

# TOWN OF HIGHGATE

## Selectboard

### Approved Minutes

#### 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration Planning Committee Meeting & Regular Highgate Selectboard Meeting March 21, 2013 @ 6:30pm & 7:00pm

**NOTE: All actions taken are unanimous unless otherwise stated.**

**A. Call to Order & Roll Call – 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Kick Off Meeting**

The meeting was called to order at 6:35pm. Present for the 250 Anniversary Meeting were: Charlie Nye, Dennis Nolan, Karen Gagne-Fortin, Liza Comiskey, Ralph Comiskey, Jeff Towle, Henry Rainville, Tom Racine, Heidi Britch-Valenta & Wendi Dusablon. It was noted that Charlie Nye had brought to the office staff's attention that Highgate will turn 250 on August 17, 2013. After some discussion it was decided that a one day event would be best – and possibly include a BBQ, Historical Sites of Highgate tour, a band, bon fire, and possibly a parade. The date of July 27, 2013 was also tossed around. The group will meet again on Thursday, April 4, 2013 @ 6:30.

**B. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned @ 7:05pm.

**C. Call to Order & Roll call – Regular Selectboard Meeting 3/21/2013**

The meeting was called to order at 7:08pm by Henry Rainville, Chair. Those present were:

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

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

**Public:** please refer to sign in sheet.

Henry Rainville noted that the 250<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration for the town was in progress, and the group had met prior to this Selectboard meeting. Henry also noted it was a reorganizational meeting for the Selecoard, as this is the first time all there members had been present since Town Meeting Day. Motion by Jeff Towle to nominate Henry Rainville as Chair, seconded by Luke Choiniere – **APPROVED**. Henry stated he would be willing to give up the seat if anyone else wanted it. There were no takers. Motion by Luke Choiniere to nominate Jeff Towle as Vice Chair, seconded by Henry Rainville – **APPROVED**.

**D. Public Comment**

None

**E. Approval of minutes**

Minutes from the February 21, 2013 regular Selectboard meeting – motion by Henry Rainville to approve them as written, seconded by Luke Choiniere – **APPROVED**.

Minutes from the March 7, 2013 regular Selectboard meeting – motion by Henry Rainville to approve them with one correction, seconded by Jeff Towle – **APPROVED**.

Minutes from the March 2, 2013 site visit – we can't approve them yet, as it was Luke Choiniere and Brian Rowell present at the site visit. Brian may be in later tonight and they can be approved at that time. *Note: Brian Rowell did arrive later in the meeting, and these minutes from the March 2, 2013 site visit were APPROVED.*

## **F. Town Treasurer – Tom Racine**

### **1. Pay bills as presented**

Jeff Towle asked if all the listers would be attending the grand list seminar. Yes, they will be going next week. This is a NEMRC seminar. Henry asked if Steve Ploof was coming to the meeting tonight. Heidi stated, yes, the highway crew will all be here later. Jeff asked about the 20/20 Perfect Vision System, is this a yearly fee? No, it is a monthly fee for our land records system.

### **2. Miscellaneous updates from Tom**

Tom presented a resolution to the Selectboard on behalf of the Trustees. This is done yearly, and the Trustees and Tom have already signed off on it. Motion by Henry Rainville to sign off on the resolution for the Trustees, seconded by Luke Choiniere – **APPROVED**. Henry noted that the Trustees have the authority to perform banking transactions on behalf of the Town of Highgate, and our Trustees are: John Ferland, Evangeline LaRocque and Clarence Miller.

Tom had a quick update on fuel. He spoke with Bob @ SB Collins, Pat @ McCuins and Mark @ Bergers. Tom is understanding the difference between fixed and indexed pricing. He will go out to three or four of them and request the rack price and then whatever their adders are for margin and delivery. Tom needs to pick a date in the future so they are all quoting the same price at the same time. Henry would like to see the information after this meeting. Bob took a look at the meter pump and there is quite a bit of rust. Henry asked if we own that tank. It has Ultramars sticker on it, so we will need to ask the Hwy. Dept. Tom does not feel that vendors will supply tanks or meters.

