

TOWN OF HIGHGATE Selectboard

August 21, 2014 @ 7pm

Approved Minutes

NOTE: All actions taken are unanimous unless otherwise stated.

A. Call to Order & Roll Call

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

Highgate Selectboard Members- Jeff Towle, Chair; Andy King, Vice-Chair; Diana O'Hara, Luke Choiniere and Chris Yates

Highgate Office Staff – Tom Racine, Town Treasurer; Wendi Dusablon, Town Clerk; (absent, Heidi Britch-Valenta – Town Admin.)

Public / Other – Steve Ploof, Mike Bockus, Richard Noel, Amy & Craig Cowan, Jacques Rainville, Steve Beyor, Debbie Spears, Steve Scott, Darlene Foster

B. Public Comment

None

C. Highway Department – Steve Ploof

1. Meadow Lane – revisit adoption issue

Amy & Craig Cowan, as well as Steve Scott, residents of Meadow Lane, were all present. Chris Yates recused himself. Amy stated that the last culvert issue at the Downes property had been replaced since the last meeting. Steve Ploof has looked at it, all that is left is the ditching, which the town will be doing. Andy King asked if there are any deed issues that need to be dealt with. Steve Ploof understands there is some septic that is under the road out in the back in the circle. Amy confirmed that there are some properties that share that septic and well located back there. Those owners are working together to form an association. Luke Choiniere asked if that area is all blue printed, to which Steve Ploof answered that, yes, it must be, the development is not that old. Andy encourages the homeowners to look at the signage and the one way traffic pattern issue. Amy doesn't believe any of the residents would have an issue if the pattern were to change. If the mailboxes could be moved to the other side of the road, that would facilitate the delivery of mail using the correct traffic pattern. Richard Noel added that all these things can be worked into the agreement. Motion by Andy King to move forward with the legal adoption of Meadow Lane as a town road. Motion seconded by Luke Choiniere – **APPROVED**. Jeff noted he will communicate with Heidi to have an agreement drawn up. Jeff also asked about the association. Steve Scott stated that five houses out in the back are talking about it. Richard asked if the road is all paved and if there is a 50' right of way. Chris Yates stated that if there is no association that leaves Sandy Acres in a bad spot. Both roads are part of one association, and there was an association within an association involving the last five houses. Chris also stated that there *are* associations there, whether or not they are active, he does not know. And, if Sandy Acres was never notified of meetings, that could be another issue. The residents of Meadow Lane had already left, and it is noted that Mike Bockus arrived at the meeting to discuss the Meadow Lane issue. The board opened the discussion back up for Mr. Bockus at the end of the highway section. Chris Yates again recused himself. Mr. Bockus stated that this is a private development and we can't go in there and ditch. As a taxpayer, he is

concerned that taxpayer money goes into cleaning ditches and we don't own that road yet. Other developers could come forward and want the town to do it for them also. Andy King hears where Mike is coming from, and understands. However, we are working with a number of years and a lot of different requirements put on Meadow Lane property owners, by a few different boards. We gave them criteria for what to do and how can we change the rules on them at this point. They were told what to do to get to A76 standards and they have done what was asked. Andy sees the Meadow Lane folks point also, because every time they come back before the board, something else gets added. Mr. Bockus stated that he is simply expressing his opinion. What will happen in the future, he does not know. When he did his development, Hoague Drive, it took him five years to get through the process and he had a lot of hurdles. Standards are standards. Jeff Towle noted that we have all learned a lot the last few years. The Selectboard, DRB and Planning Commission are all educating themselves so that a situation like Meadow Lane does not happen again. Mr. Bockus hopes this does not open a can of worms, and he understands the issue has been with communication. He again stated that a policy is a policy, and it doesn't matter who is on the board. Mr. Bockus stated he does not have a problem with it, but he is making a point based on his experience. Chris Yates asked if the Meadow Lane residents are aware that ditching will be taking place. Steve Ploof stated that Mr. Downes is aware of it. Chris doesn't want any residents to be taken by surprise if the town starts ditching Meadow Lane. Andy agreed that this would need to be looked into before any ditching were to be started.

