

Public Hearing/Town Board Meeting  
Thursday  
July 10, 2025  
7:00pm

*This meeting is being held "in-person" in Town Hall. The access information for the meeting has been posted and there are members of the public present virtually.*

Members Present: Supervisor Wolf, Councilperson Gansowski, Councilperson Gabaccia, Councilperson Haight, and Councilperson Morningstar

Present: Deputy Town Clerk Liana Jensen, Attorney Jonathon Tingley (*virtually*)

**Public Hearing**

Supervisor Wolf opens the Public Hearing at 6:50pm regarding accepting and authorizing the expenditure of funds from the Town of Copake Repair Reserve Fund for the hot mix asphalt paving of Valley View Road. This Public Hearing is being held in person in Town Hall but we are allowing remote access. This Public Hearing gives the opportunity for the public to comment both in person and virtually. This Public Hearing is being recorded and the recording will be posted online within five business days. This will be considered later in the meeting.

There being no speakers, Supervisor Wolf closed the public hearing at 7:00pm.

**Call to Order**

At 7:00pm, Supervisor Wolf calls the Town Board meeting to order. Supervisor Wolf opens the Town Board meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Supervisor Wolf mentions that this meeting is being held in person in Town Hall but we are allowing remote access. This meeting is being recorded and the recording will be posted online within five business days.

**Approval of Minutes**

A motion was made by Councilperson Gabaccia and seconded by Councilperson Gansowski to waive a further reading and accept the Minutes as written for the Public Hearing/Town Board Meeting of June 12, 2025 and the Special Town Board Meeting of June 30, 2025.

All in favor. Motion approved.

**Announcements**

Supervisor Wolf announces that the closure of Route 23 east of Route 22 in Hillsdale, has been reopened. On July 9, DOT closed Route 23 in Copake from County Route 11A to County Route 7 to replace a culvert. That work will continue through mid-August. The immediate effect has been a significant increase in traffic on town roads and in turn, has resulted in at least two problem; speeding

vehicles, and heavy trucks on town roads that we are told by the town Highway Superintendent, aren't built for. There's a concern that they will be damaged over time. As to speeding, Highway Superintendent, Bill Gregory and his staff, have placed four radar speed signs, two each on Lakeview Road and Birch Hill Road. The Board hopes that that alleviates some concerns. As to heavy trucks, the highway staff has placed six signs limiting truck weights to five tons. This evening the Board will consider a resolution authorizing the weight restrictions on Lakeview Road and Berkshire Hill Road, and other town roads. Supervisor Wolf has spoken to Columbia County Commissioner of Public Works, Ray Jurkowski and hopefully, we will be getting electronic message signs advising everybody of the weight limits on Lakeview and Birch Hill Road before they head towards the town roads to detour around the DOT work. The message will include a statement that the weight limits will be strictly enforced. These signs are much in demand and it may take a day or two before we do get them.

Supervisor Wolf states that last evening, at the monthly Board of Supervisors meeting, he was involved in two noteworthy events. The first was that he had the honor of presenting to Copake Fire Company No. 1, a proclamation from the Columbia County Board of Supervisors, signed by the board chair celebrating the company's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Present were Chief John DeRocha, Assistant Chief Bill Pitcher, who is also Chair of the 100<sup>th</sup> Celebration Committee, Fire Company Vice President John Westfall, and celebration committee members Harold Jensen, Liana Jensen, and Les Baum. That was a very nice and well-received ceremony. The second matter with which I was involved concerned the petition about seeking to change the form of county government from the current board of supervisors to one with an elected County Executive which would also continue the presence of a board of supervisors as a legislative body. Supervisor Wolf's direct involvement was that he signed the petition and learned that his signature on the petition was invalidated along with many others because he could not be identified as a Columbia County voter. There is a court case challenging the decision to reject approximately 40% of the signatories to the petition that was submitted and because that number had been invalidated, the entire petition was deemed invalid. The case will be heard on July 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Supervisor Wolf announces that the work has been completed on the tennis court and it will be open tomorrow.

Supervisor Wolf announces that work is underway installing a culvert beneath Valley View Road which will have only one lane until the work is completed in approximately three weeks. However, Valley View Road will be closed in its entirety for two days, Monday, July 14<sup>th</sup>, and Tuesday, July 15<sup>th</sup>. It is suggested that people take the detour that can be found on a flyer that is available on the way out of the building to get that information.

Supervisor Wolf thanks Councilperson Gansowski for presiding at a Special Town Board Meeting on June 30<sup>th</sup> during which camp counselors were appointed as follows: Connor Henderson, Sam Henderson, Drake Higueros, Kaylee Moore, Jesse Slater, Troy Super, and Alexis Weed. The Board also approved the purchase of the t-shirts for campers and staff to improve security on trips. The calendar of events and activities was also approved.

Supervisor Wolf thanks Bill Gregory and the Highway Department for putting up a banner at the Folger Triangle announcing the Park Commissions' Summer Music Program.