### **3. Furniture purchase**

Heidi included the quote for the conference table and ten chairs in the Selectboard packets. Total cost of \$2790.00. We need to decide on the color of the table, the chairs we already decided on, based on the demos brought to us earlier this year. Henry asked for color samples, which Wendi will get from WB Mason. Luke asked why we need 10 chairs? Heidi pointed out that the Planning Commission and Zoning Board also use the same meeting space and those boards are larger. Motion by Luke Choiniere to purchase the conference table and chairs from WB Mason, seconded by Henry Rainville – **APPROVED**.

### **4. Website update / info.**

Tom has a proposal from GovOffice regarding the town website. This proposal is in the Selectboard packets (copy of proposal attached to these minutes). Tom apologized for taking so long, but feels we need to move the web site process along. Quite a few Vermont towns and New England towns are taking advantage of this resource. Tom would like permission to engage in this level of service with GovOffice. Henry asked if there were any local companies we could inquire with. Tom did reach out to PowerShift, as they are in Vermont. He has not received any feedback from them. Tom feels that aside from doing it ourselves, it will be hard to come in beneath this quote. We supply the content, and they manage everything else. St. Albans City uses them, and Milton does also. We all would maintain the site, taking care of our own content areas (listers / treasurer / clerk / administrator / etc). Tom is comfortable that \$1825.00 will get us set up in good shape. Heidi likes that they are geared towards municipalities and have been successful with it. Henry feels a website is a necessity for us. Jeff feels the price is reasonable. Henry is concerned about the yearly fee after all the set up. Jeff commented it would be a cookie cutter type site, and we can customize our own pages within it. Motion by Luke Choiniere to accept GovOffice for the Town of Highgate website, seconded by Jeff Towle – **APPROVED**. Henry asked for clarification on the \$1825.00 and Tom said that is entry level, but that is the number they gave us. Henry asked Tom if he is comfortable with this, and Tom replied, yes.

### **G. Animal Control Officer – Ray Dixon**

Ray stated that we did a mailing on Feb. 26<sup>th</sup> to about 30 dog owners, and as of today 14 have not responded in any way. Ray has not caught them at home. We have had some issues with lost dogs lately, or dogs at large. Another issue was the report of raccoons at a residence on Gore Road. In the past Ray has not dealt with wildlife, other than an injured animal on somebody's property. People have concerns about rabies, and we have confirmed reports in town so far this year. He feels the raccoon issue should fall under Fish & Wildlife, not local animal control. Heidi stated that according to the Department of Health, this would be a health officer and animal control issue. These raccoons are very close to where the rabid skunk was found. Dean Fackler stated they had problems with rabid raccoons and called F&W and were only told to leave it alone and it would leave. Luke has some information at his house regarding coons. Jeff Towle asked for clarification on where the rabid skunk was found – at the end of the Rainville Road. Henry asked if a letter was sent to the property owner about the raccoons, and Heidi said yes. Heidi was sending that same property owner a letter about the junkyard status of their property, and included the raccoon issue in the same letter. Heidi brought up the issue of the dog ordinance. Do we want to put off re-doing the ordinance until we have a 5-member board this summer? We need to move forward, if we have time to work on it before hand, we should. Jeff Towle asked Ray if he keeps a log of animal complaints. Heidi said the complaint log covers the health officer and the ACO. Heidi added that we recently had an animal cruelty complaint. Ray did not find any wounds or broken bones on the dog. He did not feel it was animal cruelty. Henry asked Ray how he reports back to the town? Heidi added that we are still developing that protocol. Ray commented that a person recently called the office stating that they did not want Ray on their property. She claimed that the animals (two unregistered dogs) do not belong to her, they are her sons, and he is not staying with her permanently. Ray stated the dogs have been at that residence for some time. Ray wants the Selectboard to sign the dog warrant tonight, which Wendi has prepared for them to sign. Henry wants Ray to make sure he treats everyone the same. Jeff asked if Ray was interested in being reappointed as ACO for another year. Yes, he is interested. Heidi stated that a written log from Ray would be helpful. Just a list of the date and what duties he performed would be helpful, on a monthly basis would be fine. Ray asked if the board has come up with a plan for an injured animal at night. No, they have not, not yet. If they are injured, the Humane Society won't take them in.

