

**TO:** HIGHGATE SELECT BOARD CHAIR AND HIGHGATE PLANNING COMMISSION  
CHAIR, HIGHGATE TOWN CLERK

**FROM:** AMANDA HOLLAND - NORTHWEST REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

**SUBJECT:** TOWN OF HIGHGATE MUNICIPAL PLAN - REGIONAL APPROVAL REQUEST

**DATE:** 9/16/2015

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Enclosed is a copy of the Municipal Plan Review Panel findings for the Highgate Municipal Plan request for regional approval. As you can see, the Plan Review Panel has recommended full approval for the plan. Panel members were impressed by the plan, and felt it reflected a great deal of thought and effort by the town.

The Board of Regional Commissioners will vote on the issue at the September 30, 2015 Board meeting (see enclosed agenda).

Feel free to attend the Board meeting, and please call if you have any questions.

Enclosure: Municipal Plan Review Panel Findings  
Municipal Plan Review Panel minutes  
Board Meeting Agenda

**HIGHGATE MUNICIPAL PLAN  
-- REQUEST FOR REGIONAL APPROVAL --**

Municipal Plan Review Panel Findings

Date Issued: September 17, 2015

**HISTORY:**

On July 23, 2015 the Highgate Selectboard adopted the "Highgate Municipal Plan." On September 1, 2015, the Northwest Regional Planning Commission received a written request for regional approval of the plan.

Staff of the Regional Commission completed a final review of the Highgate Municipal Plan on September 1, 2015 using the Municipal Plan Approval Guidelines adopted by the Board of Commissioners May 29th, 2013. Staff review resulted in a recommendation that the plan should be approved.

The Plan Review Panel met on September 16, 2015 and discussed the Highgate Municipal Plan. At this meeting the Highgate Planning Program was reviewed for confirmation.

On September 16, 2015, a duly warned public hearing was held at 5:30 p.m. at the Northwest Regional Planning Commission in St. Albans, VT (minutes attached).

**FINDINGS:**

Based on review of the Highgate Municipal Plan using the Municipal Plan Approval Guidelines, the Plan Review Panel finds the plan:

1. Is consistent with the planning goals of 24 VSA Chapter 117, Section 4302.
2. Is compatible with the Regional Plan.
3. Is compatible with approved plans of other municipalities in the region\*.
4. Contains all the elements included in subdivisions 4382(a)(1)-(12) of 24 VSA Chapter 117.

\* Based on approved plans as of the date of request for regional approval

And based on the information provided by Highgate to Staff of the Regional Commission, the review panel confirms that the Town of Highgate:

1. Is engaged in a continuing planning process.
2. And the planning program meets the criteria of 24 VSA Chapter 117, Section 4350.

At a public hearing held on September 16, 2015, no public was in attendance.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Based on the above facts, the Plan Review Panel for the Highgate Municipal Plan hereby recommends to the Board of Regional Commissioners that the plan receive regional approval and confirmation of the planning program in accordance with section 4350 of Title 24 VSA Chapter 117.

**Municipal Plan Review Panel:**

Rowena Brown, Sylvia Jenson, David Borthwick-Leslie, Polly Rico and Gerry Carton

## MINUTES PLAN REVIEW COMMITTEE

### ATTENDANCE:

Commission: Rowena Brown, Polly Rico, David Borthwick-Leslie

Staff: Amanda Holland

Public: None in attendance

The Plan Approval Committee meeting for the Town of Highgate and Town of Bakersfield Municipal Plan Review, held at the September 16, 2015, was opened by Chair, R. Brown at 5:35 p.m.

**Officer Elections.** Staff explained the roles of the Chair and Vice-Chair before electing officers.

P. Rico motioned to appoint R. Brown as Chair. D. Borthwick-Leslie seconded. Motion carried. P. Rico motioned to appoint D. Borthwick-Leslie as Vice-Chair. R. Brown seconded. Motion carried.

### **Town of Highgate and Town of Bakersfield Public Hearing Minutes**

R. Brown opened public hearing at 5:40pm, welcomed everyone and explained the scope and intent of the public hearing.

No public was present to provide comment. Hearing closed at 5:45pm

### **Municipal Plan Review Committee Meeting Minutes**

The Committee discussed comment and concerns for the Town of Bakersfield and noted the following:

- The policies at the end of each chapter were very specific. Such as signs at public places to discourage idling. Identifying the action of assessing scenic resources in order to inform policy and language to protect these resources. Also state that growth should be concentrated where the Town has services.
- Committee members noted that since the policy language is very specific, the Town will want to make sure their bylaws are updated to not be in conflict with the Plan language.
- Most of the wording in the policy statements is interpretive but a few are strong with words like "discourage".
- The Committee recommends the Town remove specific mention to adjacent town plan adoptions as this information is out of date as of their final draft. See references to Enosburgh and Fletcher Town Plan dates in town compatibility section.
- The Staff Plan Review noted that the secondary education and vocation resources need to be addressed more in the future. The Committee suggested this could be addressed by making the connection to better access to regional resources such as transportation and improving online access to educational opportunities.

