



**TOWN OF HILLSDALE**  
TOWN BOARD MEETING  
March 21, 2023

A regular meeting of the Hillsdale Town Board was held on Tuesday, March 21, 2023 at 7:00 pm in the Hillsdale Town Hall with the following members present:

**PRESENT:**

Supervisor	Chris Kersten
Councilmember	Tom Carty
Councilmember	Steve Tiger
Councilmember	Joanna Virello
Councilmember	Robina Ward

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Elizabeth Sheer, Deputy Town Clerk; Matt Cabral, Town Attorney; Richard Briggs, Highway Superintendent; Joe Hanselman Jr., Tax Collector, Fire Deputy, Meg Wormley, Dan Levy, Kelly Sweet, David Foreman, Bill Draper, and other members of the public.

The meeting began with the Pledge of Allegiance led by Supervisor Kersten.

**Resolution #27.** Appoint Elizabeth Sheer as Interim Town Clerk  
The Supervisor requested a motion to appoint Elizabeth Sheer as Interim Town Clerk.

The motion was made by Tom Carty and seconded by Joanna Virello.

**Adopted Vote**

**Aye: 5      Nay: 0**

**Resolved to appoint Elizabeth Sheer as Interim Town Clerk**

**Public Comment:**

David Foreman asked whether there was any discussion about the apartments at 6205 State Route 23. There was no information on this from the Board except that the owner is still in talks with the Planning Board

**Resolution #28. Approval of the minutes of the Town Board of February 14, 2023**

Before approving the February minutes, there was a spelling correction on the name of one of the speakers, and a question of who seconded the motion to adjourn. These concerns were addressed.

On a motion by Tom Carty, seconded by Robina Ward, the Board voted to accept the minutes of February 14, 2023 with the stated changes.

## **Adopted Vote**

**Aye: 5      Nay: 0**

## **Resolved to accept the Minutes of the February 14, 2023 Town Board Meeting**

**Supervisor's Report** – Supervisor Kersten began congratulating Elizabeth Sheer on her appointment as Interim Town Clerk.

Supervisor Kersten proffered the Town's appreciation to the Highway Department for their efforts in plowing and clearing up after the recent storm. Other services that helped with the clean-up and restoration of services throughout the town were also thanked.

Supervisor Kersten noted that Hillsdale was the first town in Columbia County to declare of a state of emergency, and thanked Joe Hanselman for his efforts in opening the Firehouse as a warming Station. The question arose as to whether an Emergency Management committee could be formed, and Supervisor Kersten offered his affirmative opinion on its formation.

Matt Cabral asked that a public notice be placed in the newspaper of record that going forward, all Town Board Meetings would be both live and virtual.

- CHFM Inc. which supports the Copake-Hillsdale Farmer's market received 501c status, making them an official non-profit organization
- Governor Hochul created a Board of Historic Places that includes the Columbia Turnpike East Toll House on Route 23. It will be moved 30 feet to protect it from the road.
- Proposals for grants for Hamlet Park were declined
- The Food Scrap program in Columbia County is going forward.
- The Columbia County department of Solid Waste will be going back to trash bags as opposed to tags.
- Talks have been going forward about the programming of events for the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the US. Historians are working on it, and are seeking input and ideas
- County Board endorsed Senate Bill S885 introduced by State Senator Michelle Hinchey which creates a state-wide short term rental law which will assist with housing availability
- The CEDC states that there are 750 households in the county that are underserved for broadband. 292 of them are in Hillsdale. A plan to bundle the addresses and receive quotes for from Internet Service providers to offer high speed connectivity for everyone in the county. Federal funds for this purpose are coming in the mid-summer. The Town will be ready with bids , and it is expected to cost in the \$3-4 million range to complete the connectivity.

## **Highway Superintendent**

Richard Briggs said that there had been 5 storms in the past month. The Highway Garage had no power for two days. The Highway trucks had to get gas in Copake. There are downed trees in several locations.

There are proposals from three bidders for a generator. BCI is still the lowest bid at \$24933.18.

In addition, the Highway would require \$8100 for propane tanks and hook-ups from Herrington's. Propane is cheaper than fuel.

A motion was made by Robina to select BCI as the vendor for a generator, seconded by Joanna.

**Adopted Vote**

**Aye: 5      Nay: 0**

**The selection of BCI as the vendor for the Highway Generator is adopted, with an additional \$8100 for tanks.**

The Highway Department sent the Board an amended 284. There was no discussion of this.

**Motion. Accept the amended 284**

A motion was made by Steve Tiger to accept the Amended 284, seconded by Tom Carty

**Motion Vote**

**Aye: 5    Nay: 0**

**Motion Carried**

**Tri- Brook Repair** – This was not in the budget for 2023; therefore the question arose as to whether the town should proceed with this repair or wait until next year. Supervisor Kersten said that the Board should proceed.

