

TOWN OF HIGHGATE

Selectboard Mtg.

January 5, 2017 @ 7:00pm

Approved Minutes

NOTE: All actions taken are unanimous unless otherwise stated.

6:30pm - Executive Session with members of the Highgate DRB

Prior to the regular Selectboard meeting, the Town of Highgate Selectboard met with the Town of Highgate Development Review Board. In attendance were: Selectboard Members – Chris Yates, Sharon Bousquet, Randy Connelly and Bruce Butler. DRB Members – Tim Reynolds, Julie Rice, Scott Martin and Rick Trombley. Also present was Town Administrator, Heidi Britch-Valenta. The meeting was called to order by Chris Yates @ 6:45pm. Motion by Chris Yates to enter into executive session @ 6:45pm to discuss possible legal issues where premature general public knowledge could place the town or the individuals involved at a substantial disadvantage. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED**. Motion by Chris Yates to exit executive session @ 7:05pm. The motion was seconded by Sharon Bousquet – **APPROVED**.

A. Call To Order & Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting was called to order by Chair, Chris Yates @ 7:09pm, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Highgate Selectboard Members – Chris Yates, Chair; Sharon Bousquet, Vice-Chair; Randy Connelly; Bruce Butler; Josh LaRocque (arrived @ 7:18pm)

Highgate Office Staff – Wendi Dusablon, Town Clerk; Heidi Britch-Valenta, Town Administrator; Shelley Laroche, Town Treasurer (arrived @ 7:26pm)

Public / Other – Alice S. Cota; John Patnode; Jean Chevalier; Kellie Uzell; Eric Bessette; Henry Rainville; Chris Uzell; Faith Brashear; Steve LaFar; David Desorcie; Michael Casella; Richard Noel; Tim Reynolds; Jeff Towle

B. Public Comments

Sue Cota would like to see signage on Monument Road stating it is a dead end road. Chris suggested two signs, one “dead end” sign and one “end of road ahead” sign. Pat Loyer can work with Swanton on the placement of the signs.

C. Town Clerk Updates – Wendi Dusablon

1. Minutes

- Motion by Chris Yates to accept the minutes from December 15, 2016 (regular meeting) as written. The motion was seconded by Sharon Bousquet – **APPROVED**.
- Motion by Chris Yates to accept the minutes from December 15, 2016 (executive session) as written. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED**.
- Motion by Sharon Bousquet to accept the minutes from December 22, 2016 (executive session) as written. The motion was seconded by Chris Yates – **APPROVED**.

2. Town Meeting Day updates & deadlines

- Deadline to submit petitions and consent of candidate forms for elected offices is Monday, January 30th by 5pm. Minimum number of registered voter signatures is 21.
- Deadline to submit petitions for warned articles is Thursday, January 19th by 5pm. Minimum number of registered voter signatures is 105.
- Town Meeting is Tuesday, March 7th @ 10am. Polls will be open 7am – 7pm at Highgate Elementary School. All information about Town Meeting is also available on our FaceBook page and on the town website www.highgatevt.org. Petitions are available at these sites also.

3. 2017 Liquor License Renewal Application

Motion by Chris Yates to enter into the liquor control board at 7:15pm. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED**. Motion by Chris Yates to sign the liquor license renewal application for RL Vallee dba:

Highgate Village Market. The motion was seconded by Sharon Bousquet – **APPROVED.** Motion by Chris Yates to enter back into the regular Selectboard meeting @ 7:16pm. The motion was seconded by Sharon Bousquet – **APPROVED.**

D. Casella Update – Michael Casella

Michael is here to talk about ACT148 and touch base. Effective 7/1/17 they will be offering food waste collection. This will require structure and the service will be contained to one specific area of their site. He is unsure what the demand will be. New signage at the Highgate facility has helped with traffic flow. There will not be any curb side service offered for food waste, and the economics of it are shaky, even in Chittenden County. Restaurants are starting to get on board. The state is also encouraging backyard composting. Sharon asked about tonnage in Highgate, Michael said it has been consistent. Michael can provide reports regarding tonnage. Overall, things are going well at the Highgate Transfer Station. Chris asked Michael about putting a gate on the road. The town is getting hit hard lately with people going to the sand shed and helping themselves to more than a few buckets of sand. There was discussion on where a gate should be placed. There were no objections from Casella, they would like to see a gate also, and the town and Casella can work together on this. Heidi noted that we are still struggling with our application to FEMA regarding the slides at the site and stabilizing the area. NRPC thinks we should bundle up letters of support for the project. Casella would be glad to help with this. ANR and Emergency Management will be here on Feb. 16th, Casella will be back that day as well. Jeff Towle asked when the Casella contract is up. It is a ten year contract and we are only a few years into it. Henry asked about taking organics out of the landfill and if studies had been done. Casella has begun to look at the economics associated with the environmental footprint. It will still produce gas. Chris asked about the Sheldon site, off Shawville Road and how that affects the Town of Highgate. Ben Lowell may have more information, as he attends their district meetings at NWSWD. NWSWD has a permit to create a landfill in that area. Many landfills have closed due to the difficult regulatory environment. Sharon asked how much garbage storage we, as in Vermont, have available to us for the next so-many years. Michael answered 30+ years, noting that as more technology gets up to speed, the picture will be clearer. As an example, there is a digester being installed in St. Albans.

