

Planning Board Meeting Minutes (DRAFT)
Town of Canterbury, NH
August 25, 2026 – 7:00 p.m. Meeting House

Members Present:

Brendan O'Donnell (Chair), Megan Portnoy (Vice-Chair), Joshua Gordon, Janice DellaCroce, Greg Meeh, Logan Snyder, Clifton Mathieu (Alternate)

Others Present:

Calvin Todd (recused from the meeting due to his participation on the Zoning Board of Adjustment at the time the applicant received re-zoning approval)
Beth Blair, Kelly Short, Beryl Boisvert of New Road (abutter), Dan Bowman of New Road (abutter)
Cheryl Andrew (Recording Secretary), Kal McKay (Admin Assistant)

Site Walk:

In attendance: Brendan O'Donnell (Chair), Megan Portnoy (Vice-Chair), Joshua Gordon, Janice DellaCroce, Greg Meeh, Logan Snyder, Clifton Mathieu (Alternate)
Mercedes Martinez, Cheryl Andrew, Kal McKay, Lisa Carlson, Beth Blair, Calvin Todd, Kelly Short, Beryl Boisvert, Jennifer Boisvert

Brendan called the meeting to order at 6:08 p.m. and introduced the rules of a site walk to the Board and members of the public.

Ms. Martinez showed where the group was on the map. She showed how the parking area and roundabout for drop off would work. Parents would be expected to go through the roundabout unless they needed extra time to do things like undo car seats, in which case they would park. The teacher would park where the chicken tractor is right now. The students would gather in this area in the morning.

The group went to the southern bridge, then to the yurt.

Ms. Martinez that this is the area where they will spend most of their time. She showed where the lean-to, yurt, washhouse, and entrances to the trails are. The lean-to already existed when she moved to the property. The yurt and washroom were just installed.

Brendan asked where the property line is. Ms. Martinez showed on the map that the closest property line is about 300 ft away.

Board members looked in the washroom. Ms. Martinez explained that the toilets will be delivered tomorrow and the handwashing station is already installed.

Logan asked where the additional structure on the map is. Ms. Martinez showed what direction it is in and explained it is another lean-to structure.

Board members looked into the yurt and under the deck it was on.

Greg asked about what appeared to be a shipping container in the woods. Ms. Martinez explained that trailer was on the property when they moved in. It is dilapidated and they haven't yet been able to figure out how to remove it.

The group walked north and then east at the first intersection to the start of the utility walking trail that goes along the eastern edge of the property. Joshua asked where the property line is, Ms. Martinez wasn't 100% sure.

The group followed a trail that went along Haywood Brook to get to the northern bridge. The brook was a trickle at the time. They then went down a trail back to the southern bridge.

Megan asked about the area next to the bridge that had an excavator and showed signs of being torn up. The area was about 50 ft radius and 40 ft southeast of the eastern side of the southern bridge. Ms. Martinez explained that the area was a brush pile when they moved to the property. They started to clear the brush pile and found a trash pile underneath so they borrowed the excavator to try and clear out the trash. They intend to make the area a playground.

The group went to the garden and looked at the pond. The pond has a little dock that was on the property when they moved in. Ms. Martinez confirmed they moved to the property in November 2024. She said the only structures they have built since they moved in are the chicken coop, yurt, and washroom.

Joshua asked about the bottom of the pond. Ms. Martinez confirmed it has a murky/mucky bottom.

The group went around the garden to the chicken coop. There was one permanent coop and several movable coops that Ms. Martinez explained get moved up to the house during the winter. There is a water supply here at the coops, but it doesn't work in the winter. The coops will be placed around the roundabout next to the parking area.

Brendan asked where the property line is next to the coops. Ms. Martinez pointed out the pink tape marking the property line.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:35 p.m. and the Board returned to the Meeting House for the remainder of the meeting.

