

CHCA General Meeting, January 21, 2026

Board Members Present: Jim Walker, Michael Regan, Judy White, Anne Wesp, George Pullis, Pat Coyle, Bob Berding, Carol Zwielig, Betsy Cambria

Meeting Notes:

Pledge of Allegiance- Student Ambassador Paul Dipaola

Harborfields HS Update- Student Ambassador Abraham Oonnoony

- Harborfields High School was recognized for academic excellence through the AP School Honor Roll. The school's Advanced Placement programs are designed to deliver strong academic results while expanding access and participation for students. The AP Honor Roll includes four levels of distinction: Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Platinum. This year, HHS advanced from Gold to the most prestigious designation of Platinum.
- This weekend, the robotics club, of which Paul is a member, competed in the First Tech Challenge Qualifier #2 and delivered an outstanding performance, earning the title of Winning Alliance, receiving the Sustain Award for their commitment to preserving the team for the future, and finishing second overall in the competition.
- Finally, a space at the high school was renovated and transformed into "The Cove," a new area designed to provide students with a comfortable place to relax during the school day. Students have already begun to utilize their new space.

Guest Speaker - Stephanie Bontempi, Suffolk County Legislature 18th District

- Encouraged residents to contact her office for assistance with county issues or for guidance on matters involving the town or state.
- Noted that the county has secured more funding for the police.
- Leg. Bontempi serves on the following committees: Economic Development, Planning & Housing,/Education, Labor, Consumer Affairs & Diversity,/Environment, Parks & Agriculture,/Govt Operations, Personnel, Information Tech,/Public Safety,/ and Public Works, Transportation & Energy.

Caumsett Park Expansion:

A question was raised about the expansion of Caumsett Park.

- It was clarified that Caumsett is a state park, not a county park.
- The expansion involved the state purchasing over 200 acres of seminary land, a project initially involving the county and the Village of Lloyd Harbor as partners.
- The state ultimately decided to proceed with the purchase alone.
- The county's Health Department remains involved due to septic and sewer issues on the land.
- Caumsett State Park Access: It was mentioned that Caumsett State Park is open. An entrance with a parking area is available before the seminary drive, allowing access to walk around.

Water Quality Improvement Fund

A question was raised about the 1% tax collected for water quality improvement and whether funds were being distributed.

- It was confirmed that the tax collection began in March 2025, so funds are now available.
- The fund has collected approximately \$50 million.

- A small percentage is for administration; the rest is split between sewers and innovative/alternative (IA) septic systems.
- There is research underway at Stony Brook for a new, cheaper, and more effective IA system, but it is still in the experimental phase.
- The county and state offer grants totaling about \$20,000 for septic system upgrades.

Guest Speaker- Christopher Lau, the new Director of Public Safety, introduced himself and his background in federal law enforcement.

Jurisdiction Clarification (Public Safety vs. Police):

The Public Safety department is one layer of a multi-layered safety apparatus that includes local, state, and federal police.

- Public Safety focuses on quality-of-life issues, while the Police Department handles criminal matters.
- For emergencies, 911 is always the primary contact.
- For illegal parking on a state road like 25A, jurisdiction can be complex. For some areas in Centerport, it was stated that the county police would handle traffic enforcement.

The Department of Public Safety includes several divisions:

1. Code Enforcement : Handles ordinance inspections, the Sign Bureau, and Accessory Apartments. They work with police to address issues like vape shops and illicit businesses, successfully shutting down a spa near Healy's Pub.

2. Uniformed Services: Includes park rangers and public safety agents who secure parks, beaches, and town facilities. Park Rangers are town peace officers who primarily operate in town parks, beaches, and facilities.

3. Animal Shelter: A non-kill shelter for dogs and cats. It is located near the bus depot and is seeking funding for renovations to meet new state laws.

4. Traffic Violations Bureau: Manages parking enforcement.

Street Takeovers: This issue, involving street racing, is a problem in other parts of the county but not significantly in the local area. Funding was approved to help the DA prosecute offenders.

Technology in Public Safety:

- The town uses a 24/7 command center with connections to cameras in parks and beaches.
- They are implementing AI-driven cameras, such as at Dix Hills pool, which can detect and track motion.
- The town uses license plate readers for permit enforcement, but not for general vehicle tracking, which is handled by other entities like Suffolk County Police or smaller villages. Funding for readers was approved, but broader details were deferred.

Code Enforcement and Complaints

A) Enforcement for Chronic Offenders: The department documents repeat violations (e.g., noise complaints). Offenses typically start with a warning, escalate to fines, and can end up in the Bureau of Administrative Adjudication (BAA) court to enforce compliance.

