

Minutes
Hudson Development Corporation
Tuesday, September 23rd, 2025
One North Front Street
Hudson, NY 12534

A regularly scheduled meeting of the Hudson Development Corporation (HDC) Board of Directors was held at the offices of the Columbia County Chamber of Commerce located at One North Front Street, Hudson, NY 12534 on September 23rd, 2025.

Name	Title	Status	Arrived/Departed
Paul Barrett	Secretary	Present	
Andrew Trudeau	Board Member	Present	
Tom DePietro	Board Member (Ex-Officio)	Absent	
Phil Forman	Treasurer	Present	
John Friedman	Board Member	Present	
Nicholas Haddad	Vice President	Present	
Mayor Kamal Johnson	Board Member (Ex-Officio)	Present	
Christine Jones	President	Present	
Jan Egan	Scribe	Present	
Kyle Coffey	Board Member	Absent	
Britt Zuckerman	Board Member	Absent	
Kristal Heinz	HDC Attorney	Absent	
Jess Wallen	Executive Director	Present	
Ryan Curran	Board Member	Present	

I. Meeting was called to order at 4:05 PM by Christine Jones, President.

II. APPROVE AUGUST MINUTES

- President Jones thanked members for their service, noted the new timing of HDC meetings @ 4 PM, and asked for a motion to approve August Minutes as submitted.
- Secretary Barrett so motioned, with member Curran seconding.
- Motion to approve July Minutes unanimously carried.

III. PRESIDENT'S REMARKS ON THE MONTH

- President Jones thanked all for their service to Hudson.
- Jones noted that Thomas Jefferson and James Madison visited Hudson in 1791 on a northern tour to visit Seth Jenkins, a noted distiller.
- In 1803, editor in chief of The Wasp (Harry Croswell) was indicted for seditious libel.
- Alexander Hamilton (lawyer for the defense), failed in overturning the guilty verdict, but two years later Hamilton's defense of "freedom of the press" (reporting the truth was not libelous) was incorporated into law.
- <https://vanburenpapers.org/people/harry-croswell>

- Hudson has a deep history in the importance of pursuit of the truth.
- HDC has a more diversified landscape of projects we're pursuing in 2025-26.
- In 2026, HDC will be celebrating 50 years of working as an independent organization to support and promote businesses and Hudson job growth.
- Continue to collaborate with city and Hudson businesses; find new ways to meet modern Hudson, and where it is moving.
- "What Design Can Do" – an international organization (founded in 2011), that uses the power of design to accelerate the transition to a sustainable, fair and just society.
- The organization feels Hudson is the ideal place to launch their first North American challenge.
- Engage Hudson's most creative thinkers to generate ideas for theme, which tend to be very broad and can include community development issues.
- Potential to bring press and attention to Hudson; attracting NYC creatives and global thinkers as well.
- Richard Van der Laken (Founder, What Design Can Do) will come to Hudson to meet with HDC.

IV. TREASURER'S FINANCIAL REPORT

- Treasurer Forman presented the Statement of Activity (2.6+M in invested assets).
- HDC finances continue to progress very much as planned (generates \$80-100,000/year in income).
- Budget prep for 2026; working with ED Wallen and Finance Committee.
- Auditing process begins in 4th quarter; real push begins in late January 2026.
- President Jones asked for a motion to approve Treasurer's Financial report.
- Member Curran so motioned, with member Friedman seconding, and motion unanimously carried.

V. ONGOING BUSINESS (Executive Director Jess Wallen)

1. Hospitality/Creative Economy Symposium with Hudson Hall in Spring 2026

- Bigger than what was initially planned for October 2025; will be hosted at Hudson Hall in spring of 2026 to open Hudson Hall's season.
- HDC is bringing hospitality/business acumen to the table; Hudson Hall bringing cultural/institutional information.

2. Hudson Open Studios: October 11-12

- ED Jess Wallen announced HDC is now fiscal sponsor for the Hudson Open Studios.
- Asked board members to spread the word to fill "vacant" storefronts along Warren Street to display artwork by participating Open Studios artists.

- Member Haddad noted the circular nature of the economy/business: 30 years ago, empty storefronts were filled with artwork and 5,000 people came to Hudson over 2 weekends.
- Member Haddad also noted that current store owners can display artwork in windows.
- ED Wallen thanked member Haddad for agreeing to ask shop owners to display art as well in their storefront windows.
- HBC (Hudson Business Coalition) is sponsoring the map for Open Studios (designed by local artist Tom McGill.)

3. October Free Community Movie Night

- October Movie Night is scheduled for October 23rd at the waterfront. (With a backup location at Hudson Brewing Co. if the weather is uncooperative).
- Permit is pending.
- Warren Street venue will be part of HDC's big 50th Anniversary celebration (Hudson (Warren Street) Block Party).
- Member Curran spoke about the value of events close to commercial center of Hudson.
- Movie will be Rocky Horror Picture Show (preceded by a kid's short movie) and food trucks will participate.
- TSL will consider partnering with HDC in the future on an event.

