

Town Board Meeting  
Thursday  
December 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, and 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 Gansowski and seconded by Councilperson Morningstar to waive a further reading and accept the Minutes as written for the Town Board Meeting of Thursday, November 13, 2025.

All in favor. Motion approved.

**Announcements**

Supervisor Wolf thanks the Grange, Noel Fair, and the volunteers who decorated the holiday trees, as well as Highway Superintendent Gregory and the Highway Department for setting them up. Thanks also to those who adopted trees.

Supervisor Wolf thanks Vana Hotaling and her team for delivering holiday poinsettias to people who are home-bound, lost a loved one, or need cheer during the holiday season.

The Roeliff Jansen Community Library's annual holiday soup, books, and cookie sale by the Friends of the Library will be held on December 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>, from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

The holiday light parade is on Saturday, December 13<sup>th</sup>, at 5:30 p.m., with participants lining up at the firehouse at 5:00 p.m.

The Grange Open House will be held this Saturday, December 13<sup>th</sup>, from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., featuring cookies, music by the House Band, refreshments, and artisans.

The "Keeping Identities of Seniors Safe" (K.I.S.S.) document shredding program, presented by County Clerk Holly Tanner, is in effect at the Town Hall (in the meeting room) until December 19th, running Monday through Thursday from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and Saturday from 9:00 a.m. until noon.

The Knox Train Reenactment, a ceremony commemorating the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and the passage of Colonel Knox's troops bringing canon from Fort Ticonderoga to Boston will be held on Saturday, January 10th, at 11:30 a.m. at the Hillsdale Firehouse.

An Administrative Law Judge from the Office of Renewable Energy Siting (ORES) will convene public hearings in the town hall on Wednesday, January 21st, and Thursday, January 22nd, at 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. on both days. Virtual hearings are scheduled for Tuesday, January 27th, at 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

### **Correspondence**

From-Grant Langdon, many emails and phone calls

From-Columbia County Chair of Supervisors, Matt Murrell, press release opposing the Shepherd's Run project and calling for Governor Hochul to abide by home rule

From-Park Commission, Holiday Light Parade, notice

From-Columbia County Clerk, Holly Tanner, K.I.S.S. notification

From-Hillsdale, The Knox Train, notification

From- The Grange, Holiday Open House, notification

From-Columbia County Attorney, Draft EMS agreement

From-Howard Chezar, Gray Davis, Letters of Interest for the Planning Board

From-Columbia County Real Property, form requesting reappointment of Alison Adams-Weinberg

### **Supervisor's Report**

As you are probably aware, Copake is in the process of reviewing and updating our Comprehensive Plan, which was adopted in 2011. The Town Board established a Comprehensive Plan Review Committee, which is being ably assisted by our River Street consultant, Margaret Irwin, whose services are being funded by a grant from the Department of State.

The Committee volunteers are working with Margaret to develop a blueprint for Copake's near-term future. Using a variety of methods, they are learning what Copakeans want our Town to be like over the next decade. They have held a community meeting (and will hold another), conducted and are analyzing the results of a survey completed by more than 350 residents, and held focus groups with residents and businesses from Copake, Copake Falls, West Copake, Craryville, and Copake Lake, as well as with

representatives of non-profit groups and first responders. The Committee is expected to present the results of its work to the Town Board by the end of June, 2026. The Board will then consider it for adoption.

As the Board liaison to the Committee, I've been struck by the seriousness and dedication with which the Committee members approach the process. And already, some issues are emerging as critical to Copake's future, one of which is Copake's aging population.

The average age of Copake's population is almost 60. As the population continues to age, more and more residents will no longer be able to drive, and public transportation is so limited as to not be an option for people who need to go to the doctor or a pharmacy or shop or visit friends and neighbors. I mention this now because this looming problem illustrates how a Comprehensive Plan can provide the impetus to finding solutions.

