

2
3 **Planning Board Public Meeting**

4 **November 14, 2023, Town Hall**

5 **Plan for Tomorrow (Master Plan)**

6 **“Parents” Session, 6 p.m.; General Session, 7 p.m.**

7 **Final Minutes**

8 **Members Present:**

9 Greg Meeh (Chair), John Schneider (Vice Chair), Kent Ruesswick (Select Board
10 rep), Anne Dowling, Rich Marcou, Logan Snyder, Hillary Nelson (alternate), Ben
11 Stonebraker (alternate), and Joshua Gordon (arrived at 8p.m).

12
13 **Staff members:**

14 Administrative Secretary Lois Scribner; and Recording Secretary Ray Carbone

15
16 **Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission (CNHRPC) staff:**

17 Executive Director Michael Tardiff and Project Planner Matt Taylor.

18
19 **Town residents present:**

20 Brian Magoon, Rebecca Plue, John and Joanne Michno, Calvin Todd, Alice
21 Todd, Clifton Mathieu, Alex Young, Edgar Rivera, Ryan Lane, Greg Paninsky,
22 John Shepherd, Joel Beaulieu, Martha Gilman, Nate Bragdon, Danielle and
23 Charlie Krautmann, Anne and Dave Emerson, Beth Blair, Jim and Donna Miller,
24 Sumner Dole, Randi Johnson, Teresa Wyman, Al Edelstein and Lisa Carlson,
25 Felipe Salas-Ogilvie, Mark and Doris Hampton, Sylvia Styles, Steph Sosinski,
26 Tim Gurshwin and Olivia Henry, Jill McCullogh and Tim Meeh, Alison
27 Witschonke, Joe Wielock, Julie Dewdney, Ginny Litalien, Michelle and Brandon
28 Lewis, Kathy Lucas and Tess Crick, Heidi Chaney, Hans Baker and Helen Lloyd
29 Davies, and one man who declined to be identified.

30
31 **Agenda**

32
33 **1. Call to Order**

34 Chair Greg Meeh called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. He noted that the first
35 hour of the meeting would primarily address concerns of parents, and the
36 remainder of the time would look at ideas pertaining to updating the Town’s
37 Master Plan (Plan for Tomorrow), and the cluster development portion of the
38 zoning ordinance
39

40 **2. Housing/School District**

41 Greg said that questions related to the school would only be addressed as they
42 focused on issues relevant the Planning Board, e.g., demographics, etc.

43
44 CNHRPC Director Mike Tardiff explained how the Master Plan is developed and
45 how it is used in the Town's planning process, updating portions of the zoning
46 ordinance, e.g., the recent trend towards smaller households, and how those
47 might impact future school enrollment.

48
49 Greg explained how the objectives in the Master Plan are created. He said the
50 Board has been working on for almost five yeas, with a hiatus for the Covid 19
51 situation in 2020. It is developed using town surveys and other means of
52 gathering information from residents about what they deemed to be important
53 about their Town, e.g., for the most part, people like Canterbury the way it is, with
54 its historic character and a significant amount of agricultural land. He noted that
55 there are several farms in Canterbury and some of those farmlands aren't used,
56 but there's a sense that the properties add to the Town's historic agricultural
57 character.

58
59 Recent surveys and visioning sessions have also indicated that residents favor
60 small, incremental changes, and that is how the Board is approaching its
61 responsibilities to complete the Master Plan and evaluate possible changes to
62 the zoning ordinance. All zoning alterations have to be approved by voters at the
63 polls during the first part of the annual Town Meeting in March; the State
64 recommends that towns update their Master Plan every 10 years, but
65 Canterbury's current updating process is roughly two years behind that schedule
66 due to the pandemic.

67
68 Greg said Canterbury was one of the first towns in the area to implement
69 municipal zoning and that helped it avoid some of the problems that other
70 communities faced during the housing boom of the 1980s. He added that the
71 public meeting sessions that the Board has held in recent months have revealed
72 that residents are concerned about the cost of housing as related to both young
73 families and older residents who may want to downsize their residence but stay
74 in Town.

