

TOWN OF HIGHGATE

Planning Commission

April 21, 2015 @ 6pm

Approved Minutes

NOTE: All actions taken are unanimous unless otherwise stated.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Rick Trombley opened up the meeting @ 6:04pm .

Present were: Planning Commission Board Members; Rick Trombley, Woody Rouse, Luc Dupuis, Bruce Ryan. *Absent – Larry Simmons*

Also present were: Heidi Britch-Valenta – Planning & Zoning Administrator; Wendi Dusablon – Clerk; Amanda Holland – NRPC.

II. TOWN PLAN

Chapter 3 – Social & Economic Services: Rick asked for clarification on if the town plan needs to be updated every five years, and if that is being changed. It is likely to be introduced during the next legislative session. This chapter includes things such as population data and projections. These projections for the future are based on the past. This chapter also touches on issues such as projected number of new housing units, based on a past growth rate of 2-7% in each of the past two decades. The majority of our recent new housing units have been single family homes, followed by duplexes and mobile homes. Heidi would like the Franklin Homestead and Carriage House to be listed in this section also, as elderly housing options available in our area. There are currently no elderly housing options available in Highgate, which is a need. The median sale price for homes peaked in 2006 and then dipped, but started to rise again in 2013. Median county family income was discussed as well as rental affordability in the area. It was also noted that there are five mobile home parks in Highgate, and the average lot rent is \$275.00 per month.

Chapter 4 – Economy: this chapter includes data on where Highgate residents are traveling to for employment. Based on 2011 data, 59% work in Franklin County. Seasonal housing makes up 12.5% of housing units in Highgate. With regard to development and industry, the VT Egg Farm and VT Brick are no longer in town. Heidi noted to the group that it is their role to make decisions on what is included in this town plan, and not have answers fed to them. The town plan is our visionary document for what the Planning Commission wants our town to be. There are eleven statutory requirements that must be included in the town plan, and economic development is one of them. Heidi feels there isn't enough reference to tourism and noted the Tyler Place and Carmen Brook Maple & Dairy as examples. We also have Boucher's Blue Cheese right here in town as well. Rick would like information added to this section regarding the Franklin County Airport, which is in Highgate. It was also noted that the Franklin County Field Days site at the airport is used for many things such as weddings and concerts. Child care is a need in Highgate also. We currently have eight registered child care facilities and one child care center in town, for a total capacity of 87 children. Amanda provided some stats about children with two parents in the workforce and the impact that has on child care needs. This data does not take into account any unregistered child care facilities, or family members that may be caring for children while their parents work outside the home. There was a recent DRB application for a large child

care facility on the Airport Road that was approved by the town, but has hit some snags with water and waste water permitting at the state level. There are some legal issues currently going on associated with that. Things to focus on in this section of the town plan are elderly housing child care and economic development. There are some opportunities in town for more development, such as the empty gas station in town. There were some questions on the term "special needs" and how that is interpreted with regard to the town plan. For planning purposes, special needs could refer to the elderly and low income as well, as examples. Heidi would like to incorporate the Highgate Cliffs State Park, Lamoille Valley Rail Trail, and the Northern Forest Canoe Trail into this section. The boat launch in Highgate Springs needs some improvements and the town is applying for grants to address erosion and culvert issues in that area. The town plan needs to be in place in order for us to apply for different grants. Our current plan expires in July, so we are moving at an accelerated pace to get this done and adopted this summer.

Chapter 5 – Energy: VT Gas is in the planning stages of extending up Lamkin Street and the town is actively pursuing a solar farm on a municipal property. The details of the solar farm are still unclear, but in the long run if we could run some municipal buildings off from the solar farm, that would be ideal. For example, the arena, school and municipal building are all big users of electricity. Either that or the company would pay the town a rental and keep the power. There is data in this section with regard to how people are heating their home. Most use fuel oil or kerosene, followed by LP gas and wood, and then electricity. Heidi noted that we have installed a dehumidification system at the arena and soon we will have a new cooling system for the ice, which both will make the building far more efficient. There will be an addition to this section regarding the Route 78 safety study and the first section of the sidewalk project on the Lamkin Street corridor. Transportation is our biggest user of energy in the State of Vermont. Carpooling is a beneficial way to save energy. The problem can be where to park cars. Our park and ride in town was paved in 2014 as part of the Route 78 paving project by AOT. We will be adding our own striping this summer. It has been suggested that we relocate the dry hydrant to the opposite side of Route 78, to allow more flexibility at the park and ride. We also need more lighting at the park and ride. In July, we will be a dedicated stop for GMTA, and the town would like the dedicated pick up and drop off point to be at the park and ride. It is a goal of the town to encourage all types of renewable energy. Heidi noted we have to supply copies of energy codes to all new construction applicants and they are required to file a certificate afterwards to be recorded in the land records that the project was built to energy standards.

Chapter 6 – Transportation: This section includes data on average daily traffic, volume of cars, types of roads we have, truck traffic and also mentions the Bridge 25 project. Heidi noted that agricultural vehicles are putting a huge burden on the roads and we are suffering more than most due to the large amount of agriculture we have here. There should be a way to have agriculture be accountable for this. Large trucks have to get an overweight permit, agriculture vehicles do not. Ag vehicles don't even have to be registered. CDL licenses should be required and young kids should not be driving these large pieces of equipment. Today, farms are not compact, farmers own land all over. Farming is a great thing, but it has changed over the years and taxpayers are picking up the tab of damage to roads. The section on B25 needs to be updated in this chapter. The airport has recently put in an application to add three new hangars and a new runway, with a new access road. The language regarding the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail needs to be updated also. There are minor edits to the public transportation section to include the dedicated GMTA stop in Highgate. With regard to bicycles and pedestrians, Amanda noted that Act 34 passed, which encourages pedestrian and bike traffic. We are working on our sidewalk project and the Route 78 safety study to accommodate more pedestrian and bike

traffic in Highgate. We are applying for a BBR grant for road inventory to be used in the capital budgeting process. It is a long term goal of the sidewalk committee to have safe routes to school implemented in Highgate.

For the next PC meeting on May 19th we will look at the remaining chapters, which include natural resources, land use and compatibility with adjacent plans. There will be a publicly warned hearing on Thursday, May 28th with regard to the town plan adoption process.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM 3/17/15

Motion by Rick Trombley to approve the PC minutes from March 17, 2015, as amended. Motion was seconded by Bruce Ryan and Woody Rouse – **APPROVED**.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

None

V. UPCOMING EVENTS

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|--------|---------|--|
| May 2 | | Green Up Day |
| May 7 | 7pm | Selectboard Mtg. |
| May 9 | 8am-1pm | Household Hazardous Waste Collection Event @ Highgate Transfer Station |
| May 14 | 6pm | DRB Mtg. |

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Bruce Ryan to adjourn the meeting @ 8:30pm. Motion was seconded by Rick Trombley – **APPROVED**.

Minutes respectfully submitted by:

_____, Clerk
Wendi Dusablon

Date

Minutes approved by:

_____, PC, Chair
Richard Trombley

Date