

**Town of Gilsum
PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES**

May 8, 2025

Board Present: Tom Julius, Chair; Heidi Bukoski, Member; Bill Whyte, Member; Kevin Barnes, Member; Brian Bazarnicki, *Ex Officio*; and Carol Ogilvie, Alternate Member

CTO: Bill called the meeting to order at 7:10 P.M.

I. Procedures

a. Meeting Minutes of April 10, 2025

The April minutes were distributed and reviewed by the Board.

On a motion by Brian Bazarnicki/seconded by Heidi Bukoski, the minutes of April 10, 2025 were approved, with all in favor.

b. Board Meeting Agenda Structure

Tom stated that he is proposing a structure for all meeting agendas, as submitted for this meeting. He explained his rationale for each of the four primary components of the agenda (Procedures, Regulatory, Planning, and Informational) and said that he sees value in structure, not just for himself, but he thinks it will help the Board be better organized and efficient. He asked if the other members were in agreement with this approach, and all agreed to the suggested agenda format.

c. Administrative Responsibilities

i. Posting of minutes and public notices

Heidi will submit the hard copy of approved minutes to the Town Clerk. Carol will provide electronic copies of draft and approved minutes to the Town Clerk. Carol will take care of public notices that need to go to the newspaper; notices that are posted online and at the Town Offices are TBD.

ii. Availability of Staff Assistance

Brian stated that the new Administrative Assistant will be available for some limited tasks; it is unclear at this point how much time she will have to devote to the Planning Board.

iii. NH DOT Driveway Permitting Letter

Tom reported that he had been forwarded this letter from NH DOT that went to the Select Board, and he is sharing it with the Planning Board. The letter informs the Town that the system for applying for a driveway permit from DOT is moving to online only – unless a person does not have access to the internet, in which case people may fill out a paper application. Even though this does not directly affect the Planning Board, Tom felt it was important information. He noted that the Administrative Assistant and Town Clerk thought that a link to the DOT site should be put on the Planning Board web page, to which all agreed.

d. Need for Editing Access to One Drive

Tom stated that he tried to upload the agenda to One Drive and wasn't able to do it. He asked if anyone on the Board knows how to do that, or who has the administrative access. Tom will contact Vicki to get the permission to access.

Tom also noted that having a printed packet is useful because it helps him stay organized. He asked Brian if the Board has access to a copy machine, and if so, he can come in before each meeting and make copies for the other members. Brian said that possibly Haley, the Administrative Assistant, might also be able to do that.

II. Regulatory

- a. In Process Reviews. There are currently no applications before the Board.

III. Planning

- a. SoSmart NH 2025

i. Report on April 17th Meeting re: Planning & Zoning Powerpoint Slide Deck

Tom stated that the link on the agenda gets to all the information for Gilsun on this project. He also provided a slide in the packet that references the statute that authorizes towns to adopt solar ordinances. Gilsun does not have an ordinance, and there are potential projects coming up. SoSmart has the resources to help us draft an ordinance.

Heidi has been attending the monthly SoSmart remote meetings, and noted that Frank Richter is Gilsun's direct contact. There are office hours via Zoom every Thursday, 12:30 – 1:30 P.M.

Bill described his experience when Badger Balm added a solar array to the property. He believes it is the second largest array in the state. His experience was very positive and simple: he came to the Planning Board to discuss it; there was a site visit with the engineer and abutters; he went to the Planning Board for site plan review, and it was all approved without an ordinance in place. He is not sure what the value is of an ordinance, and why such projects couldn't be approved without a solar ordinance.

The Board discussed the value of having an ordinance, and Tom provided an overview of the information and resources SoSmart has to help towns.

Carol described her experiences working with other towns' solar ordinances and projects. She appreciated Bill's perspective and experience, and said there would be no need for ordinances if everyone were Bill Whyte, because he can be trusted to do the right thing; but sadly, that is not the case with everyone. Not only that, there are so many different types of systems – from on-site residential to utility scale, it is important for the boards as well as applicants to have guidelines. A simple at-home system might need no more than a building permit, whereas a utility-scale system will have more issues and components to deal with.

Tom pointed to the slide from SoSmart in the packet that showed the types of systems and how they could be permitted. Bill asked for examples of other town ordinances; Carol will send some to the members.

