

Town Board Meeting
Saturday
August 9, 2025
9:00am

This meeting is being held “in-person” in Town Hall. The access information for the meeting has been posted and there are members of the public present virtually.

Members Present: Supervisor Wolf, Councilperson Gansowski, Councilperson Gabaccia, and Councilperson Morningstar. Councilperson Haight joins virtually.

Present: Town Clerk Lynn DeRocha, Attorney Jonathon Tingley (*virtually*)

Call to Order

At 9:00am, Supervisor Wolf calls the Town Board meeting to order. Supervisor Wolf opens the Town Board meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Supervisor Wolf mentions that this meeting is being held in person in Town Hall but we are allowing remote access. This meeting is being recorded and the recording will be posted online within five business days.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Councilperson Gabaccia and seconded by Councilperson Morningstar to waive a further reading and accept the Minutes as written for the Town Board Meeting of July 10, 2025.

Four in favor. Motion approved.

Announcements

Supervisor Wolf announced that beginning at 1:00 p.m. this afternoon, Copake Fire Company No. 1 will host its 100-Year Anniversary. There will be music, food, games, and lots of fun activities for children and adults. Supervisor Wolf urges everyone to come out, enjoy the day, and honor the members of Copake Fire Company No. 1, for their service to our community.

At the Board of Supervisor’s meeting in July, Supervisor Wolf had the honor of presenting a proclamation to Fire Chief John DeRocha and four members of Fire Company No. 1, and, at approximately 3 p.m. this afternoon, Supervisor Wolf and the Town Board members will present the Town’s Proclamation as well.

Supervisor Wolf announced that tonight, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., the Summer Music in the Park concert series continues with “The Tailgate Band”.

The closure of Route 23 in Copake, from County Route 11A (Taconic Hills School campus) to County Route 7 to replace a culvert, continues to present traffic problems: congestion on town roads, speeding cars and trucks. Highway Superintendent Bill Gregory and his staff have placed four radar speed signs – two each on Lakeview Road and Birch Hill Road. At our July meeting, the Town Board passed a

resolution limiting truck weights to 5 tons, with exceptions for local deliveries and work. Sheriff Deputies have monitored our roads and issued tickets, and State Police vehicles have patrolled as well. Our Assemblymember Didi Barrett has written to senior DOT personnel seeking signs announcing that local businesses are open. The Department of Transportation now expects Route 23 to reopen on August 22nd.

Supervisor Wolf attended the opening of the Roeliff Jansen Historical Society's new exhibition, "Sites to Celebrate: Local History Revisited". It is quite remarkable, and the Historical Society will lead Sunday afternoon site visits to the locations featured in the exhibition. You must sign up to attend, and spots are going fast.

Supervisor Wolf announces that the work to install a culvert beneath Valley View Road has been completed, and the road has been fully reopened.

The Greater Capital Region Cancer Services Program offers no-cost breast, and cervical and colorectal cancer screenings for uninsured individuals between the ages of 40 and 64. A flyer with additional information is posted on the website and in Town Hall.

Taconic State Park offers discounts for entry and use of the park facilities, including of course, the beautiful swimming area known as the Ore Pit.

- The Golden Park Program allows NYS residents 62 years or older to enter the park for free, Mondays through Fridays.
- Access Pass – NYS residents with disabilities get free day use and discounted camping and covers the immediate family or group of the pass holder, for one vehicle or campsite or cabin.
- Lifetime Liberty Pass – NYS residents who are veterans, Gold Star parents, spouses or children get free day use and discounted camping.
- Finally: there is the Empire Pass Card \$80 = one year unlimited day use vehicle entry to almost all State parks.

Supervisor Wolf announces that all Town government emails have been converted from Town of Copake.org to TownofCopakeNY.gov. This change has been posted on the website and will also appear in this month's Copake Connection.

Correspondence

From-NYSDOT, denial of speed reduction on Camphill Road

From-CCDOT, information regarding the SR 23 Culvert Replacement

From-Foley Hoag, regarding Hecate's second response to Notice of Incomplete Application

From-Department of State, regarding the Town of Copake Smart Growth Comprehensive Plan

From-Planning Board, regarding appointment

From-Copake Falls Day Committee, regarding 2026 Copake Falls Day

Supervisor's Report

Last year, the Town Board appointed a committee to review and update Copake's 2011 Comprehensive Plan. I want to thank the Committee members for their hard work and dedication to the task of creating a what will be a "blueprint" or "road map" to help plan Copake's future.

