

TOWN OF HIGHGATE

Selectboard Mtg.

July 21, 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 Chair Chris Yates @ 7:02pm, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Highgate Selectboard Members – Chris Yates, Chair; Sharon Bousquet, Vice-Chair; Randy Connelly *absent* – *Josh LaRocque*

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

Public / Other – Carlton LaFrance; Rick Trombley; Shirley Fecteau; Francis Fecteau; Chris Uzell; Alice (Sue) Cota; Jean Chevalier; Richard Wilkens; Dennis Feeley; Lori Olds; Jeff Towle; Keith Ploof; Peter St. Germain; Debbie Rouse; Daniel Nadeau; John Patnode; Melissa Patnode; Joshua Aldrich; Sandra Stone; Katie Davis; Lori Choiniere; David Desorcie; George Greenwood; Greg Lamoreux (County Courier); Kellie Uzell

B. Public Comments

- Chris Yates began by recognizing that Paulette Tatro is not present this evening. She very recently sold her home in Highgate and is no longer a resident. Chris read aloud her resignation letter and thanked Paulette for her years of service to our community and to Franklin County as a whole.
- Jean Chevalier read aloud from a prepared statement regarding our new contract with AmCare that took effect on July 1st. Jean expressed frustration with issues such as response times, AmCare not knowing their way around Highgate, and the appropriate number of ambulances needed to cover all of the contracted towns. She asked that Josh LaRocque and Sharon Bousquet, Highgate Selectboard members, meet with Mr. Krul to discuss (her words) the failed rollout of Amcare with the Town of Highgate and how Mr. Krul plans to rectify the situation. She feels Mr. Krul is in breach of contract with the Town of Highgate if he does not provide an ambulance based in Highgate by August 1, 2016 at his expense. Jean gave examples of AmCare staging in certain areas, which she feels is an effort to reflect faster response times, adding that she shamed them on FaceBook about this. Jean would also like Sharon and Josh to talk with the town's lawyer and report back to the townspeople at the next Selectboard meeting. Sharon is happy to discuss these things, but feels it should be done as a board. Jean asked if this discussion will happen during a Selectboard meeting so they are not in violation of Open Meeting Law, to which Sharon said that could happen.

C. Town Treasurer – Shelley Laroche

1. Check warrants

There were no questions from the board.

2. Homestead filing

Shirley Fecteau stated we have never charged a penalty for the late filing of a homestead declaration. In the past several years we have had more and more people file late which generates corrected bills and a lot of work in-house. This year is the first year we will *NOT waive the penalty*. This year there will be a 3% penalty for late filers and next year it will go up to the full 8%. The rate is set by the state as to what can be charged. Shelley will not be asking the Selectboard to waive the fee this year as we have in the past.

3. Digital message board update

An RFP was issued on 5/25/16 and sent out to four companies, as well as advertised in the paper and posted around town and online. There was a site visit on 6/8/16 and proposals due by 7/1/16. We received only one bid, which was from Vermont Display. We are within budget and this project will be moving forward. Sue Cota asked what the cost was - \$17,350.00 was the quote we received.

4. **Set tax rates for FY2016-2017**

Motion by Chris Yates to set the tax rate(s) as presented by Shelley Laroche; *Residential 1.4849 & Non-Residential 1.6508*. The motion was seconded by Sharon Bousquet – **APPROVED**.

Highgate, VT ★

★
2016-2017
★
Tax Rate
★

RESIDENTIAL	
Education	1.2287
General Fund	0.0979
Highway Fund	0.1453
CIP	0.0107
Local Agreements	0.0023
TOTAL RESIDENTIAL	1.4849

NON-RESIDENTIAL	
Education	1.3946
General Fund	0.0979
Highway Fund	0.1453
CIP	0.0107
Local Agreements	0.0023
TOTAL NON-RES.	1.6508

★

2016-2017 tax rate approved by the Highgate Selectboard July 21, 2016

CLA 110.07%
Last updated December 10, 2016

D. Town Clerk – Wendi Dusablon

1. Minutes

Motion by Chris Yates to approve the minutes from July 7, 2016, as amended. The motion was seconded by Sharon Bousquet – **APPROVED**.

Motion by Chris Yates to approve the minutes from July 18, 2016, as written. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED**.

