

Town Board Meeting  
Thursday  
February 12, 2026  
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: Deputy Town Clerk Liana Jensen, Attorney Jonathon Tingley (*virtually*)

**Public Hearing**

Supervisor Wolf opened the Public Hearing on proposed Local Law No. 1 of 2026 entitled "A Local Law Amending Section 232.10 of the Copake Zoning Code Scenic Corridor Overlay Zone (SCOZ)" at 6:45pm for the purpose of public comment.

**Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

Supervisor Wolf closed the Public Hearing.

**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, January 8, 2026, and for the Special Town Board Meeting of Wednesday, February 4, 2026.

All in favor. Motion approved.

**Announcements**

Supervisor Wolf requests that people with the Flu or illness symptoms who have business at Town Hall are asked not to come inside but to conduct their business through the window outside the front door.

A lengthy information-gathering process will begin next week, which will eventually lead to a revaluation of all Copake properties. Data collectors from the County's Office of Real Property, in coordination with Copake's assessor, will compile information on all properties. The revaluation is not expected to start until sometime in early 2028. This is necessary because Copake has not had a revaluation since 2016, and the town's equalization rate has dropped to 60%, one of the lowest in Columbia County.

Several Grange activities were announced, including a potluck supper and game night, a "Jamming at the Grange" event, a local musicians showcase, and a winter dance party. There will also be an open mic night and a showing of the film *Cinema Paradiso*.

### **Correspondence**

From-Grant Langdon, several calls and emails

From-Administrative Law Judge, email requiring additional information from Hecate

From-Columbia County Planning Board, recommendation letter approving changes to the new "SCOZ" law

From-NYS DOS Codes, Certificate of Compliance

From-Diane Jamieson, letter regarding Park Commission appointments

From- Mary Bradway, Todd Proper, and Peter Bradway, Park Commission letters of interest

From-Terry Sullivan, Park Commission letter of resignation

From-Jeremy Holdridge, Deputy Highway Superintendent, letter of resignation

From-Red Cross, notice of blood shortage

### **Supervisor's Report**

We are in the midst of a cold, difficult winter, but as challenging as we find it to bundle up and go outside in persistently sub-freezing temperatures to shovel snow, clear our paths and driveways, and then go about our lives, most of us wouldn't be able to get very far were it not for the heroic work of the members of Copake's Highway Department.

Copake has 53 miles of town roads that are maintained by our Highway Department. Highway Superintendent Bill Gregory and his staff of seven are on call 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. When called out, eight trucks plow the town roads. On fourteen separate days in January, either the entire crew or several crew members conducted snow and ice removal operations. Whether they were pre-treating roads in anticipation of a storm, dealing with freshly fallen snow during storms, clearing roads in the aftermath of storms or clearing wind-blown drifts, the work went on and on. And it's not done yet. On Monday morning, Bill gave his crew a break. Rather than call them out at 3 a.m., he plowed all of Copake's roads himself...in sub-zero temperature! We all owe a special debt of gratitude to Superintendent Bill Gregory and the staff of the Highway Department. Of course, he'd say they're just doing their jobs, and that's true. But they do it so well and without complaint. This winter, the

persistently frigid temperatures have made those jobs especially challenging. When you see them, be sure to thank them.

A personnel change of note: after eighteen years, Jeremy Holdridge, Copake's Working Foreperson (formerly known as Deputy Superintendent) has resigned to take a position with Corrections at the Columbia County jail. Jeremy has been Bill's number two. He's a talented and really good person. Copake's loss will be Columbia County's gain. Advertising is underway to find someone to fill the vacancy at the Highway Department.

Finally, there's this: winter is not over. Temperatures have risen a bit over the last few days, but there will be more winter weather before spring arrives. Thus far, we've avoided a significant power outages. I want to remind everyone that should there be a power outage, the Park Building will again be Copake's designated warming center and a place where you can charge your phone or computer.

Stay warm!

### **Solar Update-January 2026**

An ORES (NYS Office of Renewable Energy Siting and Transmission) administrative law judge presided over four in-person public comment hearings regarding Hecate's proposed Shepherd's Run solar facility at Copake Town Hall on January 21 and 22. Two virtual hearings took place on January 27. All of the hearings were very well-attended.

Most speakers, but not all, voiced opposition to Shepherd's Run. Our State Senator Michelle Hinchey and our Assemblymember Didi Barrett spoke out in support of Copake and against the proposed project. The chair of the Columbia County Board of Supervisors and ten town supervisors from around the county spoke in favor of Home Rule and against the proposed project, noting that any decision about land use in Copake should be made by the town, not by New York State.

