



**TOWN OF HILLSDALE  
TOWN BOARD MEETING  
February 10, 2026  
Minutes**

*NOTE: After a public hearing on April 25, 2024, and at a Special Town Board Meeting the Town Board approved a resolution to allow "Extraordinary Circumstances Videoconferencing", "ECV". This allows a Town Board member who has a qualifying disability to attend, be part of a quorum and vote at all Town Board Meetings.*

The Meeting of the Town Board of the Town of Hillsdale, Columbia County in the State of New York was held at the Town Hall, 2609 State Route 23, Hillsdale, NY 12529 on February 10, 2026, at 7:00 pm.

Board members present:

**PRESENT:**

|               |                          |
|---------------|--------------------------|
| Supervisor    | Mike Dvorchak            |
| Councilmember | Irwin Feld               |
| Councilmember | Nico Hernandez           |
| Councilmember | Jamie Carano Nordenstrom |
| Councilmember | Bart Ziegler             |

**ALSO PRESENT:**

|                |                        |
|----------------|------------------------|
| Robina Ward    | Town Clerk             |
| Emily Stalker  | Deputy Town Clerk      |
| Richard Briggs | Highway Superintendent |
| Steve Tiger    | Deputy Supervisor      |
| Ken Dow        | Town Attorney          |

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Members of the public

**TRADITIONAL VIDEOCONFERENCING NOTICE:**

Notice of said meeting was posted on the Town Website. The public is invited to participate at the town hall or the videoconference meeting location at 2609 State Route 23, Hillsdale, NY 12529.

Supervisor Dvorchak called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm with the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Public Comment**

Four speakers referencing paving of dirt roads.

Supervisor Dvorchak made a motion to extend the time for Public Comment, seconded by Councilmember Caran Nordenstrom. Another two minutes were given for further comment.

**Supervisor's Report**

County Report

Supervisor Dvorchak stated that there was no county meetings in January postponed because of the snow storms

#### January Financial Report

##### Abstract Disbursements for January 2026:

|                        |              |
|------------------------|--------------|
| General Account, 1-13, | \$514,915.38 |
| Highway Fund, 1-8      | \$432,047.11 |
| Sewer Fund, 1-3        | \$53,062.05  |
| Park Fund, 1           | \$637.98     |

Abstracts 1/09/2026 and 1/19/2026 were reviewed by Town Board members, Dvorchak, Feld, Hernandez, Carano Nordenstrom, Ziegler and Highway Superintendent Briggs, with approvals from Dvorchak, Feld, Hernandez, Ziegler and Highway Superintendent Briggs.

#### Town Clerk Report

Town Clerk Ward stated that the Clerk's office was inundated and had received a large FOIA request which would need more time to execute so therefore we would need to add additional hours to the Clerk, Deputy Clerk and the Clerk Admin salary schedules. Town Clerk said she would have a proposal at the next Town Board Meeting.

#### Highway Superintendent's Report

Highway Superintendent Briggs presented his monthly report. about sealing our roads in the small Town of Hillsdale.

#### Resolution 06-2026 to approve 284-2026 Agreement

On a motion of Councilmember Feld, seconded by Councilmember Hernandez.

Highway Superintendent Briggs read a short speech about sealing our roads in our small little town of Hillsdale. It is from your elected Highway Superintendent of 22 years, and a member of the highway Department just shy of 40 years. All this conversation tonight is the same conversation of the past year, a repeat audio from basically the same audience as last year. Please look into the audience and see the same voices of opposition of road improvements, hear the same reasoning even though I have discussed at great length the positives of chip sealing. All we hear or read is negative. Now please look into the audience and see what is not there, hear what is not being said out loud tonight. There is a large group of our constituents that are not here in the audience, are not writing emails to our neighbors and signing letters to the editor. These are the residents that call us, they text us, they stop us in public and tell us how much they appreciate the improvements of chip sealing our roads. That the roads that they travel are much nicer, smoother, calmer, all while keeping the rural characteristics of our community. Tonight, before you vote on the 284, please look into the audience and see the members of our community that are not present for fear of retaliation. Remember the conversations they had with you in support of chip sealed roads in private and remember the reason they did not sign the letter; remember the reason they did not write something on social media. But most of all remember what they said. The majority of the constituents are in favor of chip sealing of loose gravel roads. Please approve the 284 this evening so that I can continue the road improvements that I was elected to do.

