



**TOWN OF HILLSDALE**  
**Town Board Meeting – February 15, 2024**  
**Draft**

The regular 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 15, 2024, at 7:00 pm.

Board members present:

**PRESENT:** Supervisor Mike Dvorchak  
Councilmember Jamie Carano Nordenstrom  
Councilmember Tom Carty  
Councilmember Irwin Feld  
Councilmember Joanna Virello

**ALSO PRESENT:** Robina Ward Town Clerk  
Emily Stalker Deputy Town Clerk  
Kenneth Dow Esq. Town Attorney  
Joe Hanselman Jr. Town Tax Collector

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Linda Brenner, Richard Kumro, Kathryn Levin, Dan Levy, Meg Wormley, Joshua Stalker, and other 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 7:00pm with the Pledge of allegiance.

**APPROVAL OF January 4, 2024, MINUTES**

On a motion of Councilmember Feld, seconded by Councilmember Carty the following resolution was

ADOPTED Ayes 5 Dvorchak, Virello, Feld, Carano, Carty  
Nays 0

Resolved that the minutes of the January 4, 2024, meeting be approved.

**APPROVAL OF January 9, 2024, MINUTES**

On a motion of Councilmember Feld, seconded by Supervisor Dvorchak the following resolution was

ADOPTED Ayes 5 Dvorchak, Virello, Feld, Carano, Carty  
Nays 0

Resolved that the minutes of the January 9, 2024, meeting be approved.

**APPROVAL OF January 25, 2024, MINUTES**

On a motion of Councilmember Carty, seconded by Councilmember Virello the following resolution was

ADOPTED        Ayes 5                    Dvorchak, Virello, Feld, Carano, Carty  
                     Nays 0

Resolved that the minutes of the January 25, 2024, meeting be approved.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

None

**CORRESPONDANCE**

Supervisor Dvorchak stated that the town had received email correspondence from Kathryn Levin, Steve Bluestone, and Peter Cohen.

**REPORT OF TOWN OFFICIALS**

**SUPERVISOR**

**COUNTY REPORT**

Supervisor Dvorchak reported that he had attended the first Economic Development Committee meeting, we reinstated Michael Tucker and Chris Brown to the Columbia County Development Corporation. He did miss the first Public Works Committee meeting because we were in Albany for training. A lot of budgetary and organizational resolutions were passed for the upcoming year.

**FINANCIAL REPORT**

We started a supervisor summary, we received 1.5 million dollars in deposits this month, 1.3 million was property taxes. We also received sales tax which was \$139,000.00. Supervisor Dvorchak shared a worksheet showing all the deposits and there is a monthly report from the town accountant Mr. Patterson.

**2023 AUDITS**

The 2023 audits, Supervisor Dvorchak will conduct the supervisor account audit as he is not conflicted, Robert Patterson is conflicted, Councilmember Virello will be helping the supervisor. Councilmember Feld will be auditing the Building Inspector account. Lee Heim has his documents digitized.

**BUDGET AMENDMENTS**

Supervisor Dvorchak stated that it is early, however he would like everyone to look at the budgets. He is anticipating an increase in the IT budgets, with Outlook 365 and other IT issues.

**BUDGET RESERVES**

The reading assignment was Budget Reserves, it will not be discussed tonight but the conversation needs to start as we have a grants committee looking at lots of grants.

Attorney Dow stated that there were a lot of different ways to put money aside from the General Budget to the reserves. Reserves can be for a specific project or a general type of project and can be subject to permissive referendum.

Supervisor Dvorchak stated that the West End Bridge grant was submitted, we should hear by April, the match is 5% which is approximately \$60,000.00. Anthony Street sidewalk grant application, by April, is a 20% match which is approximately \$200,000.00. Supervisor Dvorchak did not know about the Salt Shed and the culverts, requires further investigation and will be discussed in future meetings.

