

August 19, 2025, Gallatin Town Board Meeting
Meeting minutes

	PRESENT	ABSENT	ZOOM
Supervisor John C. Reilly	x		
Council-member Jeff Jorve	x		
Council-member Sara McGhee		x	
Council-member Michael Moran	x		
Council member Dan Quinn	x		

NEW BUSINESS SECTION

1. Update on zoning, county, fire district and relevant topics

Supervisor Reilly opened discussion on the zoning updates. The board discussed a timeline for reviewing the zoning draft before public presentation. Councilmember Jorve suggested that once they receive the first draft, the board should have a couple of weeks to review it, followed by a workshop with other relevant town officials and boards such as the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, and Code Enforcement Officer before bringing it to a public meeting.

The board agreed that this approach would allow for more thorough feedback from officials with specific expertise before seeking public input. Supervisor Reilly noted he would contact the town attorney Andy Howard to determine when a draft would be available and to schedule a workshop approximately two weeks after receipt of the draft. There was consensus that an evening meeting would be preferable to accommodate all necessary participants.

The board also discussed the presentation of the Natural Resources Inventory (NRI) by the Conservation Advisory Committee (CAC) at the September meeting, with recommendations to follow regarding how the NRI findings should be incorporated into zoning.

Regarding the fire district, Supervisor Reilly noted that at least three fire service/emergency officials and two public members had expressed interest in running for commissioner. Elections are held in December. The board previously discussed declining a proposal to dissolve the fire commission.

Regarding the county executive referendum, Supervisor Reilly informed the board that depending on November's election results, the county would either pursue a charter change internally through a committee of supervisors or potentially attempt another referendum. The earliest a potential county executive position could take effect would be January 1, 2028.

2. Planning for the 2026 budget draft - needed new items and financial decisions

Supervisor Reilly presented several budget considerations for 2026, beginning with smaller items and progressing to larger strategic decisions:

Website updates were identified, with the need to transition to a .gov domain and implement content providence authentication for security. This would increase costs but improve security and authentication. The board also discussed the need for town email services.

The town also needs a dedicated Zoom account with proper administrative controls to comply with New York State archiving rules.

Employee handbook updates were noted as necessary, as the current handbook is 7-8 years old.

Supervisor Reilly emphasized the need to update the town's 5-year equipment forecast and 10-year road plan, especially as they approach a new cycle for CHIPS funding and with Highway Superintendent Jack Gomm approaching potential retirement. The supervisor wanted to ensure that future planning captured the full costs associated with road maintenance, including staffing implications.

A significant discussion centered on potentially taking over private roads. Highway Superintendent Jack Gomm explained that the current staff is already stretched thin maintaining the existing 40 miles of town roads, with snowplow routes taking 3.5-4 hours to complete. Adding even a mile of road, particularly if located at the opposite end of town, would require additional staffing and equipment. Councilmember Jorve also suggested the town might consider developing old, abandoned roads rather than assuming responsibility for currently maintained private roads.

For larger financial decisions, Supervisor Reilly proposed potentially paying off the town's retirement deficiency (approximately \$23,000 annually at an interest rate of around 7%) and possibly the bond for town hall (currently at 2.25% interest). This would reduce annual expenses and create budget flexibility, though it would reduce reserves.

Staffing needs were also discussed, including:

- A deputy clerk position to relieve the current clerk of excessive duties.
- Building maintenance personnel rather than relying on the highway department for town building repairs
- Expanded Code Enforcement Officer role to handle short-term rental inspections and potentially building maintenance.

Supervisor Reilly noted that with revenue expectations remaining flat (sales tax growth has leveled off and court revenue has decreased), the town has limited options: reduce expenses by paying off debt, use reserves strategically, or increase taxes. He proposed presenting two budget scenarios to the board - one continuing business as usual and another forecasting future needs.

Councilmember Jorve suggested considering small, incremental tax increases to normalize the concept rather than facing a larger increase later, while Councilmember Moran emphasized ensuring that salary increases for current staff should at minimum keep pace with inflation to retain valuable employees.

MONTHLY BUSINESS SECTION

1. Review of July 2025 Minutes for Errors/Clarifications Resolution 2025-31 Approve July 2025 Meeting Minutes and posting of any completed Committee minutes

Motion to approve the July 2025 meeting minutes made by CM Moran, seconded by CM Jorve.

Vote 4 Yes 0 No 1 Absent Motion carried.

2. Bill Review of Non-Recurring items - Resolution 2025-32 approves July 2025 bills for payment

Highway 76-90 \$13,826.88

General 121-131 \$5,267.80

Motion to pay the July 2025 bills made by CM Moran, seconded by CM Jorve.

Vote 4 Yes 0 No 1 Absent Motion carried.

3. Acceptance of Monthly Financial Report Resolution 2025-33 approves July 2025 Financial reports

Motion to accept the July Financial Report CM Moran, seconded by CM Jorve.

Vote 4 Yes 0 No 1 Absent Motion carried.

4. Highway Superintendent Comments/Report

Highway Superintendent Jack Gomm reported that the department issued one driveway permit on Taghkanic Road and scheduled the town cleanup day for November 1st. He also informed the board that the truck listed on Auctions International received a high bid of \$9,800.

Motion to accept the bid of \$9,800 for the surplus equipment made by CM Quinn, seconded by CM Jorve. Vote 4 Yes 0 No 1 Absent Motion carried.

5. Comments of Code Enforcement Officer

Supervisor Reilly noted that Jake, the Code Enforcement Officer, was not present at the meeting. He read the report.

6. Clerk Reports

The Town Clerk reported the following activity:

- 5 building permits renewal (\$2,425.50)
- 1 recycling fee (\$5.00)
- 1 marriage license (\$17.50)
- 5 CO searches (\$375)
- 1 day marriage license officiant (\$25)
- \$30 in dog license fees
- Total local shares \$3,530

7. Assessor Comments

Assessor Rene DeLeeuw noted that the town is currently at 62% equalization rate. During budget discussions, he estimated that a reassessment would likely be needed in 3-4 years (approximately 2028-2029).

8. Climate Smart Task Force Update - CAC Update

The CAC reported they were working on an 85-page document related to the Natural Resources Inventory that would be presented at the September meeting. Supervisor Reilly suggested that next year the CAC work with the Town Board on reviewing the landfill closure plan, noting that while the town owns the land, the county maintains the facility and assumes liability for it as it is still

considered an active landfill due to ongoing decomposition. The landfill has passed the 30-year mark where closure was initially anticipated.

There was also discussion about well water testing programs available through the Board of Health that could benefit town residents by identifying contaminants like heavy metals, agricultural waste, and bacteria.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON OLD BUSINESS

Motion to adjourn made by CM Moran, seconded by CM Quinn. Motion carried.