TOWN OF HIGHGATE
Planning Commission

February 16, 2016 @ 6pm

Approved Minutes

NOTE: All actions taken are unanimous unless otherwise stated.

I. **CALL TO ORDER**

Woody Rouse opened up the meeting @ 6:02pm.
Present for this meeting were:
Planning Commission Board Members; Woody Rouse; Luc Dupuis; Larry Simmons; Barbara Chevalier; *absent – Bruce Ryan*
Town of Highgate staff: Heidi Britch-Valenta – Planning & Zoning Administrator; Wendi Dusablon – Clerk
Public / Other: Will Veve; Rita Wozniak

II. **SOLAR PRESENTATION**

RICAL, LLC – Will Veve – 3 TERRICEL

Proposed 500 kW (AC) Solar Project on Frontage Road

Will Veve was present to give information to the PC regarding another solar proposal on Frontage Road. This project, 3 TERRICEL, will be the last one to be interconnecting with the Swanton utility. Between the three proposed projects on Frontage Road the cap has been met, so there won't be any more proposals for net metering coming through. This property is owned by Marcel & Theresa Begnoche and is located north of Mr. Stanislaw's pit. The parcel will be accessed via Terricel Blvd. There is an agreement in place with Mr. Begnoche to lease the land for this 500 kW project on 3.5 acres in the old sandpit. The access road will be improved as part of this proposal which will consist of approximately 2,200 panels, all enclosed with a security fence and up to EEE electrical code standards. Will expects the certificate of public good around the same time as the proposed project on the Carroll Concrete property. Will would like to sit down with the fire department in the near future regarding safety protocol. There will be minimum excavation and grading and this project is outside the jurisdiction of ANR as it is nowhere near a wetland. There will be no view of the project from neighboring houses, the nearest home will be about 600' away and the entire project will be approximately 750' off of Frontage Road. Will Veve and Kirt Mayland both would like to meet with the town's solar sub-committee sometime after March 7th. Will would also like to chat with the town about reducing the towns electricity bills wherever possible. Woody asked if local contractors would be utilized – yes they will, wherever possible. Local contractors are already being used for surveying and engineering. Barb asked to clarify, these are three stand alone projects all on Frontage Road – yes. Will Veve is the assistant manager for VWSD and RICAL who are working on the Carroll Concrete property project and the Begnoche property project. The actual application for the 3 TERRICEL project will be filed shortly, at the end of the 45 day notice period. Larry commented that the packet for this project is the most thorough he has seen so far and a lot of his questions were answered by reading the 45-day notice. The tax credit has been extended for another five years, and four of those years are at the full 30% rate. Heidi asked if the property is currently under an ACT250 permit. Will has not been informed of one, but will let the town know if one is currently in place. Heidi also had questions about the reclamation process. Heidi will get back to Will on some dates the the solar sub-committee can meet with him and Kirt Mayland together. Will noted that with the Carroll Concrete property project, they would be interested in donating some land back to the town. It is an 80 acre parcel and much of it is undevelopable but would be a good use for conservation land. The project itself will only take up about 3 acres, the rest is up for discussion. Larry asked if this 3 TERRICEL project will be locally managed or sold off. Will can't speak to who the ultimate owner will be on the finance side, but as far as operations and maintenance it will most likely be a local company. These Frontage Road projects are all on a smaller scale. The

larger projects are almost forced to go out of state because the projects are so expensive. Heidi asked about the twice annual washer that is mentioned, it refers to when they bring a 750 gallon water truck in to spray down any residual dust with mild soap. For the most part, mother nature takes care of the spray down of the panels. The bigger issue is making sure the gates are locked and that the locks are operational. Gravel will be used on part of the access road to keep construction materials off of the main road. This is a site dependent issue and is sometimes not needed at all. Proposed hours and days of the week for construction were discussed, which will generally be 8am-8pm, 6 days per week and lasts 8-12 weeks. The noise will be general construction noise like trucks and they use an air hammer to hydraulically install the posts. Will had a cell phone video of the machine and how it works, which he shared with the board. It is unlikely that all three sites on Frontage Road will be constructed at the same time. This particular project (3 TERRICEL), they are pushing to complete in 2016. They have one year to complete it once they have received the certificate of public good. Heidi asked about concerns for vandalism at the sites. It was also noted that these pits are popular with ATV riders and for target shooting. Will is aware of these things these sites will actually improve security. The fencing will be 7' – 8' in height with barbed wire topping out at around 9'. On the Carroll Concrete property they will also be removing some structures that have been used as hang outs. Everything is well insured and easily replaced. There are also remote systems in place that let them know immediately that there is an issue. The board thanked Will for coming and Heidi will be in touch with him about the solar sub-committee meeting in March.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Woody Rouse to approve the minutes from *December 15, 2015*, as written. The motion was seconded by Luc Dupuis – **APPROVED.**