E. Treasurer Updates – Shelley Laroche

1. Check warrants

There were no questions on the check warrants.

2. Misc.

Things have been busy with the year end and payroll associated things. Amber from NEMRC was here, everything is fixed and the auditors will be back on January 10th to finish up. The tax sale list is down to just one property. We are hoping for a payment arrangement on the property located on LaFrance Road. We are on target for budgeting. The library finalized theirs on Jan. 4th, and Parks & Rec. also met this week. The Cemetery Commissioners are meeting on Jan. 23rd. Our special meeting for budgeting and the warning will be January 26th @ 6pm to finalize everything.

F. Town Administrator – Heidi Britch-Valenta

1. Rural Development Grant

This grant is an attempt to secure funds to match with the capital budget for work on the municipal building, pending approval of the capital budget at town meeting. The timing is great, the final awards are made in April, so by then we will know the town meeting results. They offered us 15% of the total project, so the application was put in to cover \$10,000.00 for the roof, \$60,000.00 for the fire department floor and \$80,000.00 for the ADA modifications. The total construction budget with all fees and contingencies is \$173,250.00, so we are asking for \$25,987.00 (15%) to support that. This grant is compatible with the ADA Construction Grant through the Vermont Community Development Block Grant, which is a \$75,000.00 construction grant. Together these would be a big chunk out of the construction that we are hoping to do. Sharon asked how it will work if the voters approve a lower amount in March. Whatever is decided would diminish the scope of the project and they will award 15% of the project. We will make a decision in April pending approval in March. The funds are compatible and we can use

this as part of our match. Heidi was unsure, but thinks the match is 50/50. Motion by Chris Yates to sign the rural development grant application for \$25,987.00. The motion was seconded by Sharon Bousquet – **APPROVED**.

2. Park & Ride Grant

We were notified yesterday about our park & ride application. We have been awarded \$56,000.00 with no match to finish up the work in the front / green space that is required by AOT, and to construct a bus shelter. We have preliminary bids regarding the green space and curbing. We have not received the award letter yet, that is coming in the mail and will have more information. We also have a bid from a gentleman in Franklin for the bus shelter structure. We will easily be able to do all the work at the park & ride this summer.

3. Fire systems RFP

We received four responses regarding the RFP for the fire systems at the library, municipal building and arena. The board needs more time to review them. We don't want to delay this too long, as some of the equipment has been neglected. Chris wants to make sure Joe Depatie, fire chief, has seen these as well. Shelley will put some information together on what we are currently paying Simplex for monitoring on the security system here and at the library. HVFD has been using FireProTec to get their extinguishers tested, filled and inspected. It will take some time to sift through the info, as each building is very unique. It would be nice to have one company that does everything.

4. PACIF Safety Equipment Grant

This grant is now open. The arena is trying to put together a proposal to change their locking systems and the fire department is interested in security cameras. Josh asked about due dates, it is pretty much on a first come, first served basis. Chris Uzell will bring this up at the HVFD business meeting on Jan. 9th.

