

Town Board Meeting
Thursday
September 11, 2025
7:00pm

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, Councilperson Morningstar and Councilperson Haight.

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

Call to Order

At 7:00pm, 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 Saturday, August 9, 2025, subject to corrections of page six regarding Copake Falls Day.

All in favor. Motion approved.

Announcements

Supervisor Wolf announces the following:

Columbia County Hazardous Waste Collection Day –Saturday, September 13th, from 8 a.m. – noon, 50 Grandinetti Drive, Ghent, which is the County’s Fire Training Center - see posted flyer for a list of what you can dispose of and what you can’t

Assemblymember Didi Barrett will hold “open office” hours – she will meet with constituents on Monday, September 15th from 11:30 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. at Zinnia’s Dinette on Rte. 23 in Craryville

K.I.S.S. (Keep Seniors Identities Safe) – sponsored by the Columbia County Clerk, now until September 18th – documents with identifying information that you no longer need can be brought to Town Hall for shredding

Mental Health Matters: Building a Community of Support – Thursday, September 18th, from 6 to 7:30 p.m.at the Copake Grange. Discuss mental health issues and breaking the stigma, explore ways to

reduce stress. Program is in collaboration with the founder and clinical director of Interactive Consulting and Psychological Services, Columbia Memorial Health, and the National Alliance on Mental Health. Free to attend, buffet dinner included.

Square Dance & Ice Cream Social – Saturday, September 27th, from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.. Square dance caller, live fiddle music, food from Aloha Tacos and all you can eat ice cream. Tickets at the door: \$25 for adults; \$10 for children under 12

Autumn in the Park - Saturday, October 11th, from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. – at Taconic State Park, 253 SR 344. Free admission. Activities include pumpkin painting, face painting, corn hole, kid's crafts, live animal show, food truck, and other activities. Call Park office for info: 518-329-3993

Trunk or Treat and Cruise, “Get Spooky” – Saturday, October 18th, from 4 p.m. – 6 p.m.
At TSP in Copake Falls – see flyer

Halloween Trunk or Treat – On Saturday, October 25th, the Park Commission invites everyone to this fun, annual event, held in the Memorial Park parking lot. Lot opens at 2; “trunk or treating” from 3- 4 p.m. It's always well attended, so reserve your spot. Phone numbers are on the flyer posted in Town Hall and online.

Two surveys to fill out:

- (1) Comprehensive Plan Committee's survey – let us know what you would like Copake to do and to be over the next ten years, very important to help shape Copake's blueprint for the future
- (2) County Office for the Aging – is seeking information from people 60 years and older, so the County can plan for needed services going forward, the information is posted on the Town websites. QR codes for each survey are on cards at the podium where you pick up agendas for tonight's meeting

Correspondence

From-Steve Passage, comments concerning the Hecate Solar Project

From-New York Municipal Empowerment Foundation, invitation to NYMEF Golf Fundraiser

From-NYS Homes and Community Renewal, letter regarding Pro-Housing Community status

From-NYS Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, letter regarding grant program funding

Supervisor's Report

We are in the midst of developing the town's 2026 budget, and I want to emphasize the importance of input from community residents.

In case anyone wonders whether the town board actually listens to recommendations from Copakeans, let me give you an example that proves the point. Last year we applied to the NY State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation for a grant to make improvements to Copake Memorial Park. We

proposed reconstruction of the tennis and basketball courts, and construction of a pathway around the perimeter of the park to provide a safe, off-street place for walkers and joggers to exercise, and for young children to ride tricycles and bicycles.

We recently learned that Copake did not receive the grant, but that is not the end of the story. In our application package, we included almost 100 letters and emails from residents who urged the state to give Copake the grant funds we were requesting. Overwhelmingly, the project residents most favored was the creation of a perimeter pathway. We have heard you. It is our intention to include in the 2026 budget funds to construct a new, safe, perimeter park pathway.

This board listens to the wishes and suggestions of you, our constituents. If you have in mind a project to improve Copake, let us know. All serious suggestions will receive serious consideration.

And, if there is no room in the 2026 budget to fund your suggestion, there is always 2027!

Solar Update-July 2025

The NYS Office of Renewable Energy Siting & Electric Transmission (ORES) continues to review Hecate Energy's response to ORES' second Notice of Incomplete Application (OIA) for its Shepherd's Run proposal to construct a 42- megawatt solar factory on prime farmland and wetlands in Craryville. As we wait to see whether ORES will issue a 3rd notice or grant Hecate a draft permit, we will continue to press our major concerns about the proposal, which include woefully inadequate screening with saplings instead of mature trees, lack of compensation for adjacent homeowners, clear-cutting of forested areas, and fire safety. Project components would be adjacent to the Taconic Hills School campus. There are no evacuation plans for the 1400 students, teachers, and staff; an access road to other areas of the proposed project crosses a stream, goes through wetlands, and is too narrow to permit passage of a fire truck should a fire occur.

