

CITY COUNCIL MINUTES

City of Hillsdale
October 6, 2025
7:00 P.M.

Regular Meeting

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Pro Tem Joshua Paladino opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call

Mayor Pro Tem Josh Paladino called the meeting to order. Clerk Price took roll call.

Council Members present:	Joshua Paladino, Ward 4 Mayor Pro Tem R Greg Stuchell, Ward 1 Jacob Bruns, Ward 1 William Morrissey, Ward 2 Matthew Bentley, Ward 2 Gary Wolfram, Ward 3 Bob Flynn, Ward 3 Robert Socha, Ward 4
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Council Members absent:	None
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Also Present: David Mackie (City Manager), Attorney Tom Thompson, Katy Price (City Clerk), Jason Blake (DPS Director), Scott Hephner (HCPD/HCFD), Sam Fry (Economic Development), Brandon Janes (IT Dept), Rob Stiverson, Mark Nichols, Scott Sessions, Nick Fox, Sally Clark, Susan Smith, Larry Walworth, Sheri Ingles, Nancy McCarty, Howard Spence, Leon Rodgers, Melissa Desjardin, Brian Desjardin, Keri Stewart, Gerry Brown and James Edward Thomas.

Approval of Agenda

Mayor Pro Tem Paladino requested to remove Planning Commission appointment- Jeff Fazekas from agenda and removed Communication item F. Code Enforcement Email for Hallett St and move to Public Safety committee.

Motion by Councilman Socha, support by Councilman Flynn, to remove appointment for Planning Commission and remove Communication item F from the agenda.

Voice vote, approved unanimously.

Motion by Councilman Socha, supported by Councilman Morrissey to accept the amended agenda.

Voice vote, approved unanimously.

Public Comment

Sally Clark, EDP, commented in favor of the IFE Support for Cobra Moto LLC.

Scott Cress, ward 4, commented on promotion of Sam Fry to Assistant Manager and MSCPA appointment.

Howard Spence, Apple Run Apt., commented on Camp Hope its violation(s) to ordinances and rezoning of property.

Gerry Brown, Hope Harbor board member, commented on homeless situation and Camp Hope.

James Thomas, Barr St., commented on Camp Hope and read history of extensions, citations and inspections etc.

Leon Rodgers, commented on Camp Hope/Hope Harbor and homeless.

Missy DesJardin, ward 3, commented on Camp Hope; Hope Harbor blue prints drawn up and permits needed.

Consent Agenda

- A. Approval of Bills
 - 1. City and BPU Claims of September 11, 2025: \$1,678,796.16
 - 2. Payroll of September 11, 2025: \$200,466.05
- B. City Council Minutes of September 15, 2025
- C. Finance Minutes of September 15, 2025
- D. Planning Commission Minutes of September 24, 2025
- E. Public Services Committee Minutes of September 30, 2025
- F. TCO- Train Events
- G. MSCPA Alternate Appointment
- H. AMP Safety Training

Council Member Bruns requested G. MSCPA Appointment be moved to New Business F. for discussion.

Motion by Council Member Morrissey seconded by Council Member Flynn to approve the Consent Agenda.

Roll Call:

Councilman Bruns	Aye
Councilman Flynn	Aye
Councilman Socha	Aye
Councilman Stuchell	Aye
Councilman Wolfram	Aye
Mayor Pro Tem Paladino	Aye
Councilman Bentley	Aye
Councilman Morrissey	Aye

Motion passed 8-0

Communication/Petitions

- A. BPU Hydrant Flushing Notice
- B. Fall Brush & Leaf Collection Information
- C. Halloween- Trick or Treat Times
- D. Hillsdale Railroad Festival Flyer
- E. Chili Cook Off Event
- F. Hillsdale County Commissioner Verbal Update – Doug Ingles

Hillsdale Co. Commissioner Ingles gave a brief report on KFC restaurant progress and open interviews, Michigan Works Manufacturing event and jobs available.

The items of communications were received for informational purposes only.

Introduction and Adoption of Ordinances/Public Hearings

- A. Public Hearing – IFT- Cobra Moto LLC- 250 Industrial Dr.

Cobra Moto, LLC has submitted an application for an Industrial Facilities Tax Exemption Certificate for a new facility project, started August 11, 2025, with a projected completion date of August 11, 2030. The total cost of the real property improvements reported by the applicant is \$507,000. The facility is located within an Industrial Development District established January 13, 1975.

Mayor Pro Tem Paladino opened podium at 7:53p.m.

James Thomas, support of the project and Cobra Moto LLC.

No other comments Mayor Pro Tem closed podium at 7:55p.m.