B) Noise Ordinance Enforcement: Enforcement is based on a "reasonable" standard (e.g., if an inspector can hear an unreasonable noise from 50 feet away). A complainant must be willing to attest to the noise for the case to proceed.

C) Leaf Blower Regulations: The code for gas-powered leaf blowers is currently based on previous rules (Mon-Fri 8am-6pm, Sat 9am-5pm, no Sundays) as a new code has been stayed. There is no code regulating electric leaf blowers.

Parking and Permit Systems

Digital Parking and Permits:

- The town uses the Passport app for parking in Huntington Village, allowing users to add time remotely.
- Stickers for beach and train station parking have been replaced with a digital permit system. Residents can register online.
- License plate readers are used for enforcement, replacing checking and making the process more efficient.

Parking Permit System Transition:

- The town is transitioning from an older program to a new system called "T2" for parking permits, which requires a manual transfer of information.
- Seniors with existing registrations should receive an automatic renewal email and are expected to be covered during the transition.

Confirming Registration:

- To confirm a permit, individuals can visit the town website. Train station permits are handled by the Town Clerk, and beach permits by the Parks Department.
-Parking Ticket Issues: A speaker recounted receiving a ticket at Cold Spring Harbor train station when no spots were available. The recommended action is to challenge the ticket in court.

Other Issues:

Deer Population Management:

- The deer population is acknowledged as a significant problem, causing property damage, accidents, and spreading diseases like Alpha-gal. Residents shared experiences of deer on President Street and near Camp Alvernia.
- This is seen as a shared town, county, and state problem, and residents were encouraged to voice concerns at town board meetings.
- The county performs deer culling in areas like West Hills Park, but the town is not currently culling.
- Coyotes are reportedly moving into the area.
- A specific issue with deer in a park on Prospect Road was noted for follow-up.

Deceased Geese:

- Six geese recently died at Heckscher Park, and the cause is under investigation by the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), which will determine the course of action.
- Animal Control Services: The town's animal control is available to pick up deceased animals and handle reports of strays.

Mill Pond Walk Project

Project Overview and Scope: The project, started over a year ago, aims to install informational signs with QR codes around the Mill Pond. It has expanded from an initial plan of two signs to a broader initiative.

Sign Design and Content: The signs will be similar to those in Heckscher Park and feature QR codes linking to additional content like videos and articles. This content could highlight partners (e.g., Heckscher Museum, Vanderbilt Museum) and be created by student ambassadors or through local contests.

Proposed Locations and Themes: Four potential locations have been identified:

- Grist Mill Park: Focus on the grist mill, dam history, and original yacht club.
- Heron Park: Focus on the heron sculpture and local artists.
- Center Shore Park: Focus on commercial history if the park is rehabilitated.
- Unnamed Park on Prospect Road: Focus on wildlife and conservation, honoring Betty Allen.

Safety Concerns and Project Phasing:

A participant raised significant safety concerns, citing a lack of safe pedestrian passage, sidewalks, and parking. It was warned that attracting visitors without addressing infrastructure could lead to liability. The bridge on the existing trail is difficult to navigate due to fishermen and cyclists.

A two-phase approach is proposed, focusing first on Heron Park and Gristmill Park, which are part of an established trail. The Highway Department's tentative plans will be reviewed for safety.

Next Steps:

The project needs high-resolution photos, and the public is encouraged to contribute.

Subject matter experts will help finalize content.

A small committee will be formed for future discussions. A show of hands indicated most attendees favor the signs.

The Chalet and Jellyfish:

FOIL Requests and AI Data Mining: The group files a monthly Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) request to monitor developments and plans related to the "Jellyfish" and "Chalet" properties. AI is being used to query town databanks, but its success is limited by the delayed publication of PDFs.

Historical Inquiry about Filled-in Stream: A request was made for historical information (articles, recollections, photos) about the stream that once ran from the freshwater pond to the mill pond, specifically when it was filled in (estimated 1950s).

Lost Property Tax Payment: A speaker reported that a property tax check, paid via a drop box at Town Hall on December 31st, was lost. They had to issue a new check and cancel the original. Others who used the drop box were advised to check their bank accounts.

Centerport Yacht Club Lease: A concern was raised about the town leasing two acres to the Centerport Yacht Club for five years for \$20,000, with no usage limits, and ignoring residents deeded rights.

Next Meeting Details:

- A meeting is scheduled for **March 26th at 6:00 PM in the large meeting room.** A representative from the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office will speak on protecting oneself from fraud.
- There will be no meeting in February.