We are seeking from ORES dismissal of Hecate's application or, at a minimum, party status. Our attorney has filed a 76-page Issues Statement and my 23-page Affirmation explaining that Copake needs party status to be able to present evidence and testimony before a judge concerning important, unresolved issues.

ORES never has granted party status to a town targeted for a utility-scale solar factory, but the Shepherd's Run case already has proven to be unique. ORES never before had dismissed a developer's siting application until it threw out Hecate's original 60-megawatt proposal in January 2025. So we continue to believe that anything is possible!

Party status has also been sought by Sensible Solar for Rural New York, Craryville Farms LLC (which owns the 60-acre parcel adjacent to the southern end of the proposed site), and the Birch Hill Road Neighbors Association.

Now we wait. Decisions on party status are due from ORES on February 18.

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

#### **Highway Department**

##### **a. Road materials contract**

A motion was made by Councilperson Gabaccia and seconded by Councilperson Gansowski to accept the bid from Red Wing Properties Inc. for washed sand.

All in favor. Motion approved.

A motion was made by Councilperson Haight and seconded by Councilperson Morningstar to accept the bid from A. Colarusso & Son, Inc. including gravel, blacktop, and other aggregates.

All in favor. Motion approved.

**b. Tree removal contract**

A motion was made by Councilperson Gabaccia and seconded by Councilperson Haight to accept the bid from New England Property Maintenance bid for tree removal.

All in favor. Motion approved.

Highway Superintendent Gregory reports that the lighting and windows are done at the Highway Garage, and the first two doors are in, which has made a noticeable difference. The park building lights are complete as well.

Highway Superintendent Gregory thanked Bill Pitcher from Down & Out Gutters for patching holes in the Town Hall roof at no charge after ice removal.

Highway Superintendent Gregory appoints Brian Edelman as Deputy Highway Superintendent.

Highway Superintendent Gregory has concerns about salt shortage capacity. The next load is not expected for three to four weeks.

**Conservation Advisory Committee**

CAC Chair, Mary Ann Carrick reports that construction funded by their NYSERDA grant, which covered the highway garage and park building, was successfully completed. The CAC is still figuring out how to spend the last \$12,000.

The CAC requested an expenditure of \$100 to screen at the Grange, a conservation film called *The Little Things That Run the World* on Saturday, April 18, 2026, as their Earth Day presentation.

A motion was made by Councilperson Gansowski and seconded by Councilperson Morningstar to approve the expenditure of \$100 to screen a conservation film *The Little Things That Run the World* on Saturday, April 18, 2026, as their Earth Day presentation.

All in favor. Motion approved.

### **Public Forum**

Lindsay LeBrecht, Copake resident, thanks the board and the county supervisors for their unified support in opposing the proposed Shepherd's Run solar project.

The Town Board emphasized that the support from other county supervisors was largely driven by concerns over protecting home rule and agriculture in their own towns.

### **New Business**

#### **a. Agreement for Enhanced Police Services**

A motion was made by Councilperson Gabaccia and seconded by Councilperson Gansowski to authorize the Supervisor to sign the Enhanced Police Services Agreement on behalf of the Town.

All in favor. Motion approved.

#### **b. Commendation for Gabriella Coons upon achieving Eagle Scout status**

Supervisor Wolf requested board approval to prepare a commendation document, such as a signed plaque, for Gabriella Coons, a 14-year-old Copake resident and the first female Eagle Scout in Columbia County. Her Eagle Scout project was completing a gazebo honoring veterans at Our Lady of Hope Catholic Church in Copake Falls.

A motion was made by Councilperson Haight and seconded by Councilperson Morningstar to prepare a commendation document for Gabriella Coons, the first female Eagle Scout in Columbia County.

All in favor. Motion approved.

### **Old Business**

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

The board discussed proposed revisions to the SCOZ law, with input from the Planning Board and Land Use Attorney Ken Dow. Key revisions clarify that subsequent development on major subdivision parcels is subject to SCOZ review and, broaden the scope of the law to include development requiring special use permits, site plan variances, and certain accessory dwelling units.

The proposed law establishes the rural design and sighting standards throughout the SCOZ zone, applying them to mixed-use, hamlet, and highway business districts. Restrictions on clear-cutting were established to prohibit clear-cutting in any contiguous area exceeding 15,000 square feet (about a third of an acre), though additional clearance may be allowed for larger parcels related to accessory activities. Clear-cutting for a primary residence driveway, if not exceeding 20 feet in width, would not count against the limitation.

