

VILLAGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, September 18, 2025
(Approved)

1. Call to Order & Roll Call

The September 18, 2025, meeting of the Sister Bay Village Board of Trustees was called to order by President Nate Bell at 11:39 A.M.

Present: President Bell and trustees Louise Howson, Chad Kodanko, Brigid White, Kurt Harff, Patrice Champeau. Denise Bhirdo was absent

Staff: Village Administrator Julie Schmelzer, Utilities Director Megan Barnes, and Administrative Assistant Sarah Bertges

Others: Mary Smythe, Jill Wiebe, Barb Meyer, Laurel McDermott, Tyler Duvall Esq BS53436

2. Approve Agenda

Motion by Howson, second by Harff to approve the agenda. Motion carried – All ayes.

3. Comments, Correspondence and Concerns from the Public

Resident Mary Smythe expressed regret regarding the departure of Administrator Julie Schmelzer. She praised Schmelzer's effectiveness, dedication, and vision during her tenure, noting Schmelzer had secured significant grant funding for village projects. Smythe stated concern about staff turnover and questioned the transparency of the Village Board, referencing multiple executive sessions and questioning where the contract was that the board was to discuss that day under item c. She also expressed support for having separate zoning administrator and village administrator positions.

4. Discussion/Action Items

a. Job Description; Village Administrator/Zoning Administrator

Schmelzer explained that in anticipation of her resignation announcement the previous week, she had approached the Personnel Committee in August to review the administrator job description and update it. The committee forwarded the description to the board. She encouraged the board to separate the zoning role from the administrator role, but added that while separating the roles might be beneficial, it was not currently budgeted.

Howson noted she had reviewed job descriptions from other municipalities for consistency and discussed the variation in administrative structures across Wisconsin municipalities. She explained that some have administrators, some don't, and very few combine administrator and zoning manager roles, emphasizing the importance of the job description rather than title.

Schmelzer added that with the Finance Specialist no longer serving as Finance Director, more budget responsibilities had been added to the administrator job description.

Bell inquired about the two common tracks for village administrators - zoning focused versus finance focused. Schmelzer confirmed this distinction, adding that most administrators specialize in either budget/finance or community development. She explained this specialization typically begins during education and suggested finding someone with both skill sets would likely require an experienced candidate.

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2 Kodanko advocated for separating the positions, arguing the community would be better served by
3 having a community-focused administrator who could be more visible while having a separate
4 zoning specialist.

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6 Schmelzer agreed, explaining that combining roles puts the administrator in the difficult position of
7 being both the "good cop" (administrator) and "bad cop" (zoning administrator), which has damaged
8 the reputation of the position. She also noted the village's zoning code was somewhat cumbersome
9 compared to other municipalities so finding an administrator to do both roles may be difficult.

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11 Howson questioned whether the zoning administrator position would require full-time status, which
12 Schmelzer confirmed it would. Discussion ensued about the workload created by village
13 development projects and enforcement requirements.

14 Kodanko expressed frustration with what he characterized as overly nitpicky code enforcement that
15 consumed staff time and negatively affected community feeling. He suggested the village should
16 focus on improving the code rather than on enforcement.

17 Schmelzer agreed the code needed improvement, noting that many permitted uses required
18 unnecessary plan commission and board approval when they could be handled administratively, but
19 added Sister Bay's code has many good elements, but does require a major overhaul, which the Plan
20 Commission is aware of.

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22 White agreed with the need to revise the code and consider adding a zoning administrator who
23 would work with the new code.

24
25 Bell asked about code interpretation challenges, and Schmelzer explained that the issue wasn't
26 interpretation but rather the requirement for many decisions to move up the approval ladder,
27 increasing time and costs for applicants.

28
29 Harff expressed frustration with specific code requirements, particularly regarding driveways at
30 short-term rentals, and recounted examples of problems in residential neighborhoods.

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32 After extensive discussion about code revision needs, staffing requirements, and administrative
33 workloads, the Board reached consensus to proceed with the job description as written while
34 considering changes to the position at a later date.

35
36 **b. Contract; Innovative Public Advisors; Administrator Recruitment**

37 Howson reviewed the scope of work provided by Innovative Public Advisors (IPA). She detailed their
38 recruitment process, which would include:

- 39
- 40 ● Position assessment surveys completed by trustees and staff
 - 41 ● Review and possible enhancement of the job description
 - 42 ● Development of marketing materials including a profile brochure and custom landing page
 - 43 ● Advertising through multiple channels including WCMA and LinkedIn
 - 44 ● Promotion through IPA's extensive network with targeted outreach to administrator professionals

45 Howson outlined the anticipated timeline with week 1 consisting of a kickoff call and posting the
46 position, and in-person interviews occurring around week 6. She explained the interview process
47 would include separate group interviews with trustees, supervisors, and community leaders, all
48 moderated by Jess Wilde from IPA.

1 She noted that while IPA was a relatively new firm, the individuals had extensive experience and
2 networks in Wisconsin municipal government. Bell added that IPA was confident they could find a
3 qualified candidate within the timeline and offered interim services if needed.

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5 *Motion by Kodanko, second by Champeau to accept the proposal from Innovative Public Advisors for*
6 *administrator recruitment services. Motion carried – All ayes.*

7
8 **c. Contract; Finalize Administrator Agreement**

9 The Board reviewed the administrator agreement as provided via email.

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11 *Motion by White, second by Howson to accept the administrator agreement as signed and*
12 *presented. Motion carried Aye -4 (White, Bell, Champeau, Howson); Nay -2 (Kodanko, Harff).*

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14 **5. Matters to be Placed on a Future Agenda or Referred to a Committee, Official or Employee**
15 **The Board directed the following items to be placed on future agendas:**

- 16 ● For the Plan Commission: To begin exploring options for revising/rewriting the zoning code,
17 including identifying potential consultants and estimating costs
18 ● For the Personnel Committee: To explore alternatives for zoning administration, including
19 potential third-party options

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21 **6. Adjourn**

22 *At 12:48 P.M. a motion was made by Kodanko, second by White to adjourn. Motion carried – All*
23 *ayes.*

24
25 Respectfully submitted,

26
27 Sarah Bertges

28 Administrative Assistant