75
76 Mike Tardiff said that the CNHRPC is working with the Board to suggest legal
77 and administrative tools that are available to the Town for addressing those
78 concerns by allowing different types of housing in sustainable ways. Again, the
79 goal is small, incremental changes, which is how Canterbury has traditionally
80 gone about this process.

81
82 **3. Housing/School District**

83 Clifton Mathieu said that even "small incremental changes" could have a major,
84 long-term impact on the Town. He asked Tardiff why the CNHRPC is pushing for
85 these kinds of changes, both here and in other communities. Mike Tardiff said

86 the CNHRPC isn't "pushing" anything, but only working to help the Board
87 address its issues. Greg said that there's no "magic bullet" that will solve every
88 problem for every resident. He said that property owners have rights and the
89 Board has to find ways to balance those rights against the property rights of
90 others. The Board is working to find a way to encourage smaller developments
91 that maintain the character of Canterbury.

92
93 Calvin Todd noted that Concord has seen a burst of development activity
94 recently and he asked that the Town consider how to react in ways that support
95 Canterbury's rural character. "When do we become responsive," he asked the
96 Board. With little public transportation and other challenges, Canterbury is "not
97 an ideal community to have Affordable Housing," he added, suggesting that the
98 Town consider altering its ordinance to allow cluster developments in the area
99 around Interstate 93's exit 18.

100
101 Greg said that the Board and residents have been discussing the exit 18 area
102 and whether that zone could be changed to a mixed use/cluster zone. The area
103 never developed into the heavy Industrial use that was forecast years ago,
104 largely because the hoped-for increase in railroad uses never developed.
105 He explained that there is a formula the Town uses that includes minimum lot
106 sizes and minimum frontage requirements for subdivisions. This addresses
107 several issues, including density of housing, limiting the impact and cost to town
108 services (public safety, road maintenance, students of school age), etc.
109 Greg clarified that we cannot expect more development to decrease the tax rate.
110 It would increase the tax base, but it also increases the need for services, so it is
111 very unlikely to decrease individual property tax bills. He added that people
112 frequently think of the areas around exits 17 and 18 as very similar, but there's
113 actually very little land left for development in the exit 17 area and a lot more
114 development pressure. One change that could be made in Exit 17 area would
115 allow for some apartments to be built over buildings.

116
117 Danielle Krautmann questioned predictions of a decrease in the number of
118 students at Canterbury Elementary School (CES). She said that she helps with
119 the community soccer program for the Canterbury Recreation Department and
120 that, over the last three years, she's seen significant growth.

121
122 Rebecca Plue spoke as a relatively new resident and parent of young children.
123 She wondered if the enrollment forecasts were skewed by the Covid 19 situation.

124
125 CNHRPC Project Planner Matt Taylor said that while Covid disrupted things,
126 there are some elements of the Town's demographics that have remained
127 predictable. Canterbury's population peaked in the early 1800s, before slowly
128 declining and "bottoming out" in 1930 with 505 residents. There was a rapid
129 increase in the mid-20th century, leading up to 2010 census. Current data shows
130 that there's been – and is expected to be – a more modest annual population
131 increase up to 2040.

Rebecca Plue pointed out that the data the CNHRPPC presented in a handout doesn't show info from the last year. She suggested that the SAU 80 would have up to date data. She also suggested that families had moved into town for the safety of their families during the Covid pandemic. Her house has increased in value during this time as have many properties in town.

In fact, the CES student population was back up to the 2016 level, necessitating the need for the hiring of a new teacher. Taylor agreed that the numbers don't include data from the New Hampshire Department of Education, and that their staff would utilize that data to update its projections. Still, he explained that the overall population of the Town is aging, from a medium age of 42.4 in 2000 to 47.8 in 2020, which means fewer CES students. In addition, the average number of people in New Hampshire households has been declining for some years. "There's a lot of big older homes but smaller families occupying them," he said. Rebecca said that her personal observation is that "There are a lot of young families," in town.