The discussion shifted to the need to address ridge line construction and development, which is currently not covered in the SCOZ law or the existing code. This issue is complex and requires determining the geographic applicability (e.g., above 1,000 feet above sea level), the necessary perspective for evaluation (e.g., major public roads), and how restrictions will be administered and enforced.

Edgar Masters confirmed that the Planning Board is seeking ridgeline protection only within the SCOZ zone, primarily covering the hills east of Route 22 and Tom's Hill. Mr. Masters suggested that the approach should be simpler than comprehensive mapping to support the preservation of the SCOZ.

The board confirmed that the Planning Board, with assistance from the Land Use Attorney, needs to resolve the remaining issues, including the ridgeline protection proposal, before submitting a formal recommendation for changes to the local law.

The timing of a public hearing depends on when the Planning Board can provide the final, complete recommendation to the Town Board.

**b. Proposed rules regarding rentals of Park Building**

The Town Board discussion on the park building rules included a necessary correction regarding the stated building capacity on a plaque in the town hall, as the hall does not accommodate the listed 295 people, to be determined.

Councilperson Gansowski recommended to an increase in the rental price for residents from \$100 to \$150 and for non-residents from \$150 to \$250 due to inflation and the addition of a new cleaner. It was already agreed to keep the fees the same at the last meeting.

Councilperson Gansowski recommends that adding, "or drugs" to the rule that states "no alcohol or drugs shall be permitted on the premises", on Rule No. 4.

He also suggested adding a clause under number eight stating, "all appliances shall be cleaned after use," to ensure users do not leave a mess after using the microwave, range, and oven for reheating previously prepared foods.

The proposed change for item D involved changing the rule from only "sweeping the floor in the kitchen" to "cleaning," which includes mopping and sweeping, to ensure all spills are fully cleaned up.

The rules for garbage removal were debated, with the speaker proposing changing the rule from leaving bagged garbage for the cleaner to removing the bagged garbage from the park premises, which was viewed by Supervisor Wolf as an undue burden and a liability issue for the town. This item will not change for now.

Under section G, Councilperson Gansowski proposed that renters should be responsible for "cleaning all the tables and chairs and returning" them, instead of leaving this task for the

cleaner. The board concluded this section of the discussion by agreeing to finalize and post the use rules with all the changes discussed.

The Town Board agrees on the final changes which will be posted to the website.

**Resolutions**

**TOWN OF COPAKE  
RESOLUTION  
Number 5 of February 12, 2026**

**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 personnel services for: Court Clerk, Assessor, Town Clerk, Registrar, Code Enforcement Officer, Highway Superintendent, and Park Superintendent; Law Contractual (Land Use); Historian Contractual; and, Utility services: 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	A19904	Contingency	(\$104.59)
Increase	A1110.1	Court Clerk Personnel Services	\$104.59
Decrease	A19904	Contingency	(\$128.95)
Increase	A13551	Assessor Personnel Services	\$128.95
Decrease	A19904	Contingency	(\$189.12)
Increase	A14101	Clerk Personnel Services	\$189.12
Decrease	A19904	Contingency	(\$2.71)
Increase	A40201	Registrar of Vital Personnel	\$2.71
Decrease	A19904	Contingency	(\$135.04)
Increase	A36201	Safety Ins Personnel Services	\$135.04
Decrease	A19904	Contingency	(\$290.66)
Increase	A50101	Street Admin Personnel Services	\$290.66
Decrease	A19904	Contingency	(\$32.56)
Increase	A71101	Parks Personnel Services	\$32.56

Decrease	A14204	Law Contractual – General	(\$1855.34)
Increase	A14204	Law Contractual – Land Use	\$1855.34
Decrease	A75204	Historian Property Contractual	(\$9.65)
Increase	A75104	Historian Contractual	\$9.65
Decrease	A917	Unassigned Fund Balance	(\$174.10)
Increase	A84104	Electric and Power	\$174.10

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

Resolution No. 5  
Dated: February 12, 2026  
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)

**TOWN OF COPAKE  
REVISED  
RESOLUTION  
Number 6 of February 12, 2026**

**To Authorize Electronic Payment of NYSEG Invoices in Advance of Audit**

**WHEREAS**, the Town of Copake desires to eliminate late fees incurred due to delays in the processing of payments of New York State Electric & Gas (NYSEG) electricity invoices by changing procedures for payment of NYSEG invoices only, and

**WHEREAS**, the Town Accountant recommends that the Town pay NYSEG Invoices electronically in advance of audit: now, therefore

It is hereby **RESOLVED**, that pursuant to Town Law § 118 (2), the Town Board of the Town of Copake hereby authorizes the Town Supervisor and/or his designee to pay NYSEG Invoices electronically in advance of town board audit thereof, with such claims to be presented at the next regular meeting for audit; and

It is further **RESOLVED** that the Town Board hereby directs the Town Supervisor and his/or designee(s), in consultation with the Accountant, to develop and implement auditable recordkeeping procedures for the electronic payment of NYSEG Invoices in advance of audit authorized by this Resolution.