Motion by Councilman Flynn, supported by Councilman Morrissey to accept and approve the IFE for Cobra Moto LLC as presented. **Resolution #3650.**

Roll Call:

Councilman Flynn	Aye
Councilman Socha	Aye
Councilman Stuchell	Aye
Councilman Wolfram	Aye
Mayor Pro Tem Paladino	Aye
Councilman Bentley	Aye
Councilman Morrissey	Aye
Councilman Bruns	Aye

Motion passed 8-0

Old Business

A. Camp Hope

Kim Thomas, assessor/code enforcement reported BMAK Charity Thrifts, doing business as Hillsdale Community Thrift, began leasing the property at 390 W. Carleton, 386 W. Carleton and 388 W. Carleton Rd. in 2018 and, on January 25, 2021, entered into a land contract to purchase the property. According to the BMAK corporate filings, all proceeds of the store are used for charitable purposes, including but not limited to, “relief of the poor, the distressed and the underprivileged, along with donations to charities within the county where the facility is located.” Melissa DesJardin is listed as the resident agent and the incorporator.

*July 18, 2023 Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency conducted an inspection, met with Mrs. DesJardin, and issued a letter to Hillsdale Community Thrift Store for violating Michigan Compiled Law Section 333.12501(1)(a), operating a temporary camping facility with 5 or more sites without a campground license. The letter ordered discontinuance of the campground within 60 days (September 16, 2023).

*October 3, 2023 BHSJ Health Department letter issued verifying that the property was in compliance with the state campground law (camping limited to no more than 4 sites so no campground license required). They did not address any other potential violations of state law or city ordinance (copies of both letters provided to the city assessor’s office on September 24, 2024).

*May 29, 2024 Hillsdale Daily News (HDN) reported 19 people living in the tent or occupying “office space” at the thrift store.

*September 19, 2024 Collegian article stated that there were at one time 17 tents and inaccurately stated, “To comply with state regulations, Desjardin obtained a camping license, enabling the site to legally host multiple tents and provide structured shelter.”

*October 30, 2024 code enforcement staff met with Mrs. DesJardin and issued a formal letter for construction without a zoning compliance permit, with a 90-day deadline to remove the tent structure (by January 28, 2025).

*November 20, 2024 HDN article reported 23 residents housed in the tent, including children.

*December 2, 2024 Council - members made it clear during discussion that they would not support forcible eviction and removal of the tent during the winter months.

*January 7, 2025 request submitted and approved to extend the deadline to April 30, 2025

*March 14, 2025 request was submitted to extend the deadline to December of 2025. The request stated, “We still have 11 people in the tent. We are still working on housing for them. Our goal is to have them all in housing before winter.” Request denied, letter issued March 27, 2025 reiterating the April 30, 2025 deadline.

*May 1, 2025 staff verified tent had not been removed and a civil infraction notice of violation was issued naming Melissa DesJardin as personally responsible.

*May 5, 2025 DesJardin reported to Council (according to HDN articles)

- o 11 residents at Camp Hope
- o Working on a plan to move the thrift store to a location in the downtown
- o Building at 390 to be renovated for transitional housing for up to 30 residents, with separate sleeping areas for men and women, a full kitchen and an on-site social worker.
- o “I can execute this plan in less than four months.”
- o Property would need to be rezoned.

*May 22, 2025 Public Safety Committee recommended “no leniency” after hearing complaints from residents of a neighboring apartment complex.

- o Councilman Socha reported that there had been 28 police calls and 42 fire calls to Camp Hope since its inception.

*June 26, 2025 tent still not removed, civil infraction citation issued to BMAK Charity Thrifts, with Melissa DesJardin named as the executive director.

*July 30, 2025 still not in compliance.

*August 7, 2025 Facebook post by Hillsdale Community Thrift looking for volunteers to help with transportation, paperwork, and meals for 24 Campers (more than twice the number reported at the May 5 council meeting).

*September 2, 2025 District Court Hearing

- o Staff verified and took pictures to document that the property was still not in compliance and was adversely affecting neighboring properties.

- o 3:04 pm Hillsdale Community Thrift made a Facebook post regarding the hearing, stating that they had 25 adults and 3 minors living at the camp.

- o The city attorney presented an option for DesJardin, as agent for BMAK, to sign a consent judgment agreeing to obtain zoning permits or remove the noncompliant structure within 14 days. The consent was signed by Melissa DesJardin as the authorized agent for BMAK Charity Thrifts. The judgment provided that if the property was not brought into compliance within the 14-day deadline, then the court would assess fines and costs (including the city’s attorney fees) and the city staff or their contractors would be authorized to enter the property to remove any noncompliant structures.

*September 11, 2025 Collegian article - DesJardin indicated that she was working on a plan to renovate the building at 386 for transitional housing. This plan was reiterated in person by DesJardin to code enforcement staff:

- o Would submit a formal request for an extension of the deadline.