4. Hudson Business Fitness Poll: Still Open, Focus Group Discussions

- ED Wallen noted that the Business Fitness Poll is still open, in conversations with HBC's Billy Blowers and Mary Vaughn about conducting focus groups to learn more.
- ED Wallen suggested perhaps re-launching survey in new year to tailor a bit i.e., more specific questions.
- Member Trudeau noted that we currently have a good sample size to learn from.
- President Jones noted that perhaps survey questions can include business worker's experiences/feedback (not just owners).
- Annual "cadence" is a good thing, according to member Trudeau: this "annual business pulse of Hudson, brought to you by the HDC..."
- Also allows survey to include new topics etc.
- ED Wallen would like to put together a timeline to evaluate results and share with greater community, to be published on HDC website (hudsonfirst.com).
- Member Curran asked about challenges that have surfaced: are there any?
- Awareness is the main challenge for this first survey; do we change our approach for next time?
- *Do HDC members sit with businesses and take survey with them?*
- Member Trudeau noted that the response rate is very strong for this first survey.
- Member Curran noted that everyone in the business community wants business to grow, wants Hudson to thrive; failure to participate in that growth is frustrating.
- ED Wallen added that HDC is starting to apply some of the learnings from results, i.e., meeting with Martha Lane from the CEDC (9.25.25) to keep the conversation going re: the micro-loan program.

- Member Curran added that it's important to get a clear definition/clear voice of what HDC is: people don't know what the HDC is/does -- and it starts with us, the HDC.
- Member Friedman asked about HDC method/approach/sponsorships and member Trudeau noted that in this case (the HDC survey) the target audience is business owners...so is that the group HDC wants to target our messaging to reach?
- President Jones spoke about how HDC has been misunderstood; and HDC had to "reboot" itself; for our 50th anniversary, HDC should take stock of all the things HDC has done and demonstrate our value to community.
- A mixture of "value add" to the community: micro-loans, the business survey, movie night.
- Members Trudeau/Curran/Friedman suggested HDC branded trash receptacles on Warren/State/Columbia streets.
- Repurposing the movie banners for the October movie night was discussed.
- Members Curran/Trudeau/Friedman expressed enthusiasm around HDC branded trash receptacles – President Jones asked if they would form a committee to discuss with Rob Perry.
- Treasurer Forman noted that while HDC is not very well understood, each of the things/actions the HDC takes will help educate the public about who we are.
- Focus on doing early and often "mission-related" activities so the public can experience the brand and observing the HDC-sponsored events around them.
- Member Friedman cautioned not to conflate message with method.
- Member Haddad noted that CEDC has remained focused; HDC will become more prominent when we "do more."
- There is a good "balance" to be achieved, particularly for HDC's 50th anniversary.

VI. FUTURE BUSINESS

1. Business Roundtables: Topics and Planning

- President Jones confirmed results of the HDC business survey will be one of the roundtables (if not the first one).
- Roundtable discussion around childcare also an important topic and President Jones noted that Families of Woodstock are interested in leading that discussion.

2. Exploratory Conversation with Columbia Memorial Hospital

- In conversations with Columbia Memorial Hospital (CMH): President Jones and ED Wallen will be talking with COO Dr. Dorothy Urschel to understand what CMH needs (in addition to childcare).

3. Winter Walk

- ED Wallen confirmed that Winter Walk will be held this year and met with Winter Walk producer and noted that HDC should sponsor part of this event.
- The Foundry is producing this year; they are looking for sponsors.
- HDC could underwrite funding for window displays for businesses with HDC sponsorship signs.

- President Jones noted that we need to be clear about what we're doing and what is the impact, and how present is HDC re: branding.
- ED Wallen suggested HDC sponsor the "stages" – to host music along Warren Street, stating that "the event will be as good as its partners."
- How does HDC contribute to something that is on mission and can make an impact?
- ED Wallen will get a list of sponsorship opportunities from The Foundry, and a deadline/timing for when HDC needs to decide how/if they can sponsor.

VII. PITCH DECKS

1. What Design Can Do
 - ED Wallen confirmed that two organizers of this event would like to come to Hudson for 3 nights (November 12-16) for a site visit, discussion, small focus group/workshop.
 - Project uses creative thinking to solve problems; well-managed, tested, and uses creative people to collaborate.
 - Dutch history is part of Hudson's heritage.
 - President Jones noted that the event is centered around a big idea i.e., a "sense of belonging" that would be very appropriate for Hudson and Columbia County.
 - Organizers will also pitch sponsors to support (i.e., Bank of America) as \$200,000 is needed to fund this event.
 - Member Trudeau expressed support and noted that having the organizers produce the event is a benefit.
 - President Jones asked for a motion to approve monies to bring 2 organizers to Hudson (airfares, hotels, meals).
 - Member Barrett so motioned, member Trudeau seconded, and motion unanimously carried.

VIII. NEXT MEETINGS

- October 28 @ 4pm
- November 12 – 4pm (possibly November 13th for discussion with What Design Can Do organizers?)
- December 23 – Holiday Party
- January 27 – 4 pm Annual Business Meeting to Approve 2026 Strategy and Work Plan

PUBLIC DISCUSSION:

- Hudson citizen Mary Vaughn Williams (owner, Hudson Clothiers) expressed strong support for HDC branded trash/recycling bins: "...the most visible thing HDC can do to support Hudson."
- Also expressed support for HBC/HDC collaboration.
- Hudson citizen (Mayoral candidate) Lloyd Koedding complimented the HDC on the meeting and noted that HDC members should be "ambassadors" for spreading the HDC mission.

- Koedding endorsed the idea of Hudson as a “celestine city” that leads the way for how a city can run: “good deeds well-known.”
- Proposed a pro forma mission statement: “to initiate, inspire and activate citizenry to be/do the very best they can be.”

IX. MOVE TO ADJOURN

- With no other business to be conducted, President Jones asked for motion to adjourn September meeting.
- Motion made by member Nick Haddad, seconded by member Andrew Trudeau, and unanimously carried.
- September HDC meeting adjourned @ 5:23 PM

Respectfully submitted by Jan Egan