Councilmember Feld made a statement that he had made the same statement as last year, he lived on a dirt road that was chip sealed, they drive more safely, there is no environmental impact and he is in favor of chip sealing the roads.

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Councilmember Hernandez stated that he had grown up here and remembers when Whippoorwill was dirt and was impassable, every year sections were paved. He said that the chief's point was good, there are a lot of people that live in this town that were not here because they just want their roads maintained which is why they repeatedly voted for Richard Briggs, the voters have made their position clear.

Councilmember Carano Nordenstrom stated that the town prematurely approves the 284 and we then solicit for donations to stop the execution for that approval. A Gift Committee was formed. She had not seen an advisory saying that the town has any ability to solicit gifts.

Town Attorney Dow stated that for the 284 there is no public input, it is strictly the Highway Superintendent and the Town Board discussing what is going to be done with the funding and CHIPS. There are New York State Comptrollers' opinions stating that gifts can be given to a municipality for specific purposes, stipulated to be used for one specific thing and it is simply accepted for that purpose or rejected, it is not a general grant or gift to a municipality. There is a specific opinion, where it is acceptable for a property owner to give the town money for the specific purpose of maintaining the road in front of the person's property.

Councilmember Carano Nordenstrom stated that having a Gift Committee and approving something to force constituents to donate to prevent the approval from being executed she thinks is extortive. She told the newspaper last year and is stating this again.

Town Attorney Dow stated that there was one lawful recourse that made people aware that if they wanted to go down this route that they could do it.

Councilmember Carano Nordenström read an opinion from the New York State Comptroller's Office stating that a Town could not solicit gifts or donations. She asked Town Attorney Dow if he provided the board with the references for gifts for a specific purpose as she had never seen them.

Town Attorney Dow said it was a very unusual situation, people came and asked if there is anything that they could do. The attorney for Honeydog Farm contacted the town, which was referred to Town Attorney Dow, asking if there is anything they can do to ask if this could be done differently. Town Attorney Dow looked into it and there is a Comptrollers opinion that says they could give a gift to the town for the purpose of maintaining the road in front of their property. All the town did was make the property owners aware that there was a lawful way to find recourse.

Councilmember Carano Nordenstrom began to speak and was asked by Supervisor Dvorchak to stop as her time was up as she had spoken for 6 minutes and it was the turn of other members of the board.

Councilmember Ziegler stated that there are some very good reasons for chip sealing and one of the ones that concerns him is the use of taxpayer money. He has conducted some research, and it cannot be disputed that maintaining a chip sealed road over time is less expensive than maintaining a gravel road, we have to be careful how we spend our taxpayer money. About 10% of the town is below the poverty line, there are people struggling to pay for heating bills this winter, so he thinks that we should look at ways to cut down on the cost of our main budget item which is roads.

Supervisor Dvorchak said he wanted to make a statement. Climate Change is real. I worked on the FEMA Hazard Mitigation plan and loose gravel roads are not practical for in the extreme weather we will face. The reality is loose gravel roads, and 2-ton fire trucks are not conducive to rapid responses.

Supervisor Dvorchak was interrupted by a member of the public laughing at the statement.

He continued:

I do not support putting a pause on the safety of our first responders or the residents. The fact is that the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's Wildlife Staff reviewed this project and

confirmed that there would be no negative impact related to any threatened or endangered wildlife species. In the same letter it states, every time it rains, large amounts of sediment from the road are washed into the trout stream. Sediment is a contaminant that can get into the fish's gills and cause harm to the fish.