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. 6

Dated: February 12, 2026

Copake, New York

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

**Appointments**

A motion was made by Councilperson Morningstar and seconded by Councilperson Gabaccia to appoint Mary Bradway, Peter Bradway, and Todd Proper to the Park Commission.

All in favor. Motion approved.

A motion was made by Supervisor Wolf and seconded by Councilperson Gabaccia to appoint Diana Jamieson as Chair of the Park Commission.

All in favor. Motion approved.

The board will continue to advertise for the vacancy that was created at the Highway Department.

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

**a. Preliminary Budget to Actual Report-January 31, 2026**

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

A motion was made by Councilperson Haight and seconded by Councilperson Morningstar to approve and post the budget to actual report January 31, 2026.

All in favor. Motion approved

**Councilpersons' Reports**

Councilperson Haight has nothing to report.

Councilperson Gansowski reported on dead geese found at the fire pond, which were covered by snow, and noted that five geese are still alive in the small opening of the pond. The cause of death was determined to be bird influenza, or bird flu, after speaking with a biologist from the DEC, and they plan to have Mr. Gregory remove the dead birds, which should be double-bagged and disposed of in any park garbage can.

Councilperson Gansowski acknowledged the phenomenal work of Erin Reis, the Building Inspector, noting that for the year 2025, they issued 241 building permits and renewals, 97 short-term rentals, one dispensary permit, and 202 certificates of occupancy. The total revenue generated from building permits and related fees was reported to be \$134,215.30.

Councilperson Gabaccia acknowledged the passing of Dale Peterson, a member of the ZBA and Historic Preservation Committee, expressing condolences.

Councilperson Gabaccia also reported that the town's Facebook page had over 42,000 views, largely due to postings related to the Hecate hearings, and now has over 2,300 followers, with efforts underway to potentially launch an Instagram page to attract a younger demographic.

Councilperson Gabaccia reports that the ZBA did not meet.

Councilperson Gabaccia reported on continuing interface with the road advisory committee regarding plans for the clock, and the CAC is likely getting a grant to plant a tree for Earth Day.

Councilperson Gabaccia also noted that the Columbia Land Conservancy issued a useful plan to conserve Columbia County, which includes specific maps and details for each town regarding conservation areas.

Supervisor Wolf states that the Comprehensive Plan Committee did not meet in February due to illness. The next meeting will be on Monday, March 2, 2026, at 5:00pm.

Councilperson Morningstar reports that a notice was given regarding an upcoming announcement for the "Rock Round the Clock" event, which is expected on February 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Public Forum**

Lindsay LeBrecht, Copake resident shares information regarding mapping of the ridgeline overlay zone at the Town of Hillsdale.

Diana Jameson, new Park Commission Chair, expressed concerns about potentially increasing the size of the dumpster, as people occasionally use the current park dumpster for drop-off before leaving town. She also noted that the existing dumpster is an eyesore located in front of the music shed, which detracts from the park entrance, and suggested that fencing off the dumpster might improve the view.

Councilperson Haight raised a question about the proposed zoning changes regarding the 15,000 square foot continuous area rule and how it applies to neighboring lots.

Councilperson Haight noted receiving complaints about how dark the parking lot is at night, suggesting the need for new lighting, although the grant funds for energy efficiency upgrades are not designated for new installations.

### **Approval of Bills**

Done

### **Executive Session**

A motion was made by Councilperson Gabaccia and seconded by Councilperson Morningstar to go into Executive Session to discuss pending litigation.

All in favor. Motion approved.

Upon returning to public session, a motion was made by Councilperson Gabaccia and seconded by Councilperson Haight to authorize the town attorney to negotiate and execute settlement paperwork in the matter of Casper and Rogers versus the Commissioner of the New York State Department of Health.

All in favor. Motion approved.

### **Next Meeting Date**

Thursday, March 12, 2026, 7:00pm

### **Adjournment**

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

All in favor. Motion approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn M. DeRocha