

Town Board Meeting
Thursday
May 14, 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: 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 Morningstar and seconded by Councilperson Gansowski to waive a further reading and accept the Minutes as written for the Town Board Meeting of Thursday, April 9, 2026, and the Special Town Board Meeting of Thursday, April 23, 2026.

All in favor. Motion approved.

Announcements

Supervisor Wolf thanked Highway Superintendent Bill Gregory and the Highway Department for organizing another successful cleanup day.

Regarding the Comprehensive Plan, the Community Action Planning meeting is scheduled for Saturday, May 16th at 10:00 AM, featuring a presentation by committee chair Stephanie Rabin and consultant Margaret Irwin from River Street.

The Memorial Day parade, hosted by Ancram, is scheduled for May 25th at 11:00 AM, with the lineup beginning at 10:30 AM. Please contact the Ancram Town Hall for more information.

The County Clerk's Keep Identities of Seniors Safe (KISS) program will operate from June 1st through June 12th, Monday through Thursday from 9:00 AM to 3:30 PM, and on Saturdays from 9:00 AM to noon.

Copake summer camp applications are open for residents through June 19th, with out-of-town registrations accepted as space permits starting June 1st; fees remain consistent with the previous year.

The new short-term rental host compliance provider, Granicus, went live on May 1st, allowing permit applications and renewals to be completed online, supported by a new hotline at 518-675-8397.

The automated front doors have been shipped following the completion of initial electrical work, with installation scheduled for Friday, June 12th.

A mobile food pantry will distribute free food at Our Lady of Hope Parish on June 12th from 12:00 PM to 3:00 PM.

The County Board of Supervisors has increased the price of county solid waste bags **effective immediately**: small bags (set of five) are now \$10, medium are now \$20, and large are now \$30, per roll.

The planning stage for the road reconstruction project is progressing, and the county Department of Public Works Commissioner requested a community information meeting. This meeting will take place on Saturday, June 27th, at 10:00 AM in the town hall with remote access, focusing on the project timetable and the process for obtaining easements from affected property owners.

Copake Falls Day is scheduled for Saturday, July 18, 2026, from 10 AM until 4 PM.

Correspondence

From-Assemblyperson Didi Barrett, letter to the NYSDOT regarding safety controls at the intersection of the fatal accident

From- U.S. Representative Josh Riley, opposition to the Shepherd Run Project

From-Columbia County Tourism, email regarding Columbia County's Historic Spotlight on America's Greatest Landscape Artist

Supervisor's Report

The Copake Town Board will consider adopting a resolution urging the New York State Department of Transportation (DOT) to finally install a traffic signal/stop light at the intersection of State Route 23 and County Route 7 in Craryville (intersection).

Two beloved members of the Roe Jan community – active participants in many Copake organizations and activities – died in a tragic vehicular accident on April 16. Sadly, a fatal crash seemed almost inevitable to many of us. It was only a matter of time. We've long known that the intersection is dangerous, and we've documented our concerns. Former Supervisor Jeff Nayer petitioned DOT in 2017; he was turned down in 2019. I tried again in 2022; I was turned down in 2023.

The deaths of North Hillsdale residents Janet and John Piwowarski; the extraordinary environmental mess created by the spillage of approximately 5000 gallons of gasoline from the tanker truck with which the Piwowarski's car collided; the massive, expensive remediation measures being undertaken by the state's Departments of Environmental Conservation and Transportation; the contamination of at least one nearby well and the need for ongoing water testing; and the detour set up to route traffic around the remediation site, resulting in major negative impacts on local businesses – all are consequences of the state's failure to install a stop light at the intersection.

Four days after the accident, I wrote to DOT's regional director urging that DOT finally heed the pleas of our community and install a stop light without further delay. Hillsdale Supervisor Mike Dvorchak co-signed the letter. We have not received a response.

On April 30, the Town Board hosted a community information session at Town Hall. Representatives from DEC, DOT, and the state and county health departments came to answer questions. Approximately 100 residents attended, asking how long the clean-up will take, what are the health risks from gasoline fumes and contaminated water, and, of course, when will the intersection finally have a stop light? Our Assemblymember, Didi Barrett, attended the session, spoke with the state representatives, and promised us her support.

There are new physical factors making the intersection even more dangerous than it was in 2023, when DOT last rejected our request. The Cobble Pond Farms gas station and convenience store is open. Its two entrance/exit points, one on Craryville Road and the second, directly on Route 23, have added to the congestion (and confusion) at and near the intersection. There has been additional vehicular traffic from patrons of Parker House Pub and Restaurant, Random Harvest, Tommy B's, and Zinnia's Dinette.

