

# TOWN OF HIGHGATE

## Town Meeting Minutes

March 3, 2015

### A. Call to Order & Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 10:00am by Patrick McGovern, Town Moderator.

**Highgate Selectboard Members:** Jeff Towle - Chair; Andy King – Vice Chair; Luke Choiniere; Chris Yates; Diana O'Hara

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

### B. Moment of silence & Pledge of Allegiance

Pat McGovern asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by a moment of silence.

### C. Town Meeting Guidelines

Pat stated the ground rules for the Annual Town Meeting:

- 1) Roberts Rules states two questions, per person, per article, unless the body decides to amend it. Pat also noted no more than 10 minutes for each one.
- 2) All questions or statements should be directed to the Town Moderator.
- 3) When you are recognized, please stand, state your name and wait for the cordless microphone.

### D. Town Report Dedication Presentation

- Jeff Towle presented the 2014 Town of Highgate Town Report Dedication to *Karen Gagne-Fortin*. Karen is being recognized for her dedication to the Highgate Sports Arena and to the Town of Highgate. Karen is responsible for getting Jeff first involved several years ago. We appreciate all of Karen's efforts and all she does to make Highgate a better place.

### E. Vermont House of Representatives

Chuck Pearce and Steve Beyor were both present. It was approved by the body for them to speak. Steve is a Highgate resident, Chuck is a resident of Richford. Chuck noted the very serious budget issues the state is having, there is a \$94.5 million dollar gap to fill. Governor Shumlin has made proposals on how to close the gap such as; \* making cuts to the LIHEAP program, \* closing some state libraries, \* cut funding for VT interactive technology, \* reducing working land funds, \* cutting back on labor costs of state employees, \* consolidating some of the public safety dispatch centers by closing Derby and Rutland and combining them with Rockingham and Williston, \*cutting the Community High School of Vermont budget in half, and \* payroll tax on businesses. There will be painful cuts and new taxes. The school consolidation bill H361 would eventually replace our current structure with fewer and larger school districts. There is still an awful lot to be debated and nothing is for certain.

Steve spoke on behalf of the Fish & Wildlife committee and also talked about the water quality bill. H35 is actually a very expensive proposition. Here in Franklin County it means a lot to us. H35 states we have to decrease the pollution going into the lake and we need to give reasonable assurances that it will be done, or they will. Here in Franklin County, at least 40% of the pollution in the lake is from farms. We have \$60 million from the federal government and that money is pointed at agriculture. Because of the mandates being put in by the EPA, municipalities, states and highway departments are going to be spending money. Everyone has had it up to their ears with taxes. H29 takes \$6 million out of the housing and conservation trust fund, Steve tried to get that into H35 as a funding mechanism, but it didn't go. There is a consideration to add ¼% to the rooms, meals and alcohol tax. This will be a tough year, Steve sees taxes and fees going up and he doesn't see any way around it. Zeb Maskell asked about the

common core and the implementation that is going on all over the country. Is that something the State of VT is also looking into? Chuck is not on the education committee, but he knows a lot of states have come up against it and are repealing it. Zeb also asked if it was true that Vermont is #1 in the country as far as education spending. Chuck believes that per pupil, we are second, but he will check on it. Henry Rainville asked if either Steve or Chuck have a position on taxes vs. fees. Steve doesn't see a difference, it comes out of your pocket either way. Steve is not in favor or either. Fees are more oriented towards the user and are supposed to pay for whatever they are set up for. Taxes are spread out over everything. Chuck, if given the choice, would go with fees. The people using the fees are the ones paying for it.

#### **F. Review of Articles**

##### **Article #1 – To elect the following town officers:**

These are all on Australian ballot and Pat McGovern read them aloud:

- 1) A Moderator for the ensuing year
- 2) One Selectboard Member for a term of three years
- 3) One Selectboard Member for a term of two years
- 4) One Lister for a term of three years
- 5) One Auditor for a term of three years
- 6) One Tax Collector for a term of one year
- 7) One Trustee of Trust Funds for a term of three years
- 8) One Library Trustee for a term of five years
- 9) One Town Agent for a term of one year
- 10) One Cemetery Commissioner for a term of five years
- 11) One Second Constable for a term of one year

There were no questions or comments. Article #1 by voice vote – **PASSED**.

