

Village of Schoharie Planning Board

Oct. 28, 2025

Meeting Minutes & Public Hearing for Mainbridge Commons

In Attendance:

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

Board Consultants: Dave Brennan, Mike Harrington

Applicants: Mainbridge Commons team: Dr. Hazem Elbially, Terresa Bakner, Chris Knox, Brian Messana, Alton Knapp

Public: see attached scanned image of Public Hearing sign-in sheet

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m. We reviewed the draft meeting minutes from the Oct. 22 meeting. Tom corrected that he had not forwarded the resignation letter from Tim Repicky to the Village Board, but had advised Tim to submit the letter instead to the Village Board; Mike made a motion to approve the draft minutes, seconded by Dave, and the vote was 4-0 in favor.

Tom briefed the audience about the public hearing, setting forth some ground rules. He explained that the public hearing would remain open for at least 2 weeks after tonight to receive written comments sent to the village office. He then opened the public hearing and handed it over to the Mainbridge Commons team for their presentation.

Dr. Elbially explained that his dental practice is already outgrowing the office and parking capacities of the 229 Main St. building that had been expanded just a few years ago. There is a tremendous demand for his services, with customers travelling from as far away as a 2-hour drive (100 miles!) The proposed development will offer increased dental office and parking facilities, with staff size growing from 70 to >100 during the next few years. He attributes his spectacular growth to offering all the most-demanded dental procedures in one location (general, periodontic, orthodontic, root canals), when it is uncommon to find pediatric or orthodontic dental practices in rural areas, and for accepting far more insurance providers, including Medicaid, than other local dental practices. The housing component will provide needed housing for local workers including some of his employees, enabling them to remain here to live and work in the Valley.

Terresa outlined the benefits to the community: jobs, a needed health care service, increased local economic activity, needed housing, and replacement of an unattractive no man's land by new construction that blends with the community character.

Chris presented a slide show to describe the phases of construction and the dimensions and capacities of the commercial and residential structures. The in-ground infrastructure for all the buildings will be installed during the first phase. He described the major components and features of the drainage system: rainwater harvesting and filtration, underground storage vaults that filter and slow discharge rates, a man-made gravel wetland for filtering, storing, and detaining runoff, and then discharge into the brook.

Alton described the plans to raise the grade with compacted fill, elevating the grade to be above the FEMA base flood elevation. This will result in reduced flood damage risk and a reduced flood insurance cost.

Brian, the architect, narrated the drive-by video simulation projected onto the wall. He stated that two of his design objectives were to use familiar 'vernacular' architectural features for the health care services building, intentionally avoiding the 'glass palace' style common in the suburbs and corporate parks, and to use plentiful landscaping to create a park-like environment.

Next came public comments:

Paul Brady thanked Dr. Elbially for bringing a much-needed health care service and replacing the ugly ruin. Paul resides alongside the brook on lower Hilgert Parkway, just a few hundred feet downstream from the development. The brook has flooded numerous times during the past 20+ years. He has concerns about the effect of the development on runoff into the brook, will it make flooding more frequent or more intense for those downstream? He said during the approval process for The Birches, the drainage design was adjusted to direct more of the discharge toward the front and lessen discharge into the brook.

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Julie Pacatte, executive director of SEEC, emphasized the economic, job, health care service, housing, and tax benefits this development will bring to the community, while still blending with the existing small village community character.

Wendi Weingarten praised the comprehensive array of dental services all located in one spot at Schoharie Dental, very rare in a rural area; its willingness to accommodate special needs, pediatric, and anxious patients; and its acceptance of a broader range of insurances. The business is creating local jobs, eliminating commutes into the city, plus it provides training to launch unskilled workers on a health care career path.

Meredith Foster expressed frustration about Schoharie Dental not resolving her complaints about headlight beams from vehicles in the 228 Main St. Schoharie Dental parking lot shining into her home's front window on Knower Avenue. She had questions about the effects of the development on traffic and construction noise.

Jason Ballard resides in a historic home on the hillside above The Birches. His driveway is a Right-Of-Way that traverses The Birches lot from Main St, adjacent to the new southern boundary of Mainbridge Commons, but it sits at the pre-development elevation, 4 – 5 ft lower than the raised grade of the development. He has concerns about the driveway becoming a gutter or snow tunnel due to its elevation below the two raised fill pads, serving as a channel for runoff or snow. He also sought clarification of the stated intention to offer just market-rate rental housing, because The Birches evidently changed the types of rental assistance housing programs offered from what had been stated during the development approval process to a different set after it had obtained approval. He had questions about screening of lights and noise, whether the mature willow trees alongside the brook would be cut down, whether there would be any buffer alongside the brook. He asked if a traffic study had been done, and if a traffic light was to be installed at Furman Dr/Bridge St and not just a crosswalk. He asked why Mainbridge Commons is able to have 3-storey apartment buildings when The Birches was not. And he mentioned an unused 1.5" PVC water line running from Main St to his home that is within the 75' strip parcel forming the new southern boundary of Mainbridge.

Sal Medak and Vesna Lovsin reside at the end of Furman Dr on the hillside behind the proposed development. They warned that the brook can transition surprisingly fast from docile to flood stage, especially during snowmelt thaw events. They had questions about runoff into the brook, making sure the changes would not make flooding worse on their property. A sliver of land along the western bank of the brook is Medak property from Furman Dr to near the southeastern corner of Mainbridge Commons. She felt that exiting/entering Furman Dr from Main St is already subject to frustrating waits for gaps to open in the Main St flow, so the situation will worsen with the addition of all the development traffic. She feels a traffic light at the Main St/Bridge St/Furman Dr intersection is needed.

That completed the public comments. The Board and the design team responded with answers to a few of the questions raised. The pad of fill for the new development will be 2 – 3 ft above present grade, which is far less than the 4 – 5 ft at The Birches. Stormwater runoff into the brook per state regulation must not exceed existing. In addition, the storage and detention facilities will 'shave the peak' of the runoff flow to reduce downstream flood risk, throttling down the discharge over a longer duration. Any traffic changes on Main St are unfortunately not the village's purview, but DOT's. We await their more in-depth review and response.

The unused waterline mentioned by Jason Ballard should be located and its status checked; it needs to be capped.

The chair ended the in-person presentation, informing all that the Public Hearing would remain open until Nov. 12 for written comments sent to the village office. Tom made motion to close tonight's presentation, seconded by Mike, and approved 4-0 in favor.

The Board considered next steps and set the next meeting date for Nov. 13.

Meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Future Meetings: Thursday Nov. 13

Respectfully,

Steve Babbitt

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