I have been speaking with other nearby Town Supervisors about applying for a grant offered by the State Department of Transportation's Transportation Alternatives Program. I'm hoping we can to establish a three-town network of call-on-demand van services for residents of the Roe Jan area. Of course, the odds of winning a grant are very long, but the rewards could have important benefits for our area.

None of this would even have been a possibility without the work already accomplished by the Comp Plan Committee. I thank the members for their work. And I want to extend a special thanks to Jeanne Mettler, who will be resigning at the end of the year from her position as Chair of the Committee. Her energy and organizational skills have pushed the Committee forward over the past year plus. As you know, on January 1<sup>st</sup> she will become Town Justice Jeanne Metter, thereby continuing her extraordinary public service to Copake. We all wish Jeanne well in her new position.

Lucky for Copake, we have identified an excellent successor for the Committee Chair role, current member Stephanie Rabin. It is the Board's intention to formally appoint Stephanie to be Chair at our Organizational Meeting on January 2, 2026.

### **Solar Update-October 2025**

Supervisor Wolf states that now that the state has given Hecate a draft siting permit for its Shepherd's Run solar factory, it's time to recognize the process for what it is: it's rigged in favor of developers and against local towns.

ORES (Office of Renewable Energy Siting and Transmission) operates pursuant to a law misleadingly called the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act. I say "misleading" because ORES ignores the "Community Protection" part. In all the applications submitted by developers to ORES, it has never granted party status to a town, or, as they hypocritically call towns, "host communities." In our case, ORES has chosen to override sixteen of Copake's zoning regulations, which were carefully crafted and designed to protect the very land upon which Shepherd's Run is supposed to be built.

ORES claims that each regulation is "unduly burdensome," presumably meaning that compliance would cut into Hecate's bottom line, or would make the project unbuildable because the site is mostly on prime agricultural land, wetlands, and streams. ORES refuses to explain its reasoning, writing only that each decision is "(b)ased upon the record in this case." The state has failed to explain why it capitulated

completely to Hecate's demands and ignored Copake's concerns about what a solar factory would do to our town.

The proposed construction site is convenient to Hecate – close to a point of connection to the NYSEG grid, with landowners willing to sacrifice both their neighbors (whose property values will plummet) and Craryville's prime agricultural lands as they pocket Hecate's money – but Shepherd's Run is all wrong for Copake.

The proposed site contains numerous wetlands and streams; ORES will allow the developer to ignore required 100-foot setbacks to protect them. Hecate will be allowed to cut down more than 30 acres of carbon-collecting trees. There's the issue of fire safety. Many solar arrays will be adjacent to the Taconic Hills Central School District campus. Should a fire occur, almost 1100 students, and teachers and staff, would be at risk from toxic smoke and/or fire. Hecate has provided no evacuation plans. In addition, one of the access routes for emergency vehicles goes through wetlands and over a stream, and it is too narrow to accommodate a fire truck.

The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has concluded that five National Registry eligible-properties will be "adversely affected" by the solar factory. ORES has ignored this finding and recommendations made by SHPO. It's one state agency ignoring the other!

Where is the Governor on this? When she learned of community opposition to a bill to expedite creation of a wind farm off Long Beach, Long Island, Governor Hochul vetoed that bill, writing, "It is incumbent on Renewable Energy developers to cultivate and maintain strong ties to their host communities." The last time Hecate met with me or any other Copake official was in March 2024, nineteen months ago. When I spoke recently with the governor's office, I said that Copake must receive the same consideration as did Long Beach.

An ORES administrative law judge will convene public hearings here at Town Hall on January 21 and 22 at 2pm and 6pm. Virtual hearings will be held on January 27. These hearings will be opportunities for Copakeans to speak out – to tell ORES what Shepherd's Run will do to our town. If enough of us do that, maybe the governor finally will hear us and do something.