##### **Article #2 – Shall the Town of Highgate authorize the Selectboard to appoint a First Constable, and if needed a Second Constable, in which case at least the First constable shall be appointed?**

This is also on Australian ballot, and there were no questions or comments.

Article #2 by voice vote – **PASSED**.

##### **Article #3 – To receive and act on the reports of the town officers for the past year:**

Motion by Zeb Maskell, seconded by Henry Rainville.

There were no questions or comments. Article #3 by voice vote – **PASSED**.

##### **Recess Town Meeting and enter Town School District Meeting to transact the following business:**

Motion by Scott Martin, seconded by Zeb Maskell

##### **Article #1 – To elect from the legal voters of said town the following officers:**

Motion by Zeb Maskell, seconded by Heather Larivee

- 1) One Moderator for the ensuing year
- 2) One School Director for a term of one (1) year
- 3) One School Director for a term of two (2) years
- 4) One School Director for a term of three (3) years

Motion by Zeb Maskell to nominate Pat McGovern as School Moderator, motion seconded by David Roddy. There were no other nominations, by voice vote – **PASSED**.

Motion by Joanne Campbell to nominate Chad Larivee for School Director one year term, motion seconded by Karen Fortin. There were no other nominations, by voice vote – **PASSED**.

Motion by Zeb Maskell to nominate Richard Flint for School Director two year term, motion seconded by Scott Martin. There were no other nominations, by voice vote – **PASSED**.

Motion by Liza Comiskey to nominate Nola Gilbert for School Director three year term, motion seconded by Karen Fortin. There were no other nominations, by voice vote – **PASSED**.

**Article #2 – To act upon the reports of the School Directors:**

Motion by Scott Martin, seconded by Henry Rainville

There were no other questions or comments, by voice vote – **PASSED.**

**Article #3 – Will the voters of the Highgate Town School District authorize the School Directors to borrow money to pay current expenditures in anticipation of taxes and to sign notes for that purpose?**

Motion by Paulette Tatro, seconded by Georgette Roddy

There were no questions or comments, by voice vote – **PASSED.**

**Article #4 – Will the voters of the Highgate Town School District approve the School Budget, in the amount of \$4,752,340 necessary for the fiscal year 2016?**

Motion by Heather Larivee, seconded by Zeb Maskell

Connie Beyor had a power point presentation to share, and noted it had been a very difficult year to budget for a variety of reasons. The goal of the school board is to provide a high quality education at a reasonable cost to taxpayers.

*Innovative Practice*

- SWIFT (School Wide Integrated Framework for Transformation) – the goal is to make resources available to help all regular and special education students succeed
- Math Studio – an intense and highly effective professional development system where a team of educators use data and observation to provide direct feedback to an individual teacher
- Social Thinking – establishes common language that helps students and teachers communicate successfully
- Math Instruction – grades 3-6 each have a designated math teacher who provides all direct instruction

*Centralization of Special Education Professional Staff & Benefits*

As mandated by the state, all Special Education professional staff salaries and benefits have been transferred from all local schools to the FNWSU. Costs at the SU level are budgeted in the same manner as they are in the local Special Education budget line items, salaries and benefits are now reflected within the FNWSU assessments to schools. All other Special Education expenses remain at the local level for this year. Part of the strategy is to designate one person to cover the district with their skill set. In smaller schools, the special educator has to be a jack of all trades. The state has been moving for a number of years towards operation at the Supervisory Union level in an effort to spend more on learning resources and less on operations. Transportation is being moved to the Supervisory Union as well. Efficiency is the intent behind the legislation.

*Declining Student Enrollment*

- Vermont student population has decreased by 20% over the past decade
- Highgate Elementary School enrollment has decreased by 12 students since 2012
- School leaders considered declining enrollment in an effort to reduce cost while maintaining educational programming and meeting recommended state quality standards

*Enrollment Trends*

- FY2012 there were 307 students at Highgate Elementary
- FY2015 there are 295 students at Highgate Elementary. This does not take into account our pre-school and pre-K students, of which there are 44.

