

TOWN OF HIGHGATE

Selectboard Mtg.

April 2, 2015 @ 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 Jeff Towle, Chair @ 7:02pm, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Highgate Selectboard Members- Jeff Towle, Chair; Chris Yates, Vice-Chair; Diana O'Hara; Paulette Tatro; Randy Connelly

Highgate Office Staff – Wendi Dusablon - Town Clerk; Heidi Britch-Valenta – Town Admin; Tom Racine – Town Treasurer

Public / Other – Ben Lowell – Constable; Steve Bushey; Kellie Uzell; Vonnie Lamotte – ACO; Heidi Joyce – VLCT; Steve Ploof;

B. Public Comments

- Steve Bushey was present on behalf of the arena construction committee. The committee met last night and he is here to ask the board to sign another letter of intent for concrete cutting so they can get started with the removal of the floor. The committee has decided to cut and remove the concrete with an excavator, as it is the safest way to do it. They have \$25,000.00 committed to this part of the project, prior to getting a guaranteed maximum price from DEW. Once Custom Ice signs off, we have purchased a new ice system. The freon has been removed and sent out of state for testing and to see what the value of it is. There is no sense in waiting to remove the concrete if we have the people and resources to do it now. DEW will be helping to arrange the cutting. There will be more discussion on this during the Selectboard section of this meeting. The board thanked Steve for the update and they will discuss this further later on tonight.
- Kellie Uzell was present, she is a member of HVFD and was here to ask the board about letters that were sent in the last few weeks. She was wondering where the board got their information regarding employment of each member. Letters were sent in March to HVFD members and their employers thanking employers for their support of HVFD members when they have to attend calls. Kellie stated that nothing was correct in her letter and that there are a few other members on the department that are more enraged than she is. She is sure they were sent with good intent, but if the information is not accurate, it serves no purpose and does no good. Chris Yates stated that the information provided to the board was from the department, and in the letter it does not state that Kellie was present at the Machia Road fire, only that there was a recent fire. Kellie feels the letter should have been more heartfelt. Her employer information was not correct. She stated she does not work at the place that this letter was sent. The board advised Kellie to talk to the chief to get the data accuracy cleared up, to which Kellie replied she cannot talk to him and that is why she is here. Kellie added that there were other letters sent out with incorrect information and that a little harm had been done with regard to one, and we will know who that is when he comes in. Jeff thanked Kellie for attending and bringing the issue to their attention.

C. PACIF Workstrong program – Heidi Joyce, VLCT

Heidi Joyce handed out packets to the board outlining some benefits of the PACIF program through VLCT. The employee assistance program is available to employees and household members to help with short term problem solving and counseling on health issues. This program is a benefit to the Selectboard as a consultation mechanism, and can prevent some liability issues. Courses offered include; loss control programs, flagger certifications, vehicle operator certifications, free online tutorials and drug and alcohol programs. She noted that the equipment grant deadline is approaching on April 30th. There is also a

scholarship program available to take courses, and will pay up to \$2,500.00. Heidi's specialty is wellness activities to help employees stay healthy and well. The focus is on stretching. Looking at claims across the state, most are muscle pains and strains, which can be helped with a five minute warm up and stretching routine. Gentle stretching before and during the workday can help balance the muscles. When you stretch, you feel better, and very gentle stretching as part of the workplace routine will get your circulation going. Additionally, there are 30-minute wellness consultations available, and information is kept confidential. Based on the evaluation, they can offer things such as nutrition consultation, depending on what the employees needs are. There is also an ergonomics evaluation, to make sure that people are comfortable in their work stations and using good postures. Being mindful of your breathing and eating habits is also very important. The departments with the most muscle pains and strains are those such as highway crews. Some might need a gentle nudge to get involved, and these programs are available to part time employees also. Heidi Joyce is looking for at least half of the employees to participate. She is booked through May, but could set something up in the month of June. Heidi Britch-Valenta will be in touch with Heidi Joyce. The board thanked her for coming and for all the information.

D. Highway updates – Steve Ploof

- There is a lot of sweeping to do on the roads, and we need new bristles. A new set will cost \$800.00 for a mix of poly and wire, and \$100.00 for shipping. Chris asked how long the bristles last, Steve said approximately two seasons. Straight poly bristles don't work, they wear out too quickly. Jeff noted that he is getting a lot of comments about the amount of sand still on the roads. Steve likes to do it early before people get out to rake and while its still damp out so its not too dusty. There is no set time frame, it depends on the weather. Saturday morning Mike and Steve are going to sweep the school parking lot (back) for an upcoming event. Chris said he believes they are using the front lot, Steve will verify with the school tomorrow.
- Steve will get written quotes on carbide grader blades, he got verbal estimates that range from \$1,800.00 - \$3,000.00. The board asked him to get written quotes and bring them back to them.
- Heidi noted a few grants coming up for the highway department. The first grant is through AOT and needs to be signed by the board. There are two categories, *structures* and *class II roadways*. Last year we applied for money to do some blasting on Carter Hill, and we did not get that. We did not apply for a structures grant because we did not have a project coming up. Steve Ploof mentioned the widening of the Hanna Road and doing shoulder work by Kevin Spears house. Paulette asked who cut all the brush through there, Steve thinks it was Norm McAllister. Paulette noted there is quite a drop there, and with the brush gone, there is no comfort level. Steve will look into pricing for potential guardrails in that spot. Tom confirmed we have budgeted funds for guardrails. Steve said the fill coming off Route 78 can be reused on Hanna Road, for the 500-600 foot section that should be widened. Motion by Chris Yates to sign the TA60 form. Motion was seconded by Paulette Tatro – **APPROVED**. Paulette asked about the difference in some of the numbers, to which Tom replied it might have been a slight carry forward, and he will check. Heidi noted that the second part is the certification by the Selectboard that we are current with the standards recommended by the State of Vermont. We are compliant, as we adopted a Town Road and Bridge Standards Policy in 2013. The second questions is regarding highway network inventory, which we have, to a certain extent. There is concurrently an open Better Back Roads grant which we can apply for, which will get us up to \$8,000.00 for a consultant to help identify issues, such as water quality and erosion. This is all a great step forward for the capital budget process. Paulette asked how often this would need to be updated, to which Heidi answered the standards state every 1-3 years. We do have a list which Steve updated, but it is a very basic list. Jeff asked about the ancient roads, Heidi will check on that. Motion by Chris Yates to sign the certification of compliance. Motion was seconded by Jeff Towle – **APPROVED**. Heidi is prepared to submit the Carter Hill project grant. We are estimating \$120,000.00 as a starting point for that project. Motion by Jeff Towle to have Heidi submit a grant for the Carter Hill Road project. Motion was seconded by Chris Yates – **APPROVED**. Paulette asked how the figure for the match was calculated, it is estimated based on work force labor and equipment.

- Heidi will be attending the Better Back Roads workshop on April 9th. She will also be applying for the BBR grant for \$