Randi Johnson pointed out that the 2020 U.S. Census figures might not be counting the number of people living in Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). Greg said that ADUs have developed into a very successful housing option in Canterbury. It allows a Single-Family Dwelling Unit to be augmented with a smaller residence on the same property, e.g., an "in-law" apartment. ADUs can help defray the costs of staying in a larger home and provide a less expensive housing option for some people.

Hillary Nelson pointed out that, at this time property owners are supposed to apply for a special exception from the Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA) to add an ADU, but "lots of people haven't done that." Logan Snyder said that this could mean that the population figures may not be entirely accurate in terms of family count. One of the changes the Board is considering would remove the need for an ZBA special exception for an ADU.

Nate Bragdon said that, according to the information distributed at the meeting, the board is looking to find ways to make it easier for younger families and older residents to stay in the community. "But how about someone in the middle," he asked.

It was noted that the average price of a home in Canterbury has risen dramatically in recent years.

Calvin Todd said that the Board and CNHRPC are looking at the 2020 census figures, but that more recent information shows that Merrimack County is the third fastest growing in New Hampshire, and New Hampshire is the fastest growing state in New England. "Can we use those (fresher) numbers?" he asked.

177 Mike Tardiff said that those figures are likely from the American Community
178 Survey and there is some question about how accurate they might be. But he
179 said his office would look at integrating them into the data the Board uses, even
180 though this is one small data point overall.

181
182 Greg told the audience that there will be “enormous development pressures” on
183 the Board and, by extension, on the Town. He said that if the Town doesn’t take
184 action to update its zoning ordinance to deal with those pressures, the relevant
185 issues could be decided by the NH Legislature or in NH courts. Any restrictions
186 on the rights of property owners to develop/build on their land have “got to be
187 justifiable,” he explained. For instance, restrictions can be justified by the need
188 for safe water and septic service, or the costs of public services like police, fire
189 and school. “We can justify it with the Capital Improvement Program (CIP),” he
190 noted. “We can say, ‘We are expanding services by 2% so we need to keep
191 growth in the need for services in line with what the town can provide.’”

192
193 Greg Paninsky asked why the Town would consider adding any more housing
194 when there are still unresolved infrastructure problems. “I know people who don’t
195 have internet,” he said. Greg said that the current draft of the Plan for Tomorrow
196 is available on the Town’s website except for its Infrastructure chapter, because
197 that is still in progress.

198
199 Mike Tardiff said that the Board and CNHRPC are aware of the local internet
200 problems and that there’s recently been news of a breakthrough in the NH
201 Legislature. An infrastructure bill there could provide funds that will allow some of
202 the internet gaps to be filled in within the next 12-18 months. Kent Ruesswick,
203 the Select Board’s representative on the Planning Board, said that the work has
204 already begun in Town. There are currently 225 people without Wi-Fi. “If you see
205 those trucks around, that’s what they’re doing,” he said.

206 207 **4. Cluster Ordinance Discussion**

208 **Rebecca Plue** asked about the future if the Town moves ahead with proposed
209 changes to Cluster Neighborhood portion of the zoning ordinance. What will
210 things look like in Canterbury if there’s a housing crash in the future and a
211 significant number of these residential units are unoccupied?

212
213 Greg clarified the issue of what’s considered “Affordable Housing.” He pointed
214 out that the Town’s economy is never going to make Canterbury a place that
215 provides a significant amount of affordable housing, but zoning regulations could
216 support the development of some. “If we approve a six-unit housing
217 development, we could encourage the inclusion of one, smaller – maybe a one-
218 bedroom – unit by allowing the developer” to add a unit, essentially making a
219 seven-unit development. The example also indicates how the Town could go
220 about the process of spreading out affordable housing options, he added. “We do
221 not want affordable housing all clustered together,” Greg explained. He recently
222 learned about projects of this type in Gilmanston and Warner, and both appear to

223 be very nice and in character with their communities. "A mixed-use (project) is
224 more vibrant," he added.