*Total Current Staff*

- Professionals Pre-K – 6 = 37.5 teachers, interventionists, student support leader, principal and assistant principal
- Support Pre-K – 6 = 7.26 office support, fiscal services, custodians and technology services

- Paraprofessionals Pre-K – 6 = 22.5 paraprofessionals

Adjustments made to create the budget

- 1 – professional staff salary and benefit reduction
- 1- support staff position reduction
- Paraprofessionals workday reduced by 30 minutes (saves approximately \$20,000.00)
- Anticipated health insurance premium increase of 4.5%
- Anticipated dental insurance premium decrease of 7%
- Reduction in computer equipment line item following FY15 investment
- Increase in professional development and staff training lines
- 30% decrease in energy costs over a three year period

FY2016 School District Budget proposed to taxpayers

\$4,752,340.00 – this is a 1.4% increase compared to FY2015, or \$65,602.00

Historical Budget Increases

FY2012 - 1.54%  
 FY2013 +3.97%  
 FY2014 +4.38%  
 FY2015 +3.75%  
 FY2016 +1.40%

Cost comparisons with similar schools

Highgate’s ranking of school budget spending per equalized pupil is the 95th least expensive out of 105 Vermont school districts that are a member of a union or joint high school.

FY2015 School District Data (cited from Agency of Education)

SCHOOL DISTRICT	GRADES OFFERED	EQUALIZED PUPIL	ED SPENDING PER EQUALIZED PUPIL
BRISTOL	PK – 6	277.95	14,567.34
HIGHGATE	PK – 6	302.04	13,762.98
RANDOLPH	PK – 6	316.36	12,668.18

Projected Homestead Tax Rate – after CLA adjustment & with proposed special article

	2014-15	2015-16	INCREASE
HIGHGATE	0.0647	0.0654	7/10 of one cent 0.007

FY2016 projected rates are calculated using an estimated statewide base tax rate of \$1.00 and base spending amount of \$9,459.00 – actual tax rate billed may vary based on any action taken during the current legislative session.

Decreased Projected Education Spending

FY2015	FY2016	DIFFERENCE
\$4,156,669.00	\$4,061,553.00	Decrease of 2.3% (\$95,116.00)
	Estimated Statewide Ed Spending	Increase 4.2%

Capital Projects & Facility

- FY14 Natural Gas conversion and upgrade (continues to provide savings in energy costs)
- Successful completion of Drainage Project in FY15 – White Building (total project cost of \$69,951.00 – significantly under budget)
- Phone system upgrade in FY15 (complete with 911 compliance)
- Security and accessibility upgrades completed in FY15 (front door buzzer system, new doors and locks, additional parking spaces and curb work)

### FY16 Special Article for Voter Consideration

Will the voters of the Highgate Town School District appropriate \$25,000.00 to the existing Capital Reserve Fund? The existing Capital Reserve Fund balance is approximately \$74,571.00.

### What Affects the Tax Rate

- Budget – proposed by school board – decided by the tax payers
- Revenues – State and federal funds (\$761,870)
- Equalized Pupil – 2 year weighted average of students (304.83)
- Base Spending Amount – set by the legislature (\$9,459.00)
- Base Tax Rate – Set by legislature (\$1.00)
- CLA – set by listers and state (112.62%)
- Ratio of elementary to MVU students (elementary 52.27%, MVU 47.73%)

