

Town Board Meeting  
Thursday  
March 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, Councilperson Morningstar, and Councilperson Haight

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

**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 Gabaccia and seconded by Councilperson Gansowski to waive a further reading and accept the Minutes as written for the Town Board Meeting of Thursday, February 12, 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.

Property data collection is now underway for a revaluation due to a dropping equalization rate, a process not done since 2016.

Copake seeks party status or dismissal of Hecate Energy's solar application. The Town has raised important issues regarding State-regulated wetlands and compliance with Copake's Code provisions on flood protection.

Several Grange activities were announced, including a St. Patrick's Day dinner on Saturday, March 14, Jamming at the Grange on March 15<sup>th</sup>, two weekend showings, starting March 20<sup>th</sup> of Ms. Holmes and Ms. Watson, Apartment 2B by Two of Us Productions, and Open Mic Night. Several library activities were also mentioned.

Copake Cleanup Day will be Saturday, May 9<sup>th</sup> at 8:00am.

### **Correspondence**

From-Grant Langdon, many emails and correspondences

From-Tom Goldsworthy, letter regarding CEDAC resignation

From-Columbia County Sheriff's Department, notification regarding webinar for employment

From-Copake Justice Court, letter regarding Court Clerk salary

From-Harlem Valley Rail Trail Association, letter regarding fundraising celebration

From-Donald Coons, email regarding Eagle Scout Gabriella Coons

From-Sensible Solar for Rural New York, press release regarding floodplain protection

From-All States Materials Group, letter regarding fraudulent activity

### **Supervisor's Report**

My monthly report typically addresses Copake-centric topics, but these make up only part of what I do as Town Supervisor. In fact, all town supervisors have dual responsibilities: we have our multitude of town duties, but we also serve as members of the Columbia County Board of Supervisors. Tonight I'd like to speak briefly about the supervisor's role on the county board.

The Board of Supervisors consists of 18 town supervisors and 5 Hudson supervisors. The board is responsible for providing government services to the people of the county. It passes laws, establishes a budget and collects taxes to do so. The 2026 adopted budget is \$186 million. It funds the Office of the Sheriff, who is responsible for county law enforcement and corrections. The budget funds the offices of the District Attorney, Public Defender, and Probation; the Health Department, Office of the Aging, the Board of Elections, the Department of Real Property, the Solid Waste Program, the Highway Department and much more.

One supervisor is elected by the members of the Board of Supervisors to serve as chair. The chair appoints supervisors to serve on committees that oversee county operations and services. I currently serve on two permanent committees: Public Safety and Economic Development.

Public Safety meets monthly, and oversees the Sheriff's Office, EMS, Fire, Probation, the DA's Office and Emergency Management. We receive reports from the heads of these offices and consider requests for budget modification, new hires, and permission to enter into contracts. Economic Development meets every other month. It has jurisdiction over the county Agriculture Department, the Industrial Development Agency, Soil & Water, the Cornell Cooperative Extension, and the Capital Resources Corporation, which supports existing businesses and promotes business development in Columbia County.

I also am part of an *ad hoc* EMS Financing Workgroup, which is looking at ways to provide funding that will ensure the future viability of the EMS squads serving throughout the county.

Finally, I've just been appointed to another *ad hoc* committee, County Administrator/Manager, which is, according to a recent press release, "to be tasked with getting answers to the question of the advisability of establishing a county administrator position in the county's governing structure." You may recall that last year there was considerable controversy around a failed petition calling for a referendum of voters to determine whether Columbia County should have an elected county executive. The petition drive arose out of a concern that the Board of Supervisors is an inefficient form of government. To prove their case, critics cited the fact that the overwhelming number of counties have an elected or appointed administrator rather than a multi-person board. A county manager is appointed by a board, as opposed to a county executive, who is elected by the voters of the county. This is a complicated subject. It will be interesting to see how it develops. One thing is certain: there will be lots of trips to Hudson for meetings in my future.

There are other features of the Columbia County Board of Supervisors that are very interesting, including its system of weighted voting, which is based on the number of residents in a town. The greater the population, the greater the weight of that supervisor's vote. This will be something to talk about at in a future report.

