

# TOWN OF HIGHGATE

## Selectboard

### Approved Minutes

#### Regular Meeting

January 3, 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 7:03pm by Henry Rainville, Chair.

Those present were:

**Highgate Selectboard Members:** Henry Rainville, Chair; Brian Rowell;  
Missing: Luke Choiniere

**Highgate Staff:** Heidi Britch-Valenta - Town Administrator; Tom Racine -  
Town Treasurer; Erin Rocheleau - Planning & Zoning Clerk

**Public:** Steven Ploof – Highway Foreman, Town of Highgate; Representative  
Norman McAllister – State House Franklin County; Bethany Remmers –  
Assistant Director, Northwest Regional Planning Commission; Dick Souza – Fire  
Chief, Town of Highgate Fire Department

#### **B. Public Comments**

None

#### **C. Minutes**

Motion by Henry Rainville to accept the minutes from the December 20, 2012  
regular meeting at 6:30pm, with no corrections, seconded by Brian Rowell –  
**APPROVED.**

Motion by Henry Rainville to accept the minutes from the December 20, 2012  
meeting at 7:00pm, with no corrections, seconded by Brian Rowell –  
**APPROVED.**

The third set of minutes from December 20, 2012 will wait to be accepted when  
the Tri-Town Board is meeting.

#### **D. Town Treasurer – Tom Racine**

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

Tom Racine presented the Board with two sets of paid bills for the Town.  
The first set is from 2012 and the second set is for the first week of 2013.  
Brian Rowell clarified with Steven Ploof that he purchased new plow blades  
from Clarks. Brian then clarified with Tom that Property Liability is paid  
quarterly by the Town.

##### **Dog Licenses due**

Tom stated that the Town dog licenses are due April 1, 2013. The licenses  
rates are: neutered \$10 and non-neutered \$14; after April 1, 2013 neutered  
\$12 and non-neutered \$16. A proof of rabies vaccination is needed to  
purchase the license. The Town of Highgate will be holding a rabies  
vaccination clinic on Saturday, March 23, 2013 at 10:00am at the Fire  
Station.

##### **Deadlines for petitions for articles**

Thursday January 21, 2013 at 5:00pm is the deadline for Articles listed for  
Town Meeting Day. Deadline for positions of Town Offices is Monday,  
January 28, 2013, and the deadline for Consent of Candidates Form is  
Monday, January 28, 2013 at 5:00pm.

### **Articles for Town Meeting Day**

Tom explained that much of the Articles are still in the rough draft form. Each article will be gone over and adjusted at the upcoming Budget Meeting on Tuesday, January 8, 2013.

Tom went through the details of each of the article. Each article will need to be adjusted and approved by The Board. Tom indicated that the Town is budgeting for an 18-month period, so it will be higher then previously projected 12-month periods.

Tom explained that wish lists from the three Boards and Departments are listed under line items under the general funds. Discussions and decisions need to be made in the future.

### **E. Highway Department Update – Steven Ploof**

Steven Ploof explained that he had a mishap with one of the plow trucks on January 1, 2013 on Therrien Rd. The passenger door was damaged, along with the mirror and the window was shattered. There were no used parts available, replacement parts are being ordered. Currently there is a piece of Plexiglas on the window, and a temporary repair of the mirror was done.

Steven then stated that there are many road signs as well as posts missing throughout the Town. Henry would like Highgate to notify the Franklin County Sheriff's office to be notified of the missing signs. Steven will replace the signs and posts.

Henry stated that he would like to have a discussion with Steven about his final discussions on purchasing a new truck for the Highway Department.

Motion by Henry Rainville to go into Deliberative Session at 7:28pm, The Board members with Heidi Britch-Valenta and Steven Ploof to discuss the purchasing of a new Highway Department truck, seconded by Brian Rowell – **APPROVED.**

Motion by Henry Rainville to come out of Deliberative Session at 7:42pm, The Board members with Heidi Britch-Valenta and Steven Ploof, seconded by Brian Rowell – **APPROVED.**

Henry Rainville asked Steven Ploof is the missing street signs in the Town will need to be bought, or replaced with old existing owned signs? Steven explained that there will need to be some new signs purchased and some signs will be replaced with signs already owned.