225
226 Logan said that she recently learned that one of the Town's newest police
227 officers commutes daily from Massachusetts. People who serve Canterbury in
228 these kinds of vital roles – public safety, teachers, etc. – shouldn't have to
229 commute from Massachusetts, she said.

230
231 Michelle Lewis referred to earlier in the conversation when the issue of CES
232 population was addressed. If the proposed zoning changes are able to attract
233 more young families, there will a related costs. "Are we trying to attract those who
234 are single and starting out and want to stay in Town or young families, or both?
235 I'm unclear." She believed that certain people will move in depending on what is
236 built.

237
238 Vice-Chair John Schneider said that Board isn't trying to "attract" any particular
239 group of people. It's trying to accommodate people who may want to live here
240 but, right now, cannot afford it. Rich Marcou said that the Board has heard from
241 residents about two kinds of people who want to stay/live in Canterbury but
242 cannot do so at this time: young families who do not have the income to afford to
243 carry a mortgage on a home; and older people who may want to retire here but
244 need to downsize. "We've heard it loud and clear and that's where we'd like to
245 focus," he said. Rich also disputed the idea of reacting to what development may
246 be happening in Concord at this time.

247
248 Hillary explained that the Board has another option that it may consider putting
249 before voters in March. "Conditional Use Permitting" would mean that a project
250 that comes before the Board would require a public hearing that allows any
251 resident to hear about the project and comment on it. "So, we could say (to the
252 developer), 'No. We've heard from the community that your proposal doesn't
253 work,'" she explained. She added that the Board is here to listen.

254
255 Randi Johnson made the observation that people attending the previous public
256 meetings who wanted to develop often do not live in town. Maybe they did once
257 but then move away and kept property in case they wanted to develop.

258
259 David Emerson asked if there was any housing development, that it be done in
260 the 'Canterbury Way.' He cited The Spruces and the Country Store as examples
261 where residents got together and made an effort to bring something to fruition.
262 He added that people are mixing up 'Section 8' with 'affordable housing'.

263
264 Alex Young questioned the use of the term 'affordable,' saying he was confused
265 about its meaning. He was a self-employed carpenter, and nothing was
266 affordable anymore. He asked what magic wand the Board had. Matt Taylor
267 responded that there was an official definition of 'affordable' (30% of the local
268 median income) and that was not what was being envisaged here. Greg added

269 that the Board was looking to make housing less expensive, for people like Alex.
270 It was hard with the 5-acre minimum and 300-foot frontage requirement since this
271 necessitates roads being built, and they are expensive.

272
273 Mike Tardiff suggested that the easiest tool that the Board had to use was the
274 ADU – to make those allowable and not require the applicant to seek a zoning
275 board hearing and make them flexible in relation to the primary dwelling unit.

276
277 Alison Witschonke noted that some of these are being used for Air B n B and this
278 introduced some discussion about the growth of this accommodation in town.

279 Lisa Carlson asked that people introduce themselves as there were several
280 people present whom she did not know, and it was good for neighborliness. She
281 went on to argue that there were property owners in town who were overstepping
282 the allowance on short term rentals and Air B n B. What did that mean for
283 Canterbury? Who would be living in these units? Would this in fact BE the
284 development of the future? It is already going on in town and there is little
285 enforcement.

286
287 Greg said that the enforcement of zoning regulations is not a function of the
288 Planning Board, but rather of the Select Board. Enforcement had not been
289 vigorous for some time, he said, but has been stepped up in recent years.
290 However, that doesn't mean that there aren't still some residents who are not in
291 compliance with the zoning ordinance. Mike Tardiff said that there are limitations
292 on what restrictions a town can place on a property owner in terms of renting out
293 their residence, but the whole issue of short-term rentals is something that
294 "everyone is dealing with." Canterbury doesn't have the complicated Airbnb
295 issues that towns in the Lakes Region have.

