

Public Hearing/Town Board Meeting
Thursday
October 9, 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 Haight, and Councilperson Morningstar

Present: Deputy Town Clerk Liana Jensen, Attorney Jonathon Tingley (*virtually*)

Public Hearing

Supervisor Wolf opens the Public Hearing at 6:45pm regarding the 2026 Preliminary Budget. This Public Hearing is being held in person in Town Hall but we are allowing remote access. This Public Hearing gives the opportunity for the public to comment both in person and virtually. This Public Hearing is being recorded and the recording will be posted online within five business days. This will be considered later in the meeting.

Supervisor Wolf highlights that the 2026 Preliminary Budget aims to provide expected town services without increasing town taxes. Increases include 3-5% salary raises for town hall employees and Highway Department employees (governed by a three year union contract), \$500 increases for town board members, and a proposed increase in the Supervisor's salary from \$14,000 to \$25,000 to attract qualified individuals and work towards a livable wage by 2028. Supervisor Wolf added that he will accept a salary of \$16,000 in 2026, and leave the balance unspent. The budget also allocates \$150,000 for a pathway around Copake Memorial Park, \$30,000 for Copake Lake maintenance, funds for real property data collection, and \$338,000 for a new dump truck for the highway department.

There being no speakers, Supervisor Wolf closed the public hearing at 7:00pm.

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 Haight to waive a further reading and accept the Minutes as written for the Town Board Meeting of September 11, 2025,

and the Special Town Board Meeting of September 26, 2025, subject to corrections of page four regarding the purchase of the International HS520 dump truck.

All in favor. Motion approved.

Announcements

Supervisor Wolf announces that the Roe Jan Ramble was on September 20th. It was a huge turnout, record number of riders, more than 750 participants.

The Granges' square dance and ice cream social was on September 27th, with live music and caller, food from Aloha Tacos, and all you can eat ice cream.

Autumn in the Park will take place this Saturday from 10am until 3pm at Taconic State Park. Free admission.

Trunk or Treat and Cruise, Get Spooky-Sunday, October 18th at Taconic State Park.

Halloween Trunk or Treat- Saturday, October 25th, sponsored by the Copake Park Commission. The lots open at 2pm. Trunk or Treating goes from 3pm until 4pm.

The Copake Park Commission is hosting a Halloween and Costume Party, Friday, October 31st-5pm-7pm at the Copake Memorial Park Building.

Election Day, November 4th-All Copake voting this year and going forward will be held at the Copake Memorial Park Building. The Town Hall will no longer be a polling site. Early voting begins on Saturday, October 25th through Sunday, November 2nd, at the county office building, 401 State Street, Hudson, or at the Martin H. Glenn Municipal Building in Valatie. The hours are from 9am until 5pm each day except for Tuesday and Wednesday, October 28th and 29th when the hours will be from 5:00pm until 8:00pm.

The Park Commission will host a Veterans Day Breakfast on Sunday, November 9th. Veterans eat for free with proof of service. All are welcome; \$15 for adults, \$12 for seniors, and \$10 for children 12 and younger.

Correspondence

From-Office of Renewable Energy, Notice of Complete Application

From-Sensible Solar, press release

From-Roe Jan Community Library, notification regarding proposal of library tax

From-Hilarie Thomas, resignation letter

From-Planning Board, letter regarding the SCOZ local law

From-Park Commission, letter regarding cash advance availability for the Veterans Day breakfast

Supervisor's Report

On Thursday evening, October 9, the Copake Town Board presented the 2026 preliminary budget at a public hearing. The board is proposing to provide in 2026 all of the services to which everyone has been accustomed, and to do so without raising town taxes.