2. Speed study petition – Route 7 in Highgate Springs

Steve Beyor was present to discuss a speed petition he had submitted. Jeff read aloud from the petition; *“We, the undersigned residents and businesses of Highgate Springs, Vermont, in regard to pedestrian, bicycle, child and pet safety, wish to have the speed limit reduced to 35 mph for a distance of ¼ mile beginning at the intersection of Route 7 and Carter Hill Road, extending north to just beyond Martin’s Store”*. Steve stated that there is a handicapped child near the little white church, and he would like to get the traffic slowed down before someone is hurt. On the north side of the village it seems fine, but the south side is where they need to slow down. Steve recommends 35mph for that specific area. Route 7 is a state road, so AOT is looking for a letter from the town in support of the possible change. Motion by Chris Yates for the Town of Highgate to issue a letter to AOT's District 8 Office in support of a speed study from Carter Hill extending north past Martins Store on US Route 7. Motion was seconded by Andy King – **APPROVED.**

3. Speed reduction petition – Charles Circle & Darlene Drive

Darlene Foster, a Darlene Drive resident, was present for this discussion, as well as Debbie Spears, a Charles Circle resident. Darlene has presented the town with a petition to reduce the speed limit on both dead end roads. Jeff Towle read aloud from the petition; *“This is a petition on behalf of some residents in the Town of Highgate asking to have the town reduce the speed limit (35mph) on the two dead ends of Charles Circle and Darlene Drive. Thank you”*. Ms. Foster has lived there three years and it is heavily populated with kids, bikes, dogs, adults and families. She feels that 35mph is too high for the short distance of those two roads. A potential development is coming in off of Darlene Drive, which will increase the number of cars traveling on these two roads. In 2011 Ms. Foster witnessed a young girl get hit by a car on Darlene Drive. Debbie Spears agrees completely with Darlene Foster. Andy King noted that on the petition, residents have indicated what they would request the speed limit to be, and they are all in the range of 15-20 mph. Per state statute, the lowest it can be on a town road is 25mph. Andy is familiar with the area and agrees it is worth looking at. Debbie Spears indicated that some of the curves on those roads are not made for 35mph speeds. Chris Yates asked if there is an ordinance regarding speed limits on town development roads. Chris agrees, in his mind, 25mph is sufficient on those types of roads. Andy would like the opportunity to take a

ride and look at it. This will be back on the agenda for the next meeting on Sept. 4th. Motion by Jeff Towle to table this petition until the next meeting so they can each individually take a ride by and look at the development. Motion seconded by Chris Yates – **APPROVED**.

4. Darlene Drive culvert issue

Heidi was not present to explain the issue here, but Debbie Spears explained that there is a culvert between her property and Mr. Thibault's property. There was a site visit by the DRB last week regarding a potential subdivision. Steve Ploof noted that the culvert there probably does need some attention.

5. Rainville drainage project

Jacques Rainville was present for this discussion regarding drainage on his Gore Road property. He proposed some ideas to the board with regard to the issues he is having. Water comes from the barn area and onto the lawn. His idea is to put in a drainage pipe to catch water from the milk house and put a storm drain in by the milk house to catch the water that comes from the barn. He would not need the culvert across the road any longer, and he wondered if the town would help. Jeff Towle asked if this is within the right of way of the road. Jacques said yes, the storm drain is currently right on the edge of the road. Jacques went to Precast in Milton and they have seconds that could be purchased for around \$500.00 and will also probably take three rolls of tile. Steve Ploof noted that Drummac could come clean the pipe out and another pipe could be shoved in if the current one is rotten. The cost for Drummac is \$125.00 per hour. Mike Bockus added that you could put a culvert in the driveway and not dig up the Gore Road. Luke Choiniere asked for a comparison price of what Jacques is proposing vs. what Steve and Mike are proposing. Jacques believes his proposal will be only 1 day of work. Steve noted that the road crew is down to just two guys for the next four weeks. Chris and Jeff believe a site visit is in order because there needs to be a line drawn on what benefits the tax payers and what benefits the property owner. Motion by Chris Yates to schedule a site visit to Jacques Rainville's farm on Gore Road on Thursday, August 28th @ 7pm regarding the drainage project. Motion seconded by Luke Choiniere – **APPROVED**.

6. Durkee Road project funding request – denied

Friends of Northern Lake Champlain did not receive the funds for the project. We are going to reapply and hopefully come up with the funds. A letter was sent to Mr. Sweet to have the fence removed by September 30th.

7. Highgate Falls park tree removal

Steve Ploof will check with Andy Masson, AOT foreman, on Monday to see if there are any plans to take care of it.