Supervisor Wolf states that as a critical part of the process to update Copake's 2011 Comprehensive Plan, a Visions and Goals Workshop was held on June 28<sup>th</sup>. It was very well attended and people learned from our consultant, Margaret Irwin, about the process and solicited views and opinions from those present. You'll hear more about the process when the report is given by Jeanne Mettler.

Supervisor Wolf mentions that on June 29<sup>th</sup>, he and Councilperson Haight attended a memorial service in the Copake Park honoring late EMT Stephen Walsh of the Clausson-Raught Community Rescue Squad.

Supervisor Wolf announces that on July 12<sup>th</sup>, the Roeliff Jansen Historical Society will have that grand opening of its exhibition, Sites to Celebrate: Local History Revisited.

Supervisor Wolf announces that Saturday, July 19<sup>th</sup> will be Copake Falls Day, the first one since the passing of Robin Bruce. There will be food, crafts, music, games, and lots of prizes to be won. Supervisor Wolf encourages everyone to go even if you are not from Copake Falls.

On August 9<sup>th</sup> from 1:00pm until 5:00pm, there will be a celebration in Copake Memorial Park commemorating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Copake Fire Company No. 1. There will be music, food, games, and fun activities and the Town Board will present a proclamation honoring the fire company and its dedicated volunteers. Everyone, please try to come out and show your support.

County Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day will be held on September 13<sup>th</sup> from 8:00am until noon at the Columbia County Fire Training Center in Ghent. Please visit the town website for more information.

Supervisor Wolf announces that starting July 22<sup>nd</sup>, all town government emails will be converted from org to ny.gov. This information will be posted on the town website and in the Copake Connection.

### **Supervisor's Report**

With July 4th celebrations behind us, we are well into the summer season. Many of us will enjoy barbecues and picnics, swimming, bicycling, hiking, playing ball and, most importantly, spending time with family and friends. And the spectacular beauty of Copake and the surrounding area brings large influxes of visitors who come here for what we Copake residents enjoy year-round.

While we're participating in summer activities, we don't think about two critically important public safety organizations. But should an emergency arise, we count on them to come to our aid – to always be there when we need them.

And for two entirely different reasons, now is a particularly appropriate time to offer some words of appreciation for the Clausson Raught Community Rescue Squad and Copake Fire Company Number 1.

First, the Rescue Squad. On Sunday, June 29th, Councilmember Bob Haight and I attended a moving memorial service in Copake Park honoring late EMT Stephen Walsh. Stephen Walsh was a dedicated emergency medical technician with the Rescue Squad who died in the line of duty on November 16,

2024, suffering cardiac arrest immediately upon returning from a call. His was Columbia County's first ever EMS line-of-duty death. The National EMS Moving Honors ambulance, honoring the 29 EMS personnel who died in the line of duty in 2024, stopped in Copake for the service as it traveled from California towards Arlington, Virginia. EMS and Fire Departments from throughout the area attended as well. The Rescue Squad's Operations Director, Peter Doty, presided over the solemn event. He made an important point: that Squad members who respond to medical emergencies are deeply affected by them, that as they aid and comfort members of the public, they need comfort as well. So...when you see Rescue Squad personnel, whether in the wake of an emergency call or should you be passing Squad headquarters on Mountain View Road, show your appreciation by thanking them for their service. It will mean a lot.

Parts of the Town of Copake are served by three fire different fire districts: Craryville, Hillsdale-Copake, and Copake. All three protect us and our property. But only – Copake – has a fire company that is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. So, a few words about Copake Fire Company No. 1.

In December of 1925, forty-seven charter members held Fire Company No. 1's very first meeting. They built its first fire station on Main Street, a small two-story wooden building with a garage for the fire truck and an upstairs meeting room. In 1962, a new fire station was built at 390 Center Hill Road, and in 1978 it was enlarged to hold additional equipment. As everyone knows, Copake Fire Company No. 1's firefighters and fire police are all volunteers. And they don't just fight fires: they do auto accident extractions, deal with spills and other hazardous materials mitigation, perform water marine rescues, wildlife search and rope rescues, and assist the Rescue Squad as needed with cardiac arrest incidents. This all-volunteer, well-trained group is extraordinary, performing all of these important functions while, in most instances, holding down full-time jobs.

We all can show our appreciation by joining them, on Saturday, August 9th from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., at their 100-Year Anniversary Celebration in Copake Memorial Park. Rain or shine: events will take place under a big tent and in the Park Recreation building and throughout the Park, including an art show, a car show, a bounce house and face-painting for the children, music, food trucks and even a special guest appearance by Smoky Bear. It should be a lot of fun.

Please be sure to come and show your support and appreciation to the volunteers of Copake Fire Company No. 1. I hope to see you there.

### **Solar Update-July 2025**

On June 27<sup>th</sup>, the NYS Office of Renewable Energy Siting & Electric Transmission ("ORES") issued to Hecate Energy a second Notice of Incomplete Application ("NOIA") for its Shepherd's Run proposal to construct a 42 MW solar factory on prime farmland and wetlands in Craryville. ORES served this second Notice less than one month after receiving Hecate's voluminous response to the sixty deficiencies listed in ORES' *first* NOIA. Not surprisingly, in its haste ORES failed to address many of the serious concerns and objections that we and others have raised about Hecate's Shepherd's Run proposal.

