

TOWN OF HIGHGATE

Selectboard

Approved Minutes

Regular Meeting

March 7, 2013 @ 7:00pm

NOTE: All actions taken are unanimous unless otherwise stated.

A. Call to Order & Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 7:01pm by Henry Rainville, Chair.

Highgate Selectboard Members: Henry Rainville, Chair; Jeff Towle; missing – Luke Choiniere

Highgate Staff: Heidi Britch-Valenta, Town Administrator; Tom Racine, Town Treasurer; Wendi Dusablon, Town Clerk

Public: see sign in sheet

B. Public Comment

None

Henry Rainville welcomed Jeff Towle back to the Selectboard and also mentioned that Luke Choiniere was on vacation and that Brian Rowell was present in the audience. Henry also commented that the Selectboard would reorganize at the next Selectboard meeting when all three members were present.

C. Town Treasurer

Jeff Towle asked about the school house lot / Charcoal Creek and if we had been reimbursed. Tom said yes. Henry asked Tom about the bid for the repair of the gable ends. Tom reported that the fire department radio licensing is still in process. The main radio had to go through some repair work. They had to come back after installing the equipment, but all is working well now. We have received proposals back from the CPA firms and are in the process of trying to set something up with the auditors to review. Tom will get back to the Selectboard with a recommendation. Tom would like to put a written RFP together on the fuel. Tom has not found a suitable template yet. Henry asked Tom if a fuel tank would be supplied and what size it would be, and if it could be included in the proposal. Henry said he has talked to Mike Bockus (Hwy Dept) about co-mingling the fuel for the highway and fire departments, as long as we could differentiate who gets what and how much. Tom asked if the fuel has to be low sulfur. Henry stated that all fuel they use today is low sulfur. Brian Rowell added that it is all low sulfur but you can't use off road fuel on the road, and vice-versa. Brian also added that if you have a diesel pick up, you can't use that fuel, or it will quit on you. Heidi Britch-Valenta and Tom Racine briefly touched on an RFP for legal services. Is this something the Selectboard would like to pursue? Jeff and Henry both said yes. Tom will try and communicate with Bruce Kilbury on the HVAC and determine if there is an easy way to put together an RFP for the specifics. Henry would like to have Heidi ask Dubois & King what it would cost to engineer something for us, possibly. Heidi asked if we should organize a walk through / site visit with contractors and address issues that way, rather than with an RFP. Henry feels that working with a reputable vendor we will get the results we want. Henry would like to see a nice RFP, and Heidi agrees. Heidi will talk to Dubois & King about the cost.

D. Highway Report

Steve Ploof was present. Steve mentioned that they are getting towards the back of the building with sand. Steve mentioned that he and Mike Bockus went to

