

TOWN OF HIGHGATE

Selectboard

Approved Minutes

250th Anniversary Celebration Planning Committee Meeting & Regular Highgate Selectboard Meeting

April 4, 2013 @ 6:30pm & 7:00pm

NOTE: All actions taken are unanimous unless otherwise stated.

A. Call to Order & Roll Call – 250th Anniversary Committee Mtg.

The meeting was called to order at 6:30pm. Present for the 250 Anniversary Meeting were: Charlie Nye, Dennis Nolan, Karen Gagne-Fortin, Ken Levesque, Marvin Bicknell, Kurt Valenta, Dick Souza, Merry Souza, Kevin Flint, Shirley Fecteau, Peter St. Germain, Luke Choiniere, Jeff Towle, Henry Rainville, Tom Racine, Heidi Britch-Valenta & Wendi Dusablon.

B. Discussion regarding 250th Anniversary Celebration

Peter St. Germain was able to tell us that the field days site is busy with a wedding on July 27th. July 20th was still an option for that site. It was decided that the celebration should take place in the village of Highgate (arena / school / ball fields location) on Saturday, July 27, 2013. This date did not seem to interfere with anything else going on locally. Guided tours of Historical Highgate Sites with a bus (from M&C, Luke Choiniere has connections) were discussed, which could be hosted by Marvin Bicknell and Kurt Valenta. Ken Levesque was present to discuss the hot air balloon options (tethering vs. walk through options) and the space / weather conditions needed / pricing for each of those options. Banners will be needed to promote the event. The Town of Highgate is in the process of obtaining a new web site through GovOffice, and the Town has a very active FaceBook page that we can use. Karen Gagne-Fortin would like to see if the Memorial Day Parade can incorporate the 250th theme. The meeting ended with some general agreement on the following: Historical Sites Tours, BBQ (fire dept), Band, a Hot Air Balloon option & Bon Fire to end the night. We will meet again on Thursday, April 18th @ 6:30pm.

C. Adjournment

The 250th celebration meeting was adjourned @ 7:08pm.

D. Call to Order & Roll call – Regular Selectboard Meeting 4/4/2013

The meeting was called to order at 7:10pm 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.

E. Public Comment

None

F. Approval of minutes

Minutes from the March 21, 2013 regular Selectboard meeting – motion by Luke Choiniere to approve them with one addition, seconded by Jeff Towle – **APPROVED.**

G. Fire Department Updates – Dick Souza

Dick Souza asked the Selectboard how they felt about purchasing a heavy rescue truck for the Highgate Fire Dept. The department has a few qualified people on the roster and some that need refresher courses. Dave St. Pierre is willing to put on a 40-hour class for them, and Dick is looking for the Selectboards opinion. Henry Rainville asked Dick when the last time was that they required a heavy rescue vehicle. Kevin Flint said that Swanton was selling theirs. If we had our own unit we would not have to call Missisquoi Rescue or Swanton Fire for aide. Swanton is getting rid of their truck because they are getting a new truck which will have heavy rescue already incorporated on it. Luke Choiniere asked where we would park it, and Kevin Flint answered that we would need to get rid of the van. The Selectboard wants time to think about this. Henry stated that if they have time tonight they will discuss it. Jeff Towle asked for clarification about if we have members that are already qualified. Yes, we do, there are a few. A few others need a refresher course. Merry and Dick Souza have supplied us with a fire department roster that includes the level of training for each firefighter. Henry likes to see that there are varied levels of training in the department. He noted that quite a few have no training at all. Dick said that it is suggested that each of them take Fire Fighter #1. The problem is that it is an 80 hour course and it affects people and their jobs. They have four young members who can't wait to take the course. Dick commented that he thinks the course is actually 140 hours long. The State of VT sets up where the courses are and notifies the department when the training(s) are available and where. Henry asked if there is criteria as far as going into a building. Yes, there is, you have to be certified to go into a building. They have 10 members certified. Heidi Britch-Valenta brought up background checks on new volunteers as part of the new insurance liability. Henry asked if they had ever found out where the bookshelf and cabinet went that had disappeared from the fire department. Dick Souza will ask again, but so far he did not have any more information. Henry asked if they were looking to do any dry hydrants. Heidi gave the information to Dick, and he will research it. The grant goes up to \$2,500.00 and requires a 25% match, which can be volunteer hours or equipment. Henry asked the fire department to keep in mind the 250th celebration and bring any ideas to the Selectboard. The fire department will be cooking!

