

Conservation Advisory Council Town of Hillsdale, NY

David Lewis, Chair
Amy Davidsen
Mary King
Gretchen Stevens
(open position)

MINUTES CAC MEETING, 21 MAY 2026

The meeting was convened at 7:02pm at the Hillsdale Town Hall. Amy, David, and Gretchen were present. Mary was absent. Jamie Carano Nordenstrom (Town Council liaison) was also absent.

Approval of Minutes

The March and April minutes had been previously approved via email.

Old Business

CAC Open Position

We approved a letter to the Town Board, recommending that Ed Frederick be appointed to fill the open CAC position. Gretchen will send to the board with a request to make the appointment at their June meeting.

Culverts

Gretchen will set up a meeting with Mike Dvorchak and Richard Briggs to discuss whether to go after a WQIP grant for culvert replacement.

Hillsdale Town Newsletter

Mary and Amy have approved the edited rat poison article. Gretchen will re-send it to David for review.

Sponsor a screening of The Extraordinary Caterpillar film?

Amy will notify the person who was interested in arranging the screening that the Town Board has approved the co-sponsorship by the Hillsdale CAC and Climate Smart Communities/Clean Energy Task Force. Amy has offered to arrange the screening if needed.

Paving

As a Texas Hill Rd landowner (not as a CAC member), Amy sent a letter to the Town Board and Richard Briggs about the problem of chip seal material washing into a tributary to the Taghkanic Creek, but has received no response.

Comprehensive Plan

Amy reported that the Town Board considered a resolution to appoint a preliminary Comprehensive Plan Committee, but tabled it because Jamie and Nico had not been previously consulted about it and had not had a chance to review it.

Farm Inventory

Amy has forwarded to CAC members a list, obtained from the county, of parcels with current agricultural tax exemptions. We will review it for potential additions to our farm inventory.

Garbage Receptacle Law

Amy has gathered information from other towns about garbage receptacle laws, and will send to CAC members and Jamie for review. We want to include provisions that accommodate elderly and disabled residents.

Open Space Plan

Gretchen prepared a brief description of the Open Space Plan project which we can use for recruiting new members of the Open Space Plan Committee (attached to these minutes), and discussed some ideas for people to approach.

Gretchen will send an as-is draft of the Open Space Plan to the CAC next week.

Storage of Flammable and Toxic Materials

Amy will talk to Nico about the Hillsdale Fire Company's policy for learning about where flammable and toxic materials are stored. We can look for model legislation requiring that volumes over a certain minimum be reported to the fire company.

New Business

There was no new business.

June CAC Meeting Rescheduled

We decided to reschedule the June CAC meeting so that David can attend. If the Town Hall is available and it Mary can attend, the new meeting date will be 11 June. David will check on the Town Hall availability.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:14pm.

Action Items

David:

- Review draft of rat poison article

Mary:

- Review farm inventory list
- (carried over) Draft a letter opposing the use of herbicides along roadways, to be sent by the Town Council to our state representatives.
- (carried over) Submit regular reports to the Town Board about EMC activities.

Amy:

- Check about screening of The Extraordinary Caterpillar
- Send info on Garbage Receptacle Laws to CAC & Jamie
- Talk to Nico about existing policy on reporting storage of flammables & toxins to fire company.

Gretchen:

- Send to the Town Board CAC's endorsement of Ed Frederick for the CAC position
- Re-send rat poison article to David
- Send farm inventory list and Open Space Plan draft to Mary
- Send to CAC the digital version of Intro to the Open Space Plan for recruiting OSP Committee members
- Send to CAC the current draft of Open Space Plan
- (carried over) Meet with Richard and Mike about applying for a WQIP grant for culvert replacement in the 2026 round

All:

- Recruit new members of the Open Space Committee
- (carried over) Scan Comprehensive Plans from other towns and consider the kinds of format and content suitable for Hillsdale's revised Plan.
- (carried over) Consider the kinds of elements that should be included in an RFP for Comprehensive Plan consultants.
- (carried over) Add to the list of active farms.

(see over)

Introduction to the Town of Hillsdale Open Space Plan 2026

This is a brief introduction to the Hillsdale Open Space Plan project that was initiated in 2021. The project is overseen by an Open Space Committee appointed by the Town Board and made up of representatives of town government and the public. Since the start of the project, several members of the Committee have stepped down and we are hoping to fill those positions with new members.

The Committee has completed a substantial draft of the Plan, and we hope to complete the document this year after receiving input from town agencies, residents and business owners. The draft Plan identifies and describes the places that are important for protection of groundwater, streams and ponds, farmland, biodiversity, and scenic areas, and explains how landowners, residents, and town agencies can best protect the open spaces and natural resources of the town.

The term “open space” in this context refers to **all kinds of undeveloped land, whether publicly or privately owned, including forests, shrublands, meadows, active farmland, wetlands, streams, and ponds.**

The draft Open Space Plan has maps illustrating large forest areas, good farmland soils, large meadows, coldwater streams, floodplains, aquifers, and scenic areas throughout the town. The narrative explains the significance of open space areas for water, agriculture, biodiversity, and scenic resources, how those areas support the people of Hillsdale, and what actions can help to ensure that the important places can persist intact long into the future. A basic message of the Plan is that conservation can and should happen everywhere and can be carried out by each of us on the half-acre or three-acre or five hundred-acre parcels on and near where we live.

The Open Space Committee also analyzed maps and other public data and the results of a 2021 public survey and a CAC scenic survey to identify and delineate the “highest priority” open spaces for conservation and protection.

The draft Plan outlines both regulatory and non-regulatory measures that can help to protect the land and water, and sets forth an Action Plan that can be carried out by residents, landowners, developers, and town agencies; for example, maintaining buffer zones around the most sensitive areas, promoting the establishment of conservation easements, incorporating open space protections into the design and review of development projects, and adopting new or revised local legislation.