Augmented by federal funds and state grants, this year we've be able to accomplish much and still remain within our budget. Using ARPA funds, we constructed a new Main Street municipal parking lot. A Department of State grant is funding consultant Margaret Irwin's work with the Comprehensive Plan Review Committee. A NYSERDA grant obtained by the Conservation Advisory Committee (CAC) has funded energy audits of the Highway Garage, focusing on upgrading lighting, windows and other elements to make the building more energy efficient. Bids are being solicited, and the upgrades will be paid for with grant funds. From the county's Soil and Water Commission, the CAC obtained a gift of 13 trees that now grace the land on the west side of Town Hall. Thanks go to the Highway Department, with assistance from Bob Callahan, for planting and maintaining them. Landscaping of the walkway between the Church Street lot and Empire Road will be completed within two weeks. The Highway Department has continued its fine work maintaining and improving Copake's roads, including paving Valley View Road, among others. Both the town's tennis court and skateboard park were resurfaced.

2026 should be just as productive. The preliminary budget includes \$150,000 for construction of a perimeter pathway in Copake Memorial Park. Labor provided by the Highway Department will enable us to afford to create this off-the-road, safe pathway for walkers, joggers, dog walkers, families with young children in strollers, and youngsters riding tricycles and bicycles. We will again allocate \$30,000 to support the maintenance of beautiful Copake Lake. Highway Superintendent Bill Gregory will be buying a much-needed new dump truck. And we'll be making the first of three annual payments of about \$12,365 to the county's Real Property Department to engage two data collectors to do residential data verifications at all Copake properties, a step required before a revaluation can be undertaken. Copake's last reval was in 2016, and our equalization rate – 60% – is among the lowest in the county. Town Assessor Lynn Hotaling estimates that complete information needed for a revaluation won't be ready until 2028.

Finally, I hope everyone has many opportunities to spend time outdoors, enjoy the lovely fall colors, and reflect on how fortunate we are to live in such a beautiful place.

Solar Update-October 2025

On September 19, the NYS Office of Renewable Energy Siting and Electric Transmission (ORES) wrote to Hecate Energy and informed it that its application for a siting permit to construct a 42-megawatt solar factory in Craryville had been deemed "complete." The letter noted that state regulations give ORES no more than sixty days to publish for public comment either a draft siting permit or a statement of intent to deny the application. So, no later than mid-November, we will know whether ORES intends to allow Hecate to build Shepherd's Run on more than 200 acres of mostly prime farmland in Craryville.

Two days ago, our attorney received a copy of an email sent to Hecate's attorney by the Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) assigned to the case. The ALJ requested that Hecate's lawyer coordinate dates and location for public hearings with our attorney. This seems peculiar: ORES didn't contact Copake's representative directly, but rather asked Hecate's lawyer to be its emissary to Copake, the

euphemistically-named “host community.” We haven’t yet heard from Hecate’s attorney. How is one to interpret this, other than as further proof that ORES and the developer are working closely together, and excluding Copake from their discussions? This is a discouraging development.

Nonetheless, hope springs eternal. Our attorney informs us that even if ORES were to issue a Notice of Intent to Deny Hecate’s application, the regulations require ORES to conduct public hearings. So, we still don’t know whether ORES is evaluating seriously our longstanding concerns about the proposed project: that plans call only for woefully inadequate screening with saplings instead of mature trees; that Hecate has no plans to provide appropriate compensation for adjacent homeowners whose property values will plummet; that Hecate will clear-cut forested areas; and that fire safety issues have been completely ignored. Project components would be sited adjacent to the Taconic Hills School campus, yet there are no evacuation plans for the 1100 students, teachers, and staff. Furthermore, an access road to other areas of the proposed project crosses a stream, goes through wetlands, and is too narrow to permit the passage of a fire truck should a fire occur.

Surely ORES must understand that Hecate’s need to obtain waivers from 16 of Copake’s local law provisions is proof-positive that the proposed Shepherd’s Run site is horribly inappropriate. All ORES needs to do is compare Hecate’s requests to those of other developers who have requested many fewer waivers for much larger projects. The information is right there on ORES’ website.