### **H. Health Officer update – Luke Choiniere**

Luke has been on vacation. Before he left he and Heidi had discussed following up on complaints that were having trouble making progress. There are sites that people are having trouble keeping up with rubbish removal or other things. Rodents are a concern. Luke would like to do a one day set up with a dumpster for people who have financial issues and need help cleaning up their yards. Maybe we could involve the school or seniors that need community service hours. Or we could use a town truck and ask Steve Ploof to monitor it. This would help clean up the town, and would be for only household garbage. Henry asked how often Luke wanted to do this. Luke replied in the spring, maybe in conjunction with Green Up Day in early May. Henry asked how he would pay for the disposal of the trash. Luke would like to discuss if the town could help with the cost. Luke would like people to request assistance, so we would know who would be dropping off debris. Jeff feels if we do it for some, we would need to do it for all, we need to be fair. Jeff understands we all have different lifestyles and standards. If the health officer has done a site visit and they have not followed through, it is up to the property owner to keep their property clean and safe. Henry feels that people may "bank" their garbage for this one clean up day. Luke said we could do a limit on the number of bags per household. Henry feels we could have a hard time managing this. Jeff applauds Luke's attempt to help.

Luke asked for suggestions on how to approach residents and help them clean up. To go along with this, Henry has received a letter from a resident on St. Armand Road about drainage issues from the school (see letter attached to these minutes). Back to the garbage issue, we have had comments from certain neighbors stating that they hope we do not spend any money at one certain site, because the church has helped in the past with a dumpster and did a lot of work, and that property is right back to where it was. Luke would like to see these properties cleaned up, especially in the front. Jeff is concerned about health issues. Debris and vehicles are considered a junkyard. The accumulation of non-working vehicles is not permitted. In that instance it can be enforced. We also have a solid waste ordinance. Luke is running into an enforcement issue if people are financially strapped. Heidi stated that Luke is a health officer with a heart. Brian Rowell asked about the non-working vehicles. Is it non-working vehicles or non-registered vehicles? The wording is non-working, per Heidi. You are only allowed two unregistered vehicles. Jeff told Luke that issues can be brought back to the board. Jeff would like to help him as a board. Henry feels to do something on a yearly basis to help would be hard to manage and costly. On Green Up Day, does the town pick up the bags? Yes, they are left on the side of the road and the highway crew picks them up. Henry backs up Jeff with regard to bringing health officer issues to the board for help.

## **I. Town Clerk – Wendi Dusablon**

### **1. Special Election for two additional Selectboard members**

Wendi is looking for a decision from the board to set the date of the special election to elect two more Selectboard members. Motion by Luke Choiniere to hold the special election on Tuesday, June 18, 2013 from 7am – 7pm at the Highgate Municipal Building, seconded by Henry Rainville –

**APPROVED.**

Wendi noted that this would make petitions due by Monday, May 13, 2013 by 5pm and she would prepare the petitions. Wendi will also contact the media to start advertising the election. The positions will each be for two years, but in an effort to stagger the two 2-year positions, the election in June will be for ONE 1-year term, and ONE 2-year term. The 1-year term will expire in March 2014 and then become an elected position for two years going forward. The 2-year term will expire in March 2015 and continue to be a 2-year term going forward. Our current three seats, will continue to be 3-year staggered terms. This will mean on any given year, no more than two Selectboard members would be up for reelection.

### **2. Dog warrant to be signed**

Motion by Henry Rainville to sign the annual dog warrant, seconded by Luke Choiniere – **APPROVED.** (copy attached to these minutes).

### **3. Liquor and tobacco license for Shacam's**

Motion by Henry Rainville to enter in local control board @ 8:09pm, seconded by Jeff Towle – **APPROVED.**

Motion by Henry Rainville to enter back into the regular Selectboard meeting @ 8:11pm, seconded by Luke Choiniere – **APPROVED.**

This liquor and tobacco license was put before the board on March 7<sup>th</sup>, but was not complete. This time the paperwork was in order and was signed off on by all three Selectboard members.