It was asked whether this was a capital project, to which supervisor Kersten replied that it was; it would be paid for by the capital reserve.

**Motion. Move forward with Tri-Brook Road bridge repair for \$34,688**

A motion was made by Joanna Virello to proceed with the project, seconded by Robina Ward

**Motion Vote**

**Aye: 5    Nay: 0**

**Motion Carried**

**Town Clerk** – Elizabeth Sheer. There have been two at-home deaths in rather quick succession.

The Dog Control Officer reported one entry for last month's report. A missing red and white duck toller was reported missing from Wolf Hill Road, but found by the owner shortly thereafter.

**Fire District** - Joe Hanselman, Jr. said that there were 29 calls so far this year to the Fire Department for fire, downed wires and alarms going off. Palm Sunday brunch will be at the Firehouse on April 2.

**Tax Collector** – Joe Hanselman, Jr. said that 85% of taxes have been collected. Second notices will go out on April 3rd. Extensions can be filed to collect till the end of May.

**Sewer District** – Supervisor Kersten stated that Mike Scheller is back on the job. He reported that the system was operating normally, at 9300 gallons per day, which is 1/3 of capacity. 1<sup>st</sup> quarter bills have been collected.

**Sewer Debt:** The report has been made of the sewer going from 2014-2020, approved by the Board in the October 2022 Town Board meeting. It established a debt of \$186,922 to be repaid to the General fund. It is up on the website. The Board met with Matt Cabral to make resolutions to transfer ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funds to cover the debt.

Matt Cabral discussed the two resolutions:

**Resolution #29 Authorizing the transfer of ARPA funds to the sewer district.**

These funds will be used for operational expenditures and upgrades, such as cleaning and inspecting tanks. This includes the transfer of \$87,886.71 to the district. This represents the reimbursement of non-debt operating expenses of the district from March 3, 2021 to present.

**Resolution #30.** Requires the sewer district repay \$186,922 to the town over 3 years, with bi-annual payments. The first to be paid this summer and one at the end of the year. Based on the audit,

Complete the process of repaying the debt. The EDU rate will be increased by 5%.

The Board considered the resolutions

Resolution #29. A motion was made by Robina to transfer funds, and seconded by Joanna.

**Adopted Vote**

**Aye: 5      Nay: 0**

**Resolved to transfer ARPA funds to repay the sewer debt**

Resolution #30. A motion was made by Joanna to repay the sewer debt, and seconded by Tom.

**Adopted Vote**

**Aye: 5      Nay: 0**

**Resolved to repay the sewer debt**

**Motion: Approval to Authorize a 5% per EDU increase in sewer bills which would equal \$30 per year**

The balance of the remaining \$17,829 (after ARPA funds totalling \$169,092) owed can be paid by the 5% rise in sewer rates,

Matt Cabral emphasized that though the money transferred to the Sewer District is to help with non-debt issues, it will free up the Sewer District to pay back the debt. There is no surcharge for the repayment, it is simply an increase.

A motion was made by Steve Tiger to authorize an increase of 5% per EDU to pay back the remaining sewer debt, seconded by Joanna Virello

**Adopted Vote**

**Aye: 5      Nay: 0**

**Motion carried**

Robina asked whether the Sewer Committee has developed a schedule for cleaning the tanks. Is it every 3 years, every 5 years, or when the property changes hands? She suggests that the Committee discuss this.

**Town Board Reports:**

**Human Resources** – Steve Tiger. Response to the online training for harassment has been good – best response in years

**Infrastructure** – Robina Ward. Bids are out for park maintenance, This has to go into the Register Star.

Quotes are being received for the big sign, which was damaged, and only printed on one side.

Robina suggested the creation of an Emergency Management Committee, which would be a volunteer group that could help during emergencies, such as the recent storm.

Joe Hanselman, Jr. cautioned that at the present time the firehouse, used as a warming station, was not equipped to be an emergency shelter. The whole building generator, for instance, does not actually cover the whole building. There is a limited time frame for sheltering people, yet after three days without power, people would need an emergency station more than they would need it on the first day.

Supervisor Kersten suggested that a plan be developed, which the Board will consider at the April meeting.

There were questions about the provider for phone and internet services, which had been down for a week following the storm. Robina said that at the present time the town is stuck using Consolidated, so the Town needs to consider switching internet providers.

Matt Cabral said that the committee should come up with recommendations.

**Roe Jan Park** – Joanna Virello reported that signs are being adapted for better visibility, after there were several complaints about dogs being off leash in the park. Work is being done with Matt Cabral and the State Parks Department.

Camp applications are available online.

The Farmer's Market is making a change of contract. Ron Bixby asked whether they could build a lean-to. Joanna told them that they could not because it needs to be able to be removed,

Supervisor Kersten mentioned that Joe Raco sought the Town Board's approval to hold a 5K fund drive for Dollars for Scholars on September 23, 2023

### **Motion to approve 5K for Dollars for Scholars for Taconic Hills School**

A motion was made by Steve Tiger to approve the 5K fund drive, seconded by Robina Ward.

