

Village of Schoharie Planning Board

January 28, 2025

Meeting Minutes

In Attendance:

Board members: Tom Hitter, Steve Babbitt, Tim Repicky, Dave Knoop, Mike Ullman

Board Consultants: Mike Harrington

Applicants: Schoharie Dental: Dr. Hazem Elbially, with Rob Stout, Chris Knox

Farmer's Beef & Brew: Jennie Flagler, Robert Smith, Kayleigh Robinson

Tom, the Board chairperson, called the meeting to order at 6:59. He welcomed everyone and introduced the newest member, Mike Ullman. First order of business was to edit and approve the meeting minutes from our previous meeting. No corrections were suggested; Dave made a motion to approve the draft meeting minutes from Dec. 12, which Tim seconded, and the motion was approved.

New Business: Restaurant and Banquet Facility at 445 Main Street

Jennie Flagler, owner of the Farmer's Beef & Brew restaurant downtown, revealed her plans for demolishing the dormant Old Mill barn on North Main Street and constructing a new restaurant with banquet facility there. Plans are in motion for the barn to be disassembled, with the valuable first-growth structural beams being salvaged and sold for re-use. She is purchasing a segment of the adjoining lot behind the barn, currently part of the 431 Main St parcel. She described her vision, sought our 'first take' observations, and requested advice on how to proceed. She envisions a single building, with a restaurant area in front and a banquet hall behind, set well back from the highway, with parking in front, and the lot behind landscaped for outdoor events. Size-wise, she estimates 100 seats for restaurant and 150 for banquet hall.

- This proposal has much appeal and could be a welcome improvement for the village.
- The lot is zoned commercial, but the adjoining lots are residential or a utility corridor. Some buffering or screening might be needed between adjoining lots with different zoning.
- The pertinent applications to the Planning Board would be a lot line adjustment and site plan review.
- The new combined parcel will be in Special Flood Hazard Areas X and AE, mostly in the more flood-prone zone AE (100-year flood zone). New construction in an AE zone requires engineering measures, such as bringing in fill to elevate the floor of the building above Base Flood Elevation, or at least "flood-proofing" (i.e. waterproofing) the lower walls of a commercial structure.
- The Land Use Law (LUL) and Comprehensive Plan both strongly discourage on-site parking lots located in front of retail structures; the dimensional requirements in LUL Table 2-7.2 specify a maximum front yard depth of 25 ft for commercial land use. An area variance application to the Zoning Board of Appeals is necessary to attempt to override this.
- The parking area required for a building with 250 seats may be considerable and requires further consideration.
- The existing Old Mill structure is non-conforming but allowed. She could make a good argument for the new structure to be placed on the footprint of the old one.

Our advice: Locate a few examples of existing restaurant/banquet businesses operating under similar conditions (a moderate-sized parcel within village limits, a limited road frontage, with a nearby residence) to observe the sizes, shapes, and locations of buildings and parking. Become familiar with the design standards in the Land Use Law, and consult with a professional designer at a civil engineering, planning, or architectural design service to develop a set of site plan layout sketches, drawn to scale (they probably have software that allows objects to easily be moved around, changed in size, or changed in location). This would greatly assist visualization and spurs creative thought for solutions to design obstacles. Have a conversation with a local acquaintance knowledgeable about flood zone construction (a builder, a Code Enforcement Officer, a local developer, or a civil engineering service) for an explanation of the regulations governing new construction in a flood hazard zone: feasibility, special measures and added costs, and the conditions for obtaining lending and flood insurance.

Old Business: Mainbridge Commons

Developments since the last meeting:

1. The need for one of the two area variances has been eliminated. The design for the 3-storey apartment buildings was revised to lower the roof peak height to less than 40 feet, satisfying the LUL's building height standard. The need for a density area variance remains.
2. The Board received approval responses from the agencies notified in late December of our intent to serve as the Lead Agency for the SEQR environmental review process; no agency objected. Several agencies listed applicable procedures and needed permits. These correspondences were shared with the Mainbridge Commons team.
3. Chris Knox responded to the comments in a letter dated January 27, 2025, stating their intent to satisfy the conditions as design and construction progress.

Resolution Adopted to Be Lead Agency

Tom distributed draft copies of a resolution "Lead Agency Declaration and Identification of Project as a Type I Action". Tim made a motion to approve it, seconded by Dave. The vote was 5 – 0 in favor.

Mike H. commented that the responses from the notified agencies were typical and routine, similar to those he has encountered on other projects, nothing raising alarm bells.

Chris Knox, speaking as the project manager, said his recent focus has been coordinating with the utilities (roads, storm sewer, electric power), seeking affirmation letters that they have available capacities and will support the development effort. Now the focus shifts to detail design. The Crawford designers will be busy during the next month, fleshing out the details of the filling and grading, the drainage and stormwater systems, and the trip generation traffic data. He estimated the earliest date for a presentation would be late February or early March. Further Planning Board progress awaits this information.

Rob Stout plans to present the variance request to the Zoning Board of Appeals at their Monday, Feb. 3 meeting (6:00 p.m.)

Other New Business

Since Farmer's Beef & Brew must apply for a lot line adjustment, and we don't currently have a separate application form for this, Tom distributed a sample form that he recommended we adopt for the village. It is based on the form used by the Town of Berne in Albany County. The sentiments of the board members were positive, but it needs a few edits to remove references to Berne or Albany County! Tom tabled further action until the draft is edited.

The meeting adjourned at 8:15.

Future Meetings

Monday, Feb. 03, 6:00 p.m. Joint meeting with Zoning Board of Appeals. Training session by Shane Nickle, Director of Schoharie County Planning Dept. Mainbridge Commons variance presentation to follow.

Next meeting with Mainbridge Commons: To be scheduled when design drawings are ready.

Respectfully,

Steve Babbitt

SB 02/02/2025