The members of the Committee are: Chair Jeanne Mettler, Brian Boom, Brendan Cranna, Peter Doty, Benedict Gedaminski, Edgar Masters, Catherine Mikic, Todd Proper, Stephanie Rabin, Terry Sullivan and Alden Warner. They are working with our wonderful consultant, Margaret Irwin of River Street Planning and Consulting, whom the Town has retained pursuant to a grant from the NYS Department of State. They've been meeting each month since November, and they all have been working hard.

What will Copake be in 10 years?

A Comprehensive Plan should reflect the aspirations of a town's residents and businesses, and the Committee is using a variety of means to learn what people want. It conducted a well-attended kick-off public information meeting on June 28th, at which time Ms. Irwin described the process of gathering information, highlighting two means in particular: focus groups and surveys.

Focus Groups: The Committee has held three focus groups thus far, one with residents and business of Copake Falls, a second with Copake Hamlet, and a third with Copake Lake and West Copake. So far, attendance has been good, thanks to the dual approaches of direct communications (emails and phone calls) with affected residents and businesses, and notices in the Copake Connection and on the town's website. We expect this encouraging trend will continue, as the committee conducts four more sessions, with Businesses and Employers, then Craryville, followed by Not-for-Profits, churches and organizations, and finally First Responders and Health Care. All focus groups will be completed by the end of the year.

Survey: To accomplish this, the Committee established a website, at www.CopakePlansandProjects.com. On the home page, if you click on the link "Take the Survey", you can do just that. I cannot overemphasize the importance of the survey, through which people can let the Committee know what they like and dislike about Copake, what improvements they'd like to see – what they would like the "Land of Rural Charm" to be in 10 years. Your views matter; share them!

This Comprehensive Plan Review process is a public process. The Committee will continue to solicit and review everyone's views. The members will then make recommendations about what the Plan should contain – which recommendations to pass along to the Town Board. By the end of June, 2026, the Committee intends to present to the Town Board a draft of an updated Comprehensive Plan, which will be prepared by Margaret Irwin. There will be public hearings for the Board to receive comments on the Committee's draft. Finally, the Board will consider adopting the draft as Copake's new Comprehensive Plan.

We hope that all Copakeans will let their views be known by participating in this important project.

Solar Update-July 2025

On August 1st, Hecate Energy submitted to the NYS Office of Renewable Energy Siting & Electric Transmission ("ORES") its response to ORES' second Notice of Incomplete Application ("NOIA") for its

Shepherd's Run proposal to construct a 42 MW solar factory on prime farmland and wetlands in Craryville. Hecate's response came little over a month after it received the second Notice.

It seems as though both Hecate and ORES are accelerating the speed of their communications exchanges. This is likely an effort to have a final permit issued to Hecate in time for it to receive generous renewable energy subsidies from the Federal government, before the subsidies are withdrawn.

ORES and Hecate go back and forth on issues of relatively minor consequence, while ignoring the major concerns we have been raising for years: fire safety, compensation for adjacent homeowners, clear-cutting of forested areas, woefully inadequate screening, to name a few.

This Town Board has been consistent in our objections that the proposed site is all wrong, as Shepherd's Run would be sited on prime agricultural land, would encroach on protected wetlands, and would be on land next to the Taconic Hills School Campus.

And, as I reported last month, the fact that Hecate needs ORES to override many, many of Copake's carefully developed zoning regulations to enable the developer to put its 215-acre eyesore along County Route 7 in the heart of beautiful Craryville farmland is proof-positive that the proposed Shepherd's Run site is a completely inappropriate location for a utility-scale solar installation.

Hecate's response to the second NOIA is being reviewed by our attorney for solar matters, Ben Wisniewski.

We'll continue to report on developments as they occur.

