

TOWN OF HIGHGATE

Selectboard Mtg.

March 17, 2016 @ 7pm

Approved Minutes

NOTE: All actions taken are unanimous unless otherwise stated.

A. Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting was called to order by Chris Yates, Chair @ 7:00pm, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Highgate Selectboard Members - Chris Yates - Chair; Paulette Tatro - Vice-Chair; Randy Connelly; Joshua LaRocque

Highgate Office Staff - Wendi Dusablon - Town Clerk; Heidi Britch-Valenta - Town Administrator; Shelley Laroche - Town Treasurer

Public / Other - Mark Kelley - Efficiency VT; Jeff Towle; Jean Chevalier; Richard Noel; Henry Rainville; Liza Comiskey; Karen Fortin; Joe Depatie; Ty Choiniere

B. Public Comment

Henry Rainville presented a list of questions in a sealed envelope to the board. He does not expect them to be answered tonight, but he would like the answers to his questions to be public information afterwards.

C. PACE Program - Mark Kelley

At town meeting on March 1st, the voters approved Highgate to become a PACE district. Mark has been here twice before for presentations and to answer questions. A few questions were asked at town meeting that Mark is here to clarify. The major question was if there was ever a need for the town to exit the PACE program, is there an option to opt out? Yes, there is a rescind clause written into the contract, which involves a 90 day notice from either party. Once the 90 day clock has started ticking, no new applications would be accepted into the program. There were also questions about interest rates which are available on Efficiency Vermont's website. Mark noted that in the case of a default, they would work with the customer and try to get them back on track and after 90 days it would be turned over to the town. In the event of a death and there are no survivors, the loan would follow the probate court process. There are no costs or liability to the town. Any costs at the town level are recouped through the tax sale process. There are also two reserve funds that can be used to recoup funds to the town, if needed. Shelley asked if in that case, would the town be cutting a check back to Opportunities Credit Union for any funds collected? Yes, the order would be 1) what is owed the town 2) any existing mortgages prior to PACE and after PACE. Any second mortgages after they have entered into the PACE program don't have priority. This is only with regard to past due payments. If the property is sold, the payments follow the sale of the property. Randy asked if people could defer or refinance if an emergency arises - yes, they can. Mark noted that in Maine and California they do thousands of these loans. The loans are fixed rate financing for the entire term based on the applicant's income at the time of the application. Paulette had questions about not being able to complete projects yourself. Henry Rainville asked if Efficiency VT will promote the program to the public - yes, they do host educational events and invite local contractors. Chris suggested getting information into the Highgate Happenings Newsletter with Liza and also flyers in with Friday folders through the school. Motion by Chris Yates to sign the agreement with PACE. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly - APPROVED.

D. Highgate Public Library updates - Liza Comiskey & Karen Fortin

- \$3,875.00 in grants has come in since February and \$3,215.00 in donations to assist with programs.
- HPL will be a summer meal site on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 11:00-11:30am for six weeks this summer.

- The garden program will allow the children to take fresh produce home to their families.
- Rise VT provided a grant for the composter, which the children are enjoying.
- HPL is working with Tim Vallee (RL Vallee / Irving Station) on discussions about fencing to expand the side lawn area which will include the area behind the library. 300' of stockade fencing will be installed on April 30th and this will be a community event. The public works department will be assisting as well.
- The theme for the summer at HPL will be "Health, Fitness & Sports". The "Girls on the Run" program will start next week with 21 girls.
- HPL was approved to participate in a three year intensive STEM training through a grant from the state. Liza will be receiving training on how to incorporate those topics into early literacy programs. They also provide lots of materials to use and send home to families.
- The Parks & Recreation Committee has decided to run a small running clinic and some MVU runners will be serving as mentors and assistant coaches. Richard Flint is going to see about mowing paths on the school property for more running space.
- HPL has been approved as a VISTA site, which they are excited about. People from all over the world apply for these jobs, and the application process will start soon. The new VISTA employee won't be here until June or July, and the trustees will also be part of the interview process. The new position will focus on community outreach. Liza is overwhelmed with all the grant funding coming in, and she is the only one who facilitates programs.
- Karen Fortin added that she is excited about the fence, and it has opened up more grant opportunities.
- Chris asked about tree trimming for the fence project and if that needs to be done ahead of time – yes, it does.