Polly Rico motioned to recommend the approval of the Bakersfield Town Plan to the Regional Commission and to confirm the planning program. Seconded by David Borthwick-Leslie.

## MINUTES

The Committee discussed comment and concerns for the Town of Highgate and noted the following:

- The Committee liked the flow of the plan and layout. Also noted that the plan contains strong language throughout with “will” and “should”.
- The Committee recommends the Town modify their language in the next update to reference that municipal plans can be updated as needed. The language currently reads “municipal plans shall be re-examined, updated, and readopted every five years”. The statement “*at least*” would open the statement to reference it could be done on a more frequent timeframe if needed.
- The Committee had several comments related to the Town’s Vision as follows:
  - o There are several statements that use strong language such as must and should. The Committee recommends the Town revisit the vision and identify if the language in those statements is stating things that are achievable and have the correct intent or if they should be revised. For example the statement, “*Growth in Highgate will occur at a rate that does not exceed the Town's ability to accommodate the growth and provide essential services.*” This could be modified to stating “*Encourage growth in Highgate at a rate that does not exceed the Town's ability...*”
  - o Bullet 5, page 3 – The vision statement is to encourage diversified agriculture as part of the economy. Since agriculture is noted as being an important part of their economic base. The Town should consider tying in a reference to the encouragement of best management practices in the agricultural industry.
- A typo was noted in Page 14, Item 10. “Courage” should be “encourage”.
- The Town should incorporate information from the 2006 Highgate Preservation Strategies plan into the Preservation Strategies section. Currently it does not provide an update on the results of the inventory.

P. Rico motioned to recommend the approval of the Highgate Town Plan to the Regional Commission and to confirm the planning program. Seconded by D. Borthwick-Leslie.

### **Other Business.**

In general the Committee noted that it would be a good exercise in the future to be able to review what implementation items a Community has listed in the current and prior plan. And see what actions they did or didn’t do. If they did not accomplish a task like make progress on addressing housing issues, etc. than would want to recommend the community take steps to address it.

Staff noted that the regional planning commissions across the state are working to revise the municipal plan review process. This would ensure that all commissions are using the same procedures to review and approve municipal plans.

### **ADJOURN:**

The plan review public hearing adjourned at 6:30 p.m

Motion to adjourn by P. Rico, second by D. Borthwick-Leslie



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September 23, 2015

## Meeting Notice

Please note  
the location  
of the  
meeting

### BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

September 30, 2015

6:30 p.m. Social

7:00 p.m. Meeting

Swanton Village Municipal

Complex

First Street (Route 78), Swanton

- 1. Adjustments to the Agenda**
- 2. Welcome, introductions, opening remarks –Bob Buermann, Chair**
- 3. Opportunity for Public Comment**
- 4. The Public Service Board Section 248 Process Overview (discussion item)**  
Presenter: Jeannie Oliver, Special Counsel, Public Service Dep. - Public Advocacy Division
- 5. Minutes of the July 2015 Meeting (enclosed)**
- 6. Commission Reports:**
  - Finance/Operations (budget report enclosed) – Harold Garrett**
  - Personnel – Randy Devine**
  - Executive Committee – Bob Buermann**
  - Policy/Project Review – Bill Irwin**
  - Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) – David Borthwick-Leslie**
  - Energy Committee- Bob Buermann**
  - Brownfields Committee – Laz Scangas**
  - VT Assoc. of Planning and Development Agencies (VAPDA) – Sylvia Jensen**
  - Regional Plan Committee- Lynn Douglas**
  - Vermont Economic Progress Council (VEPC) – Al Voegele**
  - Downtown Development Board – Jeff Young**
  - CCTA/GMTA- Bob Buermann/Catherine Dimitruk**
  - Office – Staff**

- 7. Regional Approval of Municipal Plan, Confirmation of Planning Efforts** (*action item*)  
Highgate, Bakersfield, Swanton, South Hero
- 8. Act 64 and TMDL Overview, the RPC Role** (*discussion item*)
- 9. Other Business**
- 10. Adjourn**

Commissioners please notify NRPC if you cannot attend the meeting.

*In accordance with provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, the NRPC will ensure public meeting sites are accessible to all people or provide an opportunity to request accommodations. Requests for free interpretive or translation services, assistive devices, or other requested accommodations, should be made to Amy Adams, NRPC Title VI Coordinator, at 802-524-5958 or aadams@nrpcvt.com, no later than 3 business days prior to the meeting for which services are requested.*