- o Hired an engineer to prepare plans and would share when they were available.

- o Possibly county funding from opioid settlement.

*September 18, 2025 city attorney contacted code enforcement the assessor indicating that the district court was asking for verification whether or not the property was in compliance.

- o Staff inspection, pictures verified that tent was still present

- o Verified no formal applications filed for permits to bring the property into compliance.

- o No request submitted to extend the deadline.

- o Affidavit of noncompliance prepared by the attorney and signed by assessor.

*September 22, 2025 county building inspection contacted code enforcement with question regarding tentative plans that had been submitted to his office for renovation of 386 (engineer asked that the plans not be shared with the city until the county inspector approved).

*September 25, 2025 Hillsdale District Court issued default judgments for two separate violations of the Hillsdale zoning code:

- o 36-034, construction without a zoning compliance permit

- o 36-005, structure occupied as dwelling without meeting minimum standards

As of October 1, 2025 no applications for any permits have been filed with the city, despite the Collegian reporting on September 25 that, “After meeting the deadline to bring its facility up to code, Camp Hope is preparing to transition into a standalone nonprofit under the new name HOPE Harbor.” The article also indicates that they plan to keep the tent structure (388) for storage, and that the current structure at 386 is adequate to house 16 people but they plan to expand it to accommodate around 30.

Thomas requested Council give recommendation to either 1. Post the tent structure as unsafe for occupancy, begin eviction proceedings against the “campers,” and remove the noncompliant structure as authorized by the consent judgment; OR

2. Issue additional civil infraction notices for each day the violation continues (Ordinance #2023-01 – “Any person violating any provision of this chapter shall be deemed to have committed a separate municipal civil infraction for each day the violation continues.”)

Council discussed in depth the history of Camp Hope, its structure (tent), zoning, citations, court judgement and recommendations presented.

Melissa DesJardin, HCT Executive Director, spoke to County Building Inspector office, waiting on project to be in compliance before sent to City Planning Commission for approval on Hope Harbor which would be a non-transit board facility/transitional housing; Sober living. DesJardin has blue prints for 16 people which would include a kitchen, 2 bathrooms and living area. Stated the board was looking to expand to two story, to house more people.

She shared she had cameras on property and asked about compliant that came in. DesJardin stated she would pay the fines. She got homeless off trials and looked for housing, there was no housing.

Councilman Flynn asked about plan about moving downtown months ago.

DesJardin mentioned she received letters stating she wasn't welcomed downtown.

Councilman Bentley asked about the social media post on the longtime employee of six (6) years not being paid or having bad paychecks.

DesJardin specified disgruntled employee had a problem with the homeless and mentioned her daughter worked there as well. The daughter submitted a doctor's note that was forged. DesJardin stated she called the doctor's office and reported the doctor's office never wrote the note.

Councilman Bentley asked if the land contract payments were current. DesJardin stated yes.

Councilman Socha addressed the complaint that was received during the meeting from Mr. Spence.

Councilman Socha reviewed the many fire and police calls to the property and asked how DesJardin will overcome the objections for 2.5 years as Council overlooked ordinance in the beginning. There is no Use and Occupancy permit. Socha is concerned for all community members.

Back and forth between Socha and DesJardin occurred.

Motion by Councilman Socha, supported by Councilman Bruns to post the tent structure as unsafe for occupancy, begin eviction proceedings against the "campers," and remove the noncompliant structure as authorized by the consent judgment.

Councilman Bruns stated that if Council would have enforced the ordinance for years now, the situation wouldn't exist.

Roll Call:

Councilman Morrissey	Nay
Councilman Socha	Aye
Councilman Stuchell	Nay
Councilman Wolfram	Nay
Mayor Pro Tem Paladino	Aye
Councilman Bentley	Aye
Councilman Bruns	Aye
Councilman Flynn	Aye

Motion passed 5-3

B. Keefer House Hotel, LLC OPRA Resolution Amendment

Nick Fox, Project Manager, gave a brief report on construction and permit update.

Motion by Councilman Morrissey, supported by Councilman Stuchell to amend resolution 3372 to extend the project competition date to December 31, 2025. **Resolution 3651.**

Roll Call:

Councilman Socha	Aye
Councilman Stuchell	Aye
Councilman Wolfram	Aye
Mayor Pro Tem Paladino	Aye
Councilman Bentley	Aye
Councilman Bruns	Nay
Councilman Flynn	Aye
Councilman Morrissey	Aye

Motion passed 7-1

New Business

A. Appoint City Engineer

Motion by Council Member Flynn, seconded by Council Member Morrissey to approve the appointment of Rob Stiverson as City Engineer.

