

**TOWN OF ESOPUS
TOWN BOARD WORKSHOP
March 5, 2026, 7:00 PM**

A regularly scheduled Town Board Workshop was held in person on February 5, 2026, at 1 Town Hall Way, Ulster Park. The following persons in attendance:

Present:
Supervisor Roscoe Pecora
Councilman Evelyn Clarke
Councilman Jared Geuss
Councilman Paul Brooks
Councilman Stephanie Yeh

Recording Administrator: Erin McNierney

4 WAYS TO GIVE PUBLIC COMMENT:

- 1.) **In-Person – Attend the Workshop**
- 2.) **Phone in:** Leave a voicemail on 845 331 0676 before the meeting
- 3.) **EMAIL – assistant@esopus.com with the subject line “Public Comment”**
- 4.) **MAIL – mail written comments to:**
Town of Esopus, P.O. Box 700
Port Ewen, NY 12466

Supervisor Pecora called the meeting to order at 7:07 PM.

Pledge to the flag

Public Comment

No public comment.

Supervisor Pecora closed the Public Comment.

Supervisor’s Office Accomplishments

Meeting with Sara Lee, Chair of the NYS Economic Development Council, regarding CHPE IDA Pilot status and Community Benefit Fund for Hudson 7 members. Supervisor Pecora said this issue is in a hold position at this time. We are waiting to see how the IDA negotiations go. There will be some funding coming our way if this goes through, it will be in the scope of approximately \$23,000 over a few years.

Participated in multi-municipal debriefing by County Executive's Emergency Operations team on Winter Storm Hernando.

Collaborative meeting with Scenic Hudson, park representatives Heather Blaikie and Rita Shaheen

To coordinate and promote park improvements. Supervisor Pecora mentioned that he is looking particularly at the Black Creek site and some uses he suggested we could do there and this will be very beneficial to the southern end of Town. He is very hopeful and feels that residents will be very happy with the outcome. More to come on this matter.

Completed mandatory workforce training for new staff and a dozen staff members participated in NYMIR Cybersecurity training.

Roscoe attended the Chambers Breakfast and learned about the Pilot Bridge Loan Program, which is a great program that supports organizations such as non-profits to acquire short-term loans up to 50K while waiting for the allocation of grant money to come through. Very helpful to our non-profits.

Updates

The Town received a reimbursement check for \$31,219.65 from the Ulster County Water/Sewer ARPA Grant; \$5,509 is being retained by the County until the engineer provides a certificate of completion.

NYS DOT has issued a decision in favor of reducing the speed limit on Old Route 9W / Wurts Street Bridge from 40 mph to 25 mph to keep the speed contiguous and consistent over the entire span of the bridge. Implementation of new signs will wait till better weather.

The Town received a quarterly Sales Tax check for \$58,677.71. Supervisor Pecora mentioned this amount was a bit less than last year.

2021 NY DEC Non-Source Point Grant was closed out in February and the process for funding reimbursement has begun.

Received resignation from a Recreation Commission member leaving a vacancy available.

SUPERVISOR PECORA MADE A MOTION TO HAVE KELLY OLDHAM CONTINUE AS THE NON-PAID SECRETARY AND FILL THE BOARD MEMBER VACANCY OF THE RECREATION COMMISSION WITH A TERM ENDING 12/31/31. COUNCILMAN EVELYN CLARKE SECONDED THE MOTION. ALL MEMBERS IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.

A call with NYS DEC Mark Domaracki P. G. Division of Environmental Remediation regarding background, status and next steps of the remedial program at the Hercules Inc./Dyno Nobel site. Supervisor Pecora mentioned that tests and studies have been

completed, waiting on test results and analysis. There are several contaminated areas that are the focus. There is a tentative date of June for a presentation to the Board on the status of this project. The Supervisor hopes that down the road the Dyno Nobel site can become a light industrial manufacturing site that will ultimately help our task base.

Meeting with Andy Bicking, UC Department of Environment Climate Smart Communities

Confidential Assistant Laura Petit worked on getting the Town a third extension on two electric charging station sites. The Town will need to complete this stage of the project to obtain future grant funding. There is some assistance available at the County level in this area.

KOENIG BLVD. ROADWAY BRIDGE SECTION OF THE PORT EWEN LIGHTING DIST.

Supervisor discussed the need to fix the lights on the bridge section in the Port Ewen lighting district. There are three phases to the lighting project:

Phase 1 – Fixtures and LED lights - Starting 3/10 – Dan Vedder will begin looking for the issues and rewiring two poles. DOT will be shutting down a portion of the road.