### **4. Updates on dog licenses and rabies clinic**

As of today, we have licensed 225 dogs. We have 800 tags, so we have some work to do. The rabies clinic in Highgate is this Saturday, March 23 from 10-noon at the Fire Dept. Wendi anticipates vaccinating several hundred dogs, and we should license at least 100 on that day. Licensing will pick up significantly the last week of March. We also have MANY that license late, well into the spring and summer months.

### **5. Appointments**

**Town Agent** – Bill Rowell – motion by Jeff Towle, seconded by Henry Rainville – **APPROVED.**

**Tree Warden** – Steve Ploof – motion by Jeff Towle, seconded by Luke Choiniere – **APPROVED.**

**911 Coordinator** – Shirley Fecteau – motion by Jeff Towle, seconded by Henry Rainville – **APPROVED.**

**Fire Marshall** – David Desorcie – motion by Jeff Towle, seconded by Luke Choiniere – **APPROVED.**

**Town Service Officer** – Wendi Dusablon – motion by Jeff Towle, seconded by Henry Rainville – **APPROVED.**

**Deputy Health Officer** – Henry Laroche – motion by Henry Rainville, seconded by Jeff Towle – **APPROVED.**

**Animal Control Officer** – Ray Dixon – motion by Jeff Towle, seconded by Luke Choiniere – **APPROVED.**

**1<sup>st</sup> Constable** – vacant

**2<sup>nd</sup> Constable** – vacant

**Cemetery Commissioner** – vacant

**Regional Planning Comm.** – Richard Noel – motion by Jeff Towle, seconded by Luke Choiniere – **APPROVED.**

**Regional Planning Comm.** – Tom Racine – motion by Henry Rainville, seconded by Luke Choiniere – **APPROVED.**

**TAC Committee (calendar year 2013)** – Richard Noel – motion by Henry Rainville, seconded by Luke Choiniere – **APPROVED.**

**Zoning Admin. (1 year)** – Heidi Britch-Valenta – motion by Henry Rainville, seconded by Luke Choiniere – **APPROVED.**

## **J. Town Administrator – Heidi Britch-Valenta**

### **1. Rec. Dept. – Freon update**

Per Luc Choquette and a report from Alliance Mechanical, the total loss of Freon this season was 300-350 lbs. of refrigerant. This is down from previous years, but not quite as great as last year.

### **2. AOT – TA60 form**

Signatures needed on this form to confirm what the town allocates to the roads. Motion by Henry Rainville to approve the TA60 to submit financial information to AOT in an effort to secure a grant, seconded by Luke Choiniere – **APPROVED.**

### **3. Petroluem Clean Up Fund**

RL Vallee was helpful in connecting Heidi with an engineer doing the testing. They stated that it should not be listed as a Highgate Library site – it is the gas station site. They will change the information. Heidi asked Norm McAllister why the state funds clean ups for gas companies. It is funded to gas companies by a tax in the gas. You pay at the pump, which goes into a fund, and back to tax payers for clean up.

### **4. Hazard Mitigation Plan**

Shawn from Regional Planning is prepared to help. They would look at a draft that was started in 2007 but not finished. We are benefited by Friends of Northern Lake Champlains work on problem areas and where they are. Shawn suggested that this would take three meetings. He will work with the Town Plan and storm water documents and come back with a draft document for the committee. From that point, it would be just a couple of meetings to fine tune it to present it to the State of VT. It can be a lengthy process with the State. The committee would consist of one Selectboard member, one Planning Commission member, one Hwy Department member and Heidi. Jeff Towle volunteered to represent the Selectboard on this committee.....before Henry nominates him.