### **Solar Update-March 2026**

The questions people are asking about the status of Hecate Energy's application for a siting permit to construct its proposed Shepherd's Run utility-scale solar facility in Craryville reveal understandable confusion. Here's how things currently stand.

First, ORES determined that Hecate's application was "complete" in September 2025. This triggered a one-year time frame for the ORES Executive Director to issue a final determination on a project permit.

I reported last month that we are seeking from ORES dismissal of Hecate's application or, at a minimum, "party status." Our attorney 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.

Hecate filed its own Issues Statement. It challenged one of the conditions in the draft permit ORES had issued. ORES had required that Hecate obtain from Copake a permit indicating that the developer complies with our Town Code provision concerning Flood Damage Protection.

Here's why that matters: portions of the proposed Shepherd's Run site are within the 100-year floodplain. The federal government long has had a flood insurance program. In 1987, Copake adopted its floodplain code to comply with the federal program, which both protects floodplain areas and makes it possible for the entire town to get flood insurance. Hecate's wants ORES to determine that state law preempts Copake's floodplain code, just as it preempts our solar law, Comprehensive Plan, and Farmland Protection Plan. Our response is that if our flood protection code is not in force, we could lose access to flood insurance, because Copake would be unable to comply with requirements of the Federal Flood Insurance Program.

Why is this issue so important to Hecate? They may be concerned that the town's permitting process might slow down their efforts to steamroll its way to a final approval from ORES, or maybe Hecate doesn't think it can comply with our code provisions.

This remains a major point of contention. Hecate asked for an additional two weeks to respond to the questions posed by the Administrative Law Judges (ALJs) about the flood protection issue. The request was granted making the due date for Hecate's response March 10. Our response to Hecate's submission is due on March 30. Sometime after that, the ALJs will issue a decision. They will rule on whether we are granted party status.

*ORES never has granted party status to a town targeted for a utility-scale solar factory.*

This time may be different. We've raised several issues that we believe merit a hearing and the flood prevention issue just may be the unique one that even ORES believes requires an adjudicatory hearing to resolve. If so, Copake would be the first "host community" ever to be granted party status by ORES. We may know before the April 9 town board meeting.

Finally, to answer the question everyone is asking: when will ORES make a final decision on Hecate's permit application? We can expect a decision from ORES' Executive Director, no later than October 8, 2026.

**Department Heads/Committee Reports**  
**Highway Department**  
**a. Salt Storage Facility**

Highway Superintendent Gregory reported on the recent salt supply shortages caused by logistics issues and proposed constructing a small storage building to stockpile salt, and return to the Town Board next month with more information

**Conservation Advisory Committee**

Mary Ann Carrick, Chair of the CAC, discussed the remaining funds from the NYSERDA grant. The proposed use for these funds is the replacement of the Town Hall entry doors to improve energy efficiency and enhance handicap accessibility.

Ms. Carrick will provide a follow-up report on this matter next month.

**Public Forum**

None

**New Business**

**a. Highway Department Salt Storage facility**

Discussed earlier in the meeting.

**b. Historic Preservation Committee-request for reimbursement**

Supervisor Wolf reiterated the town's policy that all expenses should be authorized in advance by the Town Board.

A motion was made by Councilperson Haight and seconded by Councilperson Morningstar to approve the reimbursement of \$2,500 to the Historic Preservation Committee for expenses incurred for work done in good faith related to the clock relocation.

All in favor. Motion approved.

**c. Replacement of Town Hall front entrance doors**

Discussed earlier in the meeting.

**d. Approval of date for Copake Falls Day-Saturday, July 18, 2026**

A motion was made by Councilperson Gabaccia and seconded by Councilperson Morningstar to approve the proposed date of Saturday, July 18, 2026 for the Copake Falls Day event.

All in favor. Motion approved.

**Old Business**

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

Edgar Masters addressed the proposed revisions to the SCOZ, noting that the Planning Board

had wished to add ridge line protection, which has been drafted. The Planning Board requested a change in the elevation limits for development or clear cutting: from 750 feet to 800 feet above sea level on the west side of State Route 22, and from 1,100 feet to 1,000 feet on the east side. A map showing the elevations still needs to be created, but it will be an appendix and does not affect the text wording.