**NYS PRO HOUSING INITIATIVE**

Supervisor Dvorchak introduced a member of the Housing Committee, Richard Kumro.

Mr. Kumro stated that the New York State Pro Housing Community Program was created last July by Governor Hochul in an executive order. It is part of the administration's efforts to close a gap in the supply and demand of housing in New York State. There are two features relevant to Hillsdale, the first is an incentive to become certified as a Pro Housing Community, we would then be eligible for preferential priority in certain state grant programs. The second incentive is data collection, the local zoning code, and building permits that have been issued over several years. Hillsdale submitted a letter of intent last month to HCR. Zoning Board Chair Craig Norton has submitted the zoning piece, which was submitted to HCR for review, Building Inspector Lee Heim is working on the building permits spreadsheet and the GIS map. The town should be ready to submit next week. New Lebanon has received their certification. There is a map on the website indicating which Towns, Villages have applied and the status of the application.

**RESOLUTION TO SEEK PRO HOUSING STATUS**

**RESOLUTION 12-2024**

Supervisor Dvorchak read the resolution:

WHEREAS, the Town of Hillsdale (hereinafter "Town") believes that the lack of affordable housing has negative effects at regional and local levels, we believe that every community must do their part to contribute to housing growth, and

WHEREAS,; and the Town realizes that the lack of housing is an economic development issue and severely hinders our local businesses, and

WHEREAS, and the Town Board acknowledges the continued and diligent work of our Citizen Advisory Housing Committee in preparing the necessary materials for submission,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town Board agrees that the Town of Hillsdale should apply for Pro-Housing Status from New York State and directs the Town Supervisor to upload the necessary documents for consideration to the State portal when completed.

On a motion of Councilmember Virello, seconded by Councilmember Corano.

Councilmember Carano asked how the application would be tracked by the board. Supervisor Dvorchak stated that the town would be notified by the state, and it would then be a grant situation. A file of the application will be circulated to the board.

The following resolution was

ADOPTED        Ayes 5                Dvorchak, Virello, Feld, Carano, Carty  
                      Nays 0

Resolved that the Town Board of Hillsdale will apply for Pro Housing status from New York State and directs the Town Supervisor to upload the necessary documents for consideration into the state portal when completed.

**REPORT FROM HOUSING FAIR AND TASK FORCE**

Councilmember Virello reported that the event at the library was about tiny houses, ADU's, best building practices and materials and was very good. Supervisor Dvorchak stated that he wanted to thank the town of Ancram who put it all together.

The Task Force was very interesting, there were questions from other towns interested in seeking Pro Housing Status.

Councilmember Virello encourages anyone interested to join the Zoom meetings on the last Thursday of the month at 4:00pm. Supervisor Dvorchak reported that there is a two-million-dollar grant for ADU's, if your income qualifies you can get up to \$125,000.00, for long term rentals.

#### **RAIL TRAIL BRIDGE**

Supervisor Dvorchak stated that he had written a letter to stress just how important this bridge is to Hillsdale and the businesses. There seems to be a hold up with red tape. Councilmember Virello asked what the hold up was, Supervisor Dvorchak responded that it was to do with closing down Route 22, Electric lines, last minutes items.

#### **COLUMBIA COUNTY HAZARD MITIGATION, LETTER OF INTENT**

Supervisor Dvorchak stated that this was the FEMA plan, updated every 5 years, the letter was due January 31, 2024, and he sent it with the Supervisor as the primary point of contact, David Lewis from the CAC as the secondary point of contact and Lee Heim as the flood mitigator. Now in the survey stage, there is a link on the agenda.

#### **HIGHWAY SUPERINTENDENTS REPORT**

Highway Superintendent Briggs in attending a Fire Department meeting and is unable to attend this town meeting. He sent his report. Supervisor Dvorchak read the reports.