Since this began, we've repeatedly pointed out that the proposed site is all wrong. The proof is in the numbers. To construct its solar facility, Hecate needs ORES to waive compliance with 16 provisions of local law. By comparison, ORES records show that:

- A 160 MW project, *almost 4 times the size of Shepherd's Run*, needs 8 waivers (Yellow Barn)
- A 250 MW project, *almost 6 times larger*, project needs 11 (Mill Point)
- Another 250 MW project needs no waivers (Fort Covington)
- The closest number to Shepherd's Run is a for a 300 MW proposal, which needs 14 waivers (Flat Rock) – two fewer than Shepherd's Run, even though it would be *7 times the size* of Shepherd's Run.

There is one other interesting development, which may finally convince ORES that Hecate is a bad actor and should not be allowed to do further business in New York State. Hecate has been sued by a lender, which alleges in a lawsuit that the developer defaulted on an \$82 million loan. The lender also claims

that Hecate converted proceeds from collateral it had put up to obtain the loan and pocketed the funds, which, the lender claims, should have gone to the lender.

Department Heads/Committee Reports

Highway Department

A motion was made by Councilperson Gabaccia and seconded by Councilperson Haight to approve and authorize the purchase of a 1989 International Fire Truck for the amount of \$10,000.

All in favor. Motion approved.

Highway Superintendent Gregory asks the board for permission to write an RFP and solicit bids for a tilt deck trailer.

A motion was made by Councilperson Gabaccia and seconded by Councilperson Morningstar to approve the Highway Superintendent to compose a RFP and solicit bids for a tilt deck trailer in the amount of under \$20,000.

All in favor. Motion approved.

Highway Superintendent Gregory asks the board for next year's budget to purchase a 2012 International TANM dump truck in the amount of \$338,000.

A motion was made by Councilperson Haight and seconded by Councilperson Morningstar to approve and authorize the purchase of an Allegiance HS520 dump truck in the amount of \$338,000.

All in favor. Motion approved.

Conservation Advisor Committee

Supervisor Wolf reports on behalf of Chair, Mary Ann Carrick that the Energy audits conducted by NYSERDA have been received, and a meeting will be scheduled to review findings and determine actions to improve energy efficiency at the park and highway buildings. A proposal from New Leaf Eco Landscapes for landscaping the walkway from Church Street parking lot to Empire Road was also received.

Public Forum

Diana Jameson, a member of the park commission, provided an update on the Halloween party planned for the park building. She confirmed that the event, previously approved, will be held from 6 PM to 7 PM, with an assurance that someone will be assigned to lock up the building.

Linda Senk, Copake resident, brought attention to the Roe Jan Ramble event on September 20th.

Linda Sank voiced concerns about Shepherd's Run, specifically mentioning the lawsuit against Hefty for defaulting on an \$82 million loan and questioning their ability to finance the project.

Norma Ramos, Copake resident, expressed concerns about the loss of 40 acres of agricultural land for the solar project, and inquired if the town board had considered meeting with the governor to address the issues.

Lindsay LeBrecht, Copake resident, reflecting on the tragic events of September 11th and a lot of things wrong with this country. Ms. LeBrecht voices her concerns regarding the Hecate project.

New Business

a. Scheduling 2026 budget proceedings

Supervisor Wolf details detailed the schedule for the 2026 budget process, starting with a budget workshop on September 26th at 9 AM, where the public is invited to observe only. A preliminary budget will be submitted to the Town Clerk by September 30th, followed by a public hearing before the October 9th board meeting for community comments. The final budget is planned for approval on November 13th, with a state-mandated adoption deadline of November 20th.

b. Short-term rental host compliance company update

Supervisor Wolf reports that Copake is transitioning from its current short-term rental compliance monitoring firm, Azavar, to Granicus, a county-contracted company. The annual costs are comparable, and Code Enforcement Officer Erin Reese is enthusiastic about Granicus's enhanced services.

A motion was made by Councilperson Gansowski and seconded by Councilperson Gabaccia to authorize the Supervisor to terminate the contract with Azavar and negotiate a contract with Granicus, provided Granicus amends its payment period to 90 days.

All in favor. Motion approved.

c. Establish *ad hoc* committee regarding flood alert system and evacuation routes

Supervisor Wolf states that an *ad hoc* committee is being established to address flood alert systems and evacuation routes. The committee should include members from the fire department, rescue squad, and conservation advisory committee to quickly provide recommendations to the board.