H. Highway Department Updates – Steve Ploof

Steve Ploof asked if the Selectboard had decided on the truck yet. Henry had made up his mind a while ago and has not changed his mind. Henry said they will discuss this in executive session and make a decision. The road crew has been around the roads once with stone and light grading. They will be going back around again. The roads are drying up well. They have also fixed a few culverts. Steve is keeping track of what they are putting on what roads and the amount of grading hours. Steve asked if the personnel policy had been revised, based on their discussion at the last meeting. The board has gone through it, and there will be an amendment and it will be presented to them. Steve reported that there have been some problems with Mikes truck, about \$2,000.00. It is back up and running well, but was down for a few days. Steve recently had a flat tire on his truck. Heidi asked Steve for an update on the bike racks. Steve has talked to the library and he knows where they want them to be placed. They will need to use rebar to spike them to the ground. One bike rack was lost in transit. We ended up with one small one and one larger one. One was meant for the arena and Heidi has a sketch of where that should be placed at the arena. Steve is out of material to make private road signs. Speed limits over 40mph, you are supposed to use 9" boards. The issue with larger signs is the wind. Heidi is concerned that for upcoming grants if we are not doing things up to state standards that it could bite us in the long run. Jeff Towle would like to see Steve order the signs for private roads only as we need them. Heidi added that for the equipment grant, instead of two signs at the end of the work zone, you will want three. She modified the grant to reflect three signs. Heidi had the quote and the

standards with her. Henry read the quote aloud and Steve verified what they needed. Henry said that one hiccup with the grant is that we have been flagged on a few things within the building. Heidi and Steve will iron out the issue with the signs, and the Selectboard will let Steve know about the truck.