We have real data on usage. In tonight's packet you will find building permits for Pumpkin Hill Road and for good measure Texas Hill Road. In the last few years alone, you will find construction projects requiring 30-ton cement trucks, lumber delivery trucks, transportation of carpenters, electricians, plumbers, landscapers, etc. Also, you will find roof replacements involving tons of shingles both in and out. And there logging permits with owners of both roads listed. The reality is that loose gravel roads cannot handle cement trucks and heavy activity, it is really unfair to ask the average tax payer to make this up. We are Hillsdale and aptly named, being located in the foothills of the Taconic Mountain Range. We are proposing proper care for Pumpkin Hill Road after greatly improving traction on White Hill Road, Wolf Hill Road, Texas Hill Road, Herford Hills Road, Richard Hill Road and Stone Hill Road. The reality is that the topography of our town is not opportune for loose gravel roads. The reality for me is that you are asking for me to discount the opinion of an almost 4-decade veteran who has done nothing but keep this town in good condition and safe. Of all the things we have accomplished over the last two years, the thing I am most proud of is establishing a productive relationship with our Highway Department based on mutual respect. This was not always the case. I believe that's what is best for Hillsdale. Our Sewer district would probably be \$200,000.00 in debt if it wasn't for our Highway Department. Richard Briggs knows every inch of our 74.09 miles of town-maintained roads. He was chosen by Hillsdale voters to make these decisions. He was chosen 5 times. We are not paving the roads; we are chip sealing the roads.

Based on the realities on the ground, I will be voting yes on this 284.

Supervisor Dvorchak asked if there were any further comments, Councilmember Feld stated that he knew that there was a lot said about environmental issues. He lives opposite a pond, and has lived there for 26 years, there are now geese, herons, muskrats, beavers all thriving and very happy in the pond on that chip sealed road. He knows what life was like before it and it is now greatly improved.

Councilmember Hernandez stated he was a firefighter and are used to people smiling and giggling about the risks we take, besides the Deputy in the back and the Chief. Councilmember Hernandez was interrupted by a member of public. He continued that in the last storm we went off the road into a ditch on a dirt road answering an alarm activation. He walked the road today; there are big drop offs. The Highway Superintendent, who was also Chief for a long time, we know it is going to happen to us. It is not just the firefighters and the ambulance, it is all the essential workers that we cared so much about during COVID times, my wife is a hospice nurse and in that snow storm the whole hospice team was trying to get to people in their homes who are in pain. We need to do everything we can to keep the roads safe. Having experienced that myself it is very real.

Councilmember Carano Nordenstrom stated that Councilmember Ziegler spoke about cost, but it's been raised many times last year and since last year's review that the cost models presented were completely unsubstantiated. We have the information, we have abstracts every two weeks, Highway Superintendent Briggs is really good at submitting them and has done this for many years. We have the information we can actually make this cost analysis if we really wanted to but we have not done it. She stated she had raised the issue last month and hopes Supervisor Dvorchak will consider sitting down with her to understand why those costs are unsubstantiated. Councilmember Carano Nordenstrom said she was asked at the last board meeting to do some research to present other options for residents on

dirt roads, what they can do to prevent their road from being paved. She sent the information to the Town Attorney and the Town board members and asked them to be added to the agenda, that it was relevant to review these items prior to approval or disapproval of the 284. She stated that it looks like she has been disqualified from the agenda or maybe she has been censored from the agenda.

Supervisor Dvorchak stated that the link was posted when it was received.

Councilmember Carano Nordenstrom stated that in the future she would really like to make sure that the information provided against an active agenda item, she hopes that the information that she provides to be added to the agenda is added. She would like to review that as Supervisor Dvorchak said it was not relevant. Supervisor Dvorchak asked if there is a road that is proposed to be abandoned. Councilmember Carano Nordenstrom stated no. She continued and said that she thinks that the public should know that this option exists because the only option they have now is this kind of quid pro quo extortive methodology.