### **F. Bridge B-25 Discussion**

Henry Rainville began the B-25 bridge discussion by explaining that there is a failing bridge in Highgate. Heidi Britch-Valenta went on to explain that Bethany Remmers, from the Northwest Regional Planning Commission had arranged for a traffic study that had be done this past summer, the summer of 2012. Heidi presented the results of the study, which shows that in its current failing condition approximately seven-hundred vehicles cross this bridge each day. With seven-hundred vehicles per day Heidi feels that this bridge sees a significant amount of usage within the Town.

Heidi then presented a February 2012 inspection report to the Board members, which outlined the current problems with this failing bridge. The Agency of Transportation (AOT) instructions and overview outlined the rating criteria on page 9 of the report, detailing that this Highgate bridge scored very high on condition, remaining life, functionality, load capacity and use, project momentum, regional priority, and asset benefit cost factors. Heidi spoke to Pam Thurber, a representative at the AOT and Pam explained that this Highgate bridge is currently a candidate on their proposed budget

list. Heidi is hoping that the AOT budget will pass with no cuts and this Highgate bridge will be chosen for one of the top priority candidates of 2013.

Bethany Remmers added that being on the priority candidate list means that from July 31, 2013 to June 30, 2014 the bridge proposal can be chosen to become a project for rehabilitation or replacement. Bethany feels it's great that the Highgate bridge has been chosen to be on the priority candidate list but if this proposal does not get elevated from a candidate to a project before June 30, 2014, then the candidate list will get reset and the bridge needs to be re-nominated for rehabilitation or replacement for the following fiscal year.

Heidi went onto explain that once the bridge project proposal does get chosen as a project, then a project manager will be assigned and they will make their own assessment and work along side the Historic Preservation Committee to determine the best route that should be taken as to repair or replace the bridge. Heidi explained that Highgate met with members of the Historic Preservation in the Spring 2012 and they were very cooperative and they saw no issues with the bridge proposal. Historic Preservation will have the final say on all work on the bridge.

Norman McAllister explained to the Board that he would like to know what the Town of Highgate would like him to lobby for in Montpelier. Brian Rowell explained that currently the Town of Highgate is looking for funding to repair an old bridge that will continue to be repaired. Henry added that the town has the current proposal of \$3.6 million to construct a new two-lane bridge and \$1.8 million to rehabilitate the old, existing, single-lane bridge. Henry feels that, if the public agrees, replacing the existing bridge with a new bridge is the most practical and cost effective answer. A two-lane bridge with a higher load-rating. Brian stated that the bridge being closed or not fully functional impacts a large number of residents financially, there are more than just two-local farms in the area that use the bridge regularly. Henry brought up the point that when Route 78 floods in the spring, then traffic is detoured over the bridge. The new or repaired bridge needs to be able to handle detoured Route 78 traffic. Norm pointed out that the current condition of the bridge does not allow for a trailer truck to cross, the load rating is not safe. Norm added that the bridge has served its purpose in the Town, and a new bridge is needed. Brian explained that currently the Town cannot afford the repairs on the bridge, and they could not afford to build a new bridge to replace the failing bridge.

Henry explained that even if the Town does receive Federal or State funding to cover the costs of repairing or replacing the bridge, the money is years away. The Town needs to think about how the bridge can be made safe before funding is obtained.

Heidi stated that there is a site visit planned with The Board and S.D. Ireland on January 11, 2013 at 7am. This visit will outline what repairs are needed to be done immediately for safety to allow the bridge to remain open for the next few years.

Norm explained that with his lobbying, if this proposal is placed on the project list this year, then the Town is at least 2-years away from getting any funding.

Norm agrees with the Board that it makes the most sense to replace the bridge entirely, and not continue to repair the bridge.

Heidi stated that Pam at the ATO explained that if the proposal is chosen then \$50,000 - \$75,000 will be spent in the first year developing the project, and the Town will be responsible for 10% of that cost. Henry stated that the Town can afford that 10% cost.

Norm asked the Board how much is it projected to cost the Town to keep the bridge open for the next 2 ½ or 3 years before any state or federal funding is available? Heidi explained that the Town has a quote for \$207,00 to repair the abutment. Henry went onto explain that the Town would know more about repair costs if they knew that they would be receiving funding for a bridge rehabilitation or replacement in the future. The unknown timeline, along with the unknown project specifications it's hard to predict temporary repair costs.