Tom asked what the next step should be. The members would like to have Frank Richter attend a meeting, if possible. Heidi will be at the next monthly meeting next week and will invite him.

What is the next step? How does everyone want to proceed? Heidi said next week is the next monthly SoSmart meeting. Heidi will invite Frank to come to the next meeting. Or to a special meeting if the regular meeting time doesn't work for him.

b. Steep Slopes

Tom stated that he added this to the agenda because he sees it as a planning effort. There was no further discussion on this topic.

IV. Informational

a. Sullivan Public Hearing re Gordon Excavation Operation

Heidi reported that she attended the April 1st ZBA meeting in Sullivan regarding a special exception for the Gordon excavation operation that is currently permitted in Keene, but is proposing an expansion that would extend into Sullivan. She provided her perspective on the Gordon operation in Gilsum, to which she is an abutter.

The Sullivan ZBA did not vote that night; they will wait for the Keene approval because without that approval the Sullivan phase would not occur. The reclamation plan would possibly include housing. Sullivan residents were not in favor of that. Heidi thinks this is what they will do in Gilsum, which is why she thinks Gilsum needs a steep slope ordinance.

Tom stated that he sees two issues for Gilsum: (1) a potential housing subdivision; and (2) a steep slope ordinance. We have subdivision regulations, so that protection is already in place. Brian pointed out that this is an approximately 10-acre lot, so that might provide 5 house lots, and Gilsum could use more housing.

Tom asked if the Board wanted to revisit the steep slope issue? Brian asked what is Heidi's concern? She stated that she wants to ensure that buildings are safe and ecological. Carol stated that when the operation is complete, there can be no steep slopes on the land; that is state law that the Town can't waive. Brian pointed out that 90% of the steep slopes in Gilsum are conserved lands, so he questions the value of such an ordinance. Following this discussion, Tom said he thinks there is not more that the planning board can do at this time.

b. Training Opportunities

- i. OPD Spring 2025 (Online) Planning and Zoning Conference. May 10th 8:45 A.M. to 3:30 P.M. All sessions will be recorded and available online after the conference.
- ii. SWRPC Planning Board Peer to Peer Roundtable June 26th 5:30 to 7:30 P.M. at the Chesterfield Town Hall. Connecting cross-town, local Monadnock region volunteer board members with useful resources and building a supportive peer network.
- iii. Vital Communities hosted a webinar on May 7th: Alternative Wastewater Treatment Systems for towns without municipal water and/or sewer systems.

Tom and Carol both attended and described their impressions. Both were somewhat disappointed in the presentation. They were hoping for more specific details on alternative systems, but much of the focus was on process (especially in NH). This was the third in the series on wastewater offered by Vital Communities, a non-profit organization serving the Upper Valley region of Vermont and New Hampshire. Anyone interested in viewing any of the sessions can find them here:

<https://vitalcommunities.org/confronting-the-water-wastewater-conundrum-in-housing-creation/Information>

V. Other Business

a. Bill:

- i. Bill commented on several properties in town that are being improved and upgraded, which is a very positive look for Gilsum.
- ii. Regarding master planning. Saw information from Japan on visioning for the future at 30- and 5-year increments. The outcomes were dramatically different. He thought this could be an interesting exercise when we start master plan work. One option discussed was working on the master plan in small pieces, 10-15 minutes each meeting.

It was noted that there is not an electronic version of the plan, only one hard copy. Carol volunteered to go into the Town Office and scan the plan so that everyone can have an electronic copy.

VI. Next Meeting – June 12, 2025 - Agenda Items

- a. SoSmart Representative.
- b. Review Appendix G in the OPD Planning Board Handbook “How to Be a Good Board Member.” Tom provided a handout with Appendix F and G from the Handbook. He requests that everyone review and discuss at next meeting.

Motion by Brian Bazarnicki/seconded by Heidi Bukoski to adjourn at 8:40 P.M. with all in favor.

Respectfully Submitted by:
Carol Ogilvie

Approved June 12, 2025



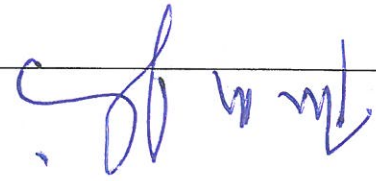
Kevin Barnes



Brian Bazarnicki



Heidi Bukoski



Tom Julius, Chair

Bill Whyte



Carol Ogilvie, Alternate