### **5. Equipment Grant – sign**

The equipment grant is being submitted for personal protective clothing for the fire department and traffic control supplies, chain saws and safety items for the highway department. Henry asked how much the grant was for. Heidi replied it is 50% up to \$5,000.00. Motion by Henry Rainville to sign off on the equipment grant application, seconded by Luke Choiniere – **APPROVED.**

### **6. Municipal Property Committee**

We had talked about reviewing town parcels to see if there was value in keeping them. Shirley Fecteau, Peter St. Germain, Henry Laroche, Richard Noel, Heidi Britch-Valenta and Tom Racine all met on March 19<sup>th</sup>. They

pulled out deeds and had lots of comments on what history might be attached to each parcel. Shirley will be coming to the April 4<sup>th</sup> Selectboard meeting to share their recommendations. Henry would like to have public meetings after that to get input from the public. Heidi added that nobody seemed to know anything about Cherry Hill or why we have it.

#### **7. Green Mountain Transit Authority**

GMTA has offered to come in and do a presentation at our April 18<sup>th</sup> meeting for about 15 minutes. Henry added that he had a verbal complaint that GMTA vehicles had been crossing the Machia Road bridge. Henry asked Heidi to call them and verify there has been a complaint. Luke asked what kinds of vehicles they have – they are shuttle buses.

#### **8. Municipal Planning Grant – sign**

This is to review the bylaws, and the grant is \$8,000.00. With it, we will pay regional planning to review the bylaws. Regional Planning has quoted \$7,920.00 to do the work. Henry asked when the last re-write was done. There have been several edits, but the last re-write was probably in 2008. Motion by Jeff Towle to approve the Municipal Planning Grant Contract, seconded by Luke Choiniere – **APPROVED**.

#### **9. Quit Claim Deed Request**

Heidi has received a request from the land owners on the opposite side of the stream / Charcoal Creek / School House Lot. The Highgate Quit Claim deed is just one last detail. Henry Rainville would like to read this before making any decision. He asked Heidi to bring it up at the next meeting, and to call Dave Barra. Luke asked for clarification on what this lot is about. Henry gave Luke some history on it.

#### **10. Miscellaneous**

- Heidi received a call from AOT. They are interested in working on a culvert on Route 78 near Carter Hill Road. They are asking the Selectboard to sign off on access. They are planning on doing the work this summer and need access to the site. There will be other land owners involved, and they are meeting on Monday to sign off as well. Motion by Henry Rainville to sign off on the request for access to the culvert at the intersection of Route 78 and Carter Hill Road, seconded by Jeff Towle – **APPROVED**. Henry asked if there was a set date. No, there is no set date as of yet.
- Heidi had an opportunity to talk with Connie Beyor and David Roddy from the school board regarding the letter on the drainage issue. They also wanted to talk about their plans for summer to move forward with drainage plans. They will come in on a regular basis. They will also be here on April 4<sup>th</sup>. Henry wants the highway department to be here at the same time. Heidi can also invite Mr. Larivee who wrote the letter. Henry read the letter from Mr. Larivee aloud (attached to these minutes). Luke asked where the water was coming from. It is coming from School Street towards St. Armand Road. Steve stated that the King's and the Perry's have pipes coming from their basements also. There are four homes that directly feed into this. Henry stated it is a situation where our infrastructure, St. Armand Road, is involved, and how do we maintain it? Butch Brosseau asked what has happened in the past, and is anything in writing? Luke feels the town should maintain it so we don't have a problem. Mike Bockus said some culverts have been closed up and would need to be cleaned out. Jeff asked for clarification on this issue. Henry asked how many land owners are impacted? Four along St. Armand Road, probably a couple hundred yards, and they are all plastic culverts. It is hard to say what will happen when they are dug up. We can nail down further details on April 4<sup>th</sup>. The highway department has cleaned out once from Sylvia Ploofs over to David Desorcies and to Frog Pond. Henry has a hard time supporting this because you are setting precedence, but at the same time, we have to protect our infrastructure (the road). The school has a plan, and is ready to discuss it on April 4<sup>th</sup>.