Zeb asked if we are an identified school. Yes, we are in literacy and math. Connie noted that every school in VT is an identified school as of the last NECAP testing. Every student had to be proficient and not one school made that grade, so every school is identified. A new test will be given in the spring, instead of October, and the new testing will be computer based. When you take the test, if you are successful, it will give you more challenging questions, as opposed to everyone getting the same questions. Paulette Tatro asked what percent of contribution professional staff and support staff contribute towards their health insurance premiums. Motion by Zeb Maskell to give Lora McAllister (Swanton resident / FNWSU employee) permission to address the question, as well as all staff present from FNWSU who are not Highgate residents. The motion was seconded by Heather Larivee, by voice vote – **PASSED**. Lora responded 18% for professional staff and 15% for support staff, and noted they are currently in negotiations with professional staff. Maurice Parah asked what does the 18% amount to per month? Connie is not sure, and it depends on what type of plan they have (single, two person or family). Maurice stated he is paying \$500.00 per month for insurance as a retiree. Lora looked into Mr. Parah's question and was able to find that the contribution for health insurance premiums for professional staff are; \$1,507 single, \$2,962 two person, and \$3,970 family. There was a show of hands of more than seven people to move to a paper vote on the proposed Highgate Elementary School budget FY16. Article #4 by paper ballot 84 YES / 28 NO (total number of votes = 112) – **PASSED**.

### **Article #5 – Will the voters of the Highgate Town School District appropriate \$25,000 to the existing Capital Reserve Fund?**

Motion by Zeb Maskell, seconded by Jeff Towle

David Roddy noted that there is \$75,000.00 left in the account, and there are lots of projects that need to be done. There is no actual goal number. Zeb was looking for a shut off number for when the school would stop asking for money to add to this fund. Henry Rainville asked about policies on what the money would be used for. Connie answered that the funds are used only for capital projects, such as the parking lot which is an issue. The board does not have any projects planned for this coming year at this point. They do want to look at the windows. There were no other questions or comments on Article #5. Article #5 by voice vote – **PASSED**.

### **Article #6 – To transact any other business legally authorized to be transacted, considered appropriate and necessary when met.**

Motion by Zeb Maskell, seconded by Scott Martin

Zeb believes it is a mistake to cut the computer budget because a lot of kids don't have access at home and maybe can't get to the public library. Connie doesn't believe they are taking away, they are not replacing or buying as many new units. The school does have some older technology and we are making progress. Connie won't argue that it is important but Rome wasn't built in a day. Zeb added that he wanted to thank the Asst. Principal, Ms. Casavant, for her participation in the Duct Tape Derby a few weeks ago. The 5<sup>th</sup> graders did a great job on their bus, even though Ms. Casavant did get taken out. ☺ Article #6 by voice vote – **PASSED**.

Connie noted that the VT School Board Association recognized David Roddy for 25 years of service on the Highgate School Board. It is very valuable work, and he does a great job. Connie also wanted to thank the following people / departments:

- The highway crew for all they do keeping our roads and parking lots clear and safe.
- The bus drivers for handling their incredible amount of responsibility so well.
- The Highgate School custodians for keeping the school looking great.
- Liza Comiskey for her time served on the school board and her great energy.

Motion by Pat McGovern to adjourn the school meeting and enter back into town meeting.

**Article #4 – Shall the voters of the Town of Highgate appropriate \$920,961 to meet the expenses and liabilities of the General Fund, with an estimated \$328,686 to be raised by taxes?**

