

Town of Hillsdale

Preliminary Comprehensive Plan Committee

Notes from 5 October 2026 meeting

The first meeting of the Preliminary Comprehensive Plan Committee was held at the Town Hall on 5 October, 6:00pm. All members who had been appointed by the Town Board in June, except for Bill Sullivan, were present. Town Board liaison Nico Hernandez was also present. Town Supervisor Mike Dvorchak attended the second half of the meeting.

Each attendee introduced themselves with a note about their position on town boards or committees and other relevant background.

Frank Upham: In Hillsdale since 1999; on Housing Committee; before recent retirement taught at New York University Law School, including a land use course; expertise is in comparative law—long experience with Japan and China.

Gretchen Stevens: Member of the Hillsdale Conservation Advisory Council; recently retired biologist from environmental research institute studying the plants, animals, and habitats of the region; much work with planning boards, conservation commissions, and municipal land use law.

Nico Hernandez: Grew up here; firefighter; has a landscape business; member of the Town Board.

Kyle McGraw: Planning board member; planner; former consulting planner for East Fishkill for almost a decade; has written four master plans.

Steve Tiger: Deputy Supervisor and Human Resources Officer for the town; here since 1989; retired teacher; worked on the original plan in the 1990s; has prior experience with the MWBE requirement for state grant-funded projects.

Robina Ward: Town Clerk; formerly on Town Board for two terms; formerly secretary for the Planning Board; here since 2000; in 2000s worked on Comprehensive Plan committee and zoning revisions, including steep slopes and the Ridgeline Overlay District.

Mike Toth: Planning Board member; living here for five years (rented in summers previously); recently retired; urban planning degree; worked with state agencies around the country on bond financing for affordable housing; has worked on many kinds of RFPs.

Nico: How long did it take to produce the original Comprehensive Plan?

Steve: The town hired a consultant based in Millbrook; might have taken six months or so (not sure).

Nico: The role of Town Board liaison is to listen in, take notes, and communicate to the Town Board about progress by the committee. Can participate in discussions but is not a voting member of the committee. Jamie Carano Nordenstrom is the second Town Board liaison.

Mike: The Town Board resolution that created the committee and appointed committee members describes the roles of members and liaisons. He will send it around to members.

Election of chair: Mike was chosen by unanimous consent.

Election of co-chair: Robina was chosen by unanimous consent.

Election of note-taker: Gretchen was chosen by unanimous consent.

Robina: Review of provisions of the New York State contract: \$111,000 grant. Some funds for Town Clerk, Building Inspector, Town Attorney. A certain amount can be spent on this stage (preparing an RFP etc.), but most of the funds will go to the planning consultant. [Actual figures in contract are: state funds \$111,060; plus Hillsdale match \$12,340; total budget \$123,400. From that total, \$6,188 is for Hillsdale salaries. Total MWBE goal is \$16,659. –GS, post-meeting]

Robina: Will contact all the Columbia Co and Greene Co town clerks and find out which towns have updated their Comprehensive Plans in the last five years, who was their consultant, how much cost, and is the town happy with the result.

Mike: Would be good to get copies of their RFPs, if possible, and learn about the towns' experience with their consultants. Many towns have revised their Comprehensive Plans recently: e.g., Austerlitz, Ghent, Chatham, Copake's may be nearly completed.

Gretchen: Would also be good if we all looked over some of the recent Comprehensive Plans to see which kinds of things we would want to include or not include in Hillsdale's. Most or all Comprehensive Plans are available on the municipalities' websites.

Mike.: Chatham sent out a survey to all town residents. Our committee will review a bunch of proposals from consultants, and invite some in for an interview.

Nico: How did we come to the \$111,000 budget amount?

Gretchen: Helped Jamie with the grant application. We asked some consulting firms to give us ballpark estimates for creating a Comprehensive Plan for a rural Hudson Valley town. We should cast a wide net with the RFP, but are looking for a firm with experience preparing Comprehensive Plans for rural towns, whose needs and concerns are different from those of a city.

Mike: Offered to look at some existing Comprehensive Plans and send summary notes about the topics that each plan addressed. Might use AI, as suggested by Frank.

Gretchen: The NYS Department of State has some guidance documents, available online, for preparing Comprehensive Plans.

Mike: The contract with the state has very specific requirements for procedure and reporting on our progress. Looks like very heavy oversight from the state.

[Mike Dvorchak. arrived around 7:25pm]

Mike D.: There is a [shared online folder](#) for the Comprehensive Plan project, with the state contract, town resolution, etc. Robina suggested setting up a group email.

Steve: In his experience, the MWBE (minority and women-owned business enterprises) requirements are difficult to comply with in this geographic area.

Gretchen: Fulfilling the MWBE requirement is ultimately the town's responsibility, but in the RFP we can ask consultants to include an MWBE component in their proposals. For example, the consultant could subcontract with MWBEs to conduct the public survey or cater public events or print the final Comprehensive Plan document.

Mike T.: We should ask other towns how they fulfilled the MWBE requirement.

Mission for the Preliminary Comprehensive Plan Committee: To create and disseminate an RFP, review proposals, and choose a consultant to recommend to the Town Board.

Mike D.: Looking at the contract, the budget for town salaries is \$6,000, for the town attorney is \$12,000, and for the consultant is \$105,000.

Mike T.: Can we ask other towns for a copy of their public survey? Will see if the surveys are appended to their Comprehensive Plans.

The next meeting of this committee will be on 2 November, 6:00pm, at the Town Hall.

The meeting was adjourned around 7:00pm.

Action Items:

- Robina: Send note to Columbia County and Greene County town clerks asking which towns have recently updated their Comprehensive Plans, who was their consultant, how much cost, is the town happy with the consultant and the result, and how did the town fulfill the MWBE requirement.
- Mike T: Look at other Comprehensive Plans and send us a summary of topics covered.
- Gretchen: Ask Emily to put the 2 November date into the November town newsletter.
- All: Review Mike T's summary notes from other towns' Comprehensive Plans and be ready to discuss what's best for Hillsdale at next meeting.

--Notes prepared by G. Stevens