

Conservation Advisory Council Town of Hillsdale, NY

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

MINUTES CAC MEETING, 17 SEPTEMBER 2026

The meeting was convened at 7:15pm at the Hillsdale Town Hall. David, Ed, Mary, and Gretchen were present. Amy was absent, but had sent a detailed memo about her progress on recent tasks. Jamie Carano Nordenstrom (Town Board liaison) was also absent.

Approval of Minutes

The August minutes were approved with edits from Amy and David.

Old Business

Sponsor *The Extraordinary Caterpillar* Film

Amy has learned that the Roe Jan Library, as a co-sponsor, will cover the insurance for the film event. Amy will purchase the film license, and will submit a save-the-date notice about the event for the October town newsletter. Doug Craig, who manages the publicity for the Taghkanic Talks speaker series, has sent a notice about the event to their mailing list, and Gretchen will ask him to post again in October. Tim Kennealy (Master Gardener with the Cornell Cooperative Extension) has also agreed to publicize the screening to his mailing list of gardening enthusiasts in the county. Amy has ordered and received 100 handouts from the Homegrown National Park for the event. Gretchen has also selected some CAC materials for viewing and handing out. We will discuss food and other details at the October CAC meeting.

Hillsdale Town Newsletter

Amy will submit a save-the-date notice about the November film screening of *The Extraordinary Caterpillar* for the October newsletter.

Planning Board

The September Planning Board meeting was cancelled because there were no cases.

Herbicides on State Roads

David will draft a CAC memo to the town board, urging the state DOT to use non-toxic methods of managing roadside vegetation. The memo could be used by other CACs as a template.

Comprehensive Plan

The first meeting of the Preliminary Comprehensive Plan Committee will be held on 5 October. The Hillsdale/New York State contract for the project was signed this week.

Farm Inventory

CAC members should review the updated account of Hillsdale farms drafted by Amy which, once approved, can be posted on the CAC's webpage as an addendum to the NRI.

Garbage Receptacle Law

Amy sent the draft garbage receptacle law to Jamie for her comments and guidance on next steps.

Open Space Plan

CAC members are to review the current draft of the Open Space Plan and recruit potential members of the Open Space Committee for appointment by the Town Board.

Storage of Flammable and Toxic Materials

Amy learned that Ghent did not change its laws governing hazardous materials after the 2012 fire at the electronics recycling facility because the company withdrew its plans to rebuild in Ghent (due to significant local opposition) and relocated to Coeymans. There is a state law requiring that every person/business report certain hazardous materials stored or used to the local fire departments:

<https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/laws/GMU/209-U>. (Farms are exempt.) A local law may thus be unnecessary. There is also a requirement to disclose to the DEC certain hazardous materials, but the volume thresholds may be too high to affect Hillsdale. Lee Heim may be the person most likely to learn about properties where large volumes of hazardous materials are stored.

Hotel/Resort Development at Roe Jan School

An article in the Millerton News had this concise description:

"The plans include a 97-room hotel in the former school building, 31 standalone lodges and cabins containing an additional 77 guest rooms, three restaurants, two bars, a spa, Pilates and yoga studios, a gym, saunas and steam rooms, a farm store with on-site greenhouses, retail shops including a bakery and an ice cream shop, two swimming pools, two hot tubs, a pickleball court, and a tennis court."

In a note to the CAC, Amy reported that the developers are requesting a waiver for 3 of the regulations of Copake's Scenic Corridor Overlay Zone: the parking provision, the restriction on height, the minimum building footprint of 3500 sq. ft. The Copake Planning Board is the lead agency for the environmental review, and the Copake Zoning Board is responsible for the Special Use Permit.

Amy reported that, at the 15 September Town Board meeting, Mike mentioned that he'd spoken with the resort developers about a combined Hillsdale/Copake wastewater treatment facility since the resort needs to build one.

CAC Roundtable

Amy learned that the CLC is in the process of hiring for a position with responsibilities that would include working with municipalities. Maybe that person would restart the Roundtable meetings.

New Business

Fencing along Roads

Mary described the problem of impermeable fences installed so close to the road that they pose hazards to wildlife, especially where such fences are on both sides of the road. Deer may be forced back onto the road and into traffic, with consequences to the deer, people, and vehicles. Fences also allow human pedestrians little space to move safely away from vehicles and snowplows. Does the town have standards on setbacks and design of fences along town roads: distance from road, fence height, and gap at the base that allows passage of wildlife? Mary will ask Richard Briggs.

including deer being forced back into in coming traffic with the life threatening consequences to people and animals and serious damage to vehicles ; also of people walking along the road in winter with no space to get off road when vehicles and snow plows come .

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10pm.

Action Items

David:

- Draft a roadside herbicide memo.

Amy:

- Submit a notice about the film screening for the October town newsletter.

Gretchen:

- Remind Doug Craig and Tim Kennelty to advertise the film screening in October.
- Print materials for viewing and handing out at the film event.

Mary:

- Ask Richard Briggs about design and setback standards for fences along town roads.

All:

- Review the updated account of Hillsdale farms, and send comments to Amy.
- Review the draft Open Space Plan and send comments to Gretchen.
- Recruit potential members of the Open Space Committee for appointment by the Town Board.