A motion was made by Councilperson Gabaccia and seconded by Councilperson Haight to authorize and *ad hoc* committee to address flood alert systems and evacuation routes.

All in favor. Motion approved.

d. Walkway landscaping proposal from NewLeaf Eco Landscapes

A motion was made by Councilperson Morningstar and seconded by Councilperson Gabaccia authorizing the Supervisor to accept NewLeaf Eco Landscapes proposal on behalf of the town and to enter into a contract for the project outlined in the proposal.

All in favor. Motion approved.

Old Business

a. Short-term rentals law update

Councilperson Gansowski reports that that out of almost 200 potential STR's, only 96 are active, with 76 current permits and 20 needing renewal. Four are non-compliant, and one is in violation. The town's permit fee for short-term rentals is considered too low compared to the rest of the county and will be increased for new and renewing permits starting in May.

b. Community Preservation Fund

Councilperson Morningstar reports that there are no new updates, as they are still gathering support letters to encourage the governor to sign the legislation. They emphasized the importance of demonstrating community support for the fund, noting that once the legislation is signed and a plan adopted, there will be significant work ahead.

Resolutions

TOWN OF COPEN **RESOLUTION**

Number 24 of September 11, 2025

To Adopt the Columbia County Multi-Jurisdiction Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan of August 15, 2025

WHEREAS, the Town Board recognizes the threats that natural hazards pose to the people and property of the Town of Copake; and

WHEREAS, Columbia County has prepared a multi-hazard mitigation plan, hereby known as the Columbia County Multi-Jurisdiction Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan of August 15, 2025, in accordance with the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000; and

WHEREAS the Columbia County Multi-Jurisdiction Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan of August 15, 2025 identifies mitigation goals and actions to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to people and property in the Town of Copake from the impacts of future hazards and disasters; and

WHEREAS adoption by the Town of Copake Town Board demonstrates its commitment to hazard mitigation and to achieving the goals outlined in the Columbia County Multi-Jurisdiction Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan of August 15, 2025; now, therefore

It is hereby RESOLVED, that the Town Board of the Town of Copake hereby adopts the

Columbia County Multi-Jurisdiction Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan of August 15, 2025.

It is hereby further RESOLVED that the Plan may be edited or amended after review by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, but will not require re-adoption thereafter by the Town of Copake.

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

Resolution No. 24
Dated: September 11, 2025
Copake, New York

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

Lynn M. DeRocha, Town Clerk

(seal)

**TOWN OF COPAKE
RESOLUTION**

Number 25 of September 11, 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 that an adequate appropriation is made to fund the Copake Summer Camp fee for a camper; 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	CM2770	Donations in Summer Youth Program Fund	(\$100.00)
Increase	A2390	Summer Rec Sign-Up Fees	\$100.00

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

Resolution No. 25

Dated: September 11, 2025
Copake, New York

Roll Call Vote:

Supervisor Wolf	yes
Councilperson Gansowski	yes
Councilperson Gabaccia	yes
Councilperson Haight	yes
Councilperson Morningstar	yes

Lynn M. DeRocha, Town Clerk

(seal)

Appointments

Supervisor Wolf announces an interim appointment of Bob Callahan to manage the Williams Cemetery, pending record updates. Appointments for the Comprehensive Plan Review Committee are ongoing, with nominations expected before the next board meeting in October.

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 Gabaccia and seconded by Councilperson Haight to approve and post the budget to actual report for August 31, 2025.

All in favor. Motion approved.

Councilpersons' Reports

Councilperson Morningstar announces that CEDAC did not meet yet but the Roe Jan Ramble is scheduled for September 20th.

Councilperson Gabaccia reports that the CAC has been working on the walkway improvement. There were a couple of new applications in the Zoning Department. The HPC is working on a cultural resources survey and how to go about that. They are continuing discussions about the clock and the center of town.

Councilperson Haight reports that there are some new members on the Planning Board, all is good.

Councilperson Gansowski reports of the Halloween /Costume party at the park on October 31st that starts at 5:00pm, costume judging begins at 6pm, sponsored by Clock Tower.

Supervisor Wolf reports that the Comprehensive Plan Review Committee had another focus group with business owners. The next focus group will be Craryville on Monday, October 6th.

Public Forum

Lindsay LeBrecht hopes there will be a tornado warning system in the Multi-Jurisdiction Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan. Ms. LeBrecht has concerns regarding fire safety of the solar panels.

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 Haight to adjourn the meeting.

All in favor. Motion approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn M. DeRocha
Town Clerk