When Hecate lost the southernmost parcel for its original 60 MW proposal, it lost an access road needed to service interior panels and other components. So it intends to use a narrow farm path, which goes directly over a protected stream and through wetlands, to provide service access. But this path is too narrow to accommodate large emergency vehicles; fire trucks could not access some areas of the site where a fire could occur.

Townpeople have been raising concerns for months about the possibility of a facility fire. These are not idle concerns: fires at solar facilities are well-documented. And the greater Roe Jan community is served by volunteer fire companies with limited numbers of firefighters. Most work and cannot always respond when an alarm occurs, firefighters may not be available in sufficient numbers should a fire occur. And, thousands of solar panels and several inverters would be on land adjacent to the Taconic Central School District campus. *Yet Hecate's application fails to include a comprehensive evacuation plan for students and staff.* In the second Notice, the only deficiency ORES identified in Exhibit 6, which is called "Public Health, Safety and Security" is limited to the health of the solar panels, **not** to that of the students, teachers, and staff. ORES only has directed Hecate to "provide additional discussion regarding the control system(s) available...to ensure that panels are tilted as needed during a flood or potential flood."

In the Notice, ORES unfortunately gives short shrift to the State's Historic Preservation Office's ("SHPO") adverse determination that the proposed solar factory would negatively impact all five of the Project's National Historic Register properties and landscapes. More than a year ago, SHPO recommended to ORES that Hecate meet with local history-based groups, such as the Arcadian Alliance, the Copake Grange, the Roeliff Jansen Historical Society, and the Friends of Taconic State Park to develop a mitigation plan to establish preservation projects and funding to offset the utility-scale facility's "significant visual impacts" on the properties. Hecate has failed to do any of this. Nonetheless, in the current NOIA, ORES requires only that Hecate include the results of any further consultations **with SHPO**; it fails to address SHPO's specific recommendation that local groups be included in the development of a mitigation plan. This is yet another example of the State ignoring the concerns of Copake, the so-called "host community".

A recent disturbing development has been reported to ORES by a homeowner whose property is adjacent to land for which Hecate has an option to lease for Shepherd's Run. Extensive logging has been observed. To quote from the letter filed with ORES, "the scale and location of the clearing strongly suggest that it is being conducted to open sight lines and prepare for solar panel installation, from what is visible, a large swath of forest—10 acres or more—has already been cleared, with activity continuing." The letter notes that the area being cleared is not mentioned in Hecate's application. It goes on to ask ORES whether it is aware of this logging activity, and to conduct an investigation to determine whether it is inconsistent with Hecate's application. If so, "or if it represents unauthorized site disturbance in advance of a permit, we urge ORES to consider suspending further review of the project or denying the permit outright."

This Town Board has been consistent in our objections that the proposed site is all wrong, as Shepherd's Run would be sited on prime agricultural land, would encroach on protected wetlands, and would be on land next to the Taconic Hills School Campus. Furthermore, the Taghkanic Creek - the source of Hudson's drinking water runs through the site.

Finally, the fact that Hecate needs ORES to override many, many of Copake's carefully developed zoning regulations to enable the developer to put its 215-acre eyesore along County Route 7 in the heart of beautiful Craryville farmland is proof-positive that the proposed Shepherd's Run site is a completely inappropriate location for a utility-scale solar installation.

We'll continue to report on developments as they occur.

#### **Department Heads/Committee Reports**

**Highway Department-Paving of Valley View Road**

Highway Superintendent Gregory asks the board to approve the \$139,200 quote from Colarusso Blacktop from the Road Improvement Reserve Account to complete a 2,500ft section of pavement of Valley View Road.

That quote is based on the NYS OGS Contract and it covers our procurement policies. Superintendent Gregory asks the board to consider that.

Supervisor Wolf states that the board has published and posted Resolution No. 20 of July 10, 2025 for consideration.

**TOWN OF COPAKE  
RESOLUTION  
Number 20 of July 10, 2025**

**To Accept a Quote and Authorize the Expenditure of Funds from the Town  
of Copake Repair Reserve Fund for the Hot Mix Asphalt Paving of Valley View Road**

**WHEREAS**, the Town of Copake Highway Superintendent has prepared Specifications and obtained a quote pursuant to a NYS Office of General Services contract for the hot mix asphalt paving of Valley View Road; and

**WHEREAS**, A. Colarusso & Son, Inc. submitted a quote pursuant to which it proposed to furnish the labor, materials and equipment in accordance with the Specifications at a price of \$139,200.00; and

**WHEREAS**, A. Colarusso & Son, Inc. is a responsible contractor; and

**WHEREAS**, the Town Board of the Town of Copake desires to accept such quote and award the contract to A. Colarusso & Son, Inc. for the hot mix asphalt paving of Valley View Road; and