I. School Board Updates – Connie Beyor & David Roddy

Connie and David were present to discuss drainage issues around the white building at the elementary school. A letter had been received from Chad Larivee (who was present) regarding the maintenance issues on his property with regard to water and drainage. Mr. Larivee lives at 145 St. Armand Road and has owned the property since 2004. Mr. Larivee stated that the entrance from the Desorcie property to his property has a plugged culvert. There are two culverts that go through his property and both are very plugged, but not completely. The water is not making its way to Frog Pond. Mr. Larivee has tried to maintain it. Mr. Roddy asked if the culverts were the towns responsibility. Henry Rainville said in his opinion the town is liable for what is in the right of way of the road, which is 24' from the center of the road – roughly 50' wide total. Henry said that years ago the land owners beyond the right of way put culverts in to better use their land with regard to the ditch that went from St. Armand Road to Frog Pond. That is coming back to haunt us now. Henry feels that the land owner should be liable for drainage on their property. Mr. Larivee asked if there was a right of way. Henry's understanding is you cannot block the water from an adjoining land owner. What is the schools plan? David Roddy stated that their plan right now is when there is water present, to pump it into a pump station or syphon tank. When the tank is full it goes across the LaFountains property. The LaFountains have a pipe that goes from the school property to St. Armand Road. It then goes into a ditch, and into a culvert towards The Frog Pond. Luke Choiniere asked why it would need to go to a tank before the pump, and Mr. Roddy could not recall the reasoning. Henry guesses that the tank is for elevation purposes. They had considered running the water to Route 78 where the State has a drain by the road. That plan came to a halt when the State heard their idea. The water can't be pumped up St. Armand Road either, so this is the only viable idea they came up with. Richard Flint and David Roddy are on the buildings and grounds committee, so if the Selectboard wants to go for a walk, it can be done. If the Selectboard has any ideas, they are ready and willing to hear them. Henry feels the culverts will be an ongoing issue. The soils don't hold a ditch very well. Steve Ploof mentioned that Swanton has the ability to clean culverts. He did not know how far in length they could clean. Swanton uses a machine where they send it in and pull it back, and it works well. Luke asked if Steve was familiar with the culverts that are plugged. Yes, Steve is. The school and town have always worked together, and the landowners have a role in this as well. Luke feels that culverts are the responsibility of the land owner. Steve stated that they are all plastic through there and won't dig up very well. Luke asked if other water was going through there – yes, constant water, and not just from the school, per Mr. Larivee. Mr. Larivee does not have the equipment or the money to clean it all the time. Every year he spends hours with a hand shovel and he isn't going to do it anymore. Steve suggests we contact Swanton to use their machine instead of digging up plastic pipe. Jeff Towle asked how many land owners total we are talking about: Messier, Desorcie, Ploof & Larivee. Luke Choiniere asked where does all this water go if we do nothing – everyone's cellar. David Roddy commented that as far as setting precedence, if it is for town purposes and you are on someones property because it is town water running across it, you are not setting precedence - you are conducting town business. Tom Racine asked if an engineer had been paid to look at this. Yes, but the engineer has not looked at the project they are proposing. Henry asked if they are planning to do something this year. Mr. Roddy said – Yes, ASAP. They had a lot of water and mold in the white building two years ago. Steve will ask Swanton to come down and take a look and let us know a ballpark figure to use their equipment and clean out the culverts. Steve said if we cleaned out the culvert by Desorcies to make sure water can flow that would help. Larivee stated that a lot of the culvert cleans itself. Henry asked Heidi if this is anything we

could get a grant for. Heidi answered that you can't get grants for maintenance but you can get grants to resolve issues. Henry would like to have the land owners get involved and come to an agreement. David Roddy would like to set up a time, and Mr. Larivee definitely wants to be involved. Connie Beyor stated that they are not at the point of putting this out to bid yet. They don't want a band aide, they want to fix it and prevent it. Henry would like all the land owners at the next meeting. Henry doesn't think the town is a road block for what the school wants to do. David Roddy would like to go and walk the properties before their next meeting. On a separate note, with regard to the generator, Heidi doesn't have much more information. Connie expressed a desire to have a generator for the white building which controls the water. Power is in the white building, and the brick building is the designated emergency shelter. The estimate for a used generator is \$3,000.00 through government surplus. We are on a waiting list for a generator. Connie said the school board approved seeing if this could be pursued. It is important to know that the water is attached to the white building and the electricity. The white building is not currently set up to support a generator. Heidi added that there was a grant opportunity last year that the town did not take advantage of. Connie will come chat with Heidi tomorrow. Steve Ploof added that we need to do a site visit at the landfill. We have to designate that area, and Brian Rowell offered to chip it out. The Selectboard will set up a time to walk the site with Steve Ploof. This will be the site for the brush depot.

J. Municipal Property Committee Report

Shirley Fecteau and Peter St. Germain were present to report on their findings and recommendations regarding town owned parcels. They have compiled information on all the properties to determine whether the town should retain them or if they should go back into the tax base. There were 16 parcels looked at by a committee that consisted of: Henry Laroche, Richard Noel, Shirley Fecteau, Peter St. Germain, Tom Racine, Shawn Neill and Heidi Britch-Valenta. They met on Tuesday, March 19th (with the exception of Shawn Neill) to come up with the recommendations. Please see attached list and maps for detailed information. Henry Rainville would like to bring this list to the voters and see what they feel we should keep and what we should sell. Tom Racine suggested that Town Meeting is not the proper place to discuss this, that we could warn a special meeting or have it warned as part of a regular Selectboard meeting. Henry would like the taxpayers blessing. Jeff Towle sees this as similar to the VELCO swap we did recently. Jeff also stated that if the Selectboard decides to do anything they would warn the meetings and notify adjoining land owners. *Please refer to attached listing of parcels and maps.*

