

July 15, 2025, Gallatin Town Board Meeting Minutes

CALL TO ORDER/ PLEDGE TO FLAG

Supervisor Reilly called the Gallatin Town Board meeting for July 15, 2025, to order and led the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

ROLL CALL

- Supervisor Reilly: Present
- Council Member Jeff Jorve: Present
- Council Member Sara McGhee: Absent
- Council Member Michael Moran: Present
- Council Member Dan Quinn: Present

NEW BUSINESS SECTION 2025

1. Fire Commission Recognition Ceremony

Supervisor Reilly welcomed the fire chiefs Kirk Mizgier and Al Sardaro from the Milan Fire Company and spoke about the importance of recognizing emergency personnel. He noted that in recent years, Gallatin has experienced more structural fires than in his first 10-12 years as supervisor. He emphasized that while it's not rare for emergency personnel to be involved in life-saving missions, it is unusual for a citizen passing by to stop and put their life in danger to save a Gallatin resident.

Fire Chief Kurt Mezgier introduced himself. Assistant Chief Sardaro recounted the events of April 25th when Columbia County 911 received numerous calls for a house fire on Jackson Corners Rd in Gallatin. Fire departments from Milan, Livingston, and Pine Plains were dispatched. Prior to the fire department's arrival, a passing motorist had forcibly entered the building and removed an elderly lady and her dog from the residence. No occupants were injured, though one firefighter was transported to Northern Dutchess Hospital for minor injuries and later released.

The fire chiefs presented a plaque to Jeffrey Higham in recognition of his courageous actions on April 25, 2025, when he entered a burning residence and safely evacuated the elderly occupant and her dog. Chief Kurt Mitzger remarked that while firefighters are equipped with protective gear when entering fires, Jeffrey acted in street clothes, making his actions even more remarkable.

2. Update on Fire Commission Dissolution Issue

Supervisor Reilly provided an update on the fire commission issue that has been discussed for several months. He reported that former board member Jeff Galm has recruited three emergency personnel who are volunteering to take on fire commissioner roles if the current fire commission were to step down, in the event that the town board declines their request to dissolve. Additionally, one towns person has expressed interest, which Supervisor Reilly felt would be advantageous for both liaison purposes and independent public budgets and contracts.

Council Member Moran discussed the dissolution, recalling that during a previous meeting with former Town Councilmember and Taghkanic Fire Fighter Donald Coons, there seemed to be some potential favorable aspects to dissolution.

Supervisor Reilly explained that his main concerns were two-fold: first, the budgeting and tax issue with the 2% cap and loss of refunds; and second, the disparity among Gallatin residents in fire tax rates, for example with some paying 50 cents and others paying \$1.30 for the same fire protection services, despite all fire companies responding to every call.

Council Member Moran noted that if dissolution occurred, properties would be taxed differently based on which fire district they were in, which is not currently an issue. The board generally seemed to favor declining any request for dissolution if they have enough people willing to serve as commissioners.

Supervisor Reilly agreed to reach out to the fire commission to clarify questions and inform them that the board is leaning toward not accepting dissolution.

3. Meeting with Town Attorney - Zoning Overview with Board Q&A - Mtg. One

Town Attorney Andy Howard met with the board to discuss redrafting the town's zoning laws. Supervisor Reilly mentioned that there is a March 2026 deadline for this work, with the deadline for the \$10,000 Hudson River Valley Greenway Grant.

Attorney Howard noted he had met with the planning board chairman to understand what is happening in real-time. He explained that while he would draft language based on the board's input, it would be the town's zoning law and would likely need revisions before being finalized.

The board discussed several key zoning topics:

Short Term Rentals (STRs): Attorney Howard outlined that STR regulations involve balancing regulation, administration, and enforcement. He noted that many towns handle administration through the code enforcement officer, similar to a unified solar permit process, while others require planning board review.

Supervisor Reilly reported there are currently 42 active STRs registered in the town, down from 68 previously identified. The county is now handling registration and tax collection, with property owners having until September to come into conformity.

