

Conservation Advisory Council Town of Hillsdale, NY

David Lewis, Chair
Amy Davidsen
Mary King
Gretchen Stevens

MINUTES CAC MEETING, 16 JANUARY 2025

The meeting was convened at 7:09pm at the Town Hall. David, Amy, and Gretchen were present. Mary was absent. Jamie Carano Nordenstrom (Town Council liaison) was also present.

Approval of Minutes

The December minutes were approved, with edits. (The town now requires that minutes be approved and submitted within two weeks of each meeting, and be sent both to the Town Council and the Deputy Clerk.)

Old Business

CAC Position

David will slightly edit and then print the recruiting flyers for the CAC position, and will post them around the hamlet, in Harlemville, and at the library.

CAC Web Page

David has sent the revised CAC webpage materials to Emily and Robina for posting on the town website. We should also ask them to move the CAC link from the “Committees” list to another heading—perhaps under “Building, Planning, and Zoning.” The CAC has a different status from municipal committees, as it is authorized by state law and established by town law with a specific mission and limited membership, and the members are appointed for fixed terms by the Town Council.

Comprehensive Plan

Jamie attended the online debriefing meeting about the Smart Growth CFA grant for updating the 1995 Hillsdale Comprehensive Plan. The grant was denied, but she reports that our application received a 100% score. There was much competition this, and one reason for the denial was that Hillsdale’s median household income was higher than for many other applicants. We were strongly encouraged to apply in the next round (July application deadline). Jamie suggested that we could also apply for Greenway funds (September application deadline) to cover a small part of the Comprehensive Plan work.

Given the strong need to update the Comprehensive Plan (it was published 30 years ago) we agreed to send a request to the Town Council to include the full cost of updating the Comprehensive Plan in the

2026 town budget. This budget item will serve as a stop gap to ensure that we can begin the comprehensive planning process in 2026 in case we again fail to receive the state grant.

Amy has drafted a vision statement for the Comprehensive Plan, and will send to us for review.

Wastewater Treatment

Gretchen will draft a memo from the CAC to the Town Council expressing our concern that the leachfield for the wastewater treatment plant be moved out of the floodplain of the Roe Jan and Auction Creek, and recommending a study of the situation by a hydrogeologist or other qualified specialist. She will copy to NYSDEC. We also discussed the potential need for testing well water and other groundwater in the vicinity of the leachfield.

Water Testing

David will check with Robina to see if the water testing of the three town-owned facilities was done and invoiced in December. Jamie requested that we alert her if the work was not completed and invoiced in 2024, in which case the project will have to be re-approved by the Town Council for 2025. Funding for the 2025 project should not come from the CAC's 2025 budget.

David will contact Christie Wright in Valatie to see if Hillsdale could take advantage of USDA and NYS Department of Health funding to conduct our larger well water testing project free-of-charge, as will be done in Kinderhook.

Hazard Mitigation

Gretchen will ask Haley Rivers about the process for completing and adopting the Columbia County Hazard Mitigation Plan. There was to be a public presentation in December, but we are unaware that it happened. Gretchen will send the current document with Hillsdale edits to Jamie.

CAC calendar

David will help us individually to get access to the CAC calendar.

Open Space Plan

Gretchen will try to send the next draft for CAC review in January.

Possible Oil Leak

David recently re-checked the site and saw moisture but no apparent oil emerging from cracks and seams in the asphalt at the Cobble Hill station. Jamie and Amy recommend calling the New York State Spill Hotline (1-800-457-7362) in any case.

New Business

County Conservation Plan, CLC, public meeting (Zoom).

Jamie (representing the Town of Hillsdale) and Gretchen (representing Hudsonia) attended the online meeting held by the Columbia Land Conservancy for the stakeholder advisory team for the CLC's Columbia County Conservation Plan. The advisory team will meet at intervals throughout the project. The CLC will give [an initial presentation](#) to the general public on 23 January, 6:00-7:30pm. Participants must register.

Planning Bd Meetings

There has yet been no Planning Board site visit to Phil Gellert's proposed subdivision parcel on Whippoorwill Rd. The new (2025) NYSDEC "Informational" Freshwater Wetland Map shows a ca. 4-acre wetland on the parcel that would have to be crossed by Mr. Gellert's proposed right-of-way corridor between Whippoorwill Rd and the remaining portion of his large parcel. The CAC should visit the site to determine the presence, location, and extent of the wetland.

The development of a new driveway and house on Syre Lane has been proposed on a parcel that is entirely within the Ridgeline Overlay District. The CAC will visit the site once we learn that the locations of major features have been staked/flagged by the consultant.

Road Paving

The Hillsdale Highway Department plans to pave certain unpaved roads in 2025, and there is much opposition among residents of those roads. According to the Town Attorney, the paving project must undergo the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR). Gretchen will ask Mike Dvorchak to send the draft Environmental Assessment Form for the project so that the CAC can review it.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:09 pm.

Action Items

David: --Edit & print flyer about CAC position, and post in hamlet, Harlemville and at Roe Jan Library.
--Draft the CAC Annual Report for 2024.
--Contact Christie Wright about free NYRWA water testing.

Amy: --Send draft vision statement for Comprehensive Plan to CAC for review.
--Draft memo to Town Council requesting a 2026 budget line for the Comprehensive Plan update

Gretchen: --Ask CLC and FEP for possible referrals for the CAC position.
--Send next draft of the Open Space Plan to CAC.

- Obtain 500-year flood zone data from NYSDEC or Tighe & Bond.
- Draft letter to Town Bd about leachfield in flood zone.
- Ask Mike Dvorchak about the status of the Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Mary: -- Submit regular reports to the Town Board about EMC activities.
--Ask the EMC if they can regularly report on asthma trends and heat-related health problems in county.

All: --Obtain sign-in codes from David for the CAC calendar.