#### **TAX COLLECTOR REPORT**

Tax Collector Hanselman reported that he had collected \$3,615,369.09 which is up \$210,000.00 from this time last year. A lot of people are paying online by echeck. One person accidentally paid the wrong bill which was refunded. The bill numbers change from year to year. Councilmember Virello suggested that the online echeck payment be added to the newsletter.

#### **TOWN CLERK REPORT**

Town Clerk Ward stated that the voucher system had been reintroduced. Bank access is a problem, in the process of being changed.

A package had been sent around about the Credit Cards, a company recommended by the Bank of Greene County, the service charge is minimal, about \$30.00 a month for the machine, all the other fees would be paid by the people who want to pay by credit card, in person and online, for everything except Property Taxes.

We are also looking into a check deposit machine or machines.

Town Clerk Ward has been working with Councilmembers Carty and Carano on a Records Management grant. We need to have more storage, another room at the Sheriff's station, install shelves, boxes need to be labeled and dated, contents listed. Some records need to be kept for life, others for 5-10-15-55 years. The other part to the grant is to digitize as many records as possible.

#### **SEWER DISTRICT REPORT**

Supervisor Dvorchak stated that the costs are borne by a small number of people, so we must be diligent about any kind of costs to the sewer district. The town needs a sewer operator, it is a part-time position, however you must be on call if there is an alarm. We may have to share someone with another town or pay for training. We have a secondary operator who keeps us state compliant with all the filings. In an emergency we have been using Bradway.

We also need a Town Maintenance person, there may be a lead for that position.

**TRANSFER OF ARPA FUNDS TO THE SEWER DISTRICT**  
**RESOLUTION 13-2024**

Supervisor Dvorchak read the resolution.

**WHEREAS**, the Town of Hillsdale has received American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (“ARPA”) State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds in the amount of \$184,819.96, and

**WHEREAS**, such ARPA funds may be used by local governments to fund government services, including government services provided by special districts; and

**WHEREAS**, in addition to prospectively funding government services, local governments may use ARPA funds to reimburse themselves for eligible expenditures incurred from March 3, 2021 to the present; and

**WHEREAS**, the Town Board of Hillsdale has determined that is in the best interests of the Town of Hillsdale to use a portion of its ARPA funds to reimburse the Town of Hillsdale Sewer District No. 1 for eligible expenditures on government service incurred by the Sewer District from March 3, 2021 through December 31, 2023; and

**WHEREAS**, the eligible non-debt expenditures of the Sewer District during such period totaled \$40,603.13; and

**WHEREAS**, the Town Board of the Town of Hillsdale desires to transfer ARPA funds in such amount to the Town of Hillsdale Sewer District No. 1 to be used by the Sewer District to provide government service in the form of ongoing operational expenses.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, by the Town Board of Hillsdale, that the Town Board hereby authorizes the transfer of ARPA funds in the amount of \$61,672.06 to the Town of the Town of Hillsdale Sewer District No.1 to reimburse the Sewer District for eligible expenditures incurred by the Sewer District from March 3, 2021 through December 31, 2023 and to provide the Sewer District with funding assistance for government services in the form of ongoing operational expenses.

On a motion of Councilmember Virello, seconded by Councilmember Carty.  
Councilmember Carano discussed the use of ARPA funds. Supervisor Dvorchak stated there were a lot of mitigating factors.

The following resolution was

ADOPTED        Ayes 5                    Dvorchak, Virello, Feld, Carano, Carty  
                             Nays 0

Resolved that the Town Board of Hillsdale hereby authorizes the transfer of ARPA funds in the amount of \$61,672.06 to the Town of Hillsdale Sewer District No. 1 to reimburse the Sewer District for eligible expenditures incurred by the Sewer District from January 1, 2023, to December 31, 2023 and to provide the Sewer District with funding assistance for government services in the form of ongoing operational expenses.