Grand Isle today to look at a truck. They drove it to South Hero and talked to them about the truck. They have a Western Star and like it. Henry asked how long Grand Isle has had this truck, and Steve believes it is since last fall. Jeff asked who sells Western Star, and Steve answered it is J&B. Henry wants Steve to make sure they have a list with everything they need on it, so nothing is forgotten or missed. Henry wants to set up a time with J&B soon. Steve commented that according to Tenco, it will take a few weeks to get the truck set up. Henry has asked Brian Rowell to help with the truck situation, as Brian has a lot of knowledge on trucks regarding specs. Jeff Towle agrees. Steve asked the Selectboard, that since the budget passed, will the road crew be getting raises? Yes, their raises will be in effect now that the budget has passed. Steve suggested the culvert on Tarte Road near Danny Rainville's house for the structures grant. Henry asked if the structures grant would allow them to extend, and Heidi said it appears to be yes. Dan Rainville does plan to use it and cattle cross through there. Steve is trying to get a concrete price. Henry asked him to get a price on a new box, Steve thinks that will be expensive. Another alternative is a flat bottom culvert, which is likely to be cheaper. Steve is suggesting a 40' culvert. With regard to the class II paving grant, Steve has suggested Carter Hill Road (Route 78 to Campagna Road or Hempyard Road to Fortin Road) or the Gore Road (Tarte Road to Cassidy Road). Most urgent need is on Gore Road. Steve said the three sites are about equal distance. Jeff asked when we have to have the information. These are due by March 29th. Should we wait until Luke Choiniere is back to further discuss this? Heidi said we could wait, as our next meeting is March 21st. Jeff asked Steve what he thought, and Steve thinks the Gore Road would be best, but does not want people to think they are only doing work on that one road. Comparing the areas, the Gore Road has considerably more traffic. Heidi mentioned that we had received the structures and class II grants last year, so our chances of getting them again are reduced. She added that it is still worth applying. AOT has taken over the Better Back Roads program which pertains to water quality and erosion. Nothing pops out at Steve as far as any ideas for a project in Highgate. In the past they have allowed for towns to apply for planning funds so you could apply based on overall scope and work towards a project. This puts you in line for repair funds when they come. In the absence of a clear project idea, it is suggested that we put in for road inventory and capital planning funds for the future. Friends of Northern Lake Champlain provided us with a letter identifying storm water issues. From that document we should be able to submit and get some planning funds. Henry asked when the due date is, and Heidi responded that it is not clear, but she will submit it by March 29th and let them direct us on the criteria. The program is in flux right now. Representative Steve Beyor was present. He suggested that we apply for every grant we can get. Steve Beyor added that we will probably have to conform to ACT 148 which is a pollution bill that was just passed. Steve Ploof commented that he and Mike Bockus were going to a meeting in St. Albans next week concerning back roads. Butch Brosseau will not be going. Heidi let the Selectboard know that with regard to the Machia Road bridge, we were going to have to go through a 106 (historic preservation) review. She is waiting to hear more information on how in depth the review is. Henry asked Heidi to enlighten us on this situation. We were contacted by AOT that we made the short list for engineering and design with regard to B25 (Machia Road bridge). AOT stated that if the budget goes through intact, we will be in line for a project manager starting in July. Once the budget is approved, we will know more, but Heidi does not know when that will be. We will then be in the hopper. Steve Beyor did not have any more input on B25 other than that Norm McAllister and Steve Beyor both have been working for us and pestering Pat Branon (Transportation Comm.) to get us pushed up on the list.

E. Recreation Update

Luc Choquette and Brian Spears were both present with an update from recreation. The ice is coming out on Sunday & Monday. The turf will be going in on March 23rd. They have programs lined up for the spring. Everything went really well with the part time employees and the ice was beautiful. This year they had painted the ice instead of the floor. They don't know about the freon

situation yet. The new front doors were awesome this year, they close & lock! Henry Rainville asked about the zamboni and any issues. Luc commented that they had a few. The fan motor went around New Years time, so they had the zamboni guy come up from Boston. He will be back up this summer to rebuild the conditioner, which is the nuts and bolts of the machine. They will have him come up on an annual basis to go through the machine. He thinks they can get another 10 years out of it. Henry asked how many drivers they have: (6) Chris Overton, Brian Spears, Kenny Spears, Bernie Delorme, Luc Choquette and Jeremy Letourneau. Luc had some questions but was not sure if the Highgate Selectboard could answer them, with regard to the arena bond vote and the next steps. It was noted that Kim Gates Maynard was already on top of it and she was pushing the process along. Brian Spears asked if the voters need to petition the vote in Swanton. Henry isn't sure, but Heidi thinks that is the case, according to Kim. We are very hopeful in Highgate, because a lot of hard work was done. Luc Choquette stated that MAHA is in limbo and does not know what to spend money on and what not to spend money on. But MAHA has been in limbo for three years, really. Henry asked how they get all the moisture out of the building. Last year they put plastic down before the turf. They have a lot less ice this year than in years past. It has been up to a week long process in previous years. Henry asked if they needed the highway departments assistance, as they have in the past. There is no paint on the floor this year, but if they need the highway department they will have a conversation with them. Other than zamboni issues, they had a lot of broken glass this year, about 20 sheets. It is very expensive per sheet to replace. Luc is not sure if it was brittle or if it was due to temperature changes. Brian Spears added that they were considering painting the zamboni this year. The two sponsors that are on it, their term expired three years ago, so they were going to remove them, paint it and jazz it up. The Selectboard does not have a problem with MAHA painting the zamboni and finding a new sponsor(s). The Selectboard also commented that MAHA is doing a great job, and they have heard nothing but good things.