Phase 2 – locating boxes in the ground that need to be fixed. The frozen ground is an issue right now.

Phase 3 – Lights by Riverview (also in the ground); frozen ground an issue.

Supervisor Pecora is extremely concerned with the issue of safety on the bridge, especially with the lighting issue. There are motorized wheelchairs and pedestrians walking across the bridge and with the present issue of low to no lighting we are opening ourselves up to a lawsuit. This is a high priority on the Supervisors' list. The lighting district will pay for the lighting projects. There was approx. 45K from last year that will be used for this project.

Councilman Clarke asked who will be handling the work on the bridge? Supervisor Pecora explained that DOT, Town of Esopus Building and Grounds Dept. and an electrician who is familiar with the lights will be working on this project.

Supervisor Pecora mentioned they are still working on the decorative lights on Broadway. There is an issue locating these lights due to the weather.

PRESENTATION BY ULSTER COUNTY HOUSING SMART COMMUNITIES' INITIATIVE CANCELED

Presenter was sick and unable to make the meeting. Laura Petit, Supervisor's Confidential Assistant, will reschedule the presentation.

MODEL CODE OF ETHICS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS DISCUSSION

Councilman Brooks discussed the need to update the Ethics Code for the Town to let the public know that the town employees are serving the public and not themselves. Councilman Brooks feels that there are a few areas of the code that are valuable for the Board to look at: use of municipal equipment, political campaigns, expand and update the gift section, and broaden the definition of family members.

At this time the current ethics code does not have an ethics board to review ethics and complaint issues that come up. We may want to consider establishing such a Board in the future.

Supervisor Pecora suggests taking a look at the existing County Ethics Code. He feels that a lot of work needs to be done on the update of the Town ethics code model and the Board has more pending issues to focus on such as an IT security policy which will eventually become part of the Ethics Code.

Councilman Clarke said we do not have a disclosure agreement with the Town at this time. She feels that updating the ethics code will need much further research.

NELSON, POPE AND VOORHIS LLC .

Attorney Dylan Harris will be defending the town at an upcoming court date that had not been previously budgeted for.

SUPERVISOR PECORA MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE NELSON, POPE AND VOORHIS LLC FOR PROESSIONAL SERVICES RELATING TO K&Y Article 78. COUNCILMAN PAUL BROOKS SECONDED THE MOTION. ALL MEMBERS IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.

CHPE TAX VALUATION DISCUSSION – ASSESSOR SHANNON HARRIS

Assessor Shannon Harris informed the Board that the NYS Office of Real Property and Tax Services (ORPTS) has valued the CHPE electronic transmission line at the highest assessed value in the Hudson River (second highest for the project overall). If the ORPTS value holds, CHPE will become the top taxpayer in town with a taxable assessed value of approximately \$26,500,000 million in revenue. The NYS Office of Real Property Taxation provided CHPE with their tentative assessment at the same time they adjusted all of the special franchise assessments locally and across the State. The prior week, Town received a legal filing notice from a lawyer representing CHPE challenging ORPTS tentative value and seeking a much lower amount, which would have the effect of reducing CHPE’s taxes significantly.

It is important to understand that even minor, incremental downward changes to the tentative assessment for CHPE will result in a huge savings for the corporation, which would negatively impact the Town. CHPE representatives are going to push hard right now to reduce their assessment and preserve their right to file a lawsuit in Supreme Court via an Article 78, and subsequently file an appeal. Their legal strategy is to get the initial tentative valuation as low as possible, so they are creating all kinds of reasons why the ORPTS did not do a good job valuing the electronic transmission line.

Shannon has asked the Board to consider promptly moving forward with legal representation for the Town in this matter. The Town of Ulster has already obtained representation from Tabner, Ryan & Keniry LLP, specifically a lawyer with expertise dealing with CHPE issues and she would like to team up with them as well as Saugerties and Kingston and hire the same lawyer to represent the Town of Esopus. The Assessor and Supervisor have had discussions with the lawyer to begin strategizing points of negotiation.

Shannon explained that the Town is viewed by the State as a stakeholder and we need to have our voice in this matter. We want to keep the assessments flowing smoothly this year; the longer we wait, the higher the risk is of depreciation and loss of tax revenue to the town.

Supervisor Pecora believes that if we do not obtain legal representation, we will be defenseless.

Councilperson Geuss mentioned that in the past, when the Town teamed up with other towns, we came out on top. He believes time is of the essence, great work with moving on this so quickly.

Councilman Yeh asked whether the town had received tax revenue from CHPE in prior years. Shannon said no this is the first time the Town will be receiving taxes from CHPE.