Department Heads/Committee Reports

None

Public Forum

The following people spoke in support of Shepherd's Run, Dan Haas

Dan Haas, Copake resident and co-chair of Friends of Solar, advocated for building Shepherd's Run, citing benefits such as \$5 to \$7 million in taxes and a rail trail extension. He emphasized the need for renewables to combat climate change, noting that the state grid aims to be 70% carbon-free by 2030, and highlighted that the site would be less than 1% of Copake's square mileage

Gary Siegel, Chrysler Pond Road resident, an environmental engineer, addressed concerns about the project's impact on water quality, stating that any measurable impact on the Hudson reservoir from Shepherd's Run would be infinitesimally small). He argued that the solar farm would have less impact on water quality than existing farming and fertilizer use, urging to put the water quality issue to rest. Joe Rubin expressed strong support for the solar facility, likening climate change to an "existential threat"

requiring a collective solution, and suggested the project would contribute to a solution they could be proud of, impacting a small fraction of the town's landscape.

Joan Rubin, Hillsdale resident of 40 years, shares Dan Haas's views and strongly supports the solar facility and shares her personal experiences.

Steve Passage, Copake resident, retired engineer, advised the board to focus on negotiating a strong host community agreement with Hecate after the permit is issued. He explained that a host community agreement provides more rights than the permit itself, including the right to sue for violations, and should ideally include a host fee larger than the sum of PILOT payments, with a preference for lower PILOTs to maximize direct town benefits.

Mr. Passage discussed concerns about property values, acknowledging that views might change but asserting that some buyers find renewable energy desirable and that studies suggest house prices would stabilize, potentially even improving due to the possibility of new public green space.

Harry Hussey, Copake resident for eight years, expressed sadness over the potential change to Copake's landscape but emphasized the necessity of the solar project as a small part of the town to address climate change.

Matthew Pilkington, Copake resident, a farmer for 30 years, shared his personal experience with environmental impacts from climate change and argued that local efforts like the solar project are crucial for broader impact, advocating for screening to mitigate visual concerns.

David Rubin, Hillsdale resident, spoke about preserving farmland, presenting a letter from Nancy and Bill Rasweiller, who stated that revenue from the solar project would allow them to keep their small farm operating, repair equipment, and buy supplies, thereby preserving farmland from low-density development.

Bradley Pitts, Copake resident, expresses his support for the Shepherd's Run project.

Lindsay LeBrecht, Copake Lake resident, expresses her deep opposition of the proposed industrial sized solar project.

New Business

a. Designating Roe Jan Ramble as "Town Event"- September 20, 2025

A motion was made by Councilperson Morningstar and seconded by Councilperson Gansowski to designate the Roe Jan Ramble as a "Town Event" to be held on September 20, 2025, at the Copake Memorial Park.

Four in favor. Motion approved.

b. Copake Falls Day 2026-approve date (July 18, 2026) and designate as “Town Event”

A motion was made by Councilperson and seconded by Councilperson to designate the 2026 Copake Falls Day as a “Town Event” to be held on July 18, 2026.

Four in favor. Motion approved.

c. Tax Certiorari Matter-Tax Map 186.-5-3.3, Alpern-Illig

A motion was made by Supervisor Wolf and seconded by Councilperson Morningstar to authorize the town attorney to negotiate and execute settlement paperwork in the tax certiorari matter of Alpern-Illig vs. Assessor by correcting the 2024 and 2025 assessed value for parcel 186.-5-3.3 to the new assessed value of \$924,000.

Four in favor. Motion approved.

Old Business

a. Short-term rentals law update

Councilperson Gansowski reports that when this started, the town had 66 STR rentals; we are now up to 94 STR rentals. There are 4 STR’s that are noncompliant but 2 of those have stated that they are sending in their applications. There are 6 new STR applications.

Supervisor Wolf adds that now that the county began collecting occupancy tax of 4% in July; add that on to the state’s sales tax that started in February-it’s 12% added on to anyone who’s staying in a short-term rental to try and level a playing field with hotels and motels and established businesses and as a consequence of the way the collections are likely to happen, is to switch host compliance companies. This is something that we will probably have to do by the end of the month.

b. Community Preservation Fund

Councilperson Morningstar reports that we are still waiting for the governor to sign. There will be instructions for posting on the governor’s online forum for support. This can be found on the Copake website. A sample letter will be provided in the near future as well as some more information that will get posted about what a Community Preservation Fund is. One of the things you can do with a CPF is when the town purchases land; you can negotiate solar energy on land that actually directly impact the town itself. An advisory group will have to be formed that meets regularly and discusses how to use land that the town could purchase with the CPF most effectively.

