



**TOWN OF HILLSDALE**  
TOWN BOARD MEETING  
June 13, 2023

A regular meeting of the Hillsdale Town Board was held on June 13, 2023 at 7:00 pm in the Hillsdale Town Hall and via Zoom with the following members present:

**PRESENT:** Supervisor Chris Kersten  
Councilmember Steve Tiger  
Councilmember Joanna Virello  
Councilmember Robina Ward

Councilmember Tom Carty was absent

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Elizabeth Sheer, Town Clerk; Meg Wormley, David Ruede, Mike Nikosia, Marion Sobol, Brandon Lentine and other members of the public.

Present via Zoom were Jonathan Mike Dvorchak, Irwin Feld, Bart Zeigler and other members of the public.

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

**Public Comment:**

There were no public comments

**Resolution #42. Approval of the minutes of the Town Board of May 9, 2023**

On a motion by Steve Tiger, seconded by Robina Ward, the Board voted to accept the minutes of May 9, 2023.

**Adopted Vote**

**Aye: 4      Nay: 0**

**Resolved to accept the Minutes of the May 9, 2023 Town Board Meeting**

**Supervisor's Report**

The Farmer's Market has come to life, and the Summer Youth program is fully subscribed.

The town continues to be in good financial shape. The Town account has \$1,871,047.61, and \$1 million was moved into the money market account., which, at 2% interest has already yielded \$5800 in interest. The town received

\$28,297.40 in mortgage tax, which is Hillsdale's share from the county, from October 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023.

The Highway fund has \$1,267,296.27 as of May 31.

The County Supervisor, Matt Morell, has declared a state of emergency because of migrants and asylum seekers, although there have, as yet, been none in the county. However, there is a dearth of affordable housing and the county struggles to accommodate the homeless population of the county, which is 100, up from 30 last year.

The Town has been provided with a supply of N-95 masks, which can be used for protection against both Covid and particles from smoke.

Columbia Memorial Hospital has closed the Rapid Care in Copake. It has been losing a significant amount of money. There are 4600 people within 5 miles of it, who now have no available doctor. The Supervisor offered hopes that this issue may soon be resolved, and a way can be found for the Rapid released grant awards.

**Highway Report** – Whippoorwill Road is being paved. The intersection with Rute 22 has been widened, The Highway department has paved more miles of road this year than ever before, CHIPS money has doubled, which makes this additional repair possible.

Superintendent Briggs has presented the Board with an amended 284, and asks the Board to entertain acceptance.

Superintendent Briggs brought up a budget issue concerning uniforms. There should be a \$900 boot allowance as a separate line item from uniforms. In the former budget process this allowance went into the uniforms budget.

**Motion to accept the 2<sup>nd</sup> amended 284**

A motion was made by Robina Ward, and seconded by Steve Tiger to accept the 2<sup>nd</sup> amended 284

**Adopted Vote**

**Aye: 4      Nay: 0**

**The Board moved to approve the amended 284**

Prior to the Town Clerk's Report, Supervisor Kersten asked that the Board entertain a motion to empower Town Clerk Elizabeth Sheer as a signatory on the Town Clerk's account

**Motion to empower Elizabeth Sheer as a signatory on the Town Clerk checking account**

A motion was made by Robina Ward, and seconded by Steve Tiger to empower Town Clerk Elizabeth Sheer as a signatory on the Town Clerk checking account

**Adopted Vote**

**Aye: 4      Nay: 0**

**The Board moved to empower Elizabeth Sheer as a signatory on the Town Clerk account**

**Town Clerk's report**

There was one marriage in the past month. In the dog report, two pit bulls were seen and then found by their owners, and another dog was seen once, but never found again.

Town Clerk Sheer offered a proposal for upgrading town employee emails to a secure Microsoft government account. Estimates from Joe Vining, the Town's IT consultant, were presented which would involve a quarterly fee of \$1,176 for 15 licenses plus one administrative license, and \$1500 for a consultant set-up fee that would involve a consultation which each user. Former email addresses, either from Fairpoint or Gmail, would be given an automatic forward to new addresses, and must be retained for at least six months.