The current detour, which is likely to continue for at least several more weeks follows the lengthy culvert-work detour last summer. Together, they have combined to seriously reduce revenues for the local businesses. We all can help these businesses to survive the downturn. If dining out or take-out is in your plans, please consider patronizing these local businesses.

Two deaths are two too many. We cannot wait until more lives are lost. We will continue to press NYSDOT for a stop light.

Solar Update-May 2026

Here is an update on our effort to have ORES dismiss Hecate's application for a permit to site its utility-scale solar factory in Craryville or to grant us "party status" so that we can present evidence and testimony before a judge concerning important, unresolved issues.

The administrative law judge (ALJ) assigned to the Shepherd's Run matter has before her our Issues Statement and my Affirmation supporting our position that a hearing is needed. She also has papers from Sensible Solar for Rural New York (SSNY), Birch Hill Road Neighbors Association (Birch Hill), and Craryville Farms, LLC.

Last month I reported that in Hecate's Issues Statement, it challenged one of the conditions in the draft permit ORES had issued. ORES required Hecate to obtain from Copake a permit indicating that the developer complies with our town code provision concerning flood damage protection. Here's why this 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 the floodplain area and also makes it possible for the entire town to get flood insurance.

Have you seen pictures of the flooding throughout much of the proposed site and adjacent areas that was caused by this year's snow melt and subsequent rains? It's as if a small lake and several ponds were created, seemingly overnight.

Hecate 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 to that is that if our 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? Are they afraid they cannot comply with our code provisions?

Then there's the wetlands issue. Depending on how it plays out, this could have enormous consequences for Shepherd's Run, potentially requiring a complete redesign of the project or preventing it from being constructed at all on the proposed Craryville site. In April 2024, ORES issued to Hecate what is called a "Jurisdictional Letter." The letter identified wetlands in or adjacent to the project area that were subject to state regulations and noted that the determination was to be valid for five years. The regulations prohibit construction on wetlands of "unusual importance," and require buffers between such wetlands and construction activities, including drilling. On January 1, 2025 the State Department of Environmental Conservation amended its wetland regulations. Smaller wetlands now are included in the definition of "wetlands of unusual importance." Several of these lie within the project area.

It is the town's position that the DEC regulations now on the books must be complied with. This seems to be DEC's position as well. If our position is upheld by the ALJ, Hecate will need to go back to the drawing board and redesign its layout, avoiding all state-regulated wetlands, including the newly-designated smaller ones. It is possible that this could further limit the size of Shepherd's Run, and reduce its nameplate capacity.

Not surprisingly, Hecate disagrees. It asserts that it must be concerned only with the

wetlands listed in the April 2024 jurisdictional determination letter, not the smaller wetlands that now come under the revised state regulations, because the April 2024 letter is “good” for five years.

Both flood protection and wetlands remain major points of contention. We strongly believe that Copake must be granted party status to adjudicate them. But keep in mind: *ORES never has granted party status to a town targeted for a utility-scale solar factory.*

On March 30, the ALJ issued a procedural ruling denying Hecate’s motion to file more papers augmenting the arguments in its Issues Statement. Hecate claimed an additional submission would be “in the interest of promoting a complete record.” The ALJ ruled that Hecate had no “meaningful justification” for its request, and that “(a)ny additional opportunity for Hecate to submit a reply is not in the best interest of the fair and efficient administration of this proceeding.” Any day now we expect the ALJ’s ruling on our request to dismiss Hecate’s siting application or, in the alternative, to grant Copake party status in the proceedings. Finally, two days ago, Republican gubernatorial candidate Bruce Blakeman held a press conference outside of Copake Town Hall to voice opposition to Shepherd’s Run.

Department Heads/Committee Reports

Highway Department

None

Conservation Advisory Committee

a. NYSERDA grant update

None

Public Forum

Patty Ackerman, Hillsdale resident, expressed support for the town’s efforts to advocate for the traffic light at the dangerous intersection.

Lindsay LeBrecht, Copake Lake resident, noted concerns regarding the need for reduced speed limits on Lake View Road and Whippoorwill Road, arguing that the town government should be heard regarding potential hazards.