Councilman Yeh asked the timeline of the negotiations and how many attorney hours are we looking at?

Shannon said the attorney rate for partner-level representation will be \$290.00 pr. hr. and the time frame will take us into the fall. She expects no more than 20 hrs. of legal representation centered around certain milestones in the assessment cycle, and the tax dollars far outweigh the cost of legal fees.

Shannon will be the key contact and will keep Supervisor Pecora updated.

TABNER, RYAN & KENIRY, LLP

SUPERVISOR PECORA MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE TABNER, RYAN & KENIRY, LLP FOR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES RELATING TO LEGAL FILING BY CHPE, LLC AGAINST THE SPECIAL FRANCHISE VALUATION FOR ESOPUS AT A RATE OF \$290.00 PER HR. COUNCILMAN STEPHANIE YEH SECONDED THE MOTION. ALL MEMBERS IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.

CHARTER COMMUNICATIONS FRANCHISE AGREEMENT DISCUSSION

Spectrum Northeast, LLC, an indirect subsidiary of Charter Communications, Inc., would like to provide cable services to the Town of Esopus. Supervisor Pecora is talking about this issue and is waiting on further information. He is hopeful that there will be discussion/adoption to move forward with this topic in the May meeting. He had a very informative meeting with Arch Top Communications and will continue that discussion. He would like to see the more rural areas of the Town receive high-speed internet access, especially for those working from home. Regarding the Franchise Fee, he just learned that there is nothing wrong with receiving grants that are available and which we have not received in the past. Supervisor Pecora said he will be looking into this matter more fully in the future.

SLEIGHTSBURGH TASK FORCE

Councilman Geuss gave an update on the Sleightsburgh Park Task Force meetings. Councilman Geuss and Councilman Brooks are working with numerous residents & specific stakeholders on this matter.

The main issue with residents in the area is exiting the park after hours when the automatic gate closes. Councilman Geuss has spoken with Sharon Jones and discussed that the gate will need to automatically open if someone breaks down on the water and does not leave the park before the gate closes. There will need to be more consistent sign placement around the park for: no swimming, no swimming to the island, no animals off-leash, and parking in designated areas only.

License hunters had two important issues: they would like to have access to ramps during duck season, and the FOB is cost prohibitive.

Supervisor Pecora said hunting signs will need to be properly placed, and we can lean on DEC for their guidance.

Councilman Geuss said he made several trips to the park last year and that parking was very good. At the next meeting, the FOB issues and concerns will be addressed, and the task force should have feedback/suggestions for the Board, as they just need to meet with a few more committee members. The Waterfront Advisory Board will review the LWRP and provide guidance on Sleightsburgh Spit Park.

Diane Dintruff confirmed that the LWRP Public Hearing will take place directly before the TB Meeting on 3/19/26 at 7:00 pm. Councilman Geuss confirmed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

SUPERVISOR PECORA MADE A MOTION TO ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION AT 7:50 PM TO DISCUSS A PERSONNEL PERFORMANCE MATTER FOR A CERTAIN INDIVIDUAL. DEPUTY SUPERVISOR HARRIS AND HIGHWAY SUPERINTENDENT MIKE CAFALDO WERE INVITED INTO THE MEETING. COUNCILMAN STEPHANIE YEH SECONDED THE MOTION. ALL MEMBERS WERE IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.

SUPERVISOR PECORA MADE A MOTION TO EXIT EXECUTIVE SESSION AT 8:15 PM. COUNCILMAN JARED GEUSS SECONDED THE MOTION. ALL MEMBERS WERE IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.

ACTION: NO ACTION TAKEN.

SUPERVISOR PECORA MADE A MOTION TO ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION AT 8:16 PM TO CONDUCT CANDIDATE INTERVIEWS RELATING TO THE HIRING OF A CPA FIRM. BOOKKEEPER DEBRA KAIN WAS INVITED INTO THE MEETING. COUNCILMAN STEPHANIE YEH SECONDED THE MOTION. ALL MEMBERS WERE IN FAVOR; THE MOTION CARRIED.

SUPERVISOR PECORA MADE A MOTION TO EXIT THE EXECUTIVE SESSION AT 8:55 PM. COUNCILMAN YEH SECONDED THE MOTION. ALL MEMBERS WERE IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.

ACTION: NO ACTION TAKEN

ADJOURNMENT

SUPERVISOR ROSCOE PECORA MADE A MOTION TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 8:56 PM. COUNCILMAN CLARKE SECONDED THE MOTION: ALL MEMBERS WERE IN FAVOR: MOTION CARRIED.

*Respectfully Submitted,
Erin Mc.Nierney
Deputy Clerk*