**ACCEPTANCE OF EASEMENTS**

**RESOLUTION 14-2024**

Supervisor Dvorchak stated that the acceptance of the Easements was the final piece that Mr. Hindes will need to get the formal DOH approval.

Mr. Bluestone and Mr. Herrington received the easement documents, which they signed, Supervisor Dvorchak needs to counter sign.

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

Councilmember Carano asked about who conducted the survey. Mr. Hindes' surveyor created the survey, Attorney Dow created the easements. There was a discussion about stamped maps and the easements that are now on the map and the need for updated as built maps.

The following resolution was

ADOPTED        Ayes 5                    Dvorchak, Virello, Feld, Carano, Carty  
                     Nays 0

Resolved that the Town Board accepts the Easement documents and authorizes Supervisor Dvorchak to sign them.

**INFRASTRUCTURE**

Supervisor Dvorchak stated that we should know about the West End Bridge by April 1<sup>st</sup>. Anthony Street grant by April 1<sup>st</sup>.

**TOWN HALL REPAIRS**

Supervisor Dvorchak stated he was on site with Building Inspector Lee Heim and Jonathon DiRocco from CPL. The roof is okay, the gutters are problematic as they used sheetrock screws to mount the gutters. There will be a review with the contractors and the job will be finished correctly.

The mold remediation work will happen in April or May, everything needs to be moved out of the basement into secure storage. The flooring will be replaced. Everything needs to be moved back. The insulation in the attic needs to be removed and replaced. There is a meeting set up for February 27<sup>th</sup> to discuss logistics.

**WEST END ENTERANCE SIGN REPLACEMENT**

Councilmember Feld stated that the Town had received the insurance payment for the replacement of the sign, and that he was in contact with Nancy Scans who will fabricate the sign. There is a cost difference.

Supervisor Dvorchak suggested that there may be money from the HECDC available. The estimates need to be updated.

**ROE JAN PARK**

Councilmember Virello stated that the last storm had taken out of the willow trees around the Harvest Barn and a few trees among the power lines. Supervisor Dvorchak and Councilmember Virello met with the new Supervisor of the town of Copake Richard Wolfe, they sent a crew and cleaned it up. Bill Furner cleaned up other trees by the picnic tables.

**ARM OF SEA CHILDRENS THEATER**

The company puts on Puppet theaters for children about the environment. They tour Columbia and Greene County. The cost is \$1,750.00 and another type for \$1,500.00, after the Farmers Market in the Hilltop barn.

Town Clerk Ward asked who takes care of the bookings for the Community Table at the Farmers Market. Councilmember Virello suggested we have a signup on the town website.

### **GRANTS COMMITTEE**

#### **NYSERDA**

Supervisor Dvorchak stated he had received a letter from Howard Van Lenten requesting the Town Attorney review the contract, which he has. Attorney Dow stated it was routine, basically don't do anything without the prior authorization of NYSERDA.

The grant is for \$10,000.00 plus the remaining \$5,000.00 from a previous grant and will be used for the installation of 12 additional Solar Panels on the Town Garage by Hudson River Solar at the prevailing wage.

#### **RESOLUTION 15-2024**

On a motion of Councilmember Feld, seconded by Councilmember Carty the following resolution was

ADOPTED      Ayes 4              Dvorchak, Virello, Feld, Carano, Carty

                    Nays 0

Resolved that Supervisor Dvorchak will sign the NYSERDA contract for a \$10,000.00 grant and that Councilmember Carty will be the administrator.

#### **STATE AND MUNICIPAL GRANT**

Supervisor Dvorchak stated he had been in touch with Didi Barrett's office. He has contacted CPL. He has created a spreadsheet for ideas.

#### **AARP COMMUNITY CHALLENGE GRANT**

Councilmember Carano stated she had read the paperwork and sat through the webinar, none of the recommendations that were received for the grant which is due March 6<sup>th</sup> are relevant. The town might be able to apply for a Micro Grant, a Walkability Grant, a Walkability Audit Grant or a Bike Ability Audit Grant which are about \$2,500.00 apiece. Now we can track it and be prepared for next year.