If ORES issues a draft permit, it will be choosing to ignore one of the two prongs of the state’s Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, because there can be no doubt: Shepherd’s Run would harm local agriculture and diminish Copake’s outdoor-recreation tourism appeal. It would create only one or two permanent jobs. And the electricity Shepherd’s Run would produce wouldn’t power our homes; it would go into the grid, presumably to points south.

By the November board meeting, we may have a decision from ORES.

Department Heads/Committee Reports

Highway Department Superintendent Gregory previously requested and received permission from the board to write a RFP to solicit bids to purchase a tilt trailer. Three proposals were received, with the lowest bid from Trailers LLC for \$17,217.

A motion was made by Councilperson Gansowski and seconded by Councilperson Haight to accept the bid and purchase a tilt trailer from Trailers LLC in the amount of \$17,217.

All in favor. Motion approved.

Conservation Advisory Committee Report

CAC Chair Mary Ann Carrick reported on the CAC’s progress in utilizing grant funds for projects to improve the highway garage and park building, including lighting upgrades and other energy-related improvements.

Ms. Carrick mentioned a January 31st deadline for submitting plans to NYSDERDA and expressed excitement about the upcoming landscaping of the path from the municipal parking lot to Empire Road.

Public Forum

Lindsey LeBrecht, Copake Lake resident and member of Sensible Solar for Rural New York, addressed the board to reiterate concerns about the proposed Shepherd's Run project's location and emphasized the project's unsuitability due to endangered species and wetlands, urging ORES or the Governor to intervene.

New Business

a. Resignation of Town Justice

Supervisor Wolf announced the resignation of Town Justice Hillary Thomas, effective October 3rd, and the intention to appoint Justice Glenn Schermerhorn to serve the remainder of Ms. Thomas's two-year term, effective January 1st, 2026. Supervisor Wolf mentioned that the 2026 town board would make the appointment, as advised by attorney Jonathan Tingley, and that Justice Schermerhorn would handle both his cases and those of the resigned justice until the end of the year, for which he would be compensated.

A motion was made by Councilperson Gansowski and seconded by Councilperson Gabaccia to approve appropriate compensation for double duty for Justice Schermerhorn until December 31, 2025.

All in favor. Motion approved.

b. Park Commission-Veterans Day breakfast cash advance

Supervisor Wolf states that the Park Commission has requested a \$500 cash advance to offset the anticipated costs of the Veterans Day breakfast on November 9th. This was requested due to the unavailability of a credit card from Walmart.

A motion was made by Councilperson Gabaccia and seconded by Councilperson Gansowski to authorize a \$500 cash advance to offset the anticipated costs of the Veterans Day breakfast on November 9, 2025.

All in favor. Motion approved.

Old Business

a. Short-term rentals law update

Councilperson Gansowski reports that regarding short-term rentals, the town has 79 current and active accounts. Five accounts recently renewed, nine expired, and four are in non-compliance, with efforts underway to address violations.

Supervisor Wolf mentions that negotiations will begin next week to sign a contract with a new firm (Granicus) engaged by the county to handle short-term rentals, which is expected to offer more comprehensive and accessible information.

b. **Community Preservation Fund**

Councilperson Morningstar reports that we are still waiting for the bill to be signed or not signed, which has to happen before the end of the year.

Resolutions

TOWN OF COPAKE

RESOLUTION

Number 26 of October 9, 2025

To Establish Fees Pursuant to Town Code §§ 129-18 and 187-3(E)

WHEREAS, pursuant to Town of Copake Town Code §§ 129-18 and 187-3(E), the Town Board is authorized to establish fees for various permits, inspections, certificates, and other matters;

WHEREAS, the Town Board desires to update its currently established fees with respect to building permits and renewals, demolition permits and renewals, certificates of occupancy/compliance, certificate of occupancy/compliance searches, inspections, short term rental permits, fire inspections, and operating permits, all as set forth on the Town of Copake Fee Schedule annexed hereto; now, therefore,

It is hereby **RESOLVED**, that the Town Board of the Town of Copake, hereby adopts and establishes the Town of Copake Fee Schedule annexed hereto, and

It is hereby **FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Town of Copake Fee Schedule adopted herein shall be deemed to amend those fees applicable only with regard to the items and matters listed thereon, and that all fees relating to items and matters other than those listed on the Town of Copake Fee Schedule adopted herein shall remain unchanged by this resolution.

