

CITY COUNCIL MINUTES

City of Hillsdale
December 1, 2025
7:00 P.M.

Regular Meeting

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Scott Sessions opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call

Mayor Sessions called the meeting to order. Clerk Price took roll call.

Council Members present:	Scott Sessions, Mayor
	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
	Joshua Paladino, Ward 4

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), Brandon Janes (IT), Penny Swan, Keri Stewart, Sheri Ingles, Cindy Pratt, Cathy Kelemen, Howard Spence, Mark Nichols, Ron Spence, Aidan Sullivan, Gerry Brown, Felicia Finch, Leon Rogers, Melissa DesJardin, Brian DesJardin, Jonathan Meckel.

Approval of Agenda

Mayor Sessions made correction in the November 17, 2025 Council Minutes and also 2026 Council Meeting Dates under New Business.

Motion by Councilman Morrissey, support by Councilman Socha, to amend the November 17, 2025 Council Minutes under the Consent agenda and amend the 2026 Council meeting dates under New Business as discussed.

All ayes. Motion carried.

Motion by Councilman Morrissey, support by Councilman Socha, to approve the agenda as amended.

All ayes. Motion carried.

Public Comment

Jeff Fazakas, commented on the chain of command process that was discussed at the last meeting. Fazakas also commented on leaf pickup and equipment.

Gerry Brown, Hope Harbor board member, spoke on Hope Harbor and Camp Hope.

Cindy Pratt, Apple Run Apts., spoke on Camp Hope, neighbor's safety and asked council to not give forgiveness for the bill.

Larry Wilson, 6038 Cole Rd., Hope Harbor board member, gave a brief background as he was once in sober living and turned his life around.

Howard Spence, Apple Run Apts., Camp Hope and Hope Harbor should be held accountable for not being in compliance with the City.

Robert Eichler, Scipio Twp., commented on Hope Harbor and stated he spoke to residents there and board members many times.

Jack McLain, 1445 S. Bunn Rd., commented on the previous meeting’s council discussion and also commented on presented boards and commission appointments.

Consent Agenda

- A. Approval of Bills
 - 1. City and BPU Claims of November 13, 2025: \$351,199.10
 - 2. Payroll of November 20, 2025: \$213,750.94
- B. City Council Minutes of November 17, 2025
- C. Finance Minutes of November 17, 2025

Motion by Councilman Morrisey, support by Councilman Socha, to approve the agenda as presented.

Roll Call:

Councilman Bruns	Aye
Councilman Flynn	Aye
Councilman Morrisey	Aye
Councilman Paladino	Aye
Councilman Socha	Aye
Councilman Stuchell	Aye
Councilman Wolfram	Aye
Mayor Sessions	Aye
Councilman Bentley	Aye

Motion passed 9-0

Communication/Petitions

- A. Comcast Letter
- B. Hillsdale County Commissioner Update – Doug Ingles

Doug Ingles, County Commissioner, gave a brief update on the County.

Introduction and Adoption of Ordinances/Public Hearings

- A. Public Hearing – Hillsdale’s Energy Waste Reduction (EWR) Plan

David Mackie, City Manager/BPU Director stated the State of Michigan adopted a very aggressive Energy Waste Reduction (EWR) law in late 2023. The BPU’s staff has been working with Michigan Municipal Electric Association (MMEA) and American Municipal Power (AMP) over the last year to develop a plan that meets the EWR requirements at lesser cost than the plan available from the State.

The State’s program is estimated to cost 3.5 percent of a community’s prior year’s electric sales. Based on Hillsdale’s sales, that program would cost our utility around \$500,077 per year. To raise that amount of revenue the BPU would have to charge each customer an additional \$6.84 per meter per month. Council has been clear that we need to keep electric rates as affordable as possible, so we notified the State that the BPU would not be participating in their program, and would instead explore other program options with the goal of complying with the state mandate at the lowest possible cost. The City’s proposed EWR program would be administered by the BPU’s staff in conjunction with AMP’s Efficiency Smart Program. The program would cost about 2.4 percent and cost our customers \$4.73 per meter per month. Our intention in managing our own program is that it would be more responsive to our customers and save them money over the State’s program. Ultimately, if we run a more effective program we might be able to reduce the monthly per meter charge of the program even further.