New Business

None

Old Business

None

Resolutions

Councilperson Haight expressed opposition, suggesting a light would detract from the hamlet's character and that the intersection already provides clear visibility.

TOWN OF COPEN RESOLUTION Number 14 of May 14, 2026

To Urge the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) to Install a Traffic Signal/Stop Light at the Intersection of State Route 23 and County Route 7 in Craryville

WHEREAS, the Copake Town Board notes with sadness the passing on April 16, 2026 of North Hillsdale residents Janet Piwowski, 76, and Jack Piwowski, 78, active and beloved participants in numerous activities in Copake and the Roe Jan area, who died in a vehicular accident at the intersection of State Route 23 and County Route 7 in Craryville (hereinafter "the intersection"); and

WHEREAS, the fatal collision between the Piwowskis' automobile and an oil tanker truck resulted in the spillage of approximately 5,000 gallons of gasoline, which gasoline seeped into a nearby stream and into soil adjacent to and underneath the State 23 roadbed; and

WHEREAS, the spilled gasoline threatens the water supplies of nearby residences and Businesses; and

WHEREAS, the New York State Departments of Environmental Conservation and Transportation are working to remediate potential negative environmental impacts of the gasoline spillage; and

WHEREAS, remediation efforts have caused the aforementioned State Departments to close State Route 23 at the east side of the intersection with County Route 7 and detour east-bound traffic north onto Craryville Road and east onto West End Road in Hillsdale, and to restrict west-bound traffic on Route 23 to local traffic only; and

WHEREAS, the closure of State Route 23 prevents traffic from driving directly to businesses located on State Route 23, east of the intersection, thereby reducing the number of customers patronizing those businesses; and

WHEREAS, in 2017, Copake requested installation by NYSDOT of a traffic signal at the intersection, and was advised in 2019 that traffic conditions did not warrant installation; and

WHEREAS, in August, 2022, Copake again requested installation by NYSDOT of a traffic signal at the intersection, and was advised in August, 2023 that after reviewing a private traffic assessment report, crash data for the previous three years, and a traffic quantity assessment

report, NYSDOT concluded that installation of a traffic signal was not justified; and

WHEREAS, by letter dated April 20, 2026, Copake Supervisor Richard Wolf, and Hillsdale Supervisor Mike Dvorchak together wrote to NYSDOT seeking installation at the intersection of a traffic signal/stop light, noting that increased traffic from the Parker House Pub and Restaurant, two additional traffic entrances/exits at the Craryville Cobble Pond Farms gas station and convenience store, and the significant number of senior drivers, combine to exacerbate already hazardous conditions at the intersection; and

WHEREAS, on April 30, 2026, approximately 100 residents of Copake and Hillsdale met at Copake Town Hall with representatives from NYSDOT, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, NYS Department of Health, and the Columbia County Health Department to insist that a traffic signal/stop light be installed at the intersection as soon as possible; now, therefore,

It is hereby **RESOLVED** that the Copake Town Board urges the New York State Department of Transportation to promptly install a traffic signal/stop light to regulate traffic at the intersection of State Route 23 and County Route 7 in Craryville.

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

Resolution No. 14
Dated May 14, 2026
Copake, New York

Roll Call Vote:	Supervisor Wolf	yes
	Councilperson Gansowski	yes
	Councilperson Gabaccia	yes
	Councilperson Haight	no
	Councilperson Morningstar	yes

Lynn M. DeRocha, Town Clerk

(seal)

May 14, 2026

TOWN OF COPEN
RESOLUTION
Number 15 of May 14, 2026

Standard Workday Resolution for Employees

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town of Copake, Location code 30579, hereby establishes the following as standard work days for its employees and will report days worked to the New York State and Local Employees' Retirement System based on the time keeping system or the record of activities maintained and submitted by these members to the clerk of this body:

Title	Standard Work Day (Hrs/day)
Accountant	6.00
Clerk	8.00
Bookkeeper	6.00
Data Collector	6.00
Secretary	6.00
Typist	6.00
Custodian	6.00
Laborers	8.00

On this 14 day of May, 2026

_____ Date enacted: May 14, 2026

I Lynn M. DeRocha, clerk of the governing board of the Town of Copake

of the State of New York, do hereby certify that I have compared the foregoing with the original resolution passed by such board, at a legally convened meeting held on the 14 day of May, 2026 on file as part of the minutes of such meeting, and that

I further certify that the full board, consists of 5 members, and that 5 of such members were present at such meeting and that 5 of such members voted in favor of the above resolution.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I hereunto

Set my hand and the seal of the

Town of Copake

(seal)

*To be used for all employees. Please list Elected and Appointed Officials on the form Standard Workday and Reporting Resolution for Elected and Appointed Officials (RS2417-A) .