The Governor needs to respect Home Rule. She needs to veto Shepherd's Run

#### **Department Heads/Committee Reports**

##### **Conservation Advisory Committee Report**

CAC Chair Mary Ann Carrick presented a request to enter into contracts for five projects using the remaining \$53,200 from the Clean Energy Communities Grant, which were the lowest bids obtained through the RFP process. Town Attorney Jon Tingley advised that each project must be approved separately as they are distinct and fall below the competitive bidding threshold.

A motion was made by Councilperson Gabaccia and seconded by Councilperson Gansowski to authorize the Supervisor on behalf of the town to enter into a contract with Luke Electric, as the low bidder, for the replacement of interior and exterior lighting fixtures in the highway garage; this bid includes the cost of equipment, in the amount of \$12,700.

All in favor. Motion approved.

A motion was made by Councilperson Morningstar and seconded by Councilperson Haight to authorize the Supervisor on behalf of the town to enter into a contract with Luke Electric, as the low bidder, to replace interior lighting fixtures in the park building in the amount of \$9,675.

All in favor. Motion approved.

A motion was made by Supervisor Wolf and seconded by Councilperson Morningstar to authorize the Supervisor on behalf of the town to enter into a contract with Residential Specialist Siding and Window, as the low bidder, to replace eight slider type windows in the highway garage in the amount of \$4,980.

All in favor. Motion approved.

A motion was made by Councilperson Gansowski and seconded by Councilperson Haight to authorize the Supervisor on behalf of the town to enter into a contract with Residential Specialist Siding and Window, as the low bidder, for the replacement of seven exterior entrance doors in the highway garage in the amount of \$9,860.

All in favor. Motion approved.

A motion was made by Councilperson Gabaccia and seconded by Councilperson Morningstar to authorize the Supervisor on behalf of the town to enter into a contract with Hudson Valley Doors and Operations, as the low bidder, to replace the weather stripping on six overhead doors at the highway garage in the amount of \$4,195.

All in favor. Motion approved.

Ms. Carrick mentions that \$11,790 in grant funds remain, and the deadline for deliverables has been extended to March 31st.

### **Public Forum**

Lindsay LeBrecht, Copake resident, thanks the board for their continued support against the solar project and mentioned an opinion piece in the Register Star, by Heather of Harrington Fuels on the need to look at other energy sources like propane.

Roberta Roll announced The Grange's Open House on Saturday, December 14<sup>th</sup> from 3:00pm-5:00pm.

### **New Business**

**a. Proposed revisions to SCOZ provisions of Zoning Code**

Postponed until January 2026.

**b. Set date for 2026 Organizational Meeting – January 2, 2026, 9:00am**

The Town Board agrees to set the date for the 2026 Organizational Meeting for Friday, January 2, 2026, at 9:00am.

**c. Approve Dates for the Rock Around the Clock**

A motion was made by Councilperson Morningstar and seconded by Councilperson Gabaccia to approve the date of July 25, 2026, from 5:00pm until 9:00pm, for CEDAC's Rock around the Clock event.

All in favor. Motion approved.

Details to follow at a later date.

**Old Business**

**a. Community Preservation Fund**

Councilperson Morningstar reports about the authorization from the Governor for Copake to create a Community Preservation Fund. Councilperson Morningstar emphasized the need for a public information campaign to ensure the fund passes if it appears on the November ballot, explaining that the CPF would be funded primarily through a real estate transfer tax on homes purchased above the county median, at no cost to current Copake residents. The purpose of the fund is to purchase and protect historic properties and farmlands, giving the town a "seat at the table" in decisions about cherished town areas. Concerns were raised regarding the potential for using eminent domain with CPF funds, which Councilperson Morningstar clarified is for willing sellers, and the board will look into imposing restrictions on how the fund can be used, with Councilperson Morningstar noting that some town supervisors have vowed not to use CPF funds with eminent domain.