#### **COMMUNITY FOREST CONSERVATION GRANT**

Councilmember Carano stated that the grant was presented by Gretchen Stevens a member of the CAC. David Lewis and Gretchen Stevens would be surveying different areas of Hillsdale for community forests. Finding land. The grant is approximately \$25,000.00 or \$35,000.00 maximum. Used for land donations or partial land donations.

#### **BERKSHIRE TACONIC FOUNDATION**

The grant goes through the HECDC and not the Town. The grant will pay for some of the events, coffee hours, and programs.

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Supervisor Dvorchak stated that the town started consolidating the Committee reports, as liaison's you need to know that notes should be sent to the Town Clerk and cc'd to the Supervisor. Councilmember Virello questioned what her position was with the Economic Development Committee, she is the chair. Councilmember Feld is the liaison. Further discussion about liaison positions and chair positions, a chair cannot be a Town Board member.

#### **CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Councilmember Carano stated that this was covered in the grant portion of the meeting.

#### CLIMATE SMART COMMUNITIES TASK FORCE

Seeking new members. Councilmember Carano stated she had looked into the CFA grants and that they give the same number of points for Bronze and Silver. Supervisor Dvorchak thanked the members for getting to Bronze.

#### SAFE AT HOME

Supervisor Dvorchak stated he had a request to update their mission statement. He read the mission statement.

On a motion of Councilmember Carty, seconded by Councilmember Virello. Councilmember Carano stated that the committee might want to update their name as "Safe at Home" refers to Domestic Abuse.

(No vote was taken).

#### HAMLET COMMITTEE

Supervisor Dvorchak added dates for the return of the Hamlet Committee, Flea Market – Memorial Day weekend, Saturday, or Sunday. The Hamlet Committee, thanks to the newsletter, got 20 new people. A reminder that the Memorial Day Parade is on Monday in Copake this year.

#### **REVIEW OF POLICIES**

Supervisor Dvorchak received a list of recommended policies from the New Lebanon Supervisor Hotaling, we should meet and go through them. A lot of our policies are in our handbook which is on the Town Website.

There was discussion on updating the handbook. Deputy Supervisor Steve Tiger stated that the town had hired a company to compile our Employee Handbook and any changes the company would review, or we can.

#### HARASSMENT TRAINING

Supervisor Dvorchak stated that the majority of the board members had completed their harassment training. Tom Carty got the highest score.

General discussion continued.

#### **RESOLUTION 16-2024**

On a motion of Councilmember Carano, seconded by Councilmember Feld the following resolution was

ADOPTED      Ayes 5              Dvorchak, Virello, Feld, Carano, Carty

                 Nays 0

Resolved that the Town Board adopt the NYMIR sanctioned training.

#### IT POLICIES

Supervisor Dvorchak stated that we have a problem with past users and need to codify the use of town addresses under [Towninfo@hillsdaleny.com](mailto:Towninfo@hillsdaleny.com).

There is a need for a workshop and to include our Town IT person.

#### POLICY FOR APPROVING MEMBERS OF CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Supervisor Dvorchak stated that there is a list that will be discussed in the Executive Session. He looked at the town of Copake Policy and suggested that if a committee is new or rejuvenated that the Town Board will be the nominating and appointing committee. Once a Board has been created that the applicants should be referred to the individual citizens advisory committee for them to interview and nominate and then the Town Board will then approve. Councilmember Carano stated that it was a revision to a current policy. There was a further general discussion.

**RAPID CARE**

Supervisor Dvorchak spoke with Supervisor Wolfe in Copake about the letter that was received. Supervisor Wolfe told Supervisor Dvorchak that the town of Copake has now not moved forward in asking the town for funding and will instead go for private financing.