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. 15

Dated: May 14, 2026
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)

A motion was made by Councilperson Morningstar and seconded by Councilperson Haight to add Resolution No. 16 of May 14, 2026, to the Agenda.

All in favor. Motion approved.

**TOWN OF COPAKE
RESOLUTION
Number 16 of May 14, 2026**

**To Support the Harlem Valley Rail Trail and Authorizing Exploration of a
Maintenance Agreement**

WHEREAS, the Town of Copake recognizes the value of recreational trails in promoting public health, outdoor recreation, environmental stewardship, and economic development; and

WHEREAS, the Harlem Valley Rail Trail is a regional multi-use trail being developed along the historic Harlem Valley rail corridor to provide safe, accessible opportunities for walking, cycling, and other non-motorized recreation; and

WHEREAS, the continued development of the Harlem Valley Rail Trail will enhance tourism, connect communities throughout the region, and provide recreational and transportation benefits to residents and visitors alike; and

WHEREAS, segments of the Harlem Valley Rail Trail will be constructed within the Town of Copake, and

WHEREAS, the Town Board recognizes that long-term success of the trail will depend on responsible maintenance, stewardship, and cooperation among municipalities, counties, and partner organizations; and

WHEREAS, the Town Board wishes to express its support for the Harlem Valley Rail Trail and its willingness to explore opportunities for collaboration regarding maintenance and stewardship of any trail segments located within the Town;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town Board of the Town of Copake hereby expresses its support for the continued development and completion of the Harlem Valley Rail Trail; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Town Board authorizes the Town Supervisor, in consultation with the Town Board and appropriate municipal officials, to explore potential maintenance agreements or partnerships with relevant governmental entities and organizations regarding the upkeep, operation, and stewardship of any portion of the Harlem Valley Rail Trail located within the Town of Copake once constructed; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that any proposed maintenance agreement shall be subject to review and approval by the Town Board prior to execution; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Town Clerk is directed to provide a copy of this resolution to relevant partner agencies and organizations involved in the development of the Harlem Valley Rail Trail.

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

Resolution No. 16
Dated May 14, 2026
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)

May 14, 2026

Appointments

A motion was made by Supervisor Wolf and seconded by Councilperson Gabaccia to appoint Brian Boom as Chair of the Conservation Advisory Committee.

All in favor. Motion approved.

The Town Board agrees to advertise for Summer Camp Counselors for the 2026 Summer Park Program.

The Town Board will continue to advertise for vacancies on the CEDAC, the Park Commission, and the Highway Department.

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-April 30, 2026

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 April 30, 2026.

All in favor. Motion approved

Councilpersons' Reports

Councilperson Morningstar reported that CEDAC has not met recently as they are planning a farewell party for Tom Goldsworthy, thanking Tom Goldsworthy for his seven years of service as Chair. Picklemania will be on May 30th with a rain date of May 31st.

Councilperson Gabaccia reports that the CAC had a party in honor of Mary Ann Carrick who is leaving, recognizing her for her dedicated service, accomplishments in the CAC, and her ability to work with others with grace and intelligence. Supervisor Wolf and the board agree.

Councilperson Gansowski reports that the Park Commission is preparing for summer events and bands, and summer camp with Diana Jamieson serving as the new Chair.

Councilperson Gansowski and Code Enforcement Officer, Erin Reis are working to clean up the town.

Councilperson Haight reports that

Councilperson Haight reports that the Planning Board is experiencing a slower month.

The Gary Sinise Foundation project house on County Route 7A is now in progress.

Supervisor Wolf reminds and encourages residents to attend the Comprehensive Plan Community meeting this Saturday, May 16th, at 10 AM, to help shape the future of the town.

Supervisor Wolf notes that if anyone has an interest in participating in the Memorial Day Parade, please contact the town of Ancram.

Public Forum

Mary Ann Carrick gives the Town Board the Columbia Land Conservancy's Common Ground publication, and states that she loves this town and this area, and we are so fortunate to have such wonderful custodians of the town.

Approval of Bills

Done

Executive Session

None

Next Meeting Date

Thursday, June 11, 2026, 7:00pm

Adjournment

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

All in favor. Motion approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn M. DeRocha