**b. Granicus-STR compliance monitoring company**

Supervisor Wolf reports that there has been a virtual meeting with the representative from Granicus, and the Code Enforcement Officer, Erin Reis will be the primary contact.

**Resolutions**

**TOWN OF COPAKE  
RESOLUTION**

**Number 31 of December 11, 2025**

**To Make Budget Transfers in the 2025 Budget**

**WHEREAS**, the Town Board desires to make transfers in the 2025 Budget to ensure that adequate appropriations are made to fund Accounting services, Zoning personnel services, utility services, and contributions to the State Retirement System: now, therefore

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

<u>Change</u>	<u>Fund/Line</u>	<u>Description of Fund/Line</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Decrease	A13214	Bookkeeper Contractual	(\$4,000.00))
Decrease	A917	Unassigned Fund Balance	(\$550.00)
Increase	A13204	Accountant Contractual	\$4,550.00
Decrease	A917	Unassigned Fund Balance	(\$700.00)
Increase	A80101	Zoning Personnel Services	\$700.00
Decrease	A917	Unassigned Fund Balance	(\$800.00)
Increase	A84104	Electric and Power	\$800.00
Decrease	A917	Unassigned Fund Balance	(\$2,575.00)
Increase	A90108	State Retirement System	\$2,575.00

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. 31  
Dated: December 11, 2025  
Copake, New York

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

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Lynn M. DeRocha, Town Clerk

(seal)

### **Appointments**

A motion was made by Councilperson Gabaccia and seconded by Councilperson Gansowski to reappoint Alison Adams-Weinberg to the Board of Assessment Review.

All in favor. Motion approved.

A motion was made by Councilperson Haight and seconded by Councilperson Morningstar to reappoint Jordan Hawver to the Park Commission.

All in favor. Motion approved.

A motion was made by Councilperson Gansowski and seconded by Councilperson Morningstar to reappoint Liana Jensen to the Park Commission.

All in favor. Motion approved.

A motion was made by Councilperson Morningstar and seconded by Councilperson Gabaccia to appoint Howard Chezar to the Planning Board.

All in favor. Motion approved.

A motion was made by Councilperson Haight and seconded by Councilperson Gansowski to appoint Gray Davis to the Planning Board.

All in favor. Motion approved.

A motion was made by Councilperson Gabaccia and seconded by Supervisor Wolf to reappoint Cara Boyle to the Columbia County Environmental Management Council (EMC).

All in favor. Motion approved.

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

#### **a. Preliminary Budget to Actual Report-November 30, 2025**

#### **b. Agreement to post Budget to Actual Report**

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

All in favor. Motion approved

### **Councilpersons' Reports**

Councilperson Haight mentions that the Gary Sinise Foundation is building a house for a wounded veteran in Copake near West Copake.

Councilperson Gansowski reports that Jim's Auto Body and Del's Auto Body is in compliance for the Auto Body Permit.

Councilperson Gabaccia mentions that the ZBA has the usual setbacks and variances matters. The Historic Preservation Committee did not meet.

Councilperson Gabaccia will be judging at the light parade.



Councilperson Gabaccia highlights the Comprehensive Plan Review Committee meeting as an eye-opener regarding issues like preventing the community from becoming a complete retirement town, and confirmed attendance at a two-day training on the Community Preservation Fund.

Councilperson Morningstar mentions CEDAC's Rock Around the Clock event on July 25, 2026, at 5:00pm.

Supervisor Wolf thanks Jeanne Mettler for her work on the Comprehensive Plan Review Committee and announces that Stephanie Rabin will be appointed to the Chair position of the Comprehensive Plan Review Committee.

#### **Public Forum**

None

#### **Approval of Bills**

Done

#### **Executive Session**

None

#### **Next Meeting Date**

Monday, December 29, 2025, 9:00am (Year-End Meeting)

Friday, January 2, 2026 (Organizational Meeting)

Thursday, January 8, 2026

#### **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