8. Fairpoint pole location sign off

The poles are already in on Lamkin Street. There was an existing pole which was updated and a pole added. Heidi has the form to be signed.

9. Project signs at park & ride – hydrant access

The fire department is requesting additional signage on the west side of the park & ride to prevent people from parking by the dry hydrant. Once this is paved as part of the Route 78 project, we will put up new signage. Jeff would like at least one sign there now if there is not already.

10. Miscellaneous

- Steve would like to rent a tractor with an arm on it to trim brush. The cost is \$2,800.00 for one week (40 hours) and they will truck it to us. Luke stated if we rent this, he would like to know there is an agenda or schedule of where they are going to use it and there is a plan in place. Some people don't like the chopped brush that is left behind, that is the only downside to it. The tractor is available to rent starting September 29th. Mike Bockus noted that they would be trimming limbs in the right of way without touching the base of the tree. Motion by Jeff Towle to rent this tractor for one week (40 hours) for \$2,800.00 starting on September 29th. Motion seconded by Luke

- Choiniere – **APPROVED**. Chris asked if we have money in the budget for this, Tom replied yes.
- Steve has gotten winter sand pricing and sand is ready to haul starting on Monday. Jeff asked about salt pricing and if that was a district price, Steve said yes.
 - On Wednesday, August 27th they will begin work around gam on the St. Armand Road culvert for Gaston Gagner and RJ Fournier.
 - Chris asked about the end of Sandy Acres where the town did some scraping along Lamkin Street. Chris is concerned about ponding of water there as winter approaches.
 - The town will pick up the brush once the work is done along the walking path at the school.
 - The road crew did some paving at the school this week to cover up where the tank was. Terry Brace was in a rush to get it done prior to school starting next week.
 - Butch's truck is at J&B. A three ring transmission seal has been ordered. Steve will check on it when he is in the Burlington area tomorrow.

11. Rumble stripes on Route 78

Richard Noel asked to discuss this now, rather than under the Selectboard section. There was a meeting on August 20th in Swanton regarding AOTs intent to put in rumble stripes as part of the Route 78 paving project. Rumble stripes are different than strips. Stripes are not continuous, they are done in sections. There was a map where the sections were indicated in orange and there were blue X's on the map that indicated where the 34 accidents in Highgate had taken place over the last six years. There will be some criteria such as no rumble stripes if a residence is within 100' of the center line due to noise disturbances. AOT is currently working on getting the shoulders ready. There will be 11' travel lanes with a 3' shoulder in most areas, but in some they won't be able to do that. Richard understands there will be a shim coat to level things off and then a top coat. There is fabric on site, which indicates there will be some grinding, but Richard is not sure. Steve Ploof confirmed that grinding will start next week and shimming will start in two weeks. They hope to complete from the Swanton Village line to the Franklin Road in Highgate during this paving season 2014. Richard will update the board if he hears anything different or new.

D. Animal Control Officer – Raymond Dixon

As of today, we have 773 licensed dogs in Highgate. We still have four dog owners from last year's list to follow up with, and three of them licensed very late last year also. We also have six more we have been trying to communicate with. Most have had dogs for years and we are just catching up with them now. Ray stated that it is a last resort to take someone's dog(s). Jeff asked Wendi to get a copy of the remaining list to the Selectboard on Friday and the board will assist in getting the remainder of these dogs licensed. Ben Lowell, Town Constable, noted that if they are in violation of a town ordinance, we can start writing tickets. These tickets are enforceable through the court system. Chris thinks this would be worth looking at. Wendi will e mail the list to the board in the morning.

E. Town Treasurer – Tom Racine

1. Audit update

Tom is still working with NEMRC on the chart of accounts. The library files are coming over next week. And the school files will be going to central office. Ron Nye will be coming in to go over the check list in preparation for the audit in September.

2. Tax bill update

Tax bills were mailed on August 15th. We have been fielding a steady stream of questions. The main question is when the second billing will be and how much will it be. We have been encouraging people to look at what they paid for education last year and compare. We do not know when the second

billing will be, it depends on when an MVU budget is passed. We vote again on September 9th.

3. Pay bills

The Blitzfire came in today for the fire department. David Rouse will be coming in to check it out. Eric Rainville will be in on Saturday morning to run electricity to the projector which will also give us WiFi out here in the Community Room.

