

Megan Portnoy, Elected Member  
Canterbury Planning Board  
133 Baptist Rd  
Canterbury, NH 03224  
June 25, 2024

Town of Canterbury and Canterbury Planning Board  
Re: The Planning Board's May 7, 2024, Special Session  
1 Old Tilton Rd  
Canterbury, NH 03224

Dear Town of Canterbury and Canterbury Planning Board,

In a letter to the Town dated April 21, 2024, I brought attention to a matter of concern regarding Planning Board Chair Greg Meeh's edits to the Board's minutes on April 9, 2024. I requested time on the Board's April 23, 2024 meeting for discussion of the edits. I publicly read the letter at that time and there was some discussion among the Board. The Chair called a special meeting of the Board for May 7<sup>th</sup> to further discuss the letter. However, the purpose of this special session was unclear, and instead of addressing the substance of my letter and collaborating on solutions, the meeting devolved into expressing frustrations, name-calling, disregarding our meeting standards, and escalating confusion. A recording of this special session is available on the [Town's Youtube channel](#).

I ensured that my April 21st letter was an objective statement of my observations and clearly articulated my reasons for bringing them to light. I refrained from qualifying or interpreting the Chair's decision to make substantive edits outside of public sessions. I have also refrained from qualifying why the Chair continued the meeting after adjournment and after the public had left. During the May 7th special session, several people mischaracterized or misunderstood my letter. I would like to clarify several points from that meeting:

1. Regarding the mischaracterization of my letter:

The Chair began the May 7th discussion by stating, "This letter says that Lois did something bad, that I did something bad, and that the Board has participated in bad actions." ([Reference: at 2 hours and 12 minutes](#)). This is a reductive and hyperbolic characterization that distracts from my letter's substance. I did not provide personal interpretations or qualifications of the Chair's actions in my letter. It was an objective account of the handling and editing of minutes, available for anyone to review and draw their conclusions. Furthermore, this was not about the Secretary. My only mention of the Secretary was to note that she provided me the requested draft minutes without delay. I did not refer to anyone else on the board, nor to any actions by the Board broadly.

2. Regarding the perspective that my letter was a thinly veiled attack:

Let me be clear, my letter was not personal. I have no personal grievance with the Chair, the Secretary, or anyone on the Board. My letter focused on ethics, transparency, and

compliance. As an elected municipal Board, our actions should be accountable to the Town, and transparency is essential for accountability. My letter aimed to serve transparency for Canterbury residents, not to attack any individual. Highlighting mistakes and holding each other accountable is not an attack; it is the right thing to do. Responding to mistakes with ownership, accountability, and offers of remediation is also the right thing to do.

3. Regarding the implication that I intended to have the Chair fired:

Some inferred from my letter that a person could be fired for the findings I shared, implying that this was my intention. I did not suggest or request any specific outcomes or remedies, nor do I have any investment in an outcome beyond the Board learning and improving for the Town's benefit. My duty was to report ethical concerns, not to dictate consequences.

4. Regarding the perspective that my letter was not collegial and showcased an inability to work as a team:

While collaboration is essential, as a quasi-judicial Board, we are expected to enter meetings open-minded and free from attachment to personal opinions or relationships outside that space. I prioritize objectivity, professionalism, composure, and clear, respectful communication in board-related interactions. This way of relating is not only my personal preference for this unique context, but it is in accordance with [Riggins Rules](#) of department of member of boards and [Appendix G](#) of The Planning Board in New Hampshire - A Handbook for Local Officials. In this role, ethics and accountability take precedence over personal relationships, personalities, and emotions.

5. Regarding the perspective that I did not follow the appropriate chain of command:

There is no explicit guidance or Planning Board standard for reporting of ethical concerns. Given that my letter regarded the Chair, I made the decision to address my letter to the Board of Selectmen, the Town Administrator, and the Town's residents broadly. Ultimately, it is a public letter made available to anyone who wants to read it, and I did bring it to the Board at the first possible meeting. I understand the perspective of those who disagree with my order of presentation. We should all consider whether the Board's culture encourages open, honest, and genuinely interested discussions on ethics, transparency, and mistakes. We would also benefit from a written standard of reporting violations or concerns.

6. Regarding the assertion that my letter was disrespectful:

My letter was likely unpleasant to read, just as it was unpleasant to write. However, it is not disrespectful to highlight ethical concerns, call for transparency, or urge the Board to improve its processes and take responsibility for actions. Positioning transparency as disrespectful sets a poor precedent for future accountability efforts. Both written and video records will demonstrate my respectfulness in meetings, regardless of what is said to me.

To understand the importance of adhering to ethical standards and making decisions transparently, the Board must consider its legal obligations: making changes to minutes in public hearings,

remaining impartial, maintaining the public perception of impartiality, providing public access to original draft minute documents, and adhering to publicly noticing meetings and legal quorum standards. These requirements are outlined in New Hampshire's Right to Know RSA. Failing to comply with these requirements could lead to lawsuits against the Town, ultimately costing Canterbury taxpayers. This is not about personalities; it is about protecting fairness for residents and the Town from liability. I am glad that my letter has catalyzed some progress toward improved standards and processes. It is my hope that this continues and that we can create a Board culture in which saying the hard thing in service of doing the right thing is valued.

Sincerely,  
Megan Portnoy  
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