E. Treasurer – Shelley Laroche

1. Check warrant & updates

- There were no questions on the check warrants.
- The CIP is set up the same way as all the other funds, we just need to separate the warned article for town meeting and how it will be presented in the town report.
- Kevin Spears had some questions about checks for the cemetery commissioners. Last year three checks were put into the cemetery trust fund income revenue line and the commissioners have asked that they be booked back and given to the trustees to be reinvested, knowing that the money was not going to be spent. That was what they had wanted to happen with the checks to begin with, and that is not what happened on 2/4/15. Paulette wanted more information. Shelley further stated that after speaking with Kevin, her understanding is that if they have projects to be done, they deposit checks into the cemetery account. If not, they deposit them with the trustees. Basically, they want their money back. Shelley will check with Jordan from Sullivan & Powers (auditors) before cutting a check back, since the fiscal year involved has been closed. If a check is cut back to the cemetery commissioners now, it will look like an expense.
- Today was the worksmans comp audit, which went well. One thing that came up was with Ben Nye, who mows the cemeteries for us. Unless he can provide proof of insurance we will have to budget the amount for it, approximately \$450.00.
- Finance Committee meetings will be Monday, March 21 and Monday, March 28, both @ 5:30pm.
- Richard Noel asked what the salaries are for the Selectboard Members; \$1,000.00 and \$1,250.00 for the chair. Richard thinks that needs to be adjusted, as the stipends haven't changed since 1991. Any change would need to be budgeted for the following year. Richard feels if it was raised, more people would be interested in serving, so it warrants some discussion, similar to the topic of \$5,000.00 spending limit back in 1961, which was brought up at town meeting. Chris commented that no one should want to serve on a board for the money. Richard asked what a .01 cent increase on the tax rate means, Shelley didn't know off the top of her head, but seems to remember Tom saying \$30,000.00 when she watched last year's town meeting video. She will look it up based on our current grand list.

F. Highgate Vol. Fire Dept updates – Joe Depatie

- The department has been busy, they responded to a few calls earlier today.
- Trucks are going in next week to have everything checked out, one truck at a time will be at Charlebois.
- There have been issues with the radios. Radio North was here today and found some issues upstairs with the repeaters. There are still issues with central dispatch. Chris will initiate the conversation with Judy Dunne on that. John at Radio North is supposed to contact her as well. Our tone frequency is in the low 300's, which is low for their broadband. The pagers don't click in, so messages aren't being received. All these issues are the fallout from when they narrow banded everything. As you narrow the band, you increase the megahertz.
- The pumps are done, Engine 2 is all finished up.
- Update on the fire department floor – Chris spoke with Randy Morin and we are first on the list. The materials are at his house, just waiting for the ground to thaw. All but one bay can be filled back up that night, the last bay we will have to wait three days, so we will need another location for the utility truck during that time.
- Chris thanked Joe for putting together the retirement reception for Dick Souza on Monday night, March 14th, noting there was a great turnout.
- Ty Choiniere asked if the antennas are adequate here for the radios – yes they are, that was looked at today. It was also noted that the Highgate cell tower is an option to improve coverage for everybody. There is no housing for equipment at the cell tower.
- Joe attended the county meeting and a lot of the discussion was regarding the state convention. There are questions on if the convention will be able to continue due to low participation.

G. Parks & Recreation updates – Ty Choiniere

- Parks & Rec ran basketball programs for PreK – 4th grade with 65 children participating.
- Rise VT will be putting up a sign for the recreation path. Ty had a draft of what it will look like to get the board's approval. A zoning permit will be required to put up the sign, but there will be no fee, the town just wants it documented. The sign will go to the left of the cell tower where the trail starts, and it can be seen when you enter the parking lot and from a few other angles. There will also be 10" x 10" mile markers along the trail. The overall trail is 200' shy of a mile long. Parks & Rec. in collaboration with the school will continue to improve the trail and maintain it by removing brush etc. They hope to have more running programs in place for the fall. Ty would like to have a dedication ceremony when the sign is installed on the trail.
- Indoor soccer will be starting for five weeks in April and May and will be for teams U6 – U14. They are reaching out to surround towns as well to get the numbers up.
- Ty asked about the makeshift guardrails in front of the arena, which are chains and cables. They would like to remove them. They were put there to protect the septic originally and keep heavy traffic away from that area. Chris doesn't like the look of it either, but would like to see something else in its place to keep vehicles off, like large boulders or something. Split rail fencing would also look nice there.
- Ty will try to be at the arena in the morning for the site visit regarding painting of the purlins. The turf usually comes out July 1st, so work could begin after that.
- The Parks & Rec. Committee currently has five members, and can have up to seven per the bylaws. For budgeting season, Ty would like some guidance on time frames and some help with planning.
- In the future, they hope to have all their program registrations done online. There is an initial cost involved but will be worth it. Jeff asked about non-resident fees because he feels Highgate residents should get a break on the rate.