Motion by Zeb Maskell, seconded by Paulette Tatro

We had an outside audit in 2014, the first one in many years. We are in a strong cash position in the operating account and in the capital account. Tom went through the General Fund pages of the town report, answering questions along the way. Tom noted that anything within the General Fund can be amended from the floor. Paulette Tatro had some questions regarding the debt payment of \$25,000.00 on page 33 for the arena. She feels the \$25K figure is not a good figure to use, now that we have other options for financing. Jeff Towle stated that his opinion would be to go with the Merchants Bank option to finance the project. Chris Yates would prefer to stay with the \$25K figure and if we choose to pay more we can, rather than put us in a bind if anything else gets changed today. Paulette pointed out that the longer we defer paying on the principal, the more it will cost us. Zeb added his opinion that the Town of Highgate is paying for Franklin and Swanton residents who are not part of the arena bond vote project. Franklin did put something on their ballot for today about donating, but Swanton did not. Zeb would like those who don't contribute to be charged more to use the facility. Zeb is all for the children, he always has been, and does not mind paying for our own residents. Jeff agreed, adding that the bond vote that passed in November for \$990,000.00 is a Highgate issue, and we are on the hook for it. We have reached out to other communities that are users of the arena. A different fee schedule for other towns might be in order, we will have to wait and see. Steve Bushey agreed with Chris, that if we have the ability this year to pay more than just interest due to fundraising or other sources, we should pay it down as much as possible, but it's unknown right now. Jeff noted that Sheldon and Enosburgh have also put this issue on their ballots for their residents to decide if they want to make an appropriation to the Highgate Arena. Tom added that the town will continue with a lease agreement with MAHA, it has been a great fit and worked out well for everyone. Henry Rainville asked about the electricity line item being taken out of the budget, as that will be included in the MAHA lease, and they will be paying the electricity directly. Jeff clarified that MAHA had previously been paying an annual lease of \$6,000.00. Since the passing of the bond vote, they will now be paying an annual lease of \$12,000.00 and also paying the electricity at the arena. Chris Yates proposed an amendment, changing the lease amount from \$36,000.00 (as indicated on page 28 of the town report) to \$12,000.00 and to remove the \$36,000.00 electricity line item from page 33. Motion by Zeb Maskell to accept the amendment, motion was seconded by Steve Bushey – by voice vote **PASSED**. This amendment will decrease the overall General Fund budget by \$24,000.00. The new General Fund budget number now on the floor for approval is \$896,961.00. Ty Choiniere asked about the Little League appropriation amount, which Chris clarified. Liza Comiskey asked about the Swanton Teen Center appropriation amount of \$6,000.00 and how many Highgate youth utilize the facility. Liza noted the amount is high compared to other appropriations. Chris Yates stated that the board will look into an appropriations policy going forward. Greg Farnham also brought up the LL appropriation of \$1,000.00, noting that their equipment is all old and need to be replaced. Greg spends a lot of his own

money on things, which he should not have to do. The conversation shifted back to the debt service for the arena bond vote. Motion by Paulette Tatro to amend the debt payment listed on page 33 from \$25,000.00 to \$87,115.66, and this motion was seconded by Henry Rainville. Paulette clarified that this new figure is \$66,000.00 for the first 15 years of principal payments and the interest payments that would be due on May 1<sup>st</sup> and November 1<sup>st</sup> in 2016. Zeb voiced concerns over where this extra money was coming from. Henry agrees with Paulette's reasons for amending this, which will save \$10,000.00 in interest payments, but also agrees with Zeb's point of view. Mary Roy would like to see the \$6,000.00 allocated to the Swanton Teen Center be put towards the arena. As she sees it, there are more Swanton teens coming to Highgate to utilize the arena than there are Highgate teens going to Swanton. The audience agreed with that comment, based on their applause. Chris noted that the difference we are dealing with in the General Fund budget is actually \$12,000.00, not \$24,000.00. We since have an open amendment on the floor to change the debt service amount to \$87,115.66. Paulette withdrew her amendment and by a voice vote all broke for lunch @ 12:05pm – by voice vote **PASSED**. Pat McGovern made a motion to enter back into Town Meeting after the lunch break @ 12:51pm – by voice vote **PASSED**. The motion on the floor is now to amend the General Fund Budget from \$896,961.00 to \$908,691.00 – motion by Heather Larivee, seconded by Henry Rainville – by voice vote **PASSED**. Before moving forward, Steve Bushey stepped forward and gave an overview of the arena project. Members of the committee working hard on this effort are; Steve Bushey, Paulette Tatro, Josh LaRocque, Brian Spears, Heidi Britch-Valenta, Don Gilbert, Ty Choiniere, Henry Rainville and Steve Roy (architect). With the bond vote passing in November, there was a 30 day period in which the vote could have been appealed, and that did not happen. The Selectboard formed a hiring committee for a construction manager, and through the RFP process we received seven outstanding proposals. Three companies were interviewed in January and DEW Construction Management was hired. We have the \$990,000.00 bond and the \$196,00.00 HUD grant to work with, and the HUD grant expires in Sept. 2015 if we don't use it. With the help of Senator McAllister, we also secured a state grant for \$25,000.00. Since 2006 we have done fundraising for the arena, and there is currently \$98,000.00 in that fund. We now need to select an ice system. The committee will be interviewing prospective companies on Monday night, March 9<sup>th</sup>, to decide what works for us and within our budget. Our current ice will be out by March 16<sup>th</sup> and that is when this project will really kick in. Our new ice will need to be in and functioning by October 2015 for the new ice season, without any delays. Once the boards and glass are out, we will hire a company to score the slab and cut it out in chunks, this will be done along with the help of the Highgate Highway Dept. We will need to continue to fundraise and welcome any ideas. We are currently involved in the Kraft Hockeyville USA 2015 Competition. Town Clerk, Wendi Dusablon, gave an update on that effort. This round of the competition ends on March 18<sup>th</sup>, and the top ten ice facilities in the nation will move on to the next round. Moving on to the next round guarantees the Highgate Sports Arena \$20,000.00 towards renovations, and potentially more, depending on how we do. We are currently doing very well in the nomination round and are right at the top with much larger facilities from Texas, Pennsylvania and Michigan. This is an easy way to help us raise money and it doesn't cost you anything, just a few moments of your time. If we move on, there will be a three day voting phase where you can vote by phone, text or online to keep us moving forward in the contest. Steve Bushey also touched on a number of the renovations already completed at the arena such as; indoor turf, sound system, upgraded furnace, changes within the locker rooms, dehumidification system, lobby and hallway flooring. Following the update from Steve Bushey, Pat McGovern went back to the General Fund budget numbers currently before everyone. Pat went back to Paulette Tatro who had withdrawn her earlier motion before lunch. Motion by Paulette to change the \$25,000.00 in debt payment to \$87,115.66, and the motion was seconded by Zeb Maskell. Zeb noted this will save us \$10,000.00 in interest, which is a lot of money, and will the difference be made up for in taxes – yes, it will, and Tom clarified that one cent on the tax rate equals \$38,000.00

