

**Town of Gilsum**  
**PLANNING BOARD**  
**MEETING MINUTES**

**February 13, 2025**

**Board Present:** Vicki Ayer, Chair; Heidi Bukoski, Member; Bill Whyte, Member; Tom Julius, Member, and Brian Bazarnicki, *Ex Officio*

**Present via Zoom:** Carol Ogilvie, Alternate Member

**Also Present:**

**CTO:** Chair Ayers called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

**I. Minutes**

Vicki stated that she did not bring hard copies of the January minutes with her, so this will be tabled to the March meeting.

**II. 2025 Budget Request Update**

Vicki reported that the Budget Committee did not support the Planning Board's request for funding for an assistant. They recommended \$1 or zero. Bruce Murphy of the ZBA said they do their own tasks and it's not a problem for them. Vicki said the planning board can hire their own staff assistance, but of course they need the budget to do that.

Brian stated that the current Select Board assistant is leaving; therefore, he has a proposal to have one staff person in the office part-time who could handle all of the administrative tasks for all of the boards. He spoke to the Budget Committee about this, but did not get a clear answer. His thought is that this position would be paid in the range of \$15 - \$17/hour, depending on experience, with a 90-day probation period.

**III. Variance Application for Solar Array Update**

Vicki reported that the variance has been approved. The applicant stated that it will be approximately six months before they are ready to apply for site plan review with the Planning Board. They need to work with Eversource, and have the wetlands mapped.

Abutters on the east side of route 10 questioned whether the arrays could be higher, but they would need a variance to exceed the town's height limit.

The Board discussed the general procedure, and that the Conservation Commission should have an opportunity to review the plans when they are filed.

**IV. Gordon Excavation**

Heidi stated that she has received notification that the Gordon excavation operation is going to be blasting. The notice she received is to inform her that the blasting will take place; within 10 days she needs to respond that she received the notice; and then she needs to give the testing company permission to access her property to test her well.

The Board discussed what their role should be at this point. It was ultimately decided that the Gordon's need to verify that the list of properties affected is correct; and that they should provide information on

the limits of the blasting area. Vicki will reach out to the Gordons, and see that a notice of the blasting is put on the Town's website.

#### **V. March 2025 Annual Election of Chair**

Vicki reminded everyone that after Town Meeting in March the Board will vote in new officers: Chair and Vice-Chair, and possibly Secretary.

Vicki and Tom's terms are up this year; Heidi in 2026; Bill in 2027; and Brian, as *ex officio*, is up this year.

Vicki said she will find out next month whether she and Tom are going to be re-instated by the Select Board. Tom looks forward to receiving the formal request from the Select Board for a new term. Vicki is leaning toward not continuing on the Board. Heidi said she will finish her term, but does not want to be chair.

Tom stated that, given the upcoming elections, he would like to discuss the future of the planning board. He feels that this board has worked really well together as a team, but acknowledges that the operations have gone well because some of us have been complicit allowing Vicki do a lot of the grunt work. While he is grateful for that, it is not sustainable. Tom does not have the confidence to be chair or capacity in a way that is in the best interests of the town. Vicki has so much knowledge. May be a way to go forward that keeps the team together but doesn't feel like a burden on one person. He would consider re-upping if the other members were willing to take on some of the responsibilities.

Vicki said that the bulk of the work is processing applications and maintaining the records. Heidi suggested that Vicki could "train" the other members so that they can better understand and do more to help. Bill stated that at one time, the board membership was down to three people, and no one wanted to be chair, so they rotated it every meeting. Brian noted that were times when there was no business for the board to attend to.

Tom pointed out that there are two roles of the planning board: one is regulatory and one is planning, and both need attention. If people are finding the position of Chair too daunting, perhaps having co-chairs is an option.

Carol stated that she is willing to take on the application processing. Tom asked if that meant reviewing them for completeness, or handling the mailings and notices, to which Carol said both. Brian noted that if the role of the administrative assistant is expanded, that person would be handling the office tasks.

Vicki stated that this past year was a very busy one, with a number of site plan applications, including the Gordon excavation, which was major.

Tom said that he feels it would be valuable to the town and helpful if both he and Vicki re-up. Vicki will think about what she has heard tonight and come to a decision.

Bill suggested that every month the agenda could include a review of the master plan and determine what action is needed. Tom agreed, saying that the agenda could include both regulatory and planning work.

Tom suggested that the minutes could be shared. Heidi said Vicki could delegate some things, but should keep the things that really matter to her. Bill stated that he like the procedure of a rotating Chair, and asked Carol whether that would work. She stated that in practice, for the meetings, it could, but that for the public there should be one person who can be contacted.

Brian stated that there needs to be more involvement, as the low turnout at Town Meeting illustrates. All agreed that more outreach is needed to get people involved.

#### **VI. SolSmart Discussion**

Vicki reported on a webinar from SolSmart. The SolSmart program has two key parts. First, the program provides no-cost technical assistance to help local governments follow national best practices to expand solar energy use in their jurisdictions. Second, it recognizes and celebrates these communities with SolSmart designations of Platinum, Gold, Silver, and Bronze.

Vicki asked if the other members thought this was worth pursuing, to which everyone said it was; and that the Conservation Commission should be informed of this. Heidi volunteered to fill out the application form.

**VII. Other Business**

- A. Vicki reported on a proposed bill that has to do with building inspections. NHMA is opposed to it. Carol interjected that she had just looked at the NHMA website, and it appears that this bill has been withdrawn.
- B. Tom noted that this is the last meeting before Town Meeting. If questions come up for the planning board, what should we be prepared to answer; likely subjects include:
  - a. Housing
  - b. Solar
  - c. Gordon's Excavation
- C. Vicki read out the task list for the Board: Carol will take on processing applications; Heidi is going to fill out the application for SolSmart.

**VIII. Agenda for Next Meeting – March 13, 2025**

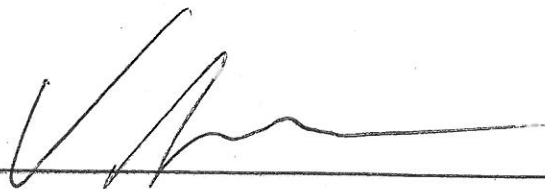
- A. Minutes of February 13, 2025
- B.

*Motion by Tom Julius/seconded by Brian Bazarnicki to adjourn at 8:46 P.M. with all in favor.*

Respectfully Submitted by:

Carol Ogilvie

**Approved March 13, 2025**



3/13/25

Victoria Ayers, Chair

*Brian Bazarnicki*

3/13/25

Brian Bazarnicki

*Tom Julius*

03-13-25

Heidi Bukoski

Tom Julius

Bill Whyte

Carol Ogilvie