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

Resolution No. 26
Dated October 9, 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)

October 9, 2025

Fee schedule attached.

Appointments

None

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

a. Preliminary Budget to Actual Report-September 30, 2025

b. Agreement to post Budget to Actual Report

A motion was made by Councilperson Morningstar and seconded by Councilperson Haight to approve and post the budget to actual report for September 30, 2025.

All in favor. Motion approved

Councilpersons' Reports

Councilperson Haight reports that the Planning Board is doing good. The new members are showing up.

Councilperson Gansowski reports that the Park Commission is working on Halloween and Christmas festivities.

Councilperson Gabaccia reports that the ZBA had one public hearing.

Councilperson Gabaccia mentions that Fairview Hospital is expanding their ER services and bringing in an MRI to the Facility.

Councilperson Morningstar reports that CEDAC is planning a joint meeting with the Comprehensive Review Plan Committee on Monday, October 27, 2025 with local businesses that employ over 10 people. There is a new event being planned for August 8, 2026, Rock Around the Block Party. The Roe Jan Ramble had over 750 riders from all over New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and further; raising over \$28,000 in donations for the Harlem Valley Rail Trail.

Public Forum

Mary Ann Carrick, Copake resident, brings attention to the Roe Jan Park and the leash law and rules.

Lindsey LeBrecht also discusses the dog rules.

Approval of Bills

Done

Executive Session

None

Next Meeting Date

Thursday, November 13, 2025, 7:00pm

Adjournment

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

All in favor. Motion approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn M. DeRocha
Town Clerk

TOWN OF COPAKE FEE SCHEDULE EFFECTIVE OCTOBER 9th, 2025		
BUILDING PERMITS		
Residential	\$6/\$1,000.00 cost of construction up to Five Million then \$2/\$1,000.00	minimum of \$50.00
Non-Residential	\$6/\$1,000.00 cost of construction up to Five Million then \$2/\$1,000.00	minimum of \$75.00/maximum \$20,000.00
Accessory Structure (including sign and fence)	\$6/\$1,000.00 cost of construction up to Five Million then \$2/\$1,000.00	minimum of \$50.00/maximum \$20,000.00
Demolition Residential	\$100.00	
Demolition Non-Residential	\$200.00	
Certificate of Occupancy/Compliance	\$50.00 is required for all permits	
Renewal	50% of original Building Permit Fee	
Work Started prior to obtaining a building permit	double the original permit fee	
Certificate of Occupancy/Compliance Inspection for Expired Building Permits	\$125.00 Residential/\$200.00 Non-Residential	
Order to Remedy/Notice of Violation of the Uniform/Energy Code	\$100.00/day	
Order to Remedy/Notice of Violation per Ch. 129 of the Town Code	\$250.00/day	
Order to Remedy/Notice of Violation per Ch. 232 - Town of Copake Zoning Code	\$500.00/day	
CO/TITLE SEARCH		
Residential	\$100.00	
Non-Residential	\$200.00	
Inspection	\$75.00	
SHORT TERM RENTAL		
Annual	\$250.00 EFFECTIVE 5/1/26	
FIRE INSPECTIONS		
Areas of Public Assembly - Annually	\$100.00	
Multiple Dwellings (3 or more dwelling units) - Every 3 Years	\$60.00 - Per Dwelling Unit	
Commercial/Business/Mercantile - Every 3 Years	\$150.00 Per Building or Occupied Space	
OPERATING PERMITS - Mobile Food Truck/Assembly/Temporary Tents		
One Day	\$50.00	
One Week	\$75.00	
One Month	\$125.00	
One Year	\$250.00	