G. Selectboard Items

1. 911 forms

The last time this was discussed, a vote was taken and it was a 2/2 outcome with an abstention. The board has been instructed to bring this back up, as the abstention was not followed by a reason. If there is a reason, we are good. If not, we need to discuss this again. The decision to vote came too quickly for Bruce the last time, and he did not have time to really think about it. Bruce had some questions about people calling for service and requesting a particular ambulance provider to respond and if that was still available to residents. Chris is not sure, noting that if a call is not answered in St. Albans, but sent to a Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) in the southern part of the state, how that would work. There was further discussion on the forms and if they follow the resident or the property, how they affect renters, daycares and more. Josh asked if the ambulance service chosen could be noted on the property card. Josh feels it is wrong to dictate who people choose. Josh also added that many of the forms looked to be in the same handwriting and they should be notarized. Jean Chevalier noted that a lot of them are already notarized. Sharon feels that people may have changed their mind on the topic, now that the issue is far less emotional than it was and time has passed. She does not want to shove anything down anyone's throat, but also does not want to see anyone suffer a tremendous loss. Jean answered that if people don't want MVR, they can pull their forms out. Randy is against it and expressed concern for liability to the town. Jean feels there is more liability to the town if it is not allowed. Eric Bessette is a renter and his landlord does not tell him who can and can't come to his home, it's up to him. It was noted that renters can be short lived at a location, and do we keep going through this every time a residence changes occupants? Randy does not see how this is manageable. Chris brought up the price increases to Swanton with MVR and the switch to Shelburne dispatch. There will be struggles with the costs and with communication. Chris Uzell said MVR has reprogrammed their radios and HVFD no longer hears their tones. HVFD still can hear Alburgh's tones and they are with Shelburne dispatch. Henry asked more questions regarding the landlord / tenant situation, as he has renters. He feels he would be liable if his tenants did not know about the forms. Kellie asked about mutual aid and how that would work. Sharon asked about the first responders and how that was coming along. They took their finals on Tuesday and were waiting for their

grades. They then need to take their state test. Practicals are being held at MVU on January 21st. The first responders are spread out around town, some in Highgate Springs, some in the center of town as well as towards East Highgate. Chris asked how it would affect Highgate residents who have signed a form if Swanton residents vote MVR down. Jean said that would never happen. If it were to happen, Highgate residents who signed on to be covered with MVR would need to go through the paperwork process again. Jean said this is not about who is better, it's about that the voters did not have a chance to vote on this. Chris would have liked to put this question on an Australian ballot and have everyone come and vote on it, but that is not how we vote. We vote public questions from the floor. Chris would have been happy to vote on this issue by Australian ballot. Jean told him that is "bogus" and he knows it. She feels it could have been accomplished last year at town meeting. Chris pointed out that it would have been a non-binding vote and feels that people do not give an honest opinion from the floor. Jean said a paper ballot is an option. This still only covers 150 voters, or whoever attends town meeting. He is more interested in what the 700 people want that come to town meeting and vote at the polls. We have tried to move to Australian ballot voting a few years ago and it was tabled immediately. We could still have town meeting for budgets if public questions were moved to the ballot. The warned article a few years ago was to move both budgets and public questions to the ballot. It hurt our town that we did not at least discuss it. We could move public questions to the ballot and leave budgets for discussion and vote from the floor. Jean stated that the people that show up usually reflect the majority of what any group wants. Julie Rice strongly disagreed with that statement. Kellie Uzell noted that the April 6th meeting had a strong representation for MVR and the board went with AmCare. Sue Cota again expressed concern about response times. Eric Bessette noted that it goes for both ambulance services when you are talking about response times, he sees it both ways. Kellie added that the first responders have had two major calls where they were on scene in six minutes, with the ambulance close behind. The first responders group is a direct result of AmCare and their training. Richard Noel spoke about a 3.3% tax coming to ambulance services and how they are going to deal with it and what that means to MVR and Alburgh. Henry asked if the town attorney had been consulted on these forms. Steve LaFar asked if the MVR form could be extended to add information being discussed tonight. Shelley asked if MVR's offer to serve Highgate residents for free was still on the table. Jean clarified that it is by donation. Josh said he has not contacted the town attorney, but he will. He also wants to talk to people and make sure they know exactly what they are getting in to. Also added to the conversation was that MVR uses Alburgh as their back up, and people might not be aware of that. Jean said she understood that Alburgh was only covering calls west of River Street. Kellie said that is not true, noting a call recently on Merchants Row that Alburgh was called to and the wait was long. Another point brought up was a life estate or a trust with regard to a property, can those be changed with regard to ambulance coverage? There were also concerns what about daycares and stores. What if someone falls at a local store and the wrong ambulance service shows up to assist them? Sharon feels this should have all been done differently, but asked Jean as far as the big picture, this board is trying their best for Highgate residents and how does the board gain back trust. What can we do to move beyond this and put the town back together? For Jean personally, it is a matter of the board doing the right thing from the get go. She feels they were given lots of good counsel by past board members and wise town residents. We still can, in spite of what Chris says, get feedback from people. Jean will personally use MVR because they are closest to her and she will call direct if she has to. She feels people were disregarded and dismissed and that the board was not honest with people. She knows Sharon and Josh are listening to the people and they have people's respect. Where this goes from here is up to the board. Sharon and Josh will reach out to our legal counsel and this issue is tabled until that happens.

2. **911 Coordinator**

Motion by Chris Yates to appoint Aimee Reynolds as E911 Coordinator for the Town of Highgate. The motion was seconded by Josh LaRocque – **APPROVED.** Eric Bessette asked if Aimee even wanted it, yes, they have spoken with her. The job was held in the past by a previous town

administrator who put it on the listers and it works well for us to have the position there.