2. Dog licensing update

As of today, 7/21/16, we have licensed 799 dogs in the Town of Highgate for the calendar year 2016. There are approximately 40 more dogs and owners out there to pursue, which Vonnie (ACO) will be working on with the help of Ben (Constable) if needed. It is always the goal to have dog licensing complete before tax bills go out, which will be on August 19th.

3. Moderator vacancy & Selectboard vacancy

On July 12th we received a letter of resignation from Patrick McGovern as Moderator due to work commitments. He thanked the town for the opportunity to serve as Moderator for the past few years. Chris Yates read Pat's letter aloud. We will soon be advertising to appoint someone as Moderator for Town Meeting 2017. The Selectboard vacancy is already posted and letters of interest are being accepted until August 4th. Applicants should plan to meet with the Selectboard on Monday, August 8th.

4. Misc.

- Liza Comiskey would like the new VISTA AmeriCorps employee, Elizabeth Toohey, at HPL to have a town email address. She will be starting on August 8th. The board had no problem with this, as long as the trustees were ok with the monthly fee of \$4.00 coming from their budget. Sharon had questions about the VISTA program, as she was not on the board at the time this was discussed.

E. Town Administrator – Heidi Britch-Valenta

1. Park & Ride Grant

Heidi does not have this ready. Andy King has been out and the numbers aren't finalized yet. It has been very busy with the culvert projects and many contractors were in house on July 18th for site visits on various RFPs that have been issued.

2. Misc.

- There was a previous motion made to apply for the two grants for the Durkee Road and Tarte Road (south) culverts. Both are structures grants that now require signatures. Both are \$81,000.00 and the match will be in-kind equipment and labor. There is a grant overview in the drop box for the board to review what is open currently.
- Sand bids – these were due today and we got just one response. Chris Yates opened the bid and read it aloud – Wright's Excavating \$5.50 per yard, loaded. This issue will be tabled until Andy King is here. Sharon was curious what Andy needs for a supply. Randy believes there must be surplus from last year.

F. Selectboard Items

1. VT Gas hook up

Andy was working on the quotes and this will be tabled until he gets back.

2. Dehumidifier

Steve Shaw recommends changing out the controls and using the dew point sensors vs. relative humidity when the ice is down, and not installing the heat coil. Don Gilbert made a call to the Rochester NY facility, and Chris there said his advice was to do neither. That rink has filed litigation against the manufacturer and so has a rink in FL and WA. They don't anticipate any funding, as the company has left the country. Randy asked if they have tried the coil change – no, they have not, so we are on hold again. Richard Wilkens asked questions about the unit and potential litigation against the consultant. Don answered that a consultant was used to design the specs and we then created an RFP to those specs. At the time, according to everything provided to us, it met all of our requirements, so it should have worked. It was an \$86,000.00 project in total, and to do it again today would be over \$100,000.00. Steve Shaw is not in favor of their recommendation for the repair. Don has more for the executive session portion of the meeting.

3. Arena alarm work

Don spoke with Eric Rainville who said that by code this needs to be hooked up and that generally the programming is done by the alarm company and the wiring is done by the suppression company. In this case, the two never came together. Motion by Chris Yates to have the town hire Tyco Fire & Security for \$550.00 to hook up the alarm to the arena hood in the snack bar. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED.**

4. Electronic communications policy

Chris made note of a disclaimer that should be at the bottom of all our town email addresses which reads; *Please note that this email message, along with any responses or reply, is considered a public record, and thus, subject to disclosure under the Vermont Public Records Law (1 VSA 315-320).* We will also need to consider an email retention policy as people leave their positions with the town. Katie Davis asked to verify that we are all now using town email addresses – yes, the Selectboard, Planning Commission and DRB all now are using @highgatevt.org addresses, as well as the Public Works Director, Librarian and Fire Chief. We have also put a disclaimer on the town website regarding use of the website as a means on contacting the town; *Any communications through email or other links on this site shall in no way be deemed to constitute legal notice to the Town of Highgate, Vermont or any of its agencies, officers, employees, or representatives, with respect to any existing or potential claim or cause of action against the Town or any of its agencies, officers, employees, or representatives, where notice is required by any Federal, State, or local laws, rules, or regulations. Email to any Town of Highgate account is considered public information and may be archived, forwarded or otherwise disseminated to any source, both inside and outside the Town of Highgate systems. Email to Town staff members is assumed to be for the purpose of conducting the business of the Town of Highgate. Under Vermont law, e-mail addresses are public records. If you do not want your e-mail address released in response to a public-records request, do not send electronic mail to the Town. Instead contact us by phone or in writing. Unauthorized email, including unsolicited commercial email and email which may contain viruses or trojans, is specifically prohibited. The Town employs methods to screen email for unauthorized use, and offending messages may be returned or deleted without delivery. Email which may*

