

September 16, 2025 Town Board Meeting

Meeting minutes

CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE TO FLAG

The meeting was called to order and recording began.

ROLL CALL

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

NEW BUSINESS SECTION 2025

Presentation by the CAC on NRI and recommendation for Zoning Redraft

Supervisor Reilly informed the board that the CAC (Conservation Advisory Committee) was not attending this meeting.

The CAC requested to be included in the upcoming joint meeting between the planning board, town board, and town attorney regarding zoning. Supervisor Reilly noted that he had forwarded the CAC's draft zoning recommendations to the town attorney for review, though the board had only received the document the previous day.

The board proceeded to discuss the CAC's zoning recommendations in their absence. Council-member Jorve expressed appreciation for the work that went into the document but found the recommendations overly restrictive. He noted concerns about the forest protection overlay district covering a substantial portion of the town, additional wetland protections beyond state and federal requirements, and potential restrictions on private property rights. While acknowledging the importance of preserving Gallatin's natural environment, he questioned whether such extensive restrictions were realistic or wise.

Council-member Moran reflected on the challenge of balancing environmental preservation with housing affordability. He was interested in exploring approaches that would be informative rather than restrictive, suggesting that most property owners would want to preserve natural resources if properly educated about their importance.

Council-member McGhee emphasized the importance of striking a balance between protection and encouraging development. She noted the importance of consulting with the town attorney to ensure the town does not find itself "playing catch up" with zoning issues.

Council-member Quinn agreed that the legal aspects would be key in determining what the town could do to protect the forest while not overly restricting property owners. He expressed concern about imposing new restrictions on longtime property owners who may have had plans for their land.

Supervisor Reilly shared specific concerns about the recommendations, including:

- Preference for the previously discussed migration corridor overlay rather than the broader forest overlay shown in the document.
- The burdensome nature of tree removal permits for clearing small acreage of ¼ acre.
- Questions about doubling ridgeline protection areas.
- Concerns about wetland protections being too restrictive, particularly regarding vernal pools and wet meadows.

The board agreed to discuss these concerns with the CAC.

Budget Draft 2025 walkthrough and setting of Public Meeting

Supervisor Reilly presented the fiscal year 2025-2026 budget draft and highlighted several key changes:

Revenue changes:

- Tax penalties reduced from \$10,000 to \$7,500.
- Interest income projected at \$65,000, down from previous years
- Sales tax revenue projected to be \$340,000, down about 5% from previous year.
- Court revenues adjusted to \$80,000 to reflect the new normal, down from previous budgets of \$120,000.
- Zoning attorney expenses of \$40,000 added from reserves.

Expense considerations:

- Board salaries remained steady, with discussion about potential increases for next month.
- Recommendation for 3% cost of living increases for town employees
- Consideration of adjustments to planning board and ZBA compensation, which has not changed in approximately 20 years.
- State retirement costs reduced with assumption of paying off penalty.
- Town attorney budget of \$10,000 added.

Supervisor Reilly outlined the town's current financial position and proposed reserve allocations:

- Current cash balance of approximately \$2.8 million
- Proposed allocation of \$350,000 for plow truck purchase
- Proposed \$500,000 for building repairs (instead of new construction)

- Proposed \$50,000 for zoning work.
- Proposed \$308,000 to pay off retirement penalty.
- Proposed \$600,000 for highway reserve (for future equipment purchases)
- Proposed \$540,000 for capital building reserve.
- Cash reserve of \$250,000.

Most significantly, Supervisor Reilly proposed returning approximately \$176,000 to taxpayers, which represents the tax increases from 2020-2025 that had been collected for the building project that did not materialize. This would result in approximately a 50% decrease in town taxes for the coming year.

The board generally supported this proposal, with Council-member Moran noting that the town's reserves were healthy enough to accommodate this tax reduction. Council-member Jorve expressed some hesitation about returning money that could be invested but was not opposed to the proposal.

Highway Superintendent offered an alternative suggestion to use some of the highway reserve funds for the plow truck purchase instead of using CHIPS money, which would allow more road repairs to be completed in the coming year.

Motion to set a public hearing for the budget at the October meeting. Moved by:
Council-member Jorve Seconded by: Council-member McGhee Vote: Approved

MONTHLY BUSINESS SECTION

Review of August 2025 Minutes for Errors/Clarifications Resolution 2025-35 Approve
August 2025 Meeting Minutes and posting of any completed Committee minutes
Motion Councilmember Jorve
Second Councilmember McGhee
Vote 5 Yes 0 No

.Bill Review of Non-Recurring items - Resolution 2025-36 approves August 2025 bills for payment.

General	132-141	\$4,729.56
Highway	91-98	\$3,887.54

Motion Councilmember Moran
Second Councilmember Jorve
Vote 5 Yes 0 No

Acceptance of Monthly Financial Report Resolution 2025-37 approves August 2025
Financial reports
Motion Councilmember Jorve
Second Councilmember McGhee
Vote 5 Yes 0 No

Highway Superintendent Comments/Report

Highway Superintendent reported that the department had finished cleanup from the September 9th windstorm and rainstorm. The annual mowing of the cemetery on County

Route 8 had been completed, and the department had been trimming brush around bridges. They also completed roadside mowing. Under shared services, one truck in Copake for three days and another truck in Ancram for two days.

Supervisor Reilly provided an update on the bridge projects, noting that according to the county, they were still on schedule for late October completion. He indicated that the goal was to have the bridge open by Thanksgiving at the latest.

Code Enforcement Officer

Building permits for the month included four permits: a heat pump, two decks, and a carport.

Supervisor Reilly noted that the town was still at zero new houses for 2025, he planned to compare with other towns in the county.

Clerk Reports

The Town Clerk reported the following receipts:

- \$104 in building permit renewals
- \$25 in public notices
- \$50 in certified copies
- \$450 in CO searches
- \$50 in driveway permits.
- \$280 in building permits
- \$250 in recreation fees
- \$22.50 in dog licensing Total: local share \$1,231

Assessor Comments

The Assessor reported on two small claims reviews that had been negotiated rather than going to hearing. One property assessment was reduced by \$12,400 and another by \$17,200, resulting in tax revenue losses to the town of \$14 and \$20, respectively.

MEETING ADJOURNED BY RESOLUTION OF THE GALLATIN TOWN BOARD

Motion to adjourn. Moved by: Council-member Moran Seconded by: Council-member Jorve

Vote 5 Yes 0 No