– by voice vote it was inconclusive. By a show of hands, the YES's clearly had it – by a show of hands – **PASSED**. By amending the debt service payment, it is a difference of \$62,116.00 (rounded). The new number we are now looking at for the General Fund Budget is now \$970,807.00. Motion by Zeb Maskell to amend that the \$6,000.00 allocated for the Swanton Teen Center be instead applied towards the principal for the arena bond, motion was seconded by Eric Chevalier. Connie Beyor asked if there are any stats on how many Highgate kids use the teen center. Not all kids skate, so it is important to know. Chris Yates stated that they provide us with percentages of kids, not an actual number. Duane Tremblay added that if Swanton is unwilling to help us with the arena, why are we helping with the teen center? By voice vote, the amendment to take the \$6K from the Swanton Teen Center line item and apply it towards the arena payment – by voice vote **PASSED**. Greg Farnham made a motion to amend the line item for Highgate Little League from \$1,000.00 to \$2,000.00. The motion was seconded by Chris Uzell, by voice vote – **PASSED**. Pat McGovern now noted the amount we are looking at total for the General Fund Budget is now \$971,807.00. Henry Rainville asked some questions about energy costs at the municipal building and the cost associated with airing Selectboard meetings on Channel 16. We have our own site, where residents (or anyone) can view Selectboard meetings on our Vimeo channel at any time at this link; <https://vimeo.com/channels/highgate16>. It was also brought up by Rebecca Howrigan that there have been recurring problems with pipes freezing at the library, and if there was anything that could be done preventatively. Zeb agreed, and asked if repairs to pipes would need to go before the tax payers, or does the Selectboard have that authority. Connie Beyor added that those repairs could be combined with the sidewalk project on Lamkin Street. Pat McGovern ran through the numbers one more time and realized that after the lunch break the figure was miscalculated (\$908,691.00 should have been \$908,961.00) so the total figure we are now voting on for the General Fund Budget is **\$972,077.00**. The article now reads; **Shall the voters of the Town of Highgate appropriate \$972,077 to meet the expenses and liabilities of the General Fund, with an estimated \$379,802 to be raised by taxes?** Article #4 by voice vote – **PASSED**.