**WHEREAS**, the Town Board scheduled a public hearing to be held on July 10, 2025 at 6:50 p.m. concerning the proposed appropriation of \$139,200.00 from the Town of Copake Repair Reserve Fund for the hot mix asphalt paving of Valley View Road; and

**WHEREAS**, notice of such public hearing was published in the official newspaper at least five days before the date specified for the public hearing; and

**WHEREAS**, the Town Board held the public hearing at the time and place so specified; and

**WHEREAS**, the hot mix asphalt paving of Valley View Road constitutes the repair of a capital improvement that is of a type not recurring annually or at shorter intervals; and

**WHEREAS**, the hot mix asphalt paving of Valley View Road is within the scope of the type of repair to be financed under the Town of Copake Repair Reserve Fund established on June 11, 2020; and

**WHEREAS**, the Town Board finds and determines that it is in the best interest of the Town of Copake to accept the quote and award a contract to A. Colarusso & Son, Inc. for the hot mix asphalt paving of Valley View Road and that appropriation therefor be made from the Town of Copake Repair Reserve Fund in the amount of \$139,200.00; now, therefore,

It is hereby **RESOLVED**, that the quote of A. Colarusso & Son, Inc. for the hot mix asphalt paving of Valley View Road is hereby accepted and a contract therefor is hereby awarded in the amount of \$139,200; and

It is hereby **FURTHER RESOLVED**, that pursuant to the provisions of section 6-d of the New York State General Municipal Law, the total expenditure of \$139,200.00 for the hot mix asphalt paving of Valley View Road is for a proper purpose for which the Town of Copake Repair Reserve Fund was established; and

It is hereby **FURTHER RESOLVED**, that upon audit and approval of vouchers/invoices for the hot mix asphalt paving of Valley View Road, the Town Board authorizes the total expenditure of \$139,200.00 from the Town of Copake Repair Reserve Fund to finance same; and

It is hereby **FURTHER RESOLVED**, that this resolution shall take effect immediately upon its adoption.

Roll Call Vote The foregoing Resolution, offered by Councilperson Gansowski and seconded by Councilperson Haight, was duly put to a roll call vote as follows:

Resolution No. 20  
Dated July 10, 2025  
Copake, New York

Roll Call Vote.	Supervisor Wolf	yes
	Councilperson Gansowski	yes
	Councilperson Gabaccia	yes
	Councilperson Haight	yes
	Councilperson Morningstar	yes

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Lynn M. DeRocha, Town Clerk

(seal)

July 10, 2025

At this time, Supervisor Wolf asks for a motion to add Resolution No. 21 to the Agenda.

A motion was made by Councilperson Morningstar and seconded by Councilperson Gabaccia to add Resolution No. 21 to the Agenda.

All in favor. Motion approved.

**TOWN OF COPAKE**

**RESOLUTION**

**Number 21 of July 10, 2025**

**To Impose a Vehicle Weight Restriction on Lakeview and Birch Hill Roads**

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to § 1660 of New York's Vehicle and Traffic Law, the Town Board of any Town may by order regulate traffic within the Town; and

**WHEREAS**, taking into consideration the recommendation of the Town of Copake's Superintendent of Highways, the Town Board of the Town of Copake has found that Lakeview Road and Birch Hill Road, both of which are town roads, would be materially injured by vehicles with a gross weight of more than five (5) tons; now, therefore,

It is hereby **RESOLVED**, that the Town Board of the Town of Copake, pursuant to New York Vehicle and Traffic Law § 1660(a)(11), does hereby temporarily close Lakeview Road and Birch Hill Road to any and all vehicles having the gross weight of more than five (5) tons, with such temporary restriction to be effective until such time as the removal of signs stating such limitation is directed by the Town Board; provided, however, that this closure shall not apply to the local delivery or pickup of goods, merchandise or other property including, but not limited to, fuel oil, trash removal, or to the operation of emergency vehicles, all of which are permitted; and

It is hereby **FURTHER RESOLVED**, that signs prohibiting use of Lakeview Road and Birch Hill Road by vehicles with a gross weight of five (5) or more tons shall be erected during the period of such temporary closure, and that notice of such closure shall be published in a newspaper in Columbia County, New York.

Roll Call Vote The foregoing Resolution, offered by Councilperson Haight and seconded by Councilperson Gabaccia, was duly put to a roll call vote as follows:

Resolution No. 21  
Dated July 10, 2025  
Copake, New York

Roll Call Vote.	Supervisor Wolf	yes
	Councilperson Gansowski	yes
	Councilperson Gabaccia	yes
	Councilperson Haight	yes
	Councilperson Morningstar	yes

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Lynn M. Connolly, Town Clerk

(seal)

July 10, 2025

**Conservation Advisory Committee Report**

CAC Chair MaryAnn Carrick states that the CAC has been in communication with New Leaf Eco in Ghent, NY. They offer a consulting service that the CAC would like to take advantage of before they begin landscaping the walkway from the municipal parking lot to Empire Road. The fee for the consultation, including a site visit and soil testing is \$200 with a \$50 deposit to reserve the time is requested as soon as possible. With the board's approval, the CAC would like to schedule that site visit on August 21<sup>st</sup>.