#### **G. Fire Department Update – Dick Souza**

Dick Souza brought a concern to The Board regarding parking on the far side of the Highgate Municipal building. The area is marked with a sign stating *Fire Lane – No Parking*, but on December 20, 2012 during the last Selectboard meeting there were many vehicles parked in this marked area. At the same time as the meeting there was a chimney fire call, and many of the Highgate firefighters blocked in the vehicles of people attending the board meeting. There was not a problem on December 20<sup>th</sup>, because the chimney fire call was completed before the board meeting was over. Dick added that this time of the year there can often be frequent and long fire calls in the Town.

Brian Rowell explained that the Board will monitor the parking during their meetings so that the Fire Department does not have to worry about parking during a call. Brian feels that posting more *Fire Lane – No Parking* signs will not solve the parking issue.

Dick Souza then explained to the Board that Heidi had spoken to him about holding a Rabies Clinic at the Fire Station on March 23, 2013 at 10:00am. Dick will take care of running that Clinic without any problems.

Henry Rainville asked Dick about the Highgate Fire Department's roster. The roster shows that there are several people listed who have not completed their National Incident Management System (NIMS) training. Dick explained that the NIMS Training is not offered in the area very often, and the department has many new members. Dick also explained that the department has its own protocol detailing when firefighters within the department are allowed to complete different aspects of a fire call. The Department also has its own in house training, where they can train their own firefighters. Henry wanted to know on a liability aspect that all the firefighters are trained correctly with the duties assigned to them within the Department. Brian Rowell confirmed with Dick that all of the in house training that is done in the Department is documented and legal.

Brian asked Dick if the Fire Department had any major expenses expected in 2013? Dick mentioned that the Department's van will most likely not last another 3-years, the van is not worth much but does not need to be replaced immediately. The Department is looking at replacing their four vehicles with three vehicles over the next couple of years. A pick-up truck would be helpful for pulling a boat and for transporting equipment in the bed.

Dick then asked how long does the Fire Department need to continue to wait for a new fire truck? Dick explained that the price of fire trucks increase approximately \$6,000 to \$9,000 each year, so each year Highgate postpones the purchase of a new truck the more it will end up costing the town. Henry stated that after discussions with Mr. Desorcie, the Board feels a couple more years, 2 or 3-years would be the right time for the Town to purchase a new fire truck for the Fire Department.

Dick explained that the Fire Department has a meeting on Monday, January 7, 2013 in the evening, he will discuss the idea of a new fire truck in 2 or 3-years and then let the Board know the thoughts of the Department.

Tom Racine asked Dick about the repair costs submitted on Engine 2. Dick explained that the repairs have been completed and the truck is full functioning. The fire truck got stuck during a shed fire on Highgate Road. The truck's bumper got twisted and new brackets needed to be put in place to straighten out the front end of the Engine.

Heidi mentioned the Santa Day that the Fire Department recently held for the Town. Dick explained that this was the largest attended Santa event to date, over 300 people attended. Dick also mentioned an upcoming Sliding Party that the Fire Department will be hosting. The event will be free of charge to the Highgate community and held at Carter Hill under the lights, with a bonfire in the evening. The exact date and time will be set at their meeting on Monday, January 7, 2013 and he will forward the information to The Board.

Brian mentioned to Dick that the Fire Department's side door is continuing to be unlocked. Brian entered through it again this evening. Brian would like Dick to speak to his Department at their upcoming meeting to make sure the fire fighters keep the doors locked to their garage.

## **H. Planning Commission Update – Heidi Britch-Valenta**

### **1. Healthy People, Strong Communities**

Heidi explained that on January 14, 2013 at 6:30pm The Northwest Regional Planning Commission will be giving a presentation at the Planning Commission's regular meeting outlining community projects aimed at healthy communities. Heidi encourages the Board to attend this meeting, as they are looking for community input.

### **2. Lamkin Street Sidewalk**

Heidi explained that at the same upcoming meeting on January 14, 2013 at 7:00 the Planning Commission will be discussing the idea of constructing sidewalks along a small section of Lamkin Street. The Planning Commission is looking for public input and would like to understand the interest of the community. The proposed sidewalk will run from the Highgate Municipal Offices through the park, past the Library and extending down Lamkin Street to St. Louis Church – connecting businesses and services in the area as well as the residences along that section of Lamkin Street. The Board needs to sign a letter stating that they agree to the proposed sidewalk, as well as match 20% of the cost which 10% could be In Kind Services. Henry read the letter aloud. Motion by Luke Choiniere to sign the letter, seconded by Brian Rowell – **APPROVED**

### **3. Bylaw Revisions**

Heidi explained that The Planning Commission will present to the Selectboard the Bylaw Revisions they propose as part of the grant.