The board discussed:

- Implementing an annual fee rather than one-time registration
- Having the fee be uniform regardless of property size or rental income
- Requiring safety measures similar to bed and breakfast regulations
- Requiring either an on-site manager or a Gallatin resident as caretaker who could respond quickly to issues, or a manager in close proximity.
- Creating a "good neighbor" rule book that would need to be posted at all STRs.
- Maintaining both STR regulations and the existing bed and breakfast laws, with B&Bs potentially being exempt from the annual STR fee

Floating Commercial Industrial Districts (FCIDs): Attorney Howard noted that the current FCID process is onerous and may discourage small-scale and entrepreneurial development. He suggested:

- Potentially preserving the FCID concept for truly industrial uses would require spot zoning.
- Moving many commercial uses from FCID to special use permits with specific standards.
- Streamlining the process to encourage appropriate business development in town

Council Member Moran advocated for focusing on the impacts of businesses rather than their types, suggesting they categorize businesses as low, medium, or high impact with different approval requirements for each.

Zoning Districts and Housing Density: The board discussed whether the current zoning districts with 2 and 3-acre minimums are working effectively. While there have not been major subdivision applications in decades, some board members questioned whether this indicates success or if it is preventing appropriate development.

The Board discussed that areas outside farmland and contiguous forest corridor could be rezoned for smaller lots, reduced setbacks, and potentially shared septic and wells.

Additional Topics: The board briefly touched on:

- Commercial solar regulations
- Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)
- Forest protection overlays

MONTHLY BUSINESS SECTION

1. Review of June 2025 Minutes for Errors/Clarifications Resolution 2025-28
Approve June 2025 Meeting Minutes and posting of any completed Committee minutes.

Motion CM Moran second CM Jorve
Vote 4 Yes 0 No 1 Absent

2. Bill Review of Non-Recurring items - Resolution 2025-29 approves June 2025 bills for payment.

General	92-120	\$67,622.95
Highway	66-75	\$6,395.37

Motion CM Moran second CM Jorve
Vote 4 Yes 0 No 1 Absent

3. Acceptance of Monthly Financial Report Resolution 2025-30 approves June 2025 Financial reports.

Motion CM Quinn second CM Moran
Vote 4 Yes 0 No 1 Absent

4. Comments of Code Enforcement Officer
The Code Enforcement Officer reported 9 building permits for June. Total permits for the year to date were 39, with no new homes, 2 certificates of occupancy, 1 certificate of compliance for a garage, and 13 site inspections performed.
5. Highway Superintendent Comments/Report
The Highway Department completed a second round of roadside mowing, improving line of sight issues at many intersections. Under shared services, they were in Ancram for two days. It was reported that Mill Hill Road temporary bridge has been installed, while Route 7 culvert replacement remains under construction.
6. Clerk Reports
The Clerk reported one demolition permit, one marriage license, one certificate of occupancy search, and building permits totaling \$5,292.00 Dog licensing brought in \$45.50. The 2025 tax collection closed, there is \$10,280 in penalties, \$90 in notice fees, and \$164 in interest, totaling \$10,554.23. The town achieved a 94% collection rate.
7. Assessor Comments
The Assessor mentioned that there are two Small Claims Assessment Review (SCAR) cases.
8. Supervisors Comments
The town received the 2026 employer contribution retirement bill for 2026 of \$75,055, this is for the 2026 Regular Contributions and the Deficiencies.
9. Climate Smart Task Force Update - CAC Update
The CAC announced the upcoming town picnic on the 26th, reporting they already had 60 RSVPs. Dan Quinn and his brother's band will be playing. They encouraged anyone who wanted to help with grilling or had other skills to offer to volunteer.

The CAC also reported that they had submitted the application for bronze certification for Climate Smart Communities, submitting 120 points out of the 90 required.

MEETING ADJOURNED BY RESOLUTION OF THE GALLATIN TOWN BOARD