**b. Proclamation commending Gabriella Coons upon becoming Columbia County's first female Eagle Scout**

**PROCLAMATION**

**Commemorating Gabriella I. Coons Upon Achieving the Rank of Eagle Scout**

**WHEREAS**, Copake resident Gabriella I. Coons has achieved the rank of Eagle Scout, thereby becoming Columbia County's first female Eagle Scout; and

**WHEREAS**, Gabriella, aged 14, became a Scouting America Cub Scout in 2018 and joined Troop 752 in 2022; and,

**WHEREAS**, Gabriella has significantly exceeded the number of Merit Badges required to reach Eagle Scout status (21), having earned eighty-three (83) Merit Badges; and

**WHEREAS**, Gabriella's Eagle Scout project was completion of a gazebo honoring veterans, which is located at Our Lady of Hope Catholic Church in Copake Falls. The gazebo is a place for reflection and prayer that was financed with more than \$12,800 in funds raised by Gabriella from local businesses and residents; and

**WHEREAS**, Gabriella attends Taconic Hills School, where she has achieved High Honor Roll grades every quarter, is enrolled in high school honors classes, and was elected Junior High School Council President in 2024-25; and

**WHEREAS**, Gabriella's many other extracurricular activities include Future Farmers of America, where she was the 8<sup>th</sup> Grade District and Regional Champion in Extemporaneous Speaking, and Civil Air Patrol, in which Cadet Captain Gabriella Coons is a certified Ground Team Search and Rescue Operator; and

**WHEREAS**, Gabriella's numerous community-based honors include the NYS Attorney General's Triple C Award given "to acknowledge the commitment, character, and courage of New York's most exceptional young people";

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT;**

**PROCLAIMED**, that the Copake Town Board honors Gabriella I. Coons for earning the rank of Eagle Scout, for her academic and extra-curricular achievements, and for her service to the Copake community.

Richard T, Wolf, Supervisor  
Supervisor

Stanley Gansowski  
Deputy Supervisor

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Robert Haight  
Councilmember

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Linda Gabaccia  
Councilmember

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William Morningstar  
Councilmember

Dated March 12, 2026  
Copake, New York

**Resolutions**

**TOWN OF COPAKE  
REVISED  
RESOLUTION  
Number 7 of March 12, 2026**

**A Resolution in Support of the Town of Hillsdale New York State Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) Grant Application for Sidewalk Improvements Leading to the Harlem Valley Rail Trail**

**WHEREAS**, the Town of Copake and the Town of Hillsdale share a municipal boundary along Anthony Street; and

**WHEREAS**, the Town of Hillsdale is preparing an application to the New York State Department of Transportation for funding through the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) to construct new sidewalks along Anthony Street and Coldwater Street in the Town of Hillsdale; and

**WHEREAS**, the proposed sidewalk improvements will enhance pedestrian safety, connectivity, and accessibility for residents and visitors traveling to and from the entrance of the Harlem Valley Rail Trail; and

**WHEREAS**, a small portion of Anthony Street adjacent to the municipal boundary lies within the jurisdiction of the Town of Copake and is necessary to include within the TAP grant application to ensure continuity of the proposed sidewalk improvements; and

**WHEREAS**, the Town of Copake recognizes the regional importance of safe pedestrian infrastructure and supports intermunicipal cooperation that enhances public safety, promotes recreation, and strengthens community connectivity;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Town Board of the Town of Copake hereby expresses its full support for the Town of Hillsdale’s application to the New York State Department of Transportation for Transportation Alternatives Program funding for sidewalk improvements on Anthony Street and Coldwater Street; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Town of Copake hereby approves the inclusion of the portion of Anthony Street located within the Town of Copake municipal boundary in the Town of Hillsdale’s TAP grant application for the purpose of constructing sidewalk improvements; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that this resolution shall serve as formal documentation of the Town of Copake’s approval and support for the inclusion of said roadway segment within the grant application; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Town Clerk is hereby authorized and directed to provide a certified copy of this resolution to the Town of Hillsdale for inclusion in its TAP grant submission materials.