Supervisor Wolf states that the town is not in the practice of giving deposits. Ms. Carrick will contact them to work this out.

A motion was made by Councilperson Gansowski and seconded by Councilperson Morningstar to approve the hiring of a consultant by the CAC in the amount of \$200.

All in favor. Motion approved.

**Comprehensive Plan Review Committee Report**

Jeanne Mettler, Chair of the Comprehensive Plan Review Committee states that the committee has been meeting since last November which consists of members Brian Boom, Brendan Cranna, Peter Doty, Benedict Gedaminski, Catherine Mikic, Todd Proper, Stephanie Rabin, Terry Sullivan, Alden Warner, and Supervisor Wolf as liaison. The committee is being guided by Margaret Irwin of River Street Planning and Development, to which the board appointed. Ms. Irwin was the towns' consultant for the 2011 and is doing a great job for the committee. The committee is tasked with proposing revisions to the 2011 Comprehensive Plan. They are basically coming up with a blueprint or map for what the people in Copake want the town look like in the next ten years. The committee has spent a lot of time putting together a survey and they already had a workshop at the end of June which was well attended. Ms. Mettler mentions the committee is also doing focus groups every month. The committee already held Copake Falls and Copake Hamlet focus groups and they were well attended. There is a focus group on Copake Lake and West Copake for residents and businesses on Monday, August 4<sup>th</sup>. On September 2<sup>nd</sup>, the committee is focusing on businesses and employers throughout the town, these are larger employers. October 6<sup>th</sup> will be Craryville, November 3<sup>rd</sup> will be not for profit churches and organizations, and in December the committee would be speaking with first responders and healthcare providers. It is a full docket and by December all focus groups will be done and by about this time next year, the plan itself should be presented to the Town Board. All of the focus groups will be publicized on the website, the Copake Connection, and Facebook.

Ms. Mettler mentions with the resignation of Julie Cohen from the Planning Board and the Comprehensive Plan Review Committee, she asks the board to appoint Edgar Masters to fill that vacancy.

A motion was made by Councilperson Gansowski and seconded by Councilperson Gabaccia to appoint Edgar Master to the Comprehensive Plan Review Committee.

All in favor. Motion approved.

### **Public Forum**

Supervisor Wolf reminds that anyone wishing to address the board, know that this is not a debate. Statements, not questions are to be made to the board. There will be no responses. Each speaker will have two minutes to speak. Please mention your name and where you are from.

Gabrielle Tessler, Copake resident, discusses her opposition to Hecate Energy. Ms. Tessler recently wrote a response to a letter to the editor that Matt Levine described Sensible Solar for rural New York as NIMBY which is a derogatory, deflective defense to describe the opposition of permitting the Hecate plant. How can objection to environmental devastation widespread destruction of wildlife habitat, biodiversity, and dire risk to endangered species be categorized under that acronym? Damage from building on and around wetlands will significantly harm vast sensitive ecosystems of flora and fauna. It will threaten the water supply to the entire city of Hudson and clear cutting 35 acres of established forest. A significant deforestation eliminating carbon absorption and clean air from oxygen producing trees is ridiculous. The elimination of animal and bird habitat will cause erosion and sediment runoff. Loss of hundreds of acres of agricultural land will permanently obliterate prime heritage farmland for food production. Fire risk to Columbia County's K-12 children who attend Taconic Hills Central School in close proximity to the site and nearby residents is also very real. Craryville and Copake's small and understaffed fire department would be impotent fighting a hazardous irrepressible solar fire. No place is immune to catastrophic weather events, including this area. Solar and brush fires have occurred within miles of here in recent months. Clouds, rain, snow, and destruction from extreme windstorms, and panel damaging hail often experienced in our valley would frequently result in limited energy production. Solar panel manufacturing relies on the use of coal fossil fuel. China produces 70% of the components which is notorious to involve the use of slave labor. Industrial solar belongs on rooftops of expansive structure, manufacturing plants, parking lots, warehouse facilities, and existed degraded brownfields. We must be resolute in our commitment in saving, protecting, conserving, and defending the precious limited remaining natural world and resources we have left.

Supervisor Wolf interjects at this time and asks anyone who has concerns to submit a written comment to the Town Board so that it is on record.

Ms. Tesslers' full statement can be viewed in the Town Clerks office.