Supervisor Dvorchak stated that she had used her three minutes, and we can do that at the next meeting.

Town Attorney Dow stated that the Abandoned Highways section 171 of the Highway Law is not discretionary.

Councilmember Carano Nordenstrom stated that the public did not know, Supervisor Dvorchak answered that it was on the agenda, the town board members stated that they had reviewed it.

Town Attorney Dow stated that the prerequisite is that a town road must become useless since it was laid out. The Cornell Local Roads program describing it says to note the useless procedure by the Town and the property owners must be in agreement about the right of way and it must be undisputed that the right of way is now useless, it cannot be done for a road that is actually in use.

Councilmember Carano Nordenstrom stated that it was not the road that was useless it was the right of way that is useless, the third item that she sent was a webinar by the general counsel for the Association of Towns she outlines what is useless, low traffic roads are considered useless under this definition.

Supervisor Dvorchak stated that he was at the Association of Towns at the Highway seminar, and we asked a specific question, does the road need to be completely abandoned for 6 years.

Councilmember Carano Nordenstrom stated that it was abandonment, this is discontinuing dedicated streets and highways it is a different statute, 171.2, Highway Law 205.

Town Attorney Dow read the law, the Town Superintendent may also on written application or written consent by the Town Board, laying out or altering a highway or discontinuing a highway which has become useless since it was laid out, that is the statute.

Councilmember Carano Nordenstrom stated uselessness was further defined by case law.

Supervisor Dvorchak stated the Councilmember Carano Nordenstrom had her 3 minutes and just for the record you sent that yesterday and according to Microsoft this was posted yesterday probably within an hour of you sending it.

Councilmember Carano Nordenstrom stated that she had sent it on Sunday.

Town Attorney Dow stated that this doesn't preclude anybody from proceeding with it, if that were the case, just like what was done last year where someone offered a gift to the town.

Councilmember Carano Nordenstrom stated it is unethical and premature to approve a 284.

Supervisor Dvorchak stated it can be amended and we are going to move on. He stated that he received it on February 8<sup>th</sup> at 9:24 in the evening and posted it the next morning at 6:00am.

Councilmember Carano Nordenstrom said why would she send you an email, this is like kindergarten.

Supervisor Dvorchak stated it was 9:24pm.

Town Clerk Ward conducted a roll call:

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The motion was

ADOPTED       Ayes 4               Dvorchak, Feld, Hernandez, Ziegler.  
                  Naves 1              Carano Nordenstrom

Councilmember Carano Nordenström stated based on inadequate review.  
Resolved the Town Board approves 284 – 2026 agreement.

**SEQR for 2026-284**

Supervisor Dvorchak stated that they were moving on to the SEQR. Attorney Dow stated that it was probably not required and that they were being extra cautious about it and had written the SEQR. Supervisor Dvorchak asked if anyone on the Town Board had objections to any of the answers posted. Councilmember Carano Nordenstrom talked about two of the answers and suggested that the private counsel and the Town Attorney should meet to discuss prior to the Town board making a “Negative Declaration”. Attorney Dow stated that he did read the letter from the private counsel, one of the issues is the section 137, it is not one of the restricted activities, secondly there is no lawful way that the Town can delegate to a private person permitting authority over its own governmental actions.

**Resolution 07-2026** to approve SEQR 1 for double chip sealing Lockwood Road, Pumpkin Hill Road, Syre Lane, Willowbrook Lane.

On a motion of Councilmember Feld, seconded by Councilmember Hernandez.

The motion was

ADOPTED       Ayes 4               Dvorchak, Feld, Hernandez, Ziegler.  
                  Abstain 1           Carano Nordenstrom

Resolved the Town Board approves section 1 of the SEQR agreement.

SEQR part 2 with eleven questions, Supervisor Dvorchak read the questions with the answers of “no or small impact”.

SEQR part 3.