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. 7  
Dated: March 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)

A motion was made by Councilperson Gabaccia and seconded by Councilperson Gansowski to add Resolution No. 8 to the Agenda.

All in favor. Motion approved.

**TOWN OF COPAKE  
RESOLUTION**

**Number 8 of March 12, 2026**

**To Make a Salary Adjustment to the Position of Part-time Court Clerk**

**WHEREAS**, the hourly-rate salary for Part-time Court Clerk of \$21.85 was established in Resolution Number 2 of January 2, 2026; and

**WHEREAS**, the hourly-rate salary for the Part-time Court Clerks of Austerlitz and Hillsdale is \$25.00; and

**WHEREAS**, the Copake Town Board wishes to establish an hourly-rate salary for Part-time Court Clerk that is comparable to that of Part-time Court Clerks in other Towns in Columbia County; and

**WHEREAS**, the Copake Town Justices have asked that the hourly-rate salary for Part-time Court Clerk be comparable to the salaries of Part-time Court Clerks in other Towns in Columbia County: now, therefore

It is hereby **RESOLVED**, that the hourly-rate salary for Part-time Court Clerk be set at \$25.00.

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

Resolution No. 8

Dated: March 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)

**Appointments**

There are no appointments.

The Town Board will continue to advertise for vacancies on the Park Commission, and the vacancy that was created at the Highway Department.

The Town Board agrees to advertise for the vacancy on the Copake Economic Development Advisory Committee.

The Town Board agrees to advertise for a vacancy and alternate member vacancy on the ZBA.

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

**a. Preliminary Budget to Actual Report-February 28, 2026**

**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 February 28, 2026.

All in favor. Motion approved

**Councilpersons' Reports**

Councilperson Morningstar reported on CEDAC, thanking Tom Goldsworthy for his seven years of service as Chair. CEDAC has set a definitive time for the "Rock around the Clock" event on July 25<sup>th</sup> from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., which will feature local food, a car show, and a DJ. It has been confirmed that the Sheriff's Department has been informed about the temporary road closures.

Councilperson Gabaccia discussed her continued work on the town's Facebook page, where it is planned to conduct regular surveys to better represent people's needs. The Historic Preservation Committee is working with the Roads Advisory Committee on the clock relocation design. There was no quorum for the ZBA meeting and they need to advertise for one member, and one alternate position. The CAC has the tree planting on Earth Day at the park. Councilperson Gabaccia also mentioned upcoming movies at the Grange, including "Burying the Hatchet: A Tom Quick Story" from the Mohican Allyship Committee, and "Little Things That Run the World" about bees on the 18<sup>th</sup>. Councilperson Gabaccia attended a meeting regarding utilities issues.

Councilperson Gansowski reports that the Park Commission had its first meeting with its new board. Three new members were welcomed; Todd Proper, Mary Bradway, and Peter Bradway. Diana Jamieson was elected as the new Chair of the Park Commission. The water tank was recently replaced. The Park Commission is discussing upgrading the bathrooms and having the building painted.

The Park Commission will be hosting an Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday, April 4, 2026, 11:00am.

The Building Department has been processing new STR's with Granicus.

Councilperson Gansowski has been monitoring the geese at the fire pond and has calls in to the marine biologists. He will be in touch with NYS DOH regarding the safety of the fire pond.

Councilperson Haight reports that the new Planning Board members are all getting along nicely. There is an applicant on SW Colony Road and everyone is trying to figure out who exactly owns the road. The applicant is will go to the county for clarification.

Supervisor Wolf states that the Comprehensive Plan Committee reviewed data from the surveys that were taken with the emphasis on 44 years old and younger. The next meeting will be on Thursday, April 9, 2026, at 5:30pm.

**Public Forum**

Lindsay LeBrecht thanks the Town Board for the pending replacement of the Town Hall front doors. Ms. LeBrecht has concerns regarding food trucks at the Rock around the Clock event taking away from local businesses.

**Approval of Bills**

Done

**Executive Session**

**Next Meeting Date**

Thursday, April 9, 2026, 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