Norma Ramos, Upper Rhoda Lake resident, expressed her opposition at the last town meeting and adds a few more thoughts. The last speaker addressed the issue of NIMBYISM. It is not NIMBYISM to protect the last remaining wildlife that we have. When you start destroying pockets in small areas here and there, it is no longer a working forest. The notion of this is going to address climate disruption is actually doing the opposite because we all know that forests are carbon sinks. Ms. Ramos makes two suggestions to the board because they have been principled and consistent with their opposition to this project. Ms. Ramos is a long standing public interest attorney, who's worked on everything from environmental justice to ending human trafficking, but every campaign that she's ever been a part of that has succeeded, it is because they've had bold elected officials who thought outside of the box. So governors can also introduce legislation, it's not just the elected officials. Ms. Ramos urges the board to meet with Governor Hochul's staff; start with the Deputy Secretary for Environment and pitch the legislation about the tiered siting that she spoke of, so that these energy companies have to first go to brownfields, abandoned industrial sites, other areas that have already been despoiled and not destroy 35 acres of pristine forest.

Ms. Ramos would also like everybody to think about this: on Hecate's website they say that they engage in careful siting, that they start with brownfields; but here they're destroying forests and they've done it elsewhere. We have to think about a shareholder action though Ms. Ramos is not an expert on that.

Ms. Ramos states that we have to be very creative in our approach because even if we were to win with Hecate, that substation means the next solar company says "oh that's a great place and we would be at this all over again. But by that time, there'll be battle fatigue and we're exhausted from all the fighting we've done with Hecate. We need to meet with our elected officials.

Lesley Doyel is here representing the Arcadian Alliance. The Arcadian Alliance is a new grassroots historic preservation and environmental advocacy organization based in Copake. The Arcadian Alliance urges ORES to deem the Shepherd's Run application as incomplete until Hecate complies with the state historic preservation offices recommendation to develop mitigation measures with local history groups, which they have not. Such compliance must be the condition of any permit. The Historic Architectural Resources Survey and Effect Report submitted by Hecate is woefully inadequate by failing to meet the local preservation groups, they failed to articulate the historic context and understand the value of our natural and rural heritage and vernacular resources. As a result, Hecate's conclusion of no adverse impact is unfounded, baseless, and stands contrary to the position of State Historic Preservation Office. Hecate is thereby misrepresenting the grave risk that Shepherd's Run poses to Copake's rural heritage, local economy, and quality of life.

Ms. Doyel states that the Arcadian Alliance urges ORES to enforce the terms of 2024's adverse determination letter. They must also deem the Shepherd's Run application incomplete until the time that Hecate and local organizations have developed and agreed upon a meaningful mitigation plan that Hecate submits to ORES for review and approval as a condition of any permit.

Lindsay LeBrecht, Copake Lake resident, has concerns and is looking for answers for the 250 cars and trucks on Birch Hill Road. The county says go to the state, the state says it's not their problem, and the only one who did anything about it was Bill Gregory. Thank you, Bill.

Ms. LeBrecht mentions that she's been to every Town Board meeting since moving here 35 years ago and has witnessed the town work on legislation for cell towers and solar. Personally, she is very grateful for all that the work that the town has done to keep Copake, Copake. In 2017, just as the town had completed their work on the solar laws, all that was left to do was for the Town Board to enact that only up to 10 acres could be used for any solar array, and that was done. Dr. Rasweiller was at that meeting and Ms. LeBrecht remembers him specifically saying that if the towns' people didn't want this solar development that he wouldn't proceed. Fast forward to the proposed project, that's still being discussed, with overwhelming loathing for Shepherd's Run. We have met with bad actors and bad faith. When the first letters went out, the resident's right across the road from the proposed project did not receive a letter. We had to tell them about it. A mole was sent in to Copake to obviously gain support for this project. This is now being presented as being great for Copake. The only people that it is really great for are the land owner, and a Chicago based company. None of the electricity will go to Copake but we are taking on the burden. Ms. LeBrecht has always asked about fire protection, although some people don't think so, and was told that they would take care of it. It's not acceptable. There is no transparency on the state's end. And, this proposed project is next to a school and residences. Our regional school has now mandated that we have electric buses with long bus roads. If there was an emergency evacuation during the school day, there would be no way to supply enough energy to those buses to get our students out of the area. Ms. LeBrecht is a taxpayer, and votes in Copake, and is at a loss at how the laws that were put in place to protect us can be overlooked. The proposed project goes against mission statements for most of the state departments and the following have gone on record to be against this proposed project. The people of Copake have actively voiced their objections, the Town Board is on record, the County Board of Supervisors, the city of Hudson where their water comes from which is the wetlands, and our representatives, Michelle Hinchey and Didi Barrett know that this location is bad and have been fighting for us. We are low-hanging fruit because of NYSEG's substation. Ms. LeBrecht wants to thank everyone who supported this fight against an ill-fated industrial sited solar facility in the town of Copake.