**Article #5 – Shall the voters of the Town of Highgate appropriate \$691,847 to meet the expenses and liabilities of the Highway Fund, with an estimated \$541,391 to be raised by taxes?**

Motion by Zeb Maskell, seconded by David Roddy

Zeb asked about machinery and equipment and if that is covered by the transfer station money. No, that money is used for the purchase of new vehicles. Steve Bushey asked if we have talked to paving contractors yet to lock in a price while fuel prices are down to get more bang for our buck. Steve Ploof will be looking in to that. Article #5 by voice vote – **PASSED**.

**Article #6 – Shall the voters of the Town of Highgate authorize the elimination of the office of Town Auditor, with future audits to be performed by a certified public accountant, and all other auditor duties performed by others as directed by the Selectboard?**

Motion by Zeb Maskell, seconded by Paulette Tatro

Zeb asked if there was savings here, or is this because we can't get auditors. There is no savings, it will cost more money. We are having trouble filling the positions. We currently have three positions, with vacancies. The work is becoming more complex and requiring more time. If we eliminate the elected auditors, by law we would need to have a yearly annual audit by a CPA firm. Maurice Parah asked if the auditors were full time, no they are not. Nancy Flint asked for the costs, which will be approximately \$12,000.00. Hopefully if we are audited annually we could contract for a longer period of time to get the costs down. Per statute, this requires a vote by paper ballot. 66 YES / 15 NO. Article #6 by paper ballot – **PASSED**.

**Article #7 – Shall the voters of the Town of Highgate vote all municipal budgets and all public questions by Australian ballot?**

Motion by Richard Flint, seconded by Zeb Maskell

Motion by Zeb Maskell to table article #7, motion was seconded by Richard Flint. Article #7 by voice vote – **TABLED.**

**Article #8 – Shall the voters of the Town of Highgate set the final date of payment for the FY2016 property taxes to be Tuesday, October 27, 2015 with payments to be received in the town office by 5:00pm or postmarked by October 27, 2015?**

Motion by Steve Bushey, seconded by Zeb Maskell

Rebecca Howrigan asked why taxes are due the 27<sup>th</sup>, which seems so random. Tom agreed, and said from an accounting standpoint we would choose the 1<sup>st</sup> or the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month, but traditionally here, it has always been the 27<sup>th</sup>, he believes it was related to when farmers got their milk checks. Richard Noel confirmed this. Article #8 by voice vote – **PASSED.**

**Article #9 – To transact any other business legally authorized to be transacted, considered proper and necessary when met.**

Motion by Henry Rainville, seconded by Zeb Maskell

Henry asked the board in what manner they would like to receive comment on some sort of a fee scenario for the arena. Jeff's comment was to put together a recreational committee to look at fees and present it to them. Judy Vanslette asked over all, how much property taxes would go up this year. Tom answered that the projected rate of .2283 for the town based on the original budget numbers. With the changes, it will add .013 cents, so we are looking at .241 and last year was .223. Sue Cota wanted to publically thank the fire department and rescue squad. She supports them and they were there to help her when she needed them. Article #9 by voice vote – **PASSED.**

The winner of the library maple basket raffle was Nancy Flint.

Jeff Towle thanked two Selectboard members who were serving their final day today; Andy King and Luke "Farmer Luke" Choiniere. We hope they enjoy their time off before coming back to serve the town again in the future, hopefully! Jeff asked people to get involved in their community and make a difference.

Motion by Paulette Tatro to adjourn Town Meeting 2015 @ 1:50pm. The motion was seconded by Henry Rainville – by voice vote – **PASSED.**

Respectfully submitted by:

\_\_\_\_\_ Wendi Dusablon, Town Clerk

Minutes approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_ Jeff Towle, Selectboard Chair

\_\_\_\_\_ Patrick McGovern, Town Moderator