about attendance, particularly with alternates. It is important for alternates to be up on what is happening by reading minutes and being in communication with the group even if they aren't able to attend often. Kelly explained that the Conservation Commission has it in their procedural rules that if someone misses a certain number of meetings or isn't in contact, that is considered grounds to ask the person to resign. This is a more pressing issue for some boards because they may only have a certain number of alternates, so an inactive member prevents a new one from joining.
- j. Brenda let everyone know that the Supervisors of the Checklist are looking for a new Moderator since Jim Miller had to retire for health reasons.
- k. Ken spoke about how the Chairs are responsible for their boards. Office staff can help, but they only have so much time and can't be chasing people down to sign their oaths of office.

- l. Ken has received several questions about if the Code of Conduct should be read aloud before meetings. He explained that it is posted on the wall of every meeting space if someone needs it. If a Chair expects a meeting to be contentious, they can remind everyone about the Code at the top of the meeting.
 - m. Beth used a metaphor to explain that even though it is mostly common sense, every single one of the rules listed in the Code of Conduct is there because someone has actually done it.
 - n. Scott emphasized the importance of civility and that Chairs set the tone.
 - o. Megan asked about how this policy could be enforced and discussion followed.
 - i. The policy says that it will be enforced as NH laws allow rather than get into specifics because of how difficult it is to remove officials, particularly elected ones, from office. To remove an elected official, the misconduct has to rise to the level of “malfeasance” and be proven in a public hearing.
 - ii. This Code of Conduct is a tool to prevent problems before they get bad.
 - iii. This policy will be distributed to officials when they sign their oath of office and to potential officials when they sign up to run for office.
 - p. There was discussion about how hard it is to find people willing to volunteer for these positions. At the last election, all of the local candidates were running unopposed. To have real choice, you need real choices.
 - q. Beth explained that she used a variety of legal/educational resources and policies from other towns to research this policy, but it has been heavily customized for Canterbury.
 - r. Frank expressed disappointment that this was necessary and hopes that it isn’t needed permanently.
 - s. Kelly asked for better communication between boards, especially when one board needs assistance from another and the issue is time sensitive. Kevin echoed the sentiment.
 - t. There was discussion about how to improve inter-board communication. Some ideas were:
 - i. Send agendas and notices of decisions for land use boards to all other land use boards.
 - ii. Schedule regular all boards meetings. This was controversial since there are already a lot of meetings, but several Chairs expressed willingness to attend if the meetings were useful.
 - iii. Send minutes of Selectboard representative reports (done at the 2nd Selectboard meeting of the month) out to the Chairs.
 - iv. If there is a deadline to meet, the Chairs can call each other.
 - v. Put the minutes from all the meetings into an AI and have it generate a report each month.
 - u. Kal will arrange for the agendas, notices, and minutes to be circulated. They will look into the AI idea.
3. Adjournment
 - a. Beth raffled off some mums, eggs, and a Country Store gift card disguised as coffee.
 - b. The meeting was adjourned at 6:57 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Kal McKay, Administrative Assistant