Sharon Shepherd lives at 25 Birch Hill Road which is right on the intersection of County Route 7, Birch Hill Road, and where this is being proposed. Ms. Shepherd thanks everyone for their support from the bottom of her heart. This would be life changing. There are a lot of reasons why the proposed project is not well matched with our rural community. The most egregious assaults are the number of times that Hecate has lied to the people and especially to the 100 or more bordering property owners. The project is not sustainable. If jobs are created, they will no longer be available in a year's time or upon completion of the project. A boost to the economy will be short lived. The area does not have a big workforce, nor are the existing businesses that have the capacity to grow rapidly. We live in a beautiful area. Building panels to cover up the land is not an attraction. Mix in a few hundred noisy and smelly sheep? Ms. Shepherd can't imagine the stress, especially her own, the wetlands, birds, sanctuaries, ancient burial sites, clean water, historic structure. The great impact of destruction may be aimed right

at the school. Smoke, fire, panic, injury, and death, it could happen. Matthew Levine and Diane Sullivan are dismissive. The reaction to my concern of the project being visible from almost every inch of her property was, "No, you won't see that because there'll be trees planted on the flats and they'll hide those panels built on the hillsides." Global good comes from protecting your neighbor. Ms. Shepherd opposes this project. Ms. Shepherd fears the damage.

Vicky Sander states that Supervisor Wolf and the board really have been terrific leadership in trying to steward this town with a very unscrupulous developer. Ms. Sander mentions that there is a group of very dedicated people who are pouring over applications, pulling out information, and trying to make it understandable because the applications are huge and they don't have lawyers just activist citizens who want to protect the land we love so much. Ms. Sander notes that there was talk of comparison waivers. The town has put in laws to protect the land and there are a number of waivers that Hecate is requesting from the state; there are sixteen and we are one of the smallest, with an output of 42 megawatts. For instance, there are only three waivers at Fort Edward Solar and they have 100 megawatts, Yellow Barn Solar has 160 megawatts and they only have eight. On Hecate's older application, there were 113 pages of request for waivers. As far as them being a nice company that just wants to make a little money. At first they were just going to develop this, it's an investment company, and they were going to sell it day one of operation. Now it's not even day one of operation, it's as soon as they get the permit, it's sold. They want their money and they want out. It is not only us who feel that they are bad actors, Didi Barrett, the Chair of the Energy Committee, has written quite a number of letters, in the last one she wrote "Stakeholders are supposed to work together in good faith to develop a project consistent with the scale of the community." Instead, Hecate has reapplied with a similar proposal that simply removes 60 acres of a parcel of land that has since been purchased and no longer part of the project. Didi Barrett writes "It has been my experience that from the outset, Hecate has failed to act in good faith, neither communicated with or addressed the concerns of the town leadership and community as a whole. As an example, the newest application does not reflect the new recommendation and the community-wide Craryville Gateway Working Group. This application also fails to take into consideration the Department of Environmental Conservation's newly enacted wetland regulations. These regulations expand the DEC's authority to regulate wetlands."

## **New Business**

### **a. Audit of Town Justice Court**

Supervisor Wolf states that the audit was done by the town accountant, Robert Patterson. This is something that has to be done annually.

A motion was made by Councilperson Gansowski and seconded by Councilperson Gabaccia to approve the audit report and authorization to send it to the Office of Court Administration's Internal Audit Services.

All in favor. Motion approved.

### **b. Proclamation Commemorating the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Copake Fire Company No. 1**

## PROCLAMATION

**WHEREAS**, on March 16, 1925, the Copake Fire District, consisting of 33 square miles within the township of Copake, was established by a group of citizens from the hamlets of Copake, Copake Falls, and West Copake who met at the Copake Grange Hall; and,

**WHEREAS**, on December 5, 1925, 47 Charter Members held Copake Fire Company 1's organizational meeting; and,

**WHEREAS**, on February 17, 1926, Copake Fire Company No. 2 was established in Copake Falls, followed by Copake Fire Company 3 in West Copake, and collectively the three Companies became the Copake Fire Department; and,

**WHEREAS**, in 1926, Copake Fire Company 1 attended its first formal parade of the County Fireman's Association in the village of Philmont; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Copake Fire Department hosted the annual Columbia County Volunteer Fireman's Association Convention Parade in 1930, 1948, 1957, 1965, 1974, and 1987; and,

**WHEREAS**, the first Copake Fire Company 1 Fire Station was built by its members on Main Street as a small, two-story wooden building with a garage for the fire engine and an upstairs meeting room; and,

**WHEREAS**, in 1962, a new concrete block fire station was constructed at 390 Center Hill Road, with three apparatus bays, a meeting room and small kitchen, and an addition in 1978 created two additional apparatus bays; and,

**WHEREAS**, in 1964, the Copake Fire Company 1 Ladies Fire Auxiliary was formed, providing valued support to the Fire Company, including fund raising, marching in parades, and general assistance to the community, until it was dissolved in 2014 and succeeded by the Fire Company Support Team; and,

**WHEREAS**, in 1976, members of the Copake Fire Department first attended the NYS Academy of Fire Science to become trained Fire Company Instructors; and

**WHEREAS**, since the 1990's, the mission of Copake Fire Company 1 expanded beyond fire suppression to include auto accident extraction, hazardous conditions mitigation, water marine rescue, wildland search and rope rescue, and assisting local Emergency Medical Services with cardiac arrest incidents; and

**WHEREAS**, for decades, Copake Fire Company 1 has organized fundraisers, sought and obtained grants, and collaborated with local organizations to enhance services and public safety;

### **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT**

**PROCLAIMED**, that the Copake Town Board proudly supports and honors Copake Fire Company 1 on its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and be it further

**PROCLAIMED**, that the Copake Town Board acknowledges and salutes the volunteer members of Copake Fire Company 1 for their selfless dedication to the safety and well-being of our community.