On a motion of Councilmember Feld, seconded by Councilmember Hernandez, that the SEQR will not have a significant adverse environmental impact on the roads.

The motion was

ADOPTED       Ayes 4               Dvorchak, Feld, Hernandez, Ziegler.  
                  Abstain 1           Carano Nordenstrom

Resolved the Town Board approves that the SEQR for double chip sealing Lockwood Road, Pumpkin Hill Road, Syre Lane, Willowbrook Lane will not have a significant adverse environmental impact.

**Resolution 08-2026** to approve the renewal of the agreement of Enhanced Police Services between the Columbia County Board of Supervisor and the Columbia County Sheriff.

Supervisor Dvorchak stated that Jackie Salvatore could not attend and had sent a Deputy in her place.

**WHEREAS**, the Hillsdale Town Court has requested enhanced patrol at court proceedings at Hillsdale Town Hall on the third Wednesday of the month, and

**WHEREAS**, the initial Agreement in place was approved by Hillsdale Town Board by Resolution 30-2024 and remains the same for its renewal, save for changing the word “his” to “hers,” and

**WHEREAS**, the Columbia County Board of Supervisors passed Resolution 126-2024 authorizing the Sheriff to contract with Towns and Villages, and

**WHEREAS**, the Town Board retains the authority to appropriate any funding for an enhanced patrol, and

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**WHEREAS**, the Court Contractual Fund in the 2026 budget contains funding for enhanced patrol  
**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Town Board authorized the renewal Enhanced Enforcement Patrol agreement and authorized the Supervisor to sign the document.

On a motion of Councilmember Feld, seconded by Councilmember Hernandez.

General discussion.

The motion was

ADOPTED      Ayes 4              Dvorchak, Feld, Hernandez, Ziegler.  
                 Abstain 1          Carano Nordenstrom

Resolved the Town Board authorized the renewal Enhanced Enforcement Patrol agreement and authorized the Supervisor to sign the document.

**Resolution 09-2026** to Approve the renewal of the lease of the Substation amended with the correct annual rent of \$6,456.00.

On a motion of Councilmember Ziegler, seconded by Councilmember Hernandez.

General discussion.

The motion was

ADOPTED      Ayes 4              Dvorchak, Feld, Hernandez, Ziegler.  
                 Abstain 1          Carano Nordenstrom

Resolved the Town Board to approve the renewal of the lease of the Substation amended with the correct annual rent of \$6,456.00.

**Resolution 10-2025** To approve a resolution supporting a public transportation pilot program. Tate Coleman, director of Public Transportation, Great Barrington.

On a motion of Councilmember Hernandez, seconded by Councilmember Feld.

Tate Coleman introduced himself and reviewed his presentation.

General discussion.

The motion was

ADOPTED      Ayes 5              Dvorchak, Feld, Hernandez, Carano Nordenstrom, Ziegler.

Resolved the Town Board approves the resolution supporting a public transportation pilot program.

**Resolution 11-2026** to approve the Town of Hillsdale, at the request of its citizen advisory committee Safe at Home, applying for a grant from the fund for Columbia County, Berkshire Taconic Foundation for the operating support and participation in a year-long, starting July 1, 2026, pilot on-demand transportation project in the amount of \$5,155 and \$2,205 for the Safe at Home Coffee Hour.

On a motion of Councilmember Feld, seconded by Councilmember Hernandez.

The motion was

ADOPTED      Ayes 5              Dvorchak, Feld, Hernandez, Carano Nordenstrom, Ziegler.

Resolved the Town Board authorizes the Safe at Home Committee to apply for a grant from the fund for Columbia County, Berkshire Taconic Foundation.

**Resolution 12-2026** to approve revised Short Term Rental Application.

On a motion of Councilmember Hernandez, seconded by Councilmember Feld.

General discussion.

The motion was

ADOPTED      Ayes 5              Dvorchak, Feld, Hernandez, Carano Nordenstrom, Ziegler.

