

Conservation Advisory Council Town of Hillsdale, NY

David Lewis, Chair
Amy Davidsen
Mary King
Gretchen Stevens

MINUTES CAC MEETING, 16 OCTOBER 2025

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

Approval of Minutes

The September minutes have not yet been approved.

Old Business

Water Testing

At the Town Council meeting, Amy learned that water testing of the three town facilities has not yet been done, but Robina has set aside (encumbered) \$950 from past funds for Claverack Pump to do the work. She planned to have it done in spring 2026, but we will see if she can have it done earlier.

Planning Board

Gretchen reported that Peter Yates has proposed a three-lot subdivision on an 18-acre parcel at the corner of Mansfield and Yonderview roads. The planning board pointed out that the state and federal maps show wetlands on the site, but the subdivision plat shows no wetlands. The applicant was asked to have the wetlands delineated by a wetland specialist and surveyed onto the plat, and also to add an agricultural disclosure statement.

CAC Open Position

Debra Adamsons, who had expressed interest in the CAC position, decided not to apply because her work and family life do not allow her enough extra time. David has renewed the posters at public places advertising the CAC opening.

Hazard Mitigation Plan

The Town Council adopted the county's Hazard Mitigation Plan at their September meeting. Mike needs to be reminded to tell the county's consultant. Final approval by FEMA is pending adoption by all Columbia County municipalities.

Culverts

David reported that the Town Council authorized \$1600 to pay engineers to assess and report on the condition of the Mitchell Street culvert, but doesn't know if that assessment has been done. Amy says that \$170,000 has been allocated for a Mitchell Street culvert in the 2026 town budget, under "Bridges

Contractual." We assume this is for the culvert near NYS Rt 23, but that is unclear. Another culvert on Mitchell Street, near Holm Road, was identified as high-priority for replacement in the 2019 culvert study. In the Hillsdale Annex to the county's Hazardous Mitigation Plan the replacement of the high-priority Mitchell Street and Breezy Hill culverts are estimated at \$300,000 each, so we assume that this \$170,000 is allocated for the southern culvert near Rt 23.

If the culvert is to be replaced, we need to make sure that the new culvert is designed to accommodate large anticipated storm flows and to present no barrier to upstream and downstream movement of aquatic organisms.

Amy and Gretchen will look for all the potential sources of funding for culvert replacement, and will then meet with Richard Briggs and Mike Dvorchak to discuss which sources to pursue and which culverts to address.

Comprehensive Plan

Amy reports that the town's draft 2026 budget allocates \$25,000 for the Comprehensive Plan to cover the match for the NYSDOS grant, if awarded.

CAC Calendar

David will work with Mary at the next CAC meeting to get her signed up for the CAC calendar.

Annual Report

David has sent the Annual Report to Mike Dvorchak.

New Business

The Town Council asked the CAC how we would spend our 2025 allocation of \$750. We discussed ways to better publicize the work of the CAC, such as hosting an event at the library, printing some of the CAC reports and other documents as handouts, and preparing a CAC flyer to be mailed to all residences. We would not be able to prepare and publicize a library event this year, but could use our 2025 funds for printing. Gretchen will look over our documents and propose a list for printing. In 2026 we could promote our work and distribute information at a table at the farmers market.

We also discussed conducting an inventory of farm operations in Hillsdale, and preparing a map of active farmland. A list of properties with agricultural tax exemptions, if available to the public, would give us a headstart on that inventory. We brainstormed a list of active farms, and we should all add to it as we think of others. We could use some of our 2025 funds for an intern stipend to help with the inventory. Amy will put out some feelers for potential interns. David will ask Mike Dvorchak if we would need to follow a particular town protocol for hiring an intern.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:25pm.

Action Items

David:

- Sign Mary up on the CAC calendar.
- Ask Mike Dvorchak about any town protocol for hiring an intern.

Mary:

- (carried over) Submit regular reports to the Town Board about EMC activities.

Amy:

- Add to the farm inventory list.
- (carried over) Revise the vision statement for the Comprehensive Plan.
- (carried over) With Gretchen, look for sources of funding for culvert replacement and start to gather information needed for 2026 applications. Confer with Richard Briggs about which culverts to prioritize.
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Gretchen:

- Select CAC articles for printing.
- (carried over) Prepare next draft of the Open Space Plan.
- (carried over) Draft a road salt article for the town newsletter.
- (carried over) With Amy, look for sources of funding for culvert replacement and start to gather information needed for 2026 applications. Confer with Richard Briggs about which culverts to prioritize.

All:

- Add to the list of active farms (circulated by email).
- (carried over) Look for suitable parcels for a future Community Forest.