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Richard T. Wolf

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Stanley Gansowski

Supervisor

Deputy Supervisor

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Linda Gabaccia  
Councilmember

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Robert Haight  
Councilmember

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Will Morningstar  
Councilmember

Date: July 10, 2025  
Copake, New York

A motion was made by Councilperson Gabaccia and seconded by Councilperson Morningstar to approve the proclamation commemorating the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Copake Fire Company No. 1, and to present it to them at their celebration on August 9, 2025.

All in favor. Motion approved.

a. **Community Preservation Fund**

Councilperson Morningstar reports that we currently have a bill on the Governor's desk that needs to be signed that Copake could create its own Community Preservation Fund. With this fund, Copake can take a 2% fee from new people buying houses over a certain amount. That money goes into a fund that can be used to specifically to buy historical land, green spaces, protect agricultural land. The town would then be able to purchase land like this agricultural land, protect it and lease it out for a multitude of different activities, lots of it being farming so that we can continue to protect the farming and agricultural character of Copake by purchasing land, keeping it out of development and protecting it in perpetuity. Councilperson Morningstar asks for people to write to Governor Hochul so that she will sign off on this bill. It's already passed through the state senate and the assembly. We are just waiting on the Governor's signature so that then, as a community we can come together and create a plan so that we can gain money and purchase properties and keep more solar panels. Properties can also be donated to this fund and money can be donated as well. It's a way to protect the towns character. Anyone wanting more information please contact [wmorningstar@townofcopakeny.gov](mailto:wmorningstar@townofcopakeny.gov). The committee will send out a template for people to use. It is important to write one's own experiences because so much of this is steeped in the history of Copake.

b. **Short-term rentals law update**

Councilperson Gansowski reports that AZAVAR has picked up as a total after looking everybody in our town, 192 STR's of which only 91 are now active. There are 4 new applications, 22 have renewed for this year, and there are three that are non-compliant. There's five new enhanced applications pending.

Supervisor Wolf reports that the time is going to come soon that we will have to switch companies because of the county's occupancy tax and we will have to use the same compliance company that the county uses.

**c. Smart Meters**

Councilperson Gansowski reports that the town of Copake has 2,658 electric meters in its township of which there has been 2,409 have been converted; 164 have not been changed out because some people have opted not to and 965 of Copake has been completed.

**Resolutions**

Done

**Appointments**

Councilperson Morningstar states that there are two seats on CEDAC that need to be advertised. The board agrees to do so.

**Budget-Approval of Budget to Actual Reports and agreement to post**

**a. Preliminary Budget to Actual Report-June 30, 2025**

**b. Agreement to post Budget to Actual Report**

The Town Board agrees to accept and post the June 30, 2025 Budget to Actual reports. The bands are now listed on the sign at the entrance of the park every week of the band and the sponsor.

**Councilpersons' Reports**

Councilperson Gansowski hopes that everyone has seen the new sign that is hanging by Folgers Triangle regarding Music in the Park on Saturday nights. There were over 80 people last Saturday. There are 81 active kids in the Summer Park Program. Everything is running very smoothly.

Councilperson Gabaccia reports that the Historic Preservation is bring in a consultant to help them with their cultural resources survey which is going to be helpful in terms of protecting the things that we all care about in Copake. In the future they are looking to get a grant.

Councilperson Gabaccia reports that the Roe Jan Historical Society event, Sites to Celebrate, which includes not only an exhibit at the museum from June 12<sup>th</sup> through October 26<sup>th</sup> but also tours of the sites presented in the exhibition.

Councilperson Gabaccia reports that the ZBA has six new applications and four public hearings.

Councilperson Gabaccia mentions that the board really needs to start talking amongst themselves on playing the long game with the Hecate situation.

Councilperson Morningstar reports that some of the members of CEDAC met with the Columbia Economic Development Committee to discuss grants for properties in Copake that could be used for

housing. There is a small business Facebook group now that they are using so businesses can communicate. There was talk about the Community Preservation Fund.

**Public Forum**

Wayne Miller, Copake resident, thinks in light of what's been going on in the United States about the climate, he would like to know what Copake is doing about it. There are two major streams running through our community. He thinks we need an alert system and evacuation plan.

Supervisor Wolf mentions that there is a Town Emergency Management Plan.

**Approval of Bills**

Done

**Executive Session**

None

**Next Meeting Date**

Saturday, August 9, 2025, 9:00am

**Adjournment**

A motion was made by Councilperson Morningstar and seconded by Councilperson Gabaccia to adjourn the meeting.

All in favor. Motion approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn M. DeRocha  
Town Clerk