

Village of Schoharie Planning Board

Sept. 15, 2025

Meeting Minutes

In Attendance:

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

Board Consultants: Dave Brennan, Mike Harrington

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

Public: None

Tom called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The draft meeting minutes from the previous June 17 meeting were reviewed and no corrections were suggested. Dave made a motion to approve the draft minutes, seconded by Tim, and the motion was approved 5-0 in favor.

Old Business: Mainbridge Commons

Endorsement Letter for Mainbridge Commons Parcel Zoning Change

The Village Board has requested a letter from the Planning Board expressing our opinion pertaining to the zoning change request from PDA to Commercial for the 75' strip (tax parcel 12.17-5-1) along the southern boundary of the present Mainbridge Commons parcel (tax parcel 12.17-5-2). The Planning Board members felt this change better suits the needs of the proposed development and supported it with no objections. Tim made a motion for the chairperson Tom to draft the endorsement letter. It was seconded by Mike and approved 5-0 in favor.

Mainbridge Commons Update:

The board had received a substantial document update packet dated Sept. 08. New releases included the lighting design, the landscaping design, the grading, drainage, and stormwater designs, sign design, a wetlands delineation drawing, an emergency vehicle turning movement analysis drawing, the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan document (SWPPP), plus updates on correspondence with interested agencies and utilities, a parking analysis, and minor revisions to pertinent documents.

Teresa began the briefings:

No Historic or Archeological Impact: They had provided revised drawings to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) for review and had received a letter from Weston Davey that "the proposed project will have No Adverse Impact to historic resources." She indicated receipt of a similar letter opining no adverse impact to archeological resources. These expert opinions address Item 10 of the Full Environmental Assessment Form. (See the table below.)

Wetlands Permit Required: DEC has made a positive JD (Jurisdictional Determination) for the freshwater wetlands on tax parcel 12.17-5-1, the 75' strip being purchased by Mainbridge, meaning they must obtain an Article 24 Wetland Permit. Crawford & Assoc. had performed a wetland delineation survey in June and created the delineation drawing. It indicates none of the disturbed surface falls within the defined wetland, but it does fall within the wetland buffer area, which new regulations earlier this year enlarged to be 100 ft. wide. However, the surface disturbance is to create the stormwater management gravel wetland, so basically no impact. DEC has indicated they are inclined to issue the permit but will wait to receive the SEQR.

Chris Knox briefed us on the updated drawing package and engineering analyses:

Grading, Drainage, and Stormwater Management Drawings Released, Plus Stormwater Document (SWPPP): The SWPPP and new drawings detail how stormwater will be managed using rainwater filtration of the runoff from the buildings, buried tanks beneath the pavement that store, detain, and filter surface runoff, and a gravel wetland at the rear of the property. The water is filtered and detained by the gravel wetland until it is pumped via an outlet pipe to the adjacent stream.

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Lights Accenting the Landscaping Foliage: The lighting system design features lights accenting the landscaping as well as those lighting the parking lots. The light poles are wood, their maximum height = 28 ft, the lights on the poles are shrouded with the light directed downward. A computer simulation indicated satisfactory illumination levels.

Fire Engine Access to Mainbridge Structures, and to the Rear of The Birches: Mike H. voiced concerns about the emergency fire access road from Main St. to the rear of The Birches shifting from the gravel driveway on the 75' strip parcel to using the 30 ft. paved driveway access road closer to the northern wing of the main Birches apartment building. The paved driveway is a 35' wide Right-of-Way for water and vehicle access to the Ballard property behind The Birches, so he felt use would require obtaining an easement. After some discussion, all agreed that the Ballard driveway would not be designated as an emergency fire access route for Mainbridge Commons; instead, the Ballard driveway would simply be crossed by emergency vehicles as part of the relocated emergency access route to The Birches. The design team had agreed in a previous meeting to reserve a crossover area where a large ladder truck could swing around the corner of the apartment building. For the latest design release, the designers had created a new drawing which models fire truck access routes into and within the Mainbridge Commons site (to ensure there is adequate space to turn). The drawing shows a near straight-line pathway is possible from Furman Drive, across the Mainbridge parking lot, through the reserved no parking area, across the property boundary, across the paved driveway, to the rear of The Birches apartment building. The site plan drawing already designates the reserved area to be signed "No Parking Fire Lane" with a hatched stripes border. Since swinging a wide turn would no longer be necessary, they agreed to adjust the shape of the area to just the width of a large fire truck.