F. Town Clerk

- **Election results from Town Meeting Day** - We had no races in Highgate on the town ballot this year. Auditor, Ron Nye – **450**; Board of Listers, Aimee Reynolds – **428**; Cemetery Commissioner – vacant; Delinquent Tax Collector, Tom Racine – **438**; First Constable – vacant; Library Trustee, Virginia Holiman – **436**; Second Constable – vacant; Selectboard Member, Jeff Towle – **407**; Town Agent – vacant; Town Clerk, Wendi Dusablon – **462**; Town Moderator, Patrick McGovern – **452**; Town Treasurer, Tom Racine – **445**; Trustee of Trust Funds, Clarence J. Miller – **450**. All articles passed with the exception of Article #10 (property tax installments), and Article #12 (advisory, non-binding option on gun discharge ordinance). Please see detailed election result information attached to these minutes. The Highgate checklist stood at 2,026 registered voters on Town Meeting Day, with 488 people showing up to vote = 24% voter turnout on 3/05/2013. Also, the arena bond vote passed in Highgate: **237 YES 186 NO**. The arena bond vote also passed in Franklin, but was defeated in Swanton by 78 votes.
- **Dogs** – we are at 142 registered so far this year. Our rabies clinic is Saturday, March 23rd from 10am – noon at the fire station.
- **Liquor & tobacco license for Shacam's Deli & Beverage**: Motion by Henry Rainville to enter the board of local control @ 7:52pm, seconded by Jeff Towle – **APPROVED**. It was noted that the paperwork is incomplete and that two questions still need to be answered on the application. Wendi will contact David Gagne tomorrow about completing the application so it can be approved at the March 21st meeting. Motion by Henry Rainville to enter back into the regular Selectboard meeting @ 7:54pm, seconded by Jeff Towle – **APPROVED**.

Tom Racine took a moment to explain the 18 month tax bill. The St. Albans Messenger ran an article and within it mentioned that Highgate was

preparing to pay an 18 month bill in October. The Messenger failed to mention that the additional 6 months was only on the municipal portion of the tax bill. Tom explained that if you take your 2012 tax bill, and take the municipal portion x 1.5 that is a good estimation of what to expect for the town portion of your next bill. However, he also clarified that the school portion is approximately 85% of the overall tax bill and that we did not have any control over that. Henry Rainville also clarified that this 18 month tax bill (one time 18 month tax bill) is not raising taxes, it is just a longer period of time for this transitional year. Henry also mentioned that the installments for property taxes being defeated means we will still pay just once a year. We need to come up with a due date. Tom stated that based on feedback from VLCT that he is confident that us leaving the due date as October 29 and allowing postmarks should be fine.