#### **Adopted Vote**

**Aye: 5      Nay: 0**

**Motion Carried**

### **Committee Reports**

**Climate Resiliency** – Tom Carty - Howard van Lenten is the head of the Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Planning Initiative. The goal has been reached for Climate Smart, so two new projects are underway:

- Inventory of policies – those already in place and those that need to be addressed
- Identify key stake holders

This initiative is spearheaded by Cornell Cooperative Extension with the DEC which will take another year to be formalized. Hillsdale is at a Bronze Level, which results in a \$10,000 grant.

Another project is getting the old streetlights out of the town garage. This is difficult because of EPA regulations.

### **Resolution #31: Approval for upgrades to eCode**

For the Town to move to a premium level will cost \$200 per year. The purpose of the upgrade would be to move all town documents to eCode, which will be more easily searchable than the website. To facilitate the data upload, eCode is offering a bulk uploader, which would cost \$250.

A motion to approve \$200 per year to upgrade eCode to a premium package was made by Steve Tiger and seconded by Joanna Virello

#### **Adopted Votes**

**Aye: 5      Nay: 0**

**Resolved to authorize a \$200 per year expenditure to upgrade eCode**

A motion to approve a \$250 expenditure for a bulk uploader which would aid in data entry for Town records was made by Tom Carty and seconded by Robina Ward

## **Adopted Votes**

**Aye: 5 Nay: 0**

**Resolved to authorize a \$250 expenditure for a bulk uploader for data entry**

**Safe at Home:** the next meeting will be on April 14 at 3 PM at Cook and Larder

**Town Board** – The Easter Egg Hunt will be held on Sunday, April 2<sup>nd</sup> at 1 PM

## **New Business**

**Grants in Engineering** – The Committee met to discuss repairs for Town Hall with CPL. The Committee is moving toward a bidding document which should be in place in early- to mid-April, to get bids from contractors. The repairs are likely to begin in Mid-summer and cost about \$300K. The next meeting will be March 30 via Zoom

**Grant for Hamlet Park** – All grant requests have been declined. Supervisor Kersten and Tom Carty met with La Bella Chazen and the New York State Parks representative who said that:

- The grant process is highly competitive.
- The grants are scored, and the Town's score was low. There is only one representative in the regional council that covers the entire capital area.

The suggestion from the Park representative is that the Town seek funding for engineering design instead of a larger grant.

Supervisor Kersten asked the Board for suggestions on proceeding.

Robina asked whether the plan was too big for a small town.

Supervisor Kersten said that the Board would take up the matter in April.

**Slat Shed** - Supervisor Kersten said that **the** Town has received a proposal from CPL for the Salt Shed. It is very costly, at \$116,500 for several phases. If the Town was to move forward, perhaps \$22,500 could be allocated for the programming phase.

Robina Ward mentioned that several years ago Richard Briggs set aside \$40,000 for a salt shed, with the idea that this reserve would be added to every year, but it wasn't. There is some money in that account, but it nowhere near what is necessary now.

Richard Briggs asked how Austerlitz got theirs.

Supervisor Kersten replied that Austerlitz has a wealthy benefactor, so that town did not go through the state procedures; it was a gift. He added that the Board will revisit this issue in months to come.

## **Resolution #32: Appoint Peter Prado as Planning Board Secretary**

A motion was made by Robina, seconded by Joanna, to appoint Peter Prado as Secretary of the Planning Board

## **Adopted Votes**

**Aye: 5 Nay: 0**

**Resolved to appoint Peter Prado as Planning Board Secretary**

**Public comment**

Bill Draper had issue with the sidewalks on Coldwater Street, where a mailbox is blocking the street. He asked whether there was a sidewalk ordinance.

Matt Cabral responded that there is a sidewalk law, and that Mr. Draper should present his complaint in writing to the Code Enforcement Officer, Lee Heim.

**Resolution #33 – Abstract dated February 27, 2023. The Board has approved the abstracts of the following:**

General	\$327,582.59
Highway	\$109,512.15
Sewer	\$549.21
Parks	\$28.67
Lighting	\$0.0
Capital fund	\$2530.58

**Resolution #34 – Abstract dated March 21, 2023. The Board has approved the abstracts of the following:**

General	\$18,315.35
Highway	\$10,297.60
Sewer	\$4660.64
Parks	\$304.31
Lighting	\$0.0
Capital Fund	\$0.0

**Motion. Adjourn Meeting.**

On a motion by Tom Carty seconded by Steve Tiger to adjourn the Town Board meeting at 8:17pm.

**Motion Vote**

Aye: 5 Nay: 0

**Motion Carried**

The next Town Board meeting will be Tuesday, April 11, 2023 at 7:00 PM