Call to Order:

Back at the Meetinghouse, Brendan called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes:

There were no edits to the previous meeting's minutes. Megan made a motion to accept the minutes of the August 11, 2026 meeting as written, motion seconded by Logan. A vote was taken, Logan, Greg, Brendan, Megan, Janice and Clifton voted in the affirmative. Joshua abstained, motion carried.

Continuation of Hearing for 2026-8 Map 258 Lot 16:

93 Brendan noted that Ms. Martinez was present at the July 28, 2026 meeting, at which the Board
94 determined her application was incomplete as there were several items not included on the site
95 plan. Brendan directed the Board and others present to be respectful in their questions and
96 comments throughout this meeting.

97
98 Ms. Martinez received a letter from NHDES regarding the bathrooms which stated the town's
99 requirements for the facilities were sufficient as there is no water and septic. Fresh water is a
100 requirement for an accredited school but this will be a Home School Enrichment program.
101 Fire Chief Gamache walked the area and said that once the Planning Board approved the plan, he
102 would inspect the buildings. There is a need for a CO2 monitor for the wood stove in the yurt.
103 Ms. Martinez also contacted the NH Fish and Game to inspect the wetlands, soil and trees on the
104 property. The trees are dry ground trees, not the type to grow in marsh or swamp areas.

105
106 Joshua confirmed the property is zoned Rural per the Zoning Board, although it still appears to
107 be both Residential and Rural on the site plan.

108
109 Brendan asked for the key plan. Ms. Martinez said they will start with eight students and one
110 full-time staff, with the ability to expand to fifteen and additional part-time staff. This will be an
111 outdoor learning program.

112
113 Brendan noted the applicant was given a checklist of items to be included on the site plan,
114 however, Ms. Martinez is presenting the same site plan as was received at the last meeting. The
115 plan came from Google Maps and shows the Flood Zone surrounding the brook. At the July 28th
116 meeting, the Board flagged the lack of Wetlands Setback, steep slopes, delineation of the area
117 used for the school, parking dimensions, driveway site distance, well and water source, waste
118 and gray water disposal, storm water drainage, fire equipment access, fire water access and
119 lighting as some of the items that needed to be identified on the site plan. The applicant is
120 choosing to use the originally submitted information as a complete application, which may not
121 be sufficient for approval.

122
123 Brendan noted there is a waiver request for Wetlands Delineation on the Site Plan. Other waiver
124 requests include the Property Line Bearings, the scale of 1" to 80', a stamped survey plan with
125 the water supply and septic system marked. Ms. Martinez explained there will be no septic, but
126 there will be two composting toilets and a foot-pump handwashing station that has a 15 gallon
127 fresh tank and empties into a 5 gallon grey water holding tank. The grey water will be emptied
128 into the home's septic system. She said the home septic is capable of handling the emptying of
129 the grey water tank. The granting of waivers does not preclude later determinations.

130
131 Megan noted that the current proposal is different than what the ZBA originally approved, which
132 requires a return to the Zoning Board for approval.

133
134 Logan made a motion to accept the application as complete with the waiver requests, motion
135 seconded by Megan. A vote was taken, Logan, Joshua, Brendan, Megan, Janice and Clifton
136 voted in the affirmative. Greg abstained, motion carried.

137

Ms. Martinez said she originally wanted to start My Village, LLC, a school, but then changed to Wild Kids, LLC as a Home School Enrichment program, geared towards year-round outdoor learning. Participants would enroll for the program in eight week segments and would attend two, three or five days per week on a full or part-time basis. The program would include topics such as identifying animal tracks, tree identification, native animals, gardening, yoga and art projects with the focus changing seasonally. She wishes to start the program with eight children with the ability to expand to fifteen. In the spring she hopes to have a full site plan and return to the Planning Board with updates. She has four children and currently two are of age for the program.

There will be no designation between summer and the public-school year. Protections from cold winter weather include a wood stove in the yurt and requiring participants to be dressed appropriately for the weather. The washrooms will be insulated but not heated, although there is a solar-powered heating system available from the toilet company.