Council discussion ensued on how to gage meter usage and charge a flat rate for residential and charge by kilowatt for commercial.

Mayor Sessions opened podium at 7:35 p.m.

Lance Lashaway, stated the public hearing should be at the following meeting as item was introduced.

Felicia Finch 25 Hillsdale St., commented that her average monthly bill is \$2,000 and would not be able to afford the increase.

Jeff Fazekas, agreed with the City Manager on a being bill for the percentage of usage.

Mayor Sessions closed podium at 7:38 p.m.

Further discussion ensued from Council on flat rate for residential and percentage usage for commercial. City Manager Mackie will look into exploring the residential amount used.

Councilman Socha stated he does not like the state requiring or mandating a plan and shared his displeasure that the state would assess penalties if the city did not comply.

Item will be discussed more at the next meeting. No action taken.

Old Business

- A. Proposed 2026 Special Assessment District – SAD 2026-1 Arch Ave. Drawings & Engineer Estimate

Jason Blake, DPS Director and Robert Stiverson, City Engineer, stated one of the City Council’s primary goals is to address the declining quality of the city’s street and infrastructure systems. City staff has utilized the Special Assessment process as delineated in the City of Hillsdale’s Code of Ordinances, Article V.-Finances, Division 3.-Special Assessments and any other applicable sections of the City Charter and/or Code of Ordinances to facilitate these projects.

Proposed SAD-2026-1 – Arch Avenue – from Carleton Road (M99) to Mechanic Road .34 Miles (Estimated 16 parcels in the SAD – (Engineering Est.: \$448,000).

Construction \$368,275
Engineering/Project Management/Special Assessment \$ 38,430
Contingencies: \$ 41,295
Total: \$448,000

Construction costs are based on historic bid tabulations for the City of Hillsdale with a comparison of MDOT Unit Prices. Project Management/Inspection is based on MDOT guideline for installation of Quantities and previous experience. Contingencies are approximately 10%, and are recommended based on there are unknowns in the field that could impact project costs.

Lengthy council discussion on Special Assessment Districts, grants, public hearing, and the construction project timeframes.

Motion by Council Member Morrisey, seconded by Council Member Socha to approve the project drawings and engineer estimates as presented for SAD 2026-1 Arch Ave project.

Roll Call:

Councilman Flynn	Aye
Councilman Morrisey	Aye
Councilman Paladino	Aye
Councilman Socha	Aye
Councilman Stuchell	Aye
Councilman Wolfram	Aye
Mayor Sessions	Aye
Councilman Bentley	Aye
Councilman Bruns	Aye

Motion passed 9-0

New Business

- A. Resolution of Necessity, Set Public Hearing Special Assessment District, SAD 2026-1 Arch Ave.

Motion by Council Member Socha, seconded by Council Member Flynn to approve the resolution of necessity for the SAD 2026-1 Arch Ave. public hearing set for January 5, 2025. **Resolution #3659.**

Roll Call:

Councilman Morrissey	Aye
Councilman Socha	Aye
Councilman Stuchell	Aye
Councilman Wolfram	Aye
Councilman Paladino	Aye
Mayor Sessions	Aye
Councilman Bentley	Aye
Councilman Bruns	Aye
Councilman Flynn	Aye

Motion passed 9-0

- B. 2026 Council Meeting Dates

The meeting dates were presented as follows:

January 5, 19
February 2, 6
March 2, 6
April 6, 20
May 4, 18
June 1, 15
July 6, 20
August 3, 17
September 8, 21
October 5, 19
November 2, 6
December 7, 21

Council discussion on changing the list by replacing January 19th to the 20th, April 6th to April 7th.

Councilman Bentley requested changing the meeting of July 6th to July 7th or cancelling it because of the celebration over the July 4th holiday weekend.

Councilman Flynn agreed with Councilman Bentley on the April change but didn't agree with changing the July 6th meeting for celebrating the July 4th holiday on Saturday.