### **4. Reappointments – Planning Commission & Zoning Board**

Heidi explained that one member of the Planning Commission (Paulette Unwin) and one member of the Zoning Board (Georgette Johnson) terms are expiring this year and both have asked to be reappointed by the Selectboard to their current positions. Henry asked if there is anyone else interested in either of these positions? Heidi explained that both the Planning Commission and the Zoning Board currently have one open seat each. Motion by Brian Rowell to reappoint Paulette Unwin to the Planning Commission and Georgette Johnson to the Zoning Board for another term, seconded by Luke Choiniere – **APPROVED**

## **I. Recreation Update**

Heidi mentioned that Luc Choquette apologized for not being able to attend meeting, she attached an email from him in the Board's packets. Luc stated that things are going well. They had a major glitch at the rink. The Zamboni broke on the ice in the middle of a game, and they needed to cancel an entire day of games at the rink. A repair man traveled from Massachusetts and

spent a whole day fixing the Zamboni. There is expected to be a large charge for this repair, but Heidi did not have an estimate.

Heidi explained Brian Spears has offered to walk through the arena with anyone from the Board or the Tri-Town Board who would be interested in learning more about the daily operations and the technical side of running the arena. Any Sunday Brian has offered, but no date has been set. There is an informational session at the arena presenting the proposed upgrade on January 7, 2013 at 6:30. Henry would like Heidi to ask Brian Spears, how many hours it takes to physically be at the arena running the day-to-day operations in both summer and winter? As part of the new arena the Tri-Town is looking to hire two-positions: maintenance, facility manager and then a marketing manager.

Brian clarified that the Board as well as community members will be having a walk through at the arena on Monday, January 7, 2013 at 6:30 and then followed by a meeting at the Highgate School Library at 7:00pm. Heidi confirmed with Comcast that community members will be able to call into this meeting while it is being broadcast live.

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

Heidi explained that the Missisquoi Wildlife Refuge is requesting a letter of support with regard to a Federal Wetland designation (RAMSAR). This designation would put them in a different bracket regarding grants etc. Henry Rainville's concern was that they maybe restrictions imposed with this new designation. Heidi stated that this wetland is considered international, within the US and Canada. There are 36 sites in the US that have this designation. It will provide fundraising opportunities as well as grant opportunities for the Missisquoi Wildlife Refuge. Motion by Henry Rainville to sign the letter of support to Mr. Stern, seconded by Brian Rowell – **APPROVED**

Heidi stated that Vern Broskey, III would like to attend the January 17, 2013 Selectboard meeting. Heidi asked Mr. Broskey to clarify if he would be giving a presentation or just speaking to the Board on the 17<sup>th</sup>, but she has not received a response. Mr. Broskey sent Heidi an email explaining that he has began speaking with his neighbors, and some of them have come to an agreement as to when they will and will not shoot in the area. Mr. Broskey stated that he has also had conversations with the NRA about locations on safe shooting ranges. Mr. Broskey asked if the Town would be willing to purchase a book by the NRA educating people on how to set up safe shooting ranges. This book could be used as a reference guide for Highgate residents.

#### **K. Upcoming Events & Announcements**

- January 7            7:00pm            Tri-Town Rec. public presentation @ Highgate Elementary School library
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- January 8            7:00pm            Special 2013 Budget meeting
- January 10          6:00pm            Zoning Board of Adjustment meeting
- January 14          6:30pm            Planning Commission meeting  
Healthy Communities – NRPC  
Lamkin Street sidewalk meeting
- January 16          7:00pm            Tri-Town Selectboard Meeting in Swanton
- January 17          7:00pm            Selectboard meeting

Notice of vacancies – The Zoning Board of Adjustments - 1 open seat and The Planning Commission – 1 open seat

**L. Adjournment**

Motion by Henry Rainville to adjourn the Highgate Selectboard regular meeting @ 8:52pm, seconded by Brian Rowell – **APPROVED.**

Respectfully submitted by:

\_\_\_\_\_ Erin Rocheleau, Clerk

Minutes approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_ Henry Rainville, Selectboard Chair