This will not be an accredited school and also not a day care program. Joshua noted Day Care requires security for the safety of the participants, such as background checks for the staff. Ms. Martinez said the state has no requirements for this type of program, but she has compiled a handbook to follow to ensure staff has appropriate background checks, and safety concerns.

The Planning Board would not monitor the program to ensure all requirements are adhered to. If there was a complaint or the town was made aware of evidence of non-compliance, the appropriate town official would inspect the property.

Megan commented that since the ZBA approval it appears there are now children at the school. Ms. Martinez explained there have been meet-ups with the parents and students, but no paying participants and no child drop-off for paid programs. Megan further noted the proposal does not match the ZBA approval for more than 15 students, three classrooms, a water bubbler and bus service to exit 18. Ms. Martinez said the original plan was for the My Village, LLC school but she has scaled back on the plan to the Wild Kids, LLC Homeschool Enrichment Program. Ms. Martinez said she is trying to propose something they could grow into. Brendan said approval for 8 – 15 students now would be binding criteria and would need to be revisited if the goal is for expanding to 30 students for school. The site plan would then need to show septic, wetlands, etc., and would require appearing before the Planning Board with the new proposal.

Brendan directed the discussion to items or concerns raised from the Site Walk.

Megan questioned the boundaries of the residential areas and where the program participants would be allowed. She noted the playground area is close to the pond and questioned if there would be fencing. Ms. Martinez responded that her insurance company reviewed the area and their only requirement was for the teachers to attend a water safety course. There were no concerns about fencing from the water or the animals on the property. Joshua questioned whether there would be any liability to the town in case of accident. Brendan responded the liability is on her insurance, not the town.

Janice asked about ADA compliance. As the program is not an accredited school, there is no ADA requirement. Clifton asked if there was room for emergency vehicle access. Ms. Martinez

184 responded that Chief Gamache had said yes, there was sufficient room for emergency response
185 vehicles, even in the winter months. Logan noted the address numbers on the mailbox were not
186 visible from one side of the road. The debris near the program site is also a concern.

187
188 Megan brought up trail markers for the pathways. She also noted the steps into the yurt bowed
189 when Board members stepped on them, and the railings for the steps are not stable. Ms.
190 Martinez said the stairs and railings are temporary and will be replaced.

191
192 Items Brendan noticed included debris near the program area, the trailer on site that is currently
193 locked and will be removed. Brendan also noticed the brook appears to be larger in certain areas,
194 especially around the driveway. He again pointed out there is no Wetland Study, only the Fish &
195 Game information.

196
197 There were questions about what the students would be doing for the program. The ambiguity
198 of the program and oversight for the safety of the children is a concern. For example, parental
199 permissions for transportation of the children in a motorized vehicle, are the children allowed to
200 speak with an inspector who is on site for any reason, dispensing of medications, etc. Oversight
201 for schools or day cares are handled by different groups and these do not apply here. Greg noted
202 that ZBA approval included obtaining Department of Education certification, and is no longer
203 part of the plan as presented to the ZBA.

204
205 Brendan invited comments from the public.

206
207 Kelly Short noted several items in regards to the wetlands areas.
208 She saw the large bridge has cracks and said any repairs would require Wetlands Permits. The
209 small excavator that is dredging the debris could also require Wetlands Permits. Burial of any
210 tanks for the toilet and hand wash stations also require permits. Any learning programs utilizing
211 the brook and water areas should note that 8-10 participants and staff walking up and down the
212 banks can cause erosion. Ms. Short further said she called DES regarding the program and was
213 told that an educational program involving the wetlands can be detrimental to the habitat.

214
215 Beryl Boisvert said she would like to have the school and would like the Planning Board to help
216 educate the applicant on the steps needed for approval.

217
218 Dan Bowman said he was concerned about liability to the town. He noted the bathrooms have
219 no heat and anticipates the participants will be using the residence facilities in colder weather.
220 He is concerned about use of the septic system and the wetlands around the area.