No Response Yet from Schoharie Fire Dept: Chris has attempted contact with Schoharie Fire Dept to discuss fire hydrant testing details and any concerns they might have with the design, but they have not responded.

Sign Size Exceeds Code, Needs Variance, Exact Location Not Yet Specified: The architect Brian M. has issued drawings of the Schoharie Dental sign to be along Main St, describing its features as being 4'7" high X 8'2 1/2 "wide, with letters 5 1/2 "high. It will be a concrete block structure with a brushed stainless-steel sheet metal facing, the standing-seam ribs running vertically. This exceeds the maximum size standard for a free-standing, non-pole sign specified in Table 3-1.2 of the Land Use Law = 20 sq. ft. area x 1.2 max bonus factor = 24 sq. ft. An area variance will be needed. The sign's location has not yet been designated on the site plan layout.

Pedestrian Pathways Added: The architect has added curved pathways to the landscaped areas on all sides of the commercial building. He has also created a wide paver strip for pedestrians as a no parking zone extending from the commercial building to the rear apartment building which splits the parking lots into northern and southern sectors, but does allow motor vehicles to cross it.

Also, the sizes and locations of the green spaces and recreation courts adjoining the apartment buildings have been adjusted.

Stormwater discharge to stream: Mike H. had noticed that the proposed location of the discharge outlet from near the northern end of the gravel wetland would cross the stream bank on the Medak property, which would necessitate obtaining an easement. He suggested they consider whether moving the discharge outlet's location to the existing Great American discharge outlet's location just a bit further from the end of the wetland would be feasible and allow them to avoid the legal work. Also, he noted that the location of the discharge pump had not yet been specified. The design team agreed to address these concerns.

The satellite parking lot: Dr. Elbially is in the process of purchasing the rear portions of the 2 Relyea residential zone parcels on the northern side of Furman Dr, intending to create a 31-space parking lot. The village has not yet received the subdivision application. But the proposed use of a residential zone parcel as a parking lot with no primary structure on it concerns the Board. Initially, we had thought the conversion of a residential parcel for parking would be allowed as an 'accessory use' to a commercial use on an **adjoining** parcel, if a parcel across a village road could be considered to be adjoining. The Land Use Law doesn't provide clarity on this, and we have different opinions. At this time, a majority of us feel that a parcel across a public street from the commercial parcel does not meet the definition in our interpretation of the meaning of this term. In this case, converting a residential parcel to use solely as a parking lot is not permitted by the LUL.

Tim R. argued strongly that to allow this conversion special consideration would set a dangerous precedent and establish a pathway which any commercial business could follow to consume an adjoining residential lot and turn it into a parking lot. After some discussion, the sentiment became any conversion action of this type should be given special in-depth consideration as an exception to the norm and be clearly recorded for future reference. Meaning, apply for and obtain a variance. To advance this idea and

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establish a pathway for Mainbridge to obtain permission for the parking lot, determine whether using a variance is the best approach, and which kind of variance (area or use?), the Code Enforcement Officer (Dave K) will confer with Teresa.

The parking analysis: The parking analysis showed that the number of surface parking spaces alone, not even counting the 65 in the underground parking garage, exceeds the minimum code requirement. Mike H. questioned the assumption that allotting just one parking space per housing unit, irrespective of whether one-bedroom or two-bedroom, was reasonable. He had obtained an opinion from a planner with whom he had worked on a similar development at a local village. The parking space estimation method in the land use code there (Malta) allots 1 parking space per one-bedroom apartment, 1.5 spaces for a 2-bedroom, plus 1 bonus space for every 5. The parking analysis relies on the time for peak residential use (after daytime business hours) not occurring at the time of peak demand for the commercial operation (the traditional day shift) to allow re-use of the spaces and reducing the total number of spaces required. For market rate apartments, not senior housing, most residents would be working age and most would be commuting to a job off-site, but how many spaces would remain filled with resident’s motor vehicles during the day is hard to estimate.

Tim R. raised a second objection to the satellite parking lot: It’s not needed, because the surface parking spaces on the main lot, if you include the 65 in the underground parking garage, exceeds the need by more than the 31 spaces of the satellite, so why convert a residential lot and risk creating a dangerous zoning precedent?

