



**TOWN OF HILLSDALE
SPECIAL TOWN BOARD MEETING
July 21, 2025
Minutes**

The special 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 July 21, 2025, at 12:00 pm.

Board members present:

PRESENT: Supervisor Mike Dvorchak
Councilmember Joanna Virello
Councilmember Steve Tiger
Councilmember Jamie Carano Nordenstrom

ABSENT: Councilmember Irwin Feld

ALSO PRESENT: Robina Ward Town Clerk
Emily Stalker Deputy Town Clerk
Richard Briggs Highway Superintendent
Bart Zeigler Deputy Supervisor
Gretchen Stevens CAC member
David Lewis CAC Chair

OTHERS PRESENT: None

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 12:00 pm with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Application to the Environmental Protection Fund Smart Growth Planning and Zoning Grant.

General discussion about the 2024 grant application and revisions for 2025 submission and timing, the deadline is July 31, 2025.

A letter from Barbara Olsen Pascale, Chairman of the Hillsdale Planning Board was read into the minutes by Supervisor Dvorchak:

Dear Jamie and Mike:

I wanted to provide a little additional feedback now that I have read the actual grant application. I think Mike and Robina have done an admiral job covering the specific legal /jurisdictional issues at play. In general, however, I am troubled that the application presents as *fait accompli* both the significant players in the process and the most important priorities of the Town. I don't think either of these have been determined.

I will reiterate that the Planning Board is supportive of the need for a comprehensive plan review, and recognizes that the CAC can and should play a vital role in the process, particularly as to the elements that lie

within their specific areas of expertise. However, environmental conservation, climate resiliency, and open space preservation cannot be the only drivers of the conversation, and it is here that I feel that the application lacks heft. I am not sure that everyone is aware that the Planning Board, for example, has a member who is a professional Planner with the NYC Port Authority, and another member who spent his entire career as a housing finance specialist on Wall St. I am suggesting, as did Mike, that we leverage the broad and deep expertise we have available to us amongst the various boards and committees.

I have one specific policy point (and here I am speaking as a member, not the entirety of, the Planning Board, since we have not discussed any of this in depth.)

Not all of the "Smart Growth" principles represent the most viable solution for Hillsdale. While "walkable downtowns" are desirable for many reasons, Hillsdale has a hamlet with approximately 70 homes, and we simply do not have the density to support the businesses needed for a self-sufficient walkable ecosystem. Further, in order to achieve the necessary density, several major (and likely unfeasible) hurdles would have to be overcome.

- water and sewer infrastructure sufficient to allow for additional food-service businesses, not to mention multifamily residences of any consequence
- parking
- traffic-calming, including on-street parking, on route 23 (which would require the undoing of the major sidewalk initiative of last decade and overcoming resistance of the State DOT)

In short, without tens of millions of dollars in infrastructure spending, Hillsdale's hamlet cannot become a walkable destination such as Rhinebeck, Chatham, or even Millerton. The challenges are economic, not insufficient planning. Our ZBA and Planning Boards are open to development in the hamlet, and the current Comprehensive Plan allows for it, yet without economically viable projects, developer money will continue to be limited.

Thank you for your consideration and the opportunity to share my thoughts.

Best,
Barbara

Supervisor Dvorchak asked Councilmember Carano Nordenstrom if she would be able to incorporate the red line amendments made to the 2024 grant application for the new 2025 application. Councilmember Carano Nordenstrom stated that she would have it completed by end of business on Tuesday, July 22, 2025. After review by the Town Supervisor, if acceptable, it will be shared with the Planning Board, Zoning Board, Building Inspector and other entities for review and sign off.

Adjournment

Councilmember Virello left the meeting for an appointment.

With no further business before the Town Board, on the motion of Councilmember Tiger, seconded by Supervisor Dvorchak,

Voted Ayes 3 Dvorchak, Tiger, Carano Nordenstrom,
the meeting was adjourned at 1:06 pm.