296
297 Nate Bragdon noted that it's reported that 93% of the houses in Canterbury are
298 owner-occupied and said, "It's part of what makes Canterbury awesome." He
299 said that owner-occupied buildings typically get better attention than ones where
300 an owner is absent. He encouraged the Board to keep that in mind as it moves
301 forward with its proposals. "How can we maintain owners that have stakes in the
302 community," he asked rhetorically. He has 4 kids and hopes they will be able to
303 stay in town.

304
305 Teresa Wyman made the observation that she lived here in the 1980s and the
306 introduction of zoning caused some people to have to live in less expensive
307 towns like Northfield.

308
309 Greg said he was not in favor of absentee landlords either. The Town's current
310 ADU regulations require that an owner live on the property, either in the main
311 residence or in the ADU.

312 Joshua Gordon said the issue could present a challenge for younger people who
313 may want to rent, but not own, at this time in their lives.

314

315 There was a brief discussion regarding the definition of Affordable Housing.
316 Logan said that what's under discussion at this meeting is not "Affordable
317 Housing" but rather "Workforce Housing," which is roughly defined as being
318 reasonably affordable for middle-income households.

319
320 Calvin Todd asked the Board about the idea of using "flag lots."
321 Greg said that Board has had some discussion of the issue, but it's heard some
322 opposition to the idea as well as to the idea of reducing frontage requirement.
323 There are no proposals to allow either. He explained that "flag lots" can connect
324 buildable land that does not have the required road access by means of a long
325 strip of road called a "flag lot," typically a "significant amount of road." That could
326 allow "land-locked" lots to be developed. Calvin said he opposes allowing these
327 kinds of developments because they open up a whole series of challenges. John
328 said that there's already at least one such development in Canterbury.

329
330 Joanne Michno who lives in the Sherwood Forest development, said that she's
331 concerned about allowing further cluster development that could create the kind
332 of issues residents in her area have had, which necessitated spending thousands
333 of dollars to fix a water problem. Joshua pointed out that when Sherwood Forest
334 was developed, its Homeowners Association (HOA) agreement didn't have
335 assessment authority, which created significant issues. The Cluster
336 Neighborhood zoning change that the Board is considering would invest HOAs
337 with assessment authority. Joanne said there could still be problems.

338
339 Doris Hampton asked about the changes to the cluster ordinance the Board is
340 considering and whether it would be for ownership or renting.

341
342 There was a brief break for refreshments and a handout distributed about cluster
343 housing.

344
345 Matt Taylor of CNHRPC said that what Canterbury's currently has is a cluster
346 ordinance which outlines lot sizes, setbacks (from other properties and features
347 like wetlands), and road frontage; it does not have a minimum total lot size.
348 There is also a requirement that a road built in a development meet the Town's
349 Class 5 road requirements, which is a disincentive. Greg added that the current
350 ordinance is also difficult to understand. The prospective change to what would
351 be called "Cluster Neighborhoods" will be easier to understand and, therefore, to
352 comply with. It sets a minimum lot size of at least 10 acres; it allows increased
353 residential density in order to protect larger "green spaces"; and it alters the
354 Class 5 road requirement to remove the onerous need to meet the Town road
355 standards in favor of standards agreed upon by the Town and a consulting
356 engineer. Greg said that the latter change would allow roads in Cluster
357 Neighborhoods to be more in character with other Canterbury roads.

Greg added that he met last week with the Conservation Commission and discussed the proposed changes and received the support of its members. "It protects at least 50% green space, with public access," he explained.

Matt Taylor said that the Board has also discussed the idea of adding incentives for developers who design their projects to fit in with the community. "So, if they're talking about doing things like (having) a traditional look or adding a stone wall." In those cases, Greg said that the Board could consider raising the allowable number of buildable lots on a development property from, for example, 8 lots, to 9 or 10.

Another resident who declined to give his name said that he didn't move to Canterbury because he found it affordable. He said not everyone can afford to live here and if they moved away, they should earn the right to live here, and wait until they've acquired those resources. With regard to developers, he said "If you allow someone to put their toe in the door, you'll have to allow another, and another, and another." Greg pointed out that the Town already has cluster projects that were built in the 1950s, the 1960s, and the 1990s.