Motion by Council Member Flynn, seconded by Council Member Morrissey to approve the 2026 meeting dates with the revisions as follows:

January 5, 20
February 2, 6
March 2, 6
April 7, 20
May 4, 18
June 1, 15
July 6, 20
August 3, 17
September 8, 21
October 5, 19

November 2, 6

December 7, 21

All ayes. Motion carried.

C. Camp Hope Demolition Email

Keri Stewart, Hope Harbor Board Member presented stats on Camp Hope over the past few years. Stewart, on behalf of Hope Harbor asked Council to forgive the fines/penalties that were assigned for the demolition of the tent at 388 W. Carleton Rd.

Lengthy council discussion followed on the Court's consent judgement, the agreement between the City and BMAK Thrift and noncompliance with the fees associated with it.

Councilman Stuchell applauded the support that has been given to the unhoused from the organization.

Councilman Bentley reviewed the fees aloud.

Stewart mentioned that the board has been in contact with the American Disability Association and the Michigan Coalition Commission and looking for other areas as well.

City Manager Mackie reviewed the history and timeline of the tent removal, demolition process, and court judgement. Planning Commission met with Hope Harbor and denied the change of use for the facility. Size of structure doesn't meet codes and building does not have a use and occupancy permit for the facility and is out of compliance. Mackie stated that what the organization is doing is good but the location is not allowed in the area.

Councilman Socha mentioned Council applauded what the mission is but organization is not in compliance with city code. Council should enforce the laws, public safety concerns were raised from surrounding residents.

More council discussion ensued.

Motion by Council Member Bentley, seconded by Council Member Socha to deny the request to forgive Camp Hope demolition and associated costs, \$2834.00.

Roll Call:

Councilman Paladino	Aye
Councilman Socha	Aye
Councilman Stuchell	Nay
Councilman Wolfram	Nay
Mayor Sessions	Nay
Councilman Bentley	Aye
Councilman Bruns	Aye
Councilman Flynn	Aye
Councilman Morrisey	Aye

Motion passed 6-3

Miscellaneous Reports

A. Proclamations – None

B. Appointment- Planning Commission – Cathy Kelemen

Zoning Board of Appeals – John Kast

Cemetery Board – Ronald Spence

TIFA Board – Rachel Doty

Reappointment: Zoning Board of Appeals- Amber Yoder

Motion by Councilman Morrisey, seconded by Councilman Socha moved to approve Cathy Kelemen to the Planning Commission.

All ayes. Motion carried.

Motion by Councilman Flynn, seconded by Councilman Morrisey moved to approve John Kast to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

All ayes. Motion carried.

Motion by Councilman Bentley, seconded by Councilman Socha moved to approve Ronald Spence to the Cemetery Board.

All ayes. Motion carried.

Council discussion ensued on the TIFA Board appointment and requirements.

Motion by Councilman Flynn, seconded by Councilman Stuchell moved to approve Rachel Doty to the TIFA Board.

Roll Call:

Councilman Bruns	Nay
Councilman Flynn	Aye
Councilman Morrisey	Aye
Councilman Socha	Aye
Councilman Stuchell	Aye
Councilman Wolfram	Aye
Councilman Paladino	Nay
Mayor Sessions	Aye
Councilman Bentley	Nay

Motion passed 6-3

Motion by Councilman Flynn, seconded by Councilman Morrisey moved to approve the reappointment of Amber Yoder to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

All ayes. Motion carried.

General Public Comment

Howard Spence and Cindy Pratt, Apple Run Apts., thanked Council for their vote on Hope Harbor.

Lance Lashaway, spoke on the energy plan and TIFA appointment.

Felicia Finch, 25 Hillsdale St., spoke on the lack of participation for events and other items within the community from Council and the city as a whole.

Bob Eichler, commented on the energy plan.

Jack McLain, commented on the TIFA Board.

City Manager Report

Reviewed the City Manager report in the packet.

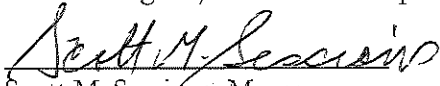
Council Comment

Council discussed committee meetings, OMA and quorum requirements.

Adjournment

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

The meeting Adjourned at 10:07 p.m.


Scott M. Sessions, Mayor


Katy Price, City Clerk