K. Town Treasurer – Tom Racine

- **Pay bills as presented**

Jeff Towle asked about the DVD archive. We periodically go pick up DVDs from channel 15 and they are kept in the vault. Jeff also asked about the current mileage rate. Tom said we have been following the IRS standard .565, which he just looked up today. The \$1,825.00 for Avnet LLC is for the new town website. Gary Ploof was paid for four hours of snowplowing while Steve was gone. Henry had questions about mowing the cemeteries. Ben Nye and Steve Bushey have been contracted to mow the town cemeteries, \$3,600.00 for Ben Nye and \$2,700.00 for Steve Bushey. Motion by Henry Rainville to sign off on the lawn care contracts for Ben Nye and Steve Bushey, seconded by Luke Choiniere – **APPROVED**. The total bill for Cartographic Associates is \$3,995.00. This is the annual maintenance contract for GIS information including the tax map updates. Motion by Jeff Towle to sign the 2013 maintenance contract with Cartographic Associates, seconded by Luke Choiniere – **APPROVED**. Tom stated that Franco is coming up tomorrow and we have a new lister, Aimee Reynolds. We will review the new batch upload utility which Michelle Douglas used to maintain. Heidi loves the

program. She has worked in three other towns and this system is very user friendly. People are thrilled that they can access this from home.

- **Fuel bids**

We had gone out to bid for the period of May 1, 2013 through April 30, 2014. We received responses from SB Collins, McCuins and Bergers. The only company that did not respond was Pyrofax. Tom presented all three to the Selectboard. The Selectboard should be looking at the margin number. Two of them are very close, one was under. Tom also asked for pricing on tanks. Pat McGovern (McCuins) got back to him on the tank price of \$2,500.00 which is a double wall tank so containment is included. The pump would be approximately \$750.00. Pyrofax may be interested in selling us the tank in the yard now, but they did not send a bid.

- **Website – GovOffice**

They have a demo site for us to access both front end and back end. Front end is all users, back end is administration. Nothing is live right now. We need to schedule a training. We may need to close the office for a few hours during training. Tom met with Matt Bouchard who is no longer with Rail City, he is on his own. Tom asked Matt to re-quote doing some of the network maintenance which would include switching to a domain. The original quote was just under \$10,000.00. Matt believes with our current hardware and software, he can do this for \$2,348.00. The Selectboard will look it over. If this is something they wish to pursue, the hope is that we can fit it into the existing IT line item. Henry Rainville is recusing himself from the discussion, as Matt is his god son.

L. Town Clerk – Wendi Dusablon

- **Dogs & dog clinic updates**

Our rabies clinic was held on March 23rd and was a great success. Hundreds of animals were vaccinated and 120+ were also licensed with the town that day, all in a two-hour period of time. BUSY!

As of today, we have licensed 527 dogs. Wendi is working with Ray Dixon (ACO) on the outstanding list. Wendi has contacted many dog owners via FaceBook and email to have them come in, and it has been successful.

Reminder notices will be going out on April 10th.

- **Special Election – June 18th**

Petitions are due by May 13th @ 5pm. We have had some interest and the St. Albans Messenger recently ran an article. Wendi has contacted the County Courier to run an article also.

M. Town Administrator – Heidi Britch-Valenta

- **Grant for sidewalks**

Heidi's big news is included in the Selectboard packets as #6. It is a letter from AOT that the Town of Highgate has been awarded a grant of \$250,000.00 towards the installment of sidewalks. The proposed sidewalk project begins at the Municipal Building and goes to the Public Library and down Lamkin to St. Louis Church. We had originally applied for \$300,000.00 and were awarded \$250,000.00. The town is obligated to have a \$20,000.00 match, and 10% of that can be an in-kind match, but needs to be approved. If the Selectboard signs off on this, we would be designated a project manager and an initial project meeting would be scheduled. This could be the start of a much improved pedestrian friendly situation in the village. Motion by Luke Choiniere to sign off and accept the grant for \$250,000.00, seconded by Jeff Towle – **APPROVED**. Jeff asked for clarification, this is a reimbursement program where we spend the money and they pay us back – Yes. As a quick overview, Heidi stated that we had a combined public hearing and got lots of good feedback. The feasibility study from 2007 was used, as safety is an issue on Lamkin Street. There will be more public hearings to continue the dialogue. AOT required 16 paper copies of the application and study.