Resolved the Town Board approves the Short-Term Rental Application.

**Hamlet Park**

**Resolution 13-2026** to approve the drawing of the West side of the Hamlet Park for bandshell placement, fast charger placement and plantings on the North and West borders.

On a motion of Councilmember Feld, seconded by Councilmember Ziegler.

General discussion.

The motion was

ADOPTED      Ayes 5                      Dvorchak, Feld, Hernandez, Carano Nordenstrom, Ziegler.

Resolved the Town Board approves the drawing of the West side of the Hamlet Park for bandshell placement, fast charger placement and plantings on the North and West borders.

**Resolution 14-2026** To Authorize the Bidding Process for the Purchase and Construction of a Bandshell in the Hillsdale Hamlet Park.

On a motion of Councilmember Feld, seconded by Councilmember Ziegler.

The motion was

ADOPTED      Ayes 5                      Dvorchak, Feld, Hernandez, Carano Nordenstrom, Ziegler.

Resolved the Town Board authorizes the Bidding Process for the Purchase and Construction of a Bandshell in the Hillsdale Hamlet Park.

**Resolution 15- 2026** To approve the

On a motion of Councilmember Hernandez, seconded by Councilmember Feld.

General discussion.

The motion was

ADOPTED      Ayes 5                      Dvorchak, Feld, Hernandez, Carano Nordenstrom, Ziegler.

Resolved the Town Board authorizes the Earth Day Tree Planting application to be signed by the Town Supervisor.

**Comprehensive Plan**

**Resolution To Establish a Comprehensive Plan Committee**

Supervisor Dvorchak added this to the agenda to start the conversation.

General discussion.

On a motion of Councilmember Hernandez, seconded by Councilmember Feld.

The motion was tabled.

**Roe Jan Park**

Councilmember Hernandez stated that there were some concerns about safety with the snow. Joanna Virello offered to get a group together to snowmobile the trail to pack it down to make it passable. This was approved by the Parks and State Department.

Working on keeping up with repairs and improvements, talking to the Farmers Market and others, so we can go after the grant money that Joanna secured last year.

**Resolution 16-2026** to approve the retainer with Elena DeFio Kean, Esq. of Hinman Straub, P.C. for Labor Representation for the Town of Hillsdale.

General discussion.

On a motion of Councilmember Feld, seconded by Councilmember Ziegler.

The motion was

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ADOPTED Ayes 5 Dvorchak, Feld, Hernandez, Carano Nordenstrom, Ziegler.  
Resolved the Town Board approves the retainer with Elena DeFio Kean ESQ.

**Adjourn to Executive Session** to discuss the medical or employment history of a particular person or matters leading to the appointment, employment, promotion, demotion, discipline, suspension, dismissal or removal of a particular person.

On a motion of Councilmember Feld, seconded by Councilmember Ziegler at 8:49pm.

ADOPTED Ayes 5 Dvorchak, Feld, Hernandez, Carano Nordenstrom, Ziegler.

**Return to Public Session:**

On a motion of Councilmember Feld, seconded by Councilmember Ziegler at 8:58pm.

ADOPTED Ayes 5 Dvorchak, Feld, Hernandez, Carano Nordenstrom, Ziegler.

**Resolution 17-2026** To approve a memorandum of understanding between the Teamsters, the employee and the Town of Hillsdale.

On a motion of Councilmember Feld, seconded by Councilmember Ziegler.

The motion was

ADOPTED Ayes 5 Dvorchak, Feld, Hernandez, Carano Nordenstrom, Ziegler.

Resolved the Town Board To approve a memorandum of understanding between the Teamsters, the employee and the Town of Hillsdale.

**Adjournment**

On a motion of Councilmember Feld, seconded by Councilmember Ziegler at 9:00 pm.

The motion was

ADOPTED Ayes 5 Dvorchak, Feld, Hernandez, Carano Nordenstrom, Ziegler.

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Robina Ward, Town Clerk