G. Selectboard Items

1. Recap of Town Meeting issues

- a. Election of additional Selectboard members** – We need to research the time frame involved. It is looking like a May or June timeframe to hold the special election for two new board members. We have seen interest already. We will definitely need a bigger table!
- b. Tri Town Arena** – This has been discussed, but as a quick recap the arena bond vote passed in Highgate and Franklin, but failed in Swanton by 78 votes. Henry feels we should get together as three boards once again to see where this puts us. A lot of work has been done. Heidi will wait to hear from the Tri Town committee and go from there. When the TTRC gets together, Henry would like to meet with them and Brian Rowell would also like to be involved.
- c. Firearms discharge ordinance** – this was defeated via paper vote 65/38 after a 55 minute discussion. There was lots of passionate discussion and good dialogue. Jeff Towle noted that we spent an hour on this issue and far less time on a 4.5 million school budget. Henry also mentioned that we received some information from Clint Gray today that we need to digest. Clint Gray is willing to have another meeting in the future about this. Henry still hopes that people can come together and resolve this. Henry doesn't feel the Selectboards position is to mediate, but is willing to if that's what it takes. At this point both sides have spoken. This is a neighborhood and people need to get along. Heidi stated that Clint Gray stopped in today to follow up on the site visit. This was not a planned visit. He asked that she relay to the others that he is very interested in this and willing to offer advice to land owners. He said the sites he visited do not have adequate protections. He recommends a minimum 60' berm for a shooting range. He did provide Heidi with info on a cd that provides measurements. Clint commented that a hard wood forest is very different than a soft wood forest. Ray Dixon commented that the shooting range on Frontage Road doesn't have a berm that high. Clint wants the information out there for anyone looking to improve their site. Eric Chevalier asked for clarification on how high. Heidi reiterated that Clint Gray is recommending 60' high. Brian Rowell wants to be included if Clint Gray comes back to speak to Highgate residents.

2. Fournier land swap

Heidi, Henry & Jeff met with David Roddy and Richard Flint (Highgate School Board members) to walk a piece of property with RJ Fournier. RJ owns property that is closer to the school that has potential for a land swap with the school. All are willing to have more conversation regarding a land swap that would better everyone's position. It was mentioned at Town Meeting and today the stars aligned so we could all talk about it. The group met at 5pm today and all are very open minded. It is in the school boards hands more than anyone's. We will wait to hear from the school board about moving forward.

H. Town Administrator

- **AOT grants** – Class II, Structures, Better Back Roads – all were discussed earlier under highway section and are due March 29th.
- **B25 update** – was also covered earlier under highway section.
- **Equipment grant** – We have an opportunity through PACIF Insurance for an equipment grant. The fire department has requested a purchase of personal protective equipment and they can cover the 50% match out of their line item. With this, we will also be purchasing a few items for the highway department (flagging equipment and signage). The deadline for this is also the end of March.
- **Miscellaneous updates**
 - Heidi did talk to Sheriff Norris and the proposed expansion of Sheldon's FCSO contract was approved at Town Meeting. Sheldon and Highgate in the shared contract will have 7-day coverage. Sheriff Norris will be coming to the second meeting in April to give us an update.
 - Heidi has prepared an RFP for the Household Hazardous Waste Days in April and August. Heidi also mentioned an article in the County Courier regarding fuel spill cleanup. She stated that the article is misleading with regard to the library receiving funds for the cleanup. Henry Rainville read the article aloud.
 - The Lamoille Valley Rail Trail is looking for suggestions with regard to a marketing concept in Highgate. Are there businesses in town that would or could benefit from the development of the rail trail?
 - Highgate will be turning 250 this year! It is also Swanton's anniversary year, and several other towns. Henry suggested we start with a small committee. Do we have a budget for this? No, this all came to our attention after budgeting had been done. We will meet on March 21st @ 6:30pm prior to the next Selectboard meeting to start working on this. Wendi will contact Liza Comiskey, Karen Gagne-Fortin and Charlie Nye to see if they can attend this meeting and brainstorm.

I. Upcoming events & announcements

March 14	6:00pm	Zoning Board of Adj. – <u>cancelled</u>
March 21	7:00pm	Selectboard Mtg.
March 23	10:00-noon	Rabies Clinic at the Fire Dept.
April 1	6:00pm	Planning Comm.

J. Executive Session

None

K. Adjournment

Motion by Henry Rainville to adjourn the meeting at 8:24pm, seconded by Jeff Towle – **APPROVED.**

Respectfully submitted by:

_____ Wendi Dusablon, Town Clerk

Minutes approved by:

_____ Henry Rainville, Selectboard Chair