Roll Call:

Councilman Morrissey	Aye
Councilman Socha	Aye
Councilman Stuchell	Aye
Councilman Wolfram	Aye
Mayor Pro Tem Paladino	Aye
Councilman Bentley	Aye
Councilman Bruns	Aye
Councilman Flynn	Aye

Motion passed 8-0

B. Set Public Hearing – Hillsdale Renaissance – OPRA Certificate

Motion by Council Member Wolfram, seconded by Council Member Socha to set public hearing for Hillsdale Renaissance on October 20, 2025 at 7pm.

Voice vote, approved unanimously.

C. Set Public Hearing – MT Maier Properties LLC- OPRA Certificate

Motion by Council Member Flynn, seconded by Council Member Socha to set public hearing for MT Maier Properties LLC on October 20, 2025 at 7pm.

Voice vote, approved unanimously.

D. Land Division Request – 350 Hillsdale St.

Owner of 350 Hillsdale St requested the land division and submitted the application.

Motion by Council Member Morrissey, seconded by Council Member Flynn to approve the land division request for 350 Hillsdale St. as presented.

Roll Call:

Councilman Stuchell	Aye
Councilman Wolfram	Aye
Mayor Pro Tem Paladino	Aye
Councilman Bentley	Aye
Councilman Bruns	Aye
Councilman Flynn	Aye
Councilman Socha	Aye
Councilman Morrissey	Aye

Motion passed 8-0

E. Proposed 2026 Special Assessment Districts for Street Projects

Jason Blake, DPS Director reviewed the change in Small Urban funding. City staff presented an updated street reconstruction project list to the Public Service Committee reflecting Oak St. as a

proposed FY 2026 SAD project and Reading Ave as a FY 2027 SAD project. Lake & Willow Streets would be delayed to FY 2028, pending funding. The City Manager and Director of Public Services recommend the following streets for inclusion in the proposed SADs for street rehabilitation for projects and potential associated utility work during the 2026 construction season: Proposed SAD 2026-14 – Oak St. (0.53 miles): Oak St. from Willow St. to W. Fayette St.

Motion by Council Member Flynn, seconded by Council Member Morrissey to direct the City Engineer to prepare plans, specifications, and cost estimates for the listed project areas pursuant to City Ordinance Article V, Division 3, Section 2-333, and submit to Council no later than the first regular meeting of January 2026 for consideration of establishment of a Special Assessment District.

Roll Call:

Mayor Pro Tem Paladino	Aye
Councilman Bentley	Aye
Councilman Bruns	Aye
Councilman Flynn	Aye
Councilman Morrissey	Aye
Councilman Socha	Aye
Councilman Stuchell	Aye
Councilman Wolfram	Aye

Motion passed 8-0

F. MSCPA Alternate Appointment

Mr. Mackie gave an overview of the appointment position to the MSCPA. In his absence Mr. Fry would sit in, in his stead. No additional compensation given for this appointment as needed.

Motion by Council Member Socha, seconded by Council Member Flynn to approve Sam Fry as an alternate appointment to the MSCPA.

By a voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Miscellaneous Reports

- A. Proclamations – Public Power Week
Pregnancy & Infant Loss Awareness Day
Mayor Pro Tem read aloud.
- B. Appointments- LAC DART – Lori Rodgers, Reappointment – EDC - Nolan Sullivan
- C. Other - None

General Public Comment

Jack McLain, 1445 S. Bunn Rd., Spoke about Galloway Drive and migrants.

James Thomas, Barr St., commented on Camp Hope.

John Beckwith, commented on about ice cream and the city needing a shop.

Scott Cress, ward four, commented on Sam Fry promotion.

Larry Walworth, ward three, commented on code enforcement and animals at large.

City Manager Report

City Manager Mackie presented a written report which was in packet.

Council Comment

Mayor Pro Tem Paladino reviewed assistant manager position.

Councilman Flynn spoke on upcoming mayoral election and timeline for swearing mayor in.

Councilman Stuchell stated he had to leave at 10:00 p.m.

October 6, 2025

City Council Minutes

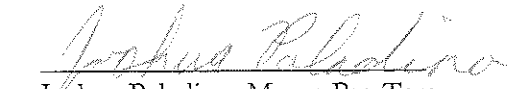
Councilman Bentley spoke on election and mayor pro tem.

Adjournment

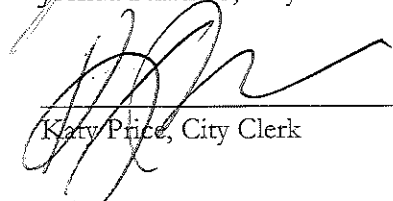
Motion by Councilmember Flynn, seconded by Councilmember Socha to adjourn the meeting.

By a voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting Adjourned at 10:02 p.m.



Joshua Paladino, Mayor Pro Tem



Katy Price, City Clerk