constitute a criminal act, such as that sent for the purposes of fraud or attacks on the system, as well as email which may constitute a criminal act upon an individual, may be tracked and the sender prosecuted.

5. **Selectboard Rules of Procedure**

This was taken from VLCT with some edits to suit the Town of Highgate. Chris had some questions about the public comment section of the meeting and how you address it if you have a lot of people that wish to speak. One way is to use the sign in sheet. Katie Davis asked about the fixed time limit for public comment. The draft has it set at 15 minutes, but a majority vote of the board can extend that. Lori Olds asked when these changes will go into effect. There is no waiting period, so at the next meeting if everyone is here and it is agreed upon, it will be a go. We will hopefully have a board of five members by the August 18th meeting. Chris offered anyone from the public that was present to look over the document if they wanted to. Chris will do one more amendment and we will look at this again in August and take it from there.

6. **Misc.**

- The Selectboard meeting on August 4th will be cancelled, due to lack of a quorum. This cancellation has already been published. Our next regular Selectboard meeting will be on Thursday, August 18th @ 7pm, although the board is planning to notice a special meeting on August 8th to meet with those interested in filling the open Selectboard seat.
- Chris thanked HVFD Chief, Joe Depatie, for hosting and organizing the joint training on Monday night with HVFD and AmCare. Also thank you to Chris Uzell from HVFD who is organizing the First Responder group and upcoming course. Chris Yates was asked in the community how people can help support the First Responders. They can donate to the HVFD Association to help with expenses associated with the course, associated materials, etc. Katie Davis had questions about the First Responder topic and Josh Aldrich added that you have to be licensed with the State of Vermont to respond as a First Responder.

G. **Upcoming Events**

Aug. 2	6pm	Parks & Rec. meeting @ arena
Aug. 4		SELECTBOARD MTG. – CANCELLED
Aug. 9	7am-7pm	State Primary Election @ Highgate Elem. town offices CLOSED
Aug. 11	6pm	DRB Mtg.
Aug. 18	7pm	Selectboard Mtg.
Aug. 18		TOWN CLERKS OFFICE IS CLOSED
Aug. 19		Tax bills mailed – due date Oct. 27 by 5pm
		<u>POSTMARKS NO LONGER ACCEPTED!</u>

H. **Executive Session**

Motion for the Selectboard, Town Administrator, Legal Team, DRB Chair, Town Agent and Don Gilbert to enter into executive session @ 7:46pm to discuss legal issues where premature general public knowledge could place the town or the individuals involved at a substantial disadvantage. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED**. The Selectboard went into executive session with Don Gilbert in the front office @ 7:47pm to discuss a sensitive contractual issue that may turn into a legal matter. Motion by Chris Yates to exit executive session with Don Gilbert @ 8:15pm. The motion was seconded by Sharon Bousquet – **APPROVED**. Motion by Chris Yates to go back into executive session @ 8:16pm with the Town's Legal Team, Town Agent and DRB Chair to discuss legal strategies on pending litigation where premature public knowledge could put the town at a substantial disadvantage. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED**. The DRB Chair recused himself from the discussion of a legal matter for which he was not involved and returned to executive session @ 9:10pm. Brian Monaghan left the meeting @ 9:10pm. Chris Yates recused himself from the discussion on a legal issue for which he is an interested party @ 9:11pm and returned to executive session @ 9:25pm. Ed Adrian left the meeting @ 9:45pm. Motion by Chris Yates to exit executive session @ 9:46pm. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED**.

I. **Adjournment**

Motion by Chris Yates to adjourn the meeting @ 9:50pm. The motion was seconded by Sharon Bousquet – **APPROVED**.

Respectfully submitted by,

_____ Wendi Dusablon, Highgate Town Clerk

Minutes approved by,

_____ Christopher Yates, Chair – Highgate Selectboard