Resolutions

Town of Copake

RESOLUTION

No. 22 of August 9, 2025

To Appoint Lynn C. Hotaling for a Six-year Term as Assessor

WHEREAS, New York State Real Property Tax Law section 310 provides that the term of office of assessor shall be six years and that the terms for appointive assessors shall commence on the first day of October, two thousand and twenty five, and each sixth year thereafter, which directs that a term shall commence on October 1, 2025; and

WHEREAS, the Town Board of the Town of Copake desires to re-appoint Lynn C. Hotaling for a full term as assessor,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town Board of the Town of Copake hereby appoints Lynn C. Hotaling as the Town of Copake's sole appointed assessor, for a term of six (6) years, commencing October 1, 2025 and terminating September 30, 2031.

Roll Call Vote: The foregoing Resolution, offered by Councilperson Gabaccia and seconded by Councilperson Gansowski, was duly put to a roll call vote as follows:

Resolution No. 22	Supervisor Wolf	yes
August 9, 2025	Councilperson Gansowski	yes
Copake, New York	Councilperson Gabaccia	yes
	Councilperson Haight	
	Councilperson Morningstar	yes

Lynn M. DeRocha, Town Clerk

“seal”

A motion was made by Councilperson Gansowski and seconded by Councilperson Morningstar to add Resolution No. 23 to the Agenda.

All in favor. Motion approved.

TOWN OF COPEN **RESOLUTION**

Number 23 of August 9, 2025

To Make a Budget Transfer in the 2025 Budget

WHEREAS, the Town Board desires to make a transfer in the 2025 Budget to ensure adequate appropriations are made to fund treatment services on Copake Lake, including algae control; now, therefore

It is hereby RESOLVED, that the Town Board of the Town of Copake hereby authorizes and directs the following budget transfer in the adopted 2025 Final Budget:

<u>Change</u>	<u>Fund/Line</u>	<u>Description of Fund/Line</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Decrease	A917	Unassigned Fund Balance	(\$30,000)
Increase	A87104	Conservation Contractual	\$30,000

Roll Call Vote: The foregoing Resolution, offered by Councilperson Gabaccia and seconded by Councilperson Morningstar, was duly put to a roll call vote as follows:

Resolution No. 23

Dated: August 9, 2025

Copake, New York

Roll Call Vote:	Supervisor Wolf	yes
	Councilperson Gansowski	yes
	Councilperson Gabaccia	yes
	Councilperson Haight	
	Councilperson Morningstar	yes

Lynn M. DeRocha, Town Clerk

(seal)

Appointments

Supervisor Wolf and the Town Board agree to advertise for the two vacancies on the Ethics Board.

A motion was made by Councilperson Gansowski and seconded by Councilperson Morningstar to appoint Howard Chezar as a Planning Board member.

Four in favor. Motion approved.

A motion was made by Supervisor Wolf and seconded by Councilperson Gabaccia to appoint Chris Grant as Planning Board Chair.

Four in favor. Motion approved.

Budget-Approval of Budget to Actual Reports and agreement to post

a. Preliminary Budget to Actual Report-August 31, 2025

b. Agreement to post Budget to Actual Report

A motion was made by Councilperson Morningstar and seconded by Councilperson Gansowski to approve and post the budget to actual report for August 31, 2025.

Four in favor. Motion approved.

Councilpersons' Reports

Councilperson Gansowski reports that there has been great attendance at the Park Commissions "Music in the Park". Councilperson Gansowski reports that he checked on Copake Lake and that's doing really well.

Public Forum

Matthew Pilkington, Copake resident, suggests lowering the speed limit on Copake Lake Road from 30mph to 25mph.

Approval of Bills

Done

Executive Session

None

Next Meeting Date

Thursday, October 9, 2025, 7:00pm

Adjournment

A motion was made by Councilperson Gansowski and seconded by Councilperson Gabaccia to adjourn the meeting.

All in favor. Motion approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn M. DeRocha
Town Clerk