H. Town Clerk updates – Wendi Dusablon

1. Minutes from March 3rd

Motion by Chris Yates to approve the minutes from March 3, 2016 as amended. The motion was seconded by Josh LaRocque – **APPROVED**.

2. Hockeyville update

We finished the nomination round on March 11th with 814 entries out of 7,915 total in the competition, which is 10.3% of the overall vote! We now wait until April 9th to see if we are a top ten finalist! As far as Wendi can tell, we are the top nomination getter, but we are judged on passion for hockey, dedication to hockey, originality, creativity, pride and spirit.

3. Dog warrant 2016

The Selectboard will not meet again until after the April 1st deadline to register dogs. Wendi asked them to sign the dog warrant for Vonnie & Kristy (ACO & Asst. ACO) as well as Ben (Constable). The wording is set by statute and each town signs a warrant each year with regard to dogs and licensing. Motion by Chris Yates to sign the 2016 dog warrant. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED**.

4. Open Selectboard seat

Zeb Maskell obtained enough write in votes at town meeting for the 3-year seat, but respectfully declined it on Monday, March 7th. On March 9th we posted the notice regarding the open seat and are asking for letters of interest to be submitted by March 24th. The Selectboard will need to appoint someone until town meeting day 2017.

5. Digital message board

The funds for this were approved as part of the general fund. Wendi will ask Andy to reach out to AOT and find out what our restrictions are and what permitting we will need from the state, as this will be on a state road, Route 78. We are undecided if we will get a 2-sided board or single sided board. Once we know where the state feels is an acceptable and safe location, we will issue an RFP to get more updated quotes and move forward.

6. Appointed positions

A list with various appointed positions was posted a few weeks ago and we asked for letters of interest by March 15th. We received letters from Vonnie Lamotte, Jeff Towle, Bruce Ryan, Luc Dupuis, Woody Rouse and Julie Rice. All the appointments listed below were approved unanimously.

Town Agent	1 yr.	Jeff Towle	Motion by Chris Yates, seconded by Paulette Tatro
Tree Warden	1 yr.	Andy King	Motion by Chris Yates, seconded by Randy Connelly
Town Service Officer	1 yr.	Wendi Dusablon	Motion by Chris Yates, seconded by Josh LaRocque
Animal Control Officer	1 yr.	Vonnie Lamotte	Motion by Chris Yates, seconded by Josh LaRocque
Deputy Health Officer	1 yr.	Ben Lowell	Motion by Chris Yates, seconded by Paulette Tatro
Zoning Administrator	3 yr.	Heidi Britch-Valenta	Motion by Chris Yates, seconded by Randy Connelly
NW Regional Planning	1 yr.	Richard Noel	Motion by Chris Yates, seconded by Josh LaRocque
NW Regional Planning	1 yr.	Shawn Noel	Motion by Chris Yates, seconded by Randy Connelly
TAC Committee	1 yr.	Richard Noel	Motion by Chris Yates, seconded by Josh LaRocque
DRB	3 yr.	Julie Rice	Motion by Chris Yates, seconded by Randy Connelly
DRB	3 yr.	Woody Rouse	Motion by Chris Yates, seconded by Randy Connelly
Planning Comm.	3 yr.	Luc Dupuis	Motion by Chris Yates, seconded by Josh LaRocque
Planning Comm.	3 yr.	Bruce Ryan	Motion by Chris Yates, seconded by Josh LaRocque
Clean Water Adv. Comm.	1 yr.	Jeff Towle	Motion by Chris Yates, seconded by Josh LaRocque

I. Town Administrator updates – Heidi Britch-Valenta

1. Town road and bridge standards certificate

These are completed annually to keep us eligible for grant funding. Chris read aloud from the certificate. Paulette asked if we have the inventory and are compliant. We have an older inventory and updating it is in progress. We have the contract with regional planning, so we are compliant. Motion by Chris Yates to sign the certification of compliance. The motion was seconded by Paulette Tatro – **APPROVED**. Richard Noel wanted to make sure the board was aware that the portion of the dam in East Highgate was being removed.