- **Recreation update**
The Tri-Town Rec. Committee has a list of upcoming events (see list attached to these minutes) prior to the re-vote on May 14th in Swanton. There was recently a letter submitted to the Messenger by April Kilbury that was circulated in support of the project. Luke Choiniere asked for an update on the arena project, as he had left town right after Town Meeting. Henry Rainville gave Luke an update. There has not been a joint Selectboard meeting since January in Swanton. The Tri-Town committee has been working hard to move forward.
- **HHW RFP and HHW grant - sign**
Heidi has the HHW swip grant that needs to be committed to. When she returns it, she needs to commit to who the waste handler will be for Hazardous Waste Day on April 27th. She was unsuccessful getting commitment from waste handlers based on our location and the volume. Jeff asked who the waste handler was in the past – APT. She wants to talk about this in executive session. Luke may not be available on April 27th for HHWD. Henry Laroche (deputy health officer) may be able to help. HHWD is Saturday, April 27th from 8am – noon at the Sand Shed near the Transfer Station on Transfer Station Rd.

N. Selectboard items

- **HVAC**
Henry has an email in to Bruce Kilbury and is waiting to hear back.
- **Quit Claim Deed – Charcoal Creek**
Dave Barra stated that this looks fine. Motion by Henry Rainville to sign off on the quit claim deed for Charcoal Creek, seconded by Luke Choiniere – **APPROVED.**
- **Site Visit**
Henry Rainville, Luke Choiniere, Brian Rowell and Mike Bockus went on a site visit on Friday, March 22nd to Burlington to look at a truck. It had not been warned as a meeting, as it was decided the night before they went. No business decisions were made at this site visit.
- **Electrical work**
The electrical work for both sides of the Municipal Building will be discussed in executive session
- **Appointment of Road Commissioner**
Wendi mentioned to the Selectboard that we had not yet appointed a Road Commissioner. Henry asked Jeff if he was interested, Jeff said yes. Motion by Henry Rainville to appoint Jeff Towle as Road Commissioner, seconded by Luke Choiniere – **APPROVED.**
- **Complaint of suspected illegal drug use and disposal**
We have received a complaint on Hemyard Road of suspected illegal drug use and disposal of needles. Heidi has forwarded this to the FCSO. Sheriff Norris will be at our next meeting and we can further discuss. Luke Choiniere asked who should clean that up. The health officer should, but following proper protocol and safety procedures. The health manual should help with that and Heidi will get more information to share.

O. Upcoming events and announcements

April 11	6pm	Zoning Board of Adj. – cancelled
April 18	7pm	Selectboard Mtg.
April 27	8-noon	Household Hazardous Waste Day @ Sand Shed
May 6	6pm	Planning Comm. & Zoning Board joint meeting
May 13	5pm	Petitions due for Selectboard election
June 18	7am-7pm	Special election to add 2 Selectboard members

P. Other Business

Tom added that he had found fairly reasonable pricing for signage for the fire department with regard to people not parking on that side of the building.

Q. Executive Session

Motion by Henry Rainville to enter executive session @ 9:27pm to discuss personnel, legal matters and contracts, seconded by Jeff Towle – **APPROVED.**

Motion by Henry Rainville to exit executive session @ 10:45pm, seconded by Jeff Towle – **APPROVED.**

R. Adjournment

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

Respectfully submitted by:

_____ Wendi Dusablon, Town Clerk

Minutes approved by:

_____ Henry Rainville, Selectboard Chair