

Conservation Advisory Council Town of Hillsdale, NY

David Lewis, Chair
Amy Davidsen
Ed Frederick
Mary King
Gretchen Stevens

MINUTES CAC MEETING, 16 JULY 2026

The meeting was convened at 7:10pm at the Hillsdale Town Hall. David, Amy, and Gretchen were present. Mary and Ed were absent. Jamie Carano Nordenstrom (Town Board liaison) was also absent.

Approval of Minutes

The June minutes had been approved via email with an edit from David.

Old Business

CAC Open Position

At their regular June meeting, the Town Board approved the appointment of Ed Frederick to the CAC.

Culverts

Gretchen has been communicating with Mike Dvorchak, Richard Briggs, Robina Ward, and Bart Ziegler about applications to the NYS WQIP and Climate Smart Communities grant programs for funds to replace culverts. The applications must be submitted by 31 July.

Hillsdale Town Newsletter

Gretchen submitted the article about rodenticides for the August town newsletter.

Sponsor *The Extraordinary Caterpillar* Film

Amy reported that the Roe Jan Library will co-sponsor the film screening with the CAC. We decided to aim for 7, 8, 14, or 15 November, 1:00 or 2:00pm. Amy will look into the requirement for town insurance to cover the event. We should especially advertise the screening to gardeners and children, and promote it via posters and the town newsletter, along with other means.

Planning Board

The June Planning Board meeting was cancelled.

Comprehensive Plan

At their June meeting, the Town Board approved the appointment of the preliminary Comprehensive Plan Committee. Gretchen will contact other appointed members to try to set up an initial meeting.

Farm Inventory

We all need to review the farm list compared to the tax exemptions list. We discussed the idea of composing an addendum to the NRI with the new farm data. Amy will draft a piece for the town newsletter which may also elicit some useful information from readers.

Garbage Receptacle Law

Amy drafted a local law after reviewing such laws in other towns. David questioned whether a prohibition on setting out receptacles before the morning of the pick-up day would get push-back from people who would find it difficult to do this as they are getting off to work. We decided to leave that requirement as is for now, and wait for Jamie's review and guidance on when to present a draft to the Town Board.

Open Space Plan

Gretchen will send a note to the Open Space Plan Committee about reviving the committee and adding new members to replace those who have left. If the committee can meet before 11 August, it could submit nominations for new members in time for Town Board approval at the 18 August board meeting. Gretchen will send an as-is draft of the Open Space Plan to the CAC.

Storage of Flammable and Toxic Materials

Amy asked Nico Hernandez about the policy for reporting storage of flammable and toxic materials to the fire company. He is looking into it.

Roadside Herbicide Applications

Starting with info that Mary sent last month, Amy will draft a memo to the Town Board urging them to endorse the elimination of the use of herbicides to control roadside vegetation along state roads. The Columbia County Environmental Management Council hopes to obtain such endorsements from many towns, and then from the county Board of Supervisors.

Project Initiation Procedure

Regarding the proposed law governing how development and subdivision projects are initiated with the town, we have questions about the rationale for the law, and whether the Code Enforcement Officer has the time to take on this responsibility. David has sent these questions to Jamie, but has not yet heard back.

New Business

We briefly discussed the proposal for a large hotel/resort development at the old Roe Jan School in Copake. Although the CAC does not usually weigh in on projects outside of Hillsdale, we will discuss whether the CAC should make an exception because this project is so large, is just over the border in Copake, and the environmental impacts would be immense if the project is carried out as planned. A public hearing will be held in Copake on 23 July.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:18pm.

(see over)

Action Items

David:

- Ask Jamie again about the Town Board's rationale for the project initiation law, and whether the Code Enforcement Officer has the capacity to take on the new task.
- Draft a memo to the Town Board urging them to endorse the elimination of the use of herbicides to control roadside vegetation along state roads.
- [I think there was something else...]

Amy:

- Look into town insurance for screening of The Extraordinary Caterpillar, and nail down a date and time for the screening
- Send the draft Receptacle law and resolution to Jamie for review.
- Create an updated Farm Inventory narrative, to compare to the 2020 NRI, for review.

Gretchen:

- Contact members of the Comprehensive Plan Committee to set up an initial meeting.
- Send the current draft of the Open Space Plan to the CAC.
- Continue working with Mike, Richard, and others on grant applications for culvert replacement.

All:

- Recruit new members for the Open Space Committee
- Recruit new members for the Open Space Committee and confirm requirements of Board approval.
- (carried over) Scan Comprehensive Plans from other towns and consider the kinds of format and content suitable for Hillsdale's revised Plan.
- (carried over) Consider the kinds of elements that should be included in an RFP for Comprehensive Plan consultants.