221
222 There has been advertising for students and teachers for the program to begin September 1,
223 before obtaining approval or Site Plan review. The Planning Board is not obligated to rule for
224 60 days, so September 1 is not a realistic date to begin. Although there is no stamped plan, the
225 Board can require conditions to be included. The Planning Board process is not yes or no.
226 Currently the applicant has ZBA approval and any changes that deviate from that approval
227 require another review with the ZBA.

At this time, the information provided from DES is not sufficient and the Board needs more specificity, including the maximum number of students and the program hours. If the Board does issue a Conditional Approval, exactly what is proposed must be listed out and included in the approvals from the applicable agencies.

Logan also noted the wetlands conservation questions from Kelly also need to be addressed. There is no prohibition of using the wetlands, but the state would caution to no construction and land disturbance within the wetlands setback. The question of using port-a-potties rather than composting toilets was raised, and Ms. Martinez said the decision for composting toilets was to avoid pumping out port-a-potties.

It was noted the maximum capacity of the yurt is 16. Furnishings inside the yurt will include small, collapsable tables and hooks on the wall for the student participants to hang their belongings. There will also be a wood stove for heat. The Board can approve the maximum number of students for the program, which number will include Ms. Martinez's children. The Fire Department will designate the number of people to be allowed in the yurt, including student participants and teachers. Mr. Bowman said the Board may set the number of program participants, but adding a part-time afternoon program would increase the number. Brendan responded that the Board would limit the number of participants per day, regardless of whether they were full or part-time.

Solar lighting that is currently available on the property, located in the parking area and along the ground to the yurt. If additional lighting is needed, the applicant must return to the Planning Board.

A list of conditions was presented as follows:

- Trailer remains locked during program hours.
- Must use reasonable efforts to ensure educational activities do not damage Wetlands.
- Participants and staff do not use toilets, sink and septic of the primary residence.
- Must obtain all applicable DES permits for toilets, sinks and handwash stations and disposal of gray water, or provide confirmation that the exact proposed program and facilities don't require a permit.
- Maximum of fifteen participants and staff per day, or the maximum occupancy as allowed by the Fire Department.
- Debris must be removed from site.
- Maintain all areas of the property used by program participants and staff in a safe and sanitary manner.
- Program hours are limited to 7:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. weekdays.
- No more than one business sign which must comply with the Zoning Ordinance.
- Install safety railings on both bridges.
- Participants must be supervised at all times.
- Participants and staff must have access to drinking water, working toilets and hand wash stations. Use of the property cannot continue if these systems do not function.
- Zoning Board of Adjustment confirmation that the "as approved" site plan meets the existing special exception, or obtain an amended special exception.
- Must obtain and maintain all required federal, state and local approvals.

- Must obtain Certificate of Occupancy and confirmation from the Fire Department that the proposed heating system for the yurt is safe.

Joshua made a motion that the Planning Board accept the conditions, motion seconded by Logan. Brendan explained that Board approval to accept the conditions means that no program can commence until the conditions are met, and that the conditions must be listed on the Site Plan. A vote was taken by roll call. Janice, Joshua, Brendan and Logan said yes, Megan said no, Greg and Clifton abstained. Motion carried. Brendan noted that the applicant has 30 days to file a motion for a re-hearing. Site plans are filed at the town but not recorded at the registry.

Other Business:

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board is to be Tuesday, September 8, 2026. As this is the state election day and members of the Board will be busy all day, Brendan proposed Monday, September 14, 2026 as the meeting date. All agreed and notices will be sent for the hearing scheduled for that meeting.

Adjournment:

With no further business to discuss, Logan made a motion to adjourn the meeting, motion seconded by Greg. A vote was taken, all in favor, motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 9:32 p.m.

Next Meeting: Monday, September 14, 2026 - 7:00 p.m. at the Meeting House
Minutes submitted by Cheryl Andrew, Recording Secretary