4. Miscellaneous

- Tom attended an education property tax and funding reform conference in South Burlington on August 14th. It was very well attended.
- The parks & recreation committee has met twice so far. Tom expressed concern for jumping into programming too quickly. We need to consider that presently we only budget for mowing and liability insurance at the arena. Open meeting law impacts the group. If they do sponsor programs, even without fees, what is the protocol for background checks on volunteers? Tom doesn't want to discourage their enthusiasm. Liza has taken the Cross Country program under the library, and there is an option for the soccer program to be run under the library as well. Tom ran the registration forms by VLCT who advised him to run them by legal counsel, which will require a cost. Chris noted that any forms should be something that can be used for all programming and require only minor changes to program name etc. Tom will follow up with Ed Adrian about the background checks. Tom noted that we can't share information from the school, we have to do our own checks.
- Tom will be on vacation the first week of September.

F. Town Administrator – Heidi Britch-Valenta (absent)

1. Parking ordinance model

This was not discussed.

2. Route 78 safety study site visit

This was not discussed.

G. Town Clerk – Wendi Dusablon

1. Minutes

Motion by Andy King to accept the minutes from August 7, 2014, with one correction. Motion seconded by Chris Yates – **APPROVED**.

2. Miscellaneous

- Tom already touched on tax bills – we have been very busy with calls, visits and payments.
- Ray already touched on the issue of dogs. We need to finish up the licensing process now that tax bills have gone out. Wendi would appreciate any help the board can provide.
- Primary Election is Tuesday, August 26th from 7am – 7pm here at the Town Office in the Community Room.

H. Selectboard items

1. Job descriptions

Chris has begun to look through these. He thinks that some of the highway crew descriptions are not accurate. Chris would like to individually look at these and get together and see what coincides.

2. Setting speed limits

Heidi is not here this evening, but the board does need to talk about the petitions presented tonight. Chris noted that this would also include the Bouchard Road. Chris would like to see a standard set for development roads that the town would potentially take over. He will pull out the traffic ordinance and see how we can fit this in. Chris also noted that the speed limit on the Franklin Road is lower on our end, due to grant funding.

Richard Noel might have more info. The board would like this back on the agenda for the next meeting.

3. Rumble stripes – VT Route 78

This was discussed earlier with Richard Noel under the highway section.

4. Schedule reviews and department budgets

The goal was by September to complete the reviews that need to be done. Andy would like copies of the blank reviews, Heidi will get these to the board. Andy asked when budgeting would start. Tom noted that there is a meeting on October 21st with the Planning Commission and VLCT will be here for a presentation on capital planning. It would be helpful if department heads were involved in a more detailed way. Tom would find it helpful to form a very small finance committee and have it hashed out ahead of time to present to the board as a workable draft. We should be into budgeting in earnest by mid-October. An example tonight for job descriptions would be with the highway crew and defining Steve's role in overseeing whether a road is up to standard or not.

I. Upcoming events

Aug. 26	7am-7pm	Primary Election @ Town Office
Sept. 4	7pm	Selectboard Mtg.
Sept. 8	7pm	Route 78 Safety Study / Local Concerns Mtg. @ Highgate Elem. Library
Sept. 11	6pm	DRB Mtg.
Sept. 16	6pm	Planning Commission Mtg.

J. Executive session

Motion by Jeff Towle to enter into executive session @ 8:37pm to discuss contracts and legal issues. Motion seconded by Andy King – **APPROVED**.

Motion by Chris Yates to exit executive session @ 9:52pm. Motion seconded by Jeff Towle – **APPROVED**.

Motion by Andy King to accept the negotiated terms for the cell tower lease as presented by SBA. Motion seconded by Jeff Towle – **APPROVED**.

Ayes: Towle, King, O'Hara, Choiniere and Yates

Nays: None

Absent Members: None

Members who declined to vote: None

Percentage of approval votes: 100%

K. Adjournment

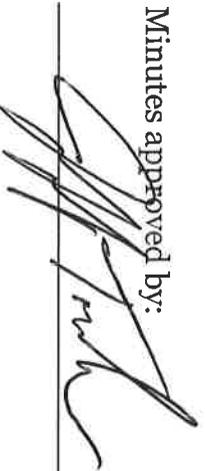
Motion by Chris Yates to adjourn the meeting @ 9:55pm. Motion was seconded by Andy King – **APPROVED**.

Respectfully submitted by:



Wendi Dusablon, Highgate Town Clerk

Minutes approved by:



Jeff Towle, Highgate Selectboard Chair