Hillary Nelson pointed out that any resident who was opposed to proposals had the right to come to Town Meeting and vote no. The reason the Board was attempting to be proactive was to discourage big money developers coming in and changing the nature of the town.

Helen Lloyd Davies who formerly lived in Auburn, said that the community had major problems when it allowed cluster development. There were water issues, road maintenance issues, and the local property taxes went "sky-high" as it attracted "under-capitalized developers trying to make a buck and screwing everyone over." She thought the term "village" was a euphemism for small lots and unhappy people. Logan said that the Board is working hard on the proposed zoning changes exactly to avoid those kinds of issues here.

Teresa Wyman, spoke out about having been a nurse and having worked hard to live in Canterbury. She questioned the gentleman who argued that only those who could afford to be here should be allowed to, asking why the town would not try to make it more affordable for people like her to live here. The discussion ceased to address the Chair, so Greg redirected the meeting to move on.

Jim Miller and Alex Young cautioned the Board about making changes that would eventually result in the building of "McMansions" when there's a change in the housing market. Alex, who said he was a carpenter, said that developers want to build larger homes because they make more money on those structures. "For me, that's not the character of Canterbury," he said. Jim pointed out that many people who used to be able to afford to move to Canterbury can no longer do so.

Sumner Dole suggest that the Board consider requiring common lands that are created in Cluster Neighborhoods (and managed by HOAs) be donated to the Town. Greg said that in his discussion with the Conservation Commission, he learned that the commission doesn't want to be managing "random bits of property all over Town." In addition, that change would remove those lands from the Town's tax roll.

Joanne Michno said she was having a difficult time visualizing what a Cluster Neighborhood would look like. Homeowners would have to bear the cost of building septic, wells and roads, all expensive. She said she's heard from neighbors, saying that if they want to build something and the zoning ordinance forbids it, they would simply go to the state courts to "get what they want."

Danielle Krautmann also suggested that allowing Cluster Neighborhoods might not be the solution that the Board is hoping it will be. She works for visiting nurses and sees 1-2 bedroomed units in Concord and even those are around \$2200 per month. She said that even homes on Hathlon Road are estimated to be worth \$500,000. She questioned if building smaller units would actually have the desired result.

Logan said the change would likely not have achieve everything that people want regarding affordable housing since it's a national problem, but it could make some improvement.

Matt Taylor pointed out that on the last page of the handout there are several examples of successful Cluster Neighborhood projects built in Warner and Contoocook using 'Farmhouse designs'. In addition, the Canterbury Hall structure in Town boasts three rental units and some single-room rentals, so that's another example.

Greg said that Canterbury Hall is a good example of how the changes that the Board is considering could save some of the Town's older buildings that are part of Canterbury's historic character.

Rebecca Plue thanked the Board for including an earlier parent session. She asked about voting on amendments. It was explained that would be during session 1 of Town Meeting, voting on the ballot held on the Tuesday before Town Meeting session 2 on the Friday in March.

There was some further discussion about some of the outdoor benefits of Cluster Development for recreation. Greg Paninsky mentioned that his father was in a homeowners association in Florida that was taken over by chain management. How might the town deal with that issue?

Kent Ruesswick noted that the town gets to vote on roads at Town Meeting.

450 Donna Miller praised Canterbury Hall for providing a mix of housing with
451 management and maintenance. Hillary pointed out that a Variance was needed
452 from the Zoning Board because multi-family housing was not currently allowed in
453 the Agricultural zone.

454
455 Greg thanked residents for attending. Some thanked the Board for the meeting.

456
457 **5. Adjournment**

458 At 8:40 p.m., without objection, Greg adjourned the meeting.

459
460 Respectfully submitted, Ray Carbone, Recording Secretary, with edits from Lois
461 Scribner, Secretary and Greg Meeh, Chair.