- We got a quote back from Jim Smith for \$47,000.00 to repair the box culvert on the Tarte Road. Heidi thought it was a \$10,000.00 grant and she called for clarification. Henry feels this is a lot of money for a culvert. Steve Ploof called Red Head Supply and they quoted \$8,500.00 and his brother (Gary) quoted \$4,500.00 for cement. Heidi had quotes in the Selectboard packets. Henry asked what is the life span of a culvert? Steve said this was a coated culvert. They are steel coated with tar and have a flat bottom. The culvert by Henry's house is a multi-plate culvert, which has been there since around 1972.

**K. Selectboard Items**

**1. HVAC**

Henry emailed Bruce Kilbury, he will hopefully have something to report at the April 4<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**2. Tri-Town Rec. Committee**

The Tri-Town submitted their petitions to the Swanton Selectboard on Monday for a revote. They are on the agenda for their next Selectboard meeting in Swanton and there will most likely be a vote, per statute. The Town of Swanton has 60 days to respond and schedule a revote.

**3. Reorganization of officers**

This was done earlier in the meeting.

**L. Highway Department Updates**

- As soon as the roads dry up they will get back to patching. All are done, except Rice Hill and Dunton Road and those are quite bad. They have graded some roads. Hopefully we don't get much more snow, they are getting low on sand. They will work on the roads as soon as they can.
- Truck Specs – The Selectboard asked Brian Rowell to come back and talk about the truck. The highway crew has gone through the truck list and plow package and are comfortable with both sets. Henry has questions regarding the warranties. Steve is not sure about that part. Per Mike Bockus, International has specified 5 year warranty. That is not on the whole truck, only the engine and transmission. Brian said with J&B you can go up to 5 years on the International and 7 years on the Western Star. The standard warranty is as good or more on the Western Star as the International. Mike and Steve went and drove the Western Star. Mike stated the Western Star was a nice truck, but not comfortable friendly for the driver. He feels where the shifter is and switches are, are kind of out of reach, and the cup holder is on the other side. On the International, everything is right there next to you. The International is more eco-friendly, but the Western Star drove really well. Mike is more comfortable with the International. Brian has Bill Cleary's number. Several towns that have gone to Western Star because of problems with International. There is no comparison in trucks. Brian prefers having the shifter on the dash, but that is a preference. Jeff asked if Mike was able to call those people who have purchased in the last few years. Would Mr. Cleary come up and talk to us? Henry asked what is the difference with today's International compared to Butch's truck? Mike said there are no differences, Brian stated the engine is different. Mr. Cleary just took two trucks back from Belevance. Belevance was having too much down time with the Internationals. Henry asked Jeff if he is available tomorrow, Jeff said no. Luke is available tomorrow. Mike would like to have someone come with him on a run to see the tight spots when he has to turn. The specs should state the turning radiuses. Henry would like to go and look at both trucks at J&B. We would need to warn the meeting if Henry and Luke both attend. They will meet at 9am tomorrow at the Municipal Building to go look at the trucks (Brian, Mike, Henry & Luke).

**M. Upcoming Events / Announcements**

March 22	5 - 8pm	Little League Reg @ Town Office
March 23	9am – noon	Little League Reg @ Town Office

March 23 10am – noon Rabies clinic @ Fire Dept.  
April 1 6pm Planning & Zoning Combined Review  
April 4 7pm Selectboard Mtg.  
April 18 7pm Selectboard Mtg.

Wednesday nights @ 7pm – Highgate Elem. – Adult Yoga  
1<sup>st</sup> Saturday each month @ 9am – Municipal Bldg – Yoga Tots  
Caitlin’s Closet – drop off prom gowns at Highgate Library by Apr. 15

**N. Executive Session**

Motion by Henry Rainville to enter into executive session @ 9:21pm to discuss personnel issues with the highway department, seconded by Luke Choiniere – **APPROVED.**

Motion by Jeff Towle to exit executive session @ 10:40pm, seconded by Luke Choiniere – **APPROVED.**

**O. Adjournment**

Motion by Henry Rainville to adjourn the meeting @ 10:50pm, seconded by Jeff Towle – **APPROVED.**

Respectfully submitted by:

\_\_\_\_\_Wendi Dusablon, Town Clerk

Minutes approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_Henry Rainville, Selectboard Chair