3. Rainville Maintenance Agreements

Matt Rainville, Rainville Dairy on Gore Road, had to get a waiver from the town to preform work in the town right of ways. The final step is making sure that liability never comes to the town to maintain the catch basins or drains, or if there is any backup. The maintenance agreement will be transferred with the property. Chris will set up a time with Matt and the forms will need to be notarized. Motion by Josh LaRocque to accept the maintenance agreement with Rainville Dairy and for Chris to sign it. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED.**

4. Street Lights

We notified some Monument Road residents nearby the proposed poles we are considering adding street lighting. We heard back from two residents with feedback that lighting should be moved from pole 29 to pole 30. There will be a total of three lights added, as well as a “road ends” sign and a “dead end” sign mentioned earlier in this meeting. There will also be lighting added to Park Street at the Brosseau Road end, on Mill Hill the second pole going down needs lighting which will light every other pole going down the road, and on Lamkin Street a total of eight will be will added to light every other pole up Lamkin as far as Quail Drive. Two poles do not have secondary power already, which will be an \$850 charge to the town to add secondary power. The lights will be the same LEDs we have used and these are saving the town a lot of money. Chris will contact Swanton Village tomorrow. Motion by Chris Yates to install 13 street lights in the Swanton Village service area on Lamkin Street, Park Street, Mill Hill and Monument Road. The motion was seconded by Sharon Bousquet – **APPROVED.**

5. Land Sale Advisory Group

Henry Rainville formed this group to revisit and look again at all town owned parcels. Present for the meeting on January 3rd were; Henry Rainville, Sharon Bousquet, Peter St. Germain, April St. Francis and Scott Bessette. Josh LaRocque was not able to make the meeting. Sharon took notes and they came up with three parcels to present to the board and, hopefully, the voters at town meeting: 1) *Lamkin Street (.12 acres) next to the cemetery* 2) *Cherry Hill (11.4 acres) off Ballard / Rheume Road* 3) *Dalcourt property (4.2 acres) on Route 78 up on the hill behind Dufresne's*. The group is looking to get approval from the voters in March to sell. Chris recommends separate articles for each parcel. There are several other town parcels the group felt should be kept, either because they serve a good purpose to the town or because there are restrictions on them and they can't be sold. There are some parcels that need more investigating and the properties should be walked to understand what we have. The Lamkin Street parcel is very small and could be donated to the church. Henry said the conclusion at the meeting was to put these parcels up for bid, not through a realtor. The wording of the articles would need to be worked on, but any funds should go back in to the general fund for the purpose of lowering taxes. There was some discussion on the Pine Forest property on Lamkin Street / Mill Hill. The group wants to understand that property more. Henry noted that the biggest struggle is understanding what has happened in the past. Anything we can record in the land records helps those that will be looking at these type things in the future. We have been recording contracts, policies, ordinances and agreements in the land records for that very reason.

H. Upcoming Events

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| Jan. 3 | | Dog licensing begins – please license by March 31 st |
| Jan. 12 | 6pm | DRB Mtg. |
| Jan. 16 | | Offices CLOSED – Martin Luther King Jr. Day |
| Jan. 17 | 6pm | Planning Commission Mtg. |
| Jan. 19 | by 5pm | Petitions for warned articles due – minimum of 105 registered voter signatures |
| Jan. 19 | 6pm | Ranger Solar Presentation |
| Jan. 19 | 7pm | Selectboard Mtg. |
| Jan. 20 | 6-9pm | Little League Registration @ Municipal Bldg. |
| Jan. 21 | 9-noon | Little League Registration @ Municipal Bldg. |
| Jan. 26 | 6pm | Selectboard Executive Session |
| Jan. 30 | by 5pm | Petitions & consent forms for elected offices due – minimum of 21 registered voter signatures |

I. Executive Session

Motion by Chris Yates for the Selectboard, Town Agent and Town Administrator to enter into executive session @ 8:48pm to discuss contracts, real estate and personnel where premature general public knowledge could place the town or the individuals involved at a substantial disadvantage. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED**.

Jeff Towle, Town Agent, departed the meeting @ 9:45pm.

Motion by Chris Yates to exit executive session @ 10:01pm. The motion was seconded by Josh LaRocque – **APPROVED**.

J. Adjournment

Motion by Chris Yates to adjourn the meeting @ 10:02pm. The motion was seconded by Josh LaRocque – **APPROVED**.

Respectfully submitted by,

_____ Wendi Dusablon, Highgate Town Clerk

Minutes approved by,

_____ Christopher Yates, Chair – Highgate Selectboard