**EASTER EGG HUNT**

It is early this year March 24; we need volunteers to stuff eggs and set them out. Councilmember Virello suggested that we use the Hillsdale Firehouse again, we have to order eggs and candy and asked if someone from the Hamlet Committee would like to take it over.

**RESOLUTION 17-2024**

On a motion of Councilmember Carano, seconded by Councilmember Feld the following resolution was

ADOPTED        Ayes 5                Dvorchak, Virello, Feld, Carano, Carty  
                     Nays 0

Resolved that the Town Board authorize the Supervisor to purchase plastic eggs and candy for the Easter Egg Hunt.

**ASSOCIATION OF TOWNS TRAINING**

Supervisor Dvorchak stated that he and Councilmember Feld and Town Clerk Ward would be attending training in New York City from Sunday through Wednesday. Councilmember Carano stated that she will be attending. General discussion followed.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Linda Brenner asked about the Taco place, the town board responded that it was not a town topic.

Kathry Levin stated that the bylaws regarding telecommunications are sadly lacking. There is nothing about NEPA. Ms. Levin handed Attorney Dow a flash drive with the bylaws of Dalton Gardens. Ms. Levin stated that there was 5G antenna right across the street. There will be an educator at the Roe Jan Library on March 4, from 5:00pm to 6:30pm and suggested that the town board meet with her on Tuesday March 5 morning for breakfast.

Linda Brenner asked who will make the decision to change the name of a committee, Supervisor Dvorchak answered that it was the Town Board.

Allison Murphy stated that she had printed out articles from other cities and towns about bylaws for more information.

Joe Hanselman stated that the Fire Company was cancelling the Palm Sunday Brunch this year as they do not have enough members and asked for assistance from the public to become a support member. Meg Wormley will be in touch with Mr. Hanselman to add information to the next newsletter.

**MOTION TO MOVE IN TO EXECUTIVE SESSION**

On a motion of Councilmember Feld, seconded by Councilmember Virello the following resolution was

ADOPTED        Ayes 5                Dvorchak, Virello, Feld, Carano, Carty  
                     Nays 0

Resolved that the Town Board move into Executive Session at 9.07 pm to discuss Personnel Appointments.

Supervisor Dvorchak read a list of persons for Committee Appointments.

General discussion followed, including a possible change of policy.

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New members were voted on as follows:

Safe at Home Committee

Patti Rohrlich, 4 Ayes, 1 Nays

Hamlet Committee

Tim Stookesberry, 4 Ayes, 1 Nays

Steve Tiger, 5 Ayes

Kelly Fox, 3 Ayes, 1 Nays, 1 Abstention

Linda Brenner 5 Ayes

Emergency Preparedness Committee

Paul Duernberger, 5 Ayes

Alex Bloomstein, 5 Ayes

CSC

Amy Davidson, 3 Ayes, 2 Nays

RJ Park Steering Committee

Zelda Furner, 5 Ayes

Bill Furner, 5 Ayes

Tamara Gaskill, 3 Ayes, 1 Nays, 1 Abstention

Sam Johnson, 3 Ayes, 2 Nays

Meghan McCann, 5 Ayes

Ron Bixby, 3 Ayes, 1 Nays, 1 Abstention

Martin Stosiek, 3 Ayes, 1 Nays, 1 Abstention

Attorney Dow stated that this was not an effective way to go forward to appoint people to committees.

Tom Carty left the meeting at 9:50pm

MOTION TO RETURN TO REGULAR SESSION

On a motion of Councilmember Feld, seconded by Councilmember Virello the following resolution was

ADOPTED        Ayes 5                Dvorchak, Virello, Feld, Carano, Carty

                     Nays 0

Resolved that the Town Board move out of Executive Session at 9.50pm.

With no further business on a motion of Councilmember Feld seconded by Councilmember Virello the meeting was adjourned at 9:57pm. Carried unanimously.

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Robina Ward, Town Clerk