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

- **ADA study** – We have a grant to look at our municipal building and find ways to best utilize the space we have and make the upstairs ADA compliant. The upstairs could be offices or meeting space, whatever best fits the needs of the town. An RFP was put out and we have received four proposals. Whomever we select will meet with departments to find out what our long term goals are. The goal for now is to find out which proposal(s) make the most sense. It will be a slow burn and won't happen overnight. We will need to look for grant funding to make it happen. We need to put a small committee together to look at the proposals and rank them. Once we have our ranks, we then open the fees to see how the fees rank. This part of the process has been paid for with a $10,000.00 grant through community development. We are looking at a lot of things all at once in this building. Larry and Barb offered to participate on the committee.
- **Pedestrian update** – A copy of the Route 78 study is included with the packets. These will be used by the sidewalk committee to decide what the next steps will be.
- **Gore Road crosswalk update** - A new crosswalk will be installed on Gore Road in the area of the Historical Society / Jolley Store / Veterinarian's office. Larry had questions about signage and / or lights for the crosswalk.
- **Road safety audit update** – Heidi gave a brief update on changes to the plan for the Machia Road bridge and the removal of the apartment house on the corner. The road safety audit involved the intersection of Route 78 & St. Armand Road as well as Route 78 & Machia Road intersection.
- **Sensitive slopes study** – We currently have no standard in our bylaws with regard to sensitive slopes. The intent would be to add a section on this to give us teeth in creating an overlay map to identify weak banks that we don't want to see any development on. We have a FEMA application to stabilize the slopes by the transfer station. They are asking us to create a 10% plan of exactly what we would do if we receive the funds. Geo Design went in and took a pulse again and there has been further sliding, which will help our application. It is vulnerable on all sides.
- **Other proposed solar projects updates** – Heidi gave an update on what the solar sub-committee has been working on. Jeff and Chris from the Selectboard, as well as Heidi are serving on this committee. Larry asked for an update on the large proposal for St. Armand Road and Barb

asked for an update on the Ballard Road proposal. Nothing new to report on the St. Armand Road project (Ranger Solar), and the developers of the Ballard Road project have met with the Haugland's and other land owners to address concerns. On Frontage Road, there are now three contiguous parcels, all former sand pits, looking to be developed. Typically there is reclamation at these sand pit sites, so that will be important to address. The primary concern for the Ranger project on St. Armand Road is that there is already a lot of stress on an area that is already impaired. The road is going to take a beating. The Ballard Road project with Onyx Development will be working on a road that is already in bad shape. We will have to have arrangements in place to compensate the town for damages. We need to be sure the town is not losing money for someone else to make money.

- **Airport update** – The airport hopes to do some major upgrades in the next few years. Jim Harrison has a parcel at the back of the airport he is looking to develop. It will be a collaborative effort between Mr. Harrison, the State of Vermont and a private developer. Jim is looking for the state to help him with permitting and he would turn his parcel into an industrial park at the back of the airport. The airport is also proposing to extend the airstrip another 1,000' to make them eligible to receive cargo planes. This would create a micro economic engine right here in Highgate, which is quite exciting. Our airport is unique as it is self-sustaining. We have the most hangar rentals in the state, most of which are rented by residents from Canada. They have asked if the town would be a signer on a grant application, and the town would be favorable to doing that.
- **Resolution regarding VT municipalities input on renewable energy projects** – We currently do not have the opportunity to review any renewable energy projects at the local level, it is all done by the PSB. This resolution is asking they take another look at the process for approving renewable energy projects in the State of Vermont. Barb doesn't know what the point of having zoning bylaws is if they aren't considered. Larry agrees and feels we should sign the resolution. The Selectboard wanted the opinion of the Planning Commission before they sign it.
- **Zoning district overlay maps** – There are three maps in the PC packets for review; 1) Surface Water Buffer Strips; 2) 100 Year Flood Zones; 3) Native American Sites (Monument Road). Currently, residents of Monument Road have to call the state and have an archeologist come out prior to building anything. Having an overlay map in our bylaws of this district would be beneficial. Do we want it to incorporate just the residential housing section of Monument Road, or include the large parcels at the end? The large parcels at the end are included in the wetland area anyway and would require a review. Amanda at NRPC can begin to create a map for addition to the bylaws. Woody would like to see the area on the other side of the stream identified on the map also. Heidi will ask Amanda to create a map for the next PC meeting for the group to review.

* **NRPC report for Highgate 2015 town report** – as an FYI this is included in the packet. We have had a lot of projects lately that involve NRPC.

* **Violation updates** – Heidi had a grid to share with the PC. There is still a lot of work to be done. Ray's Auto & Salvage down by MVU has been a big one lately and Heidi has been working with them to resolve the issues. They need a letter from the town to have their license renewed so they will be working towards compliance to make that happen.

* **Capital Budget** – This will be an active discussion at town meeting, which is a good thing. The Selectboard wants to extend the invitation to the PC to come to town meeting and participate in the discussion. This is our first year with the CIP and it's a nice tool for the voters to be able to see all the need. The voters will have to decide what we can afford.

V. UPCOMING EVENTS

Feb. 18	7pm	Selectboard Mtg.
Feb. 24	by 5pm	Last day for voter registration
Mar. 1	10am	Town Meeting @ Highgate Elem. Polls open 7-7.
Mar. 3	7pm	Selectboard Mtg.
Mar. 10	6pm	DRB Mtg.
Mar. 19	10am – noon	Dog & cat rabies clinic @ HVFD
Apr. 1		DOG LICENSES ARE DUE BY APRIL 1st late fees will apply after April 1st

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Woody Rouse to adjourn the meeting @ 8:00pm. The motion was seconded by Luc Dupuis – **APPROVED.**

Minutes respectfully submitted by:

_____, Clerk _____
Wendi Dusablon Date

Minutes approved by:

_____, PC – Chair _____
Woodbury Rouse, Jr. Date