2. Misc.

We have to certify to AOT that we are setting aside funds for infrastructure. The Better Back Roads program has expanded this year, it is no longer just one category. Heidi and Andy spent the afternoon yesterday going around with AOT looking at projects. There are two large culverts on Tarte Road that are in bad shape and completely rusted out. They looked at them yesterday and last night with heavy rain one of them opened up. That section of Tarte Road is

going to be on limited use until we can get grants. There is also a large culvert on Durkee Road that is way past it's prime. These probably should have been taken care of a long time ago and were not attended to. Chris asked for clarification on which culvert on the Tarte Road, it is the culvert further north and may require a box culvert which is much more expensive. Grant applications have to be completed by April 15th. The Durkee Road culvert is next to the Laroche farm, the header on both ends has collapsed.

J. Selectboard items

- **iPad update** – This is really a DRB item, as the new iPads for the DRB have arrived. This has snowballed into a drop box issue on how to segregate drop boxes for each of the boards. Currently about 50% of our free drop box storage is full. The suggestion from Matt Bouchard is to upgrade to Drop Box Pro for \$10.00 per month, which gives us more storage than our server can even handle, 2 terabytes. The Selectboard will have a drop box and the DRB will have one, as well as a joint drop box for documents that need to be shared. Down the road, the Planning Commission will also have one. This year's DRB iPads were purchased with the Planning Commission line item because the DRB needed them more. We have purchased enough iPad cases for all the boards. Motion by Chris Yates to upgrade our drop box to Drop Box Pro for \$10.00 per month. The motion was seconded by Paulette Tatro – **APPROVED.** Matt also said there is a way to archive things so we can have our drop box items archived onto the server. Paulette noted that the CIP should never be archived, as it is a live document.
- **PACE agreement**
This was covered earlier in the meeting under "C".

K. Other business

- Heidi asked Wendi if a dog hearing was needed with an ongoing issue on Brosseau Road. A certified letter was sent to the dog owner today, as per the ordinance. We have also received another phone call. Chris would like to have all the documents put together for their next meeting.
- Paulette asked Heidi about the road safety audit and the next steps. Heidi will follow up on this.
- Heidi met with the school nurse and Safe Routes to School and they are making strides towards advertising a national walk to school day in October.
- Chris has obtained three quotes for the speed feedback signs. He forwarded them to Ben Lowell, as Ben is the one who brought up the issue from a discussion with a resident. Andy should be included in this conversation as well. There are funding options available through Safe Routes to School, village programs and municipal police forces as well.

L. Upcoming events

March 19	10am – noon	Rabies Clinic @ HVFD
March 20		FIRST DAY OF SPRING!!!!!!
March 21 & 28	5:30pm	Finance Comm. Mtgs.
April 1	by 4:30pm	Dog licenses are due – late fees after Apr. 1, fines after May 1
Apr. 5	6pm	Parks & Rec. Mtg. @ arena
Apr. 6	6pm	Library Trustees Mtg. @ library
Apr. 7	7pm	Selectboard Mtg.
Apr. 14	6pm	DRB Mtg.
Apr. 19	6pm	Planning Comm. Mtg.

Sept. 20 @ 6pm (tentative date) – Heidi added that the ADA study committee met with architects and are on the verge of hiring one for the ADA study of the municipal building. We are looking at ways to move forward jointly with the Planning Commission that is revising the CIP and looking for ways to engage the public and get info out. On Tuesday, September 20th (tentative date) we are hoping to host an open house as a way to draw people in with a BBQ and CIP presentations as well as present results of the ADA study for our building. This way people can see the building and the need for ADA compliance and see how best to use the space we have, including the upstairs.

M. Executive session

Motion by Chris Yates for the Selectboard and Town Administrator to enter into executive session @ 8:47pm to discuss legal and a possible real estate transaction where premature public knowledge would put the town at a substantial disadvantage. The motion was seconded by Josh LaRocque – **APPROVED**.

Motion by Paulette Tatro to exit executive session @ 10:19pm. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED**.

N. Adjournment

Motion by Paulette Tatro to adjourn the meeting @ 10:20pm. The motion was seconded by Josh LaRocque -- **APPROVED**.

Respectfully submitted by,

_____ Wendi Dusablon, Highgate Town Clerk

Minutes approved by,

_____ Christopher Yates, Chair – Highgate Selectboard