Grading and Flood Plain Engineering: Alton Knapp, the flood plain construction consultant, briefed us on the grading plan and the method being followed for satisfying FEMA flood plain construction regulations. The drawing release package includes a grading design for the site. The fill will raise the grade to the FEMA map base flood elevation (BFE) = 610.5’, with the lowest level of the inhabited space to be BFE + 2’ = 612.5’. His professional evaluation is that increased downstream flooding impact for the flood water displaced by the development would be minimal or minor, due to : the site being on the very fringe of the valley floor, far from the floodway; the pad of fill being less high and displacing less flood water than that of The Birches; and the HEC-RAS computer simulation performed for The Birches had shown minimal increased downstream impact.

The top surface of the fill pad will not be absolutely flat but will contain a few slightly lower spots where runoff will drain into catch basins. He wants to discuss minor grading design details pertaining to the low spots with the designers, then he will submit the application to FEMA for a LOM-R (Letter Of Map Revision).

SEQR Nearly Complete, a Negative Declaration Letter to be drafted: Following the briefing by the Mainbridge Commons team, the Board resumed work on the Full EAF Part II form, returning to the 6 (out of 18 total) impact categories left open at the June 17 meeting, awaiting design details. The Sept. 08 drawing release package provides the awaited details. (The other 12 impact categories had been judged to have No Impact or Small or No Impact.)

| Question | Topic | Board’s Revised Assessment of Severity of Impact, Based On Sept 08 Design Release |
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| 3 | Impacts on Surface Water | Yes. The SWPPP and drawings for Temporary ESC and Grading & Utilities detail systems which will mitigate stormwater runoff impacts. We anticipate small or no impacts. |
| 5 | Impact on Flooding | Yes. The site will be raised to be above the FEMA AE flood risk zone. Evaluation by Flood Plain Engineering consultant is for small increased downstream impact. Based on the HEC-RAS study for The Birches, increased risk to downstream properties will be negligible or very slight. A LOMR is in process for FEMA flood map. The Board sentiment is that the impact will be small. |
| 10 | Impact on Historic and Archeological Resources | Yes. The site is adjacent or nearby to districts or sites listed on State or National Historical Registers. Evaluation by SHPO expert finds no adverse impacts, so design updates resolved initial size and appearance concerns. The surface has been disturbed by prior development. No or small impact. |
| 13 | Impact on Transportation | Yes. DOT has approved the Stage 1 PERM33-COM application without requiring traffic analysis. Stage 1 is just concept phase. The Stage 2 application will examine the detailed design, and we await DOT’s assessment. We anticipate small impact, even without receipt of the detail design. |

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| 15 | Impact on Noise, Odor, and Light | Yes. The lighting system design has been released. The light poles are attractive, LED, and shielded with downward oriented light beams to reduce side glare. No or small impact. |
| 17 | Consistence with Community Plans | Yes. The addition of approximately 50 more residents in the village would increase the population by about 5 %. There will be an increased demand for fire, EMS, law enforcement, school, and recreation, and increased traffic, but we feel the village can absorb this size of population increase with minor change to prevailing small town character. Perhaps it would spur some development nearby? We await variance decision on housing unit density, but small impact. |

We would prefer to have the detail design of the traffic entrances and exits to Main St and DOT's response in hand, but don't foresee a major impact, just a small impact. The level of certainty was high enough to request that our consultants draft a letter declaring a Negative Declaration for the SEQR process to be presented at the next meeting. Tom made a motion for this letter to be drafted, seconded by Dave, and we voted 5-0 in favor. At the next meeting, we intend to set a date for a Public Hearing.

The site plan application is not yet complete. We await the subdivision application for the Relyea parcels, the variance decisions from the Zoning Board, a few remaining design details.

Referral to County Planning (239 Referral): Is the package complete enough to send it to County Planning for review? They only meet once per month. After discussion, Tom made a motion for attorney Dave B. to refer the Mainbridge Commons package to the Schoharie County Planning Commission once we have received the subdivision application and the revised the Environmental Assessment Form. The motion was seconded by Dave, and we voted 5-0 in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

Future Meetings: Monday Sept. 29

Respectfully,
Steve Babbitt