

Town of Gilsum
PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
September 12, 2024

Board Present: Vicki Ayer, Chair; Brian Bazarnicki, *Ex Officio*; Bill Whyte, Member; Tom Julius, Member; and Carol Ogilvie, Alternate Member

Present over Zoom: None

Also Present: Eric Zablowsky

CTO: Chair Ayers called the meeting to order at 7:05 P.M.

Vicki appointed Carol to sit as a full member for this meeting.

I. Minutes

Vicki distributed the minutes of May 28, 2024 Site Visit to St. Pierre, June 13, 2024, and July 11, 2024 and asked if anyone had comments or changes.

Motion by Tom Julius/seconded by Vicki Ayers to approve May 28, 2024 minutes as written, with all in favor.

Motion by Tom Julius/seconded by Brian Bazarnicki to approve June 13, 2024 minutes as written, with all in favor.

Motion by Tom Julius/seconded by Bill Whyte to approve July 11, 2024 minutes as written, with all in favor.

II. Public Comment

Eric Zablowsky introduced himself to the Board and stated that he would like to discuss a concern of his. He is a member of the Zoning Board, but his concerns are as a citizen. His concern is with development in town, whether it is land clearing or building construction. He has a strong land use ethic, and watching the logging that is going on leads him to think about long-term, sustainable, ecological aspects of development. He would like to see good, basic, building and land development ethics in place. He thinks the building he sees is of poor quality. What can the Town do?

Vicki said that the planning board has site plan review that can mandate certain things, but not everything. Tom pointed out that the planning board, the select board, the conservation commission, and the building inspector all have oversight over certain things. If an application meets the ordinances, the planning board approves it. But ordinances can be changed at Town Meeting.

Bill stated that Eric has a vision, and how Gilsum looks in the future depends on the residents' vision as expressed in the master plan. He suggested that Eric look at Gilsum and other towns' master plans to see if any have visions that align with his vision on the issue of sustainability and ecological health

Carol pointed out the site plan review, subdivision, and excavation regulations can be amended to strengthen the landscaping requirements that would address some of Eric's concerns about invasive species and other plantings.

Tom spoke to the citizen planner roundtable held the previous evening in Gilsum that provided a forum for planning boards to discuss shared issues. He said that one town has an annual meeting with the planning board and zoning board to discuss zoning issues that need to be addressed.

Vicki said that the planning board is allowed to rely on experts to evaluate an application, and that they could, for example, call on Eric for his advice on an application that would relate to his knowledge. Tom pointed out that there is a difference between what is desired and what the planning board can ask for.

The Board thanked Eric for coming in and sharing his thoughts.

III. Reclamation of Excavation Site on Map 409 Lot 10

Vicki drafted a letter to document the closure the pit. The letter is intended to satisfy a requirement of the bonding company that there be documentation that the pit is officially closed. Vicki had photos of the site before the reclamation and after Mr. St. Pierre completed the reclamation.

On a motion by Tom Julius/seconded by Bill Whyte, the Board voted to accept the reclamation plan provided by Mr. St. Pierre in accordance with RSA155-E:5, with all in favor except Brian Bazarnicki, who abstained.

On a motion by Bill Whyte/seconded by Tom Julius, the Board voted to release the bond associated with the St. Pierre operation, with all in favor except Brian Bazarnicki, who abstained.

IV. Update on Potential Housing Proposal for 268 Route 10, Map 405 Lot 24

Vicki reported that the plan to have multi-family housing on this lot is possibly changing to building a duplex. The owner will keep the planning board updated as plans are finalized. [Note: multi-family would require a variance and then site plan review by the planning board; a duplex would not need either of these.]

V. Continued Steep Slopes Discussion

Tabled to next meeting.

VI. Continued Building Inspector Discussion

The Board continued its discussion on the issue of a building inspector, specifically whether the Town should have a professional inspector and if so, how that would be funded. Bill pointed out that he has been in town for 35 years, and over that time there have been various approaches, but all have been part-time, with the inspector having varying levels of expertise. One thing that has been fairly consistent is that a certificate of occupancy is issued at the completion of the project, but rarely have there been inspections during the course of construction. Maybe the town only needs a “permit official” to confirm compliance with zoning. The town needs a building inspector who is knowledgeable, knows the codes, and has the time. A part-time inspector may not have the time to do the job properly, even if that person has the expertise.

Tom asked Carol what other towns do and she said basically the same as Gilsum. It’s a real issue around the region with small towns. Many still rely on the Selectmen to issue the permits; and for those that do have a designated building inspector, very often that person is not qualified to conduct some of the inspections that require knowledge of the work.

Vicki stated that the state fire marshal will inspect structures that are not one- or two-family dwellings.

Bill said that there is no financial benefit to the town from having an inspector because the fee goes to the inspector. The benefit comes when properties are reassessed after notification by means of the building permit. Therefore, Gilsum shouldn’t have a building inspector.

Vicki asked if this needed further discussion. Bill asked about a process for drafting qualifications for a building inspector; Brian said that is the job of the Select Board. Vicki suggested that someone from the planning board meet with the Select Board for a brief discussion to see what their opinion is.

VII. Continued Noise Ordinance Discussion

Vicki reported that Clem spoke with Carol about this, and she told him that the Select Board can adopt a bylaw for noise, but they first have to get authorization from Town Meeting to do that. Vicki asked Brian if he could put this on the Select Board agenda and give her 15 minutes to discuss this.

VIII. Update on Cell Tower on Old Gilsum Road, Map 405 Lot 9

No updates.

IX. Report on SWRPC Meeting of 9-11-24

Vicki, Tom, Brian, and Carol were at the citizen planner roundtable the previous evening. All agreed the meeting was very productive and informative. Tom noted that he was surprised to hear that several towns are struggling with organizing records. Also, the use of personal emails, no electronic files, fees, and processing of applications are all challenges for some towns.

Vicki spoke to the current situation in Gilsum, with the new Select Board assistant not yet providing the administrative support to the planning board that the previous assistant did.

X. Other Business

Vicki raised the issue of the current lack of administrative support for the planning board. She is doing all of that work now, and since there are fees associated with applications, she is asking whether she can collect the fees since she is doing the work. She also made clear that she is happy to let someone else do this. She provided several examples of work she does outside of the meeting that takes time – emails, phone calls, processing applications, etc.

Carol suggested including a line item in the planning board budget for this. Tom stated that a number of things are true. We all volunteer a certain amount of time, that goes with being a volunteer. There is also other work that needs being done, and if there is no one in the office to do the administrative work and a board member does it, that person should be compensated.

Bill prefers the system of a board member doing the administrative work and being compensated for it, until the administrative assistant is able to do it.

Brian said that Vicki should bring her hours in to the board and get compensated for the hours.

XI. Agenda for Next Meeting – October , 2024

- A. Minutes of September 12, 2024
- B. Continued Steep Slopes Discussion
- C. Continued Building Inspector Discussion
- D. Continued Noise Ordinance Discussion

Motion by Vicki Ayers/seconded by Brian Bazarnicki to adjourn at 9:05 P.M. with all in favor.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Carol Ogilvie

Approved 2024

Victoria Ayers, Chair

Brian Bazarnicki

Heidi Bukoski

Tom Julius

Bill Whyte

Carol Ogilvie