**Motion to accept the proposal for new email system for Town Employees.**

A motion was made by Joanna Virello, and seconded by Steve Tiger to accept the proposal for the license fee and consultant fee for new secure government email addresses for Town Employees

**Adopted Vote**

**Aye: 4      Nay: 0**

**The Board moved to approve the proposal for new email system for Town employees**

**Fire District Report** – Joe Hanselman, Jr. was not present

**Tax Collector's Report** – Joe Hanselman, Jr. was not present

**Sewer Report** – 9000 gallons were used per day, continuing at 1/3 capacity. \$33,089.41 was moved to the general fund for debt repayment; the first of six payments from the sewer to the general fund. The loan will be satisfied by December of 2025.

Mike Scheller has asked to clean out the tanks at a cost of \$10,000. The Supervisor deems it wise to wait to see what is left in the sewer account after the annual bond payment.

**Human Resources** – Steve Tiger said that there was nothing to report

**Infrastructure** – Robina Ward said that the Town Engineer is looking into the relocation of street lights. Lee Heim, Building Inspector, found the schematics for the lights from original design. Tim Moot is looking into it.

The Board is waiting for a corrected estimate for the big town sign.

Phone problems – currently, Town Hall’s phone systems are down. The problem is not with Consolidated, it is with the phones. New equipment is being sent.

There are questions about the newly constructed sidewalk by the new driveway on Dan Levy’s property. Barbara Olsen Pascale, Planning Board Chair, will be asked about rulings.

**Roe Jan Park Report** –Joanna Virello reported that the Community Table at the Farmer’s Market has almost been filled for the season.

The Bindlestiff Circus will be performing for the Summer Youth Program. Porta-potties have already been ordered for this event , however, mulch still needs to be ordered.

The Columbia County Art School has asked to use the Hilltop Barn for painting classes. They would make a donation to the Park.

The question arose of signs in the park for both dogs and humans.

Attorney Matt Cabral reminded the Board of current leash laws, and offered to help with language for the signs.

It was suggested that general rules for the Park be posted by the entrance.

Steve Tiger pointed out that there were legal issues and suggested that Councilperson Virello document other issues for the next meeting.

**Engineering Report** -- Bidding for contractors for the Town Hall renovation will open on June 22<sup>nd</sup>. A pre-bid walk-through was scheduled for June 2<sup>nd</sup>, but no contractors attended. Although no bids have been received so far, the Board is assured that most bids are received at the last minute.

### **Log Cabin**

Lee Heim cited all of the Building Department’s findings and communications with the owner.

The cabin was damaged in a storm in 2017. Half of the roof was blown off, and was never repaired. The building was condemned in 2019. The property owner has not lately responded to correspondence. The Town needs to secure it in some fashion. There are three options:

- A fence around the property
- The property owner repairs the building
- The town demolishes the building, which would be paid for by the owner via a tax lien.

The cost of any of these actions would be the responsibility of the property owner, if necessary, taken as a lien against their taxes.

In answer to questions Lee said that the electricity is turned off, but the house is connected to the sewer system, which could be adding materials of some kind to the sewer system.

Attorney Matt Cabral said that the town had enacted an unsafe buildings and structures law That law allows the Town, upon report, to issue an order served on the property owner and a hearing held before the Town Board before the Town takes further action. The owner has the opportunity to be heard on the issue and allows the town to recover costs.

The Board asked Lee Heim about a remedy for the situation. The response was that if the building is unsafe and cannot be made safe, then it should be removed. If the property owner will not correct the issue, the Town can take it over.

Robina Ward pointed out that even of the town tears down the building, the owner still owns the land.

Attorney Cabral asked what the Town Board is proposing as a remedy. He suggested that the Town Engineer might provide an opinion. The priority is the remedying of the unsafe structure, and again he asked what the Board wanted to do.

After some discussion, Lee Heim said that he would ask the owner for access, and then have the Town Engineer look at the building and make an assessment.

### **Motion to retain the Town Engineer to ascertain the status of the Log Cabin on Route 22**

A motion to retain the Town Engineer to provide the Town with a report on the status of the building was made by Joanna Virello and seconded by Steve Tiger.

### **Adopted Vote**

**Aye: 4      Nay: 0**

**The Board adopted the motion to retain the Town Engineer.**

### **Route 71 Speeding**

Richrd Briggs pointed out that the town has no jurisdiction over that road; Route 71 is a state road, therefore, the complaint should be sent to the state. The state id the only entity that can take care of it.

Attorney Matt Cabral suggested that residents send a petition to the state to complain about the speeding issue, a tactic which, he says, is often successful. This petition should be started by Chuck Johnson, since he was the person who brought the complaint to the Board.

### **Property Tax Exemptions**

Supervisor Kersten said that the County Board of Supervisors voted to have property tax exemptions put into place for low income seniors, disabled people, low-income residents, firemen, and ambulance drivers. This was approved on a county level. It was recommended by the County Board that this issue be taken up as local laws. Supervisor Kersten proposed that a local law be discussed at the July meeting, with a hearing in August to track what the County has done. Attorney Cabral suggested that the process be completed by December 2023.

**Roe Jan Mowing issue** – Supervisor Kersten said that he had spoken with a representative from the Fish and Wildlife bureau. They do not know whether birds are, in fact, nesting at that location. He added that the Town could explore a mowing timeline with the lessee as well as a lease amendment. The farmer who leases the land uses it for fodder for his cattle, so mowing would be important to him.

Mike Nikosia said that he also spoke with the representative. Mr. Nikosia's organization notes the sighting of a single bird and after seven days, consider it probable that the bird is nesting. Fish and Wildlife uses different criteria. Mr. Nikosia offered to walk the fields and photograph any nesting birds. That information will be relayed to both the representative from Fish and Wildlife and the farmer.

The town, and Attorney Cabral, can review materials from Fish and Wildlife and discuss a mowing schedule.

### **Accounting**

Quickbooks, the accounting software used for Town billing, is phasing out the current version. The new version, which will feature access through the cloud, rather than through an individual computer costs \$215 per month.

### **Motion to acquire the new version of Quickbooks**

A motion to approve the expenditure of \$215 per month to acquire the new version of Quickbooks was made by Robina Ward and seconded by Joanna Virello.

### **Adopted Vote**

**Aye: 4      Nay: 0**

**The Board adopted the motion to approve the expenditure for the new version of Quickbooks**

### **Planning Board**

On the departure of Richard Freiman from the Planning Board, the recommendation is made that Suzanne Warner be appointed to replace him.

### **Motion to appoint Suzanne Werner to the Planning Board**

A motion to approve the appointment of Suzanne Werner to the Planning Board was made by Steve Tiger and seconded by Joanna Virello.

**Adopted Vote**

**Aye: 4      Nay: 0**

**The Board adopted the motion to approve appointment of Suzanne Werner to the Planning Board**

**Public Comments**

Brandon Lentine said that, in the matter of the log cabin, the Town should attempt vigorously to contact the property owner, let them know the Town's intention, and use any funds to improve the look of the property, thus improving the property value, and benefit the Town's aesthetic. Attorney Matt Cabral said that the Town's objective is to make sure that the unsafe condition is remedied.

**Resolution #43 – Abstract dated May 19, 2023. The Board has approved the abstracts of the following:**

General	\$6097.43
Highway	\$11,724.28
Sewer	\$292.21
Parks	\$954.07
Lighting	\$0.0
Capital Fund	\$12,150

**Motion. Adjourn Meeting.**

A motion was made by Robina Ward and seconded by Steve Tiger to adjourn the Town Board meeting at 8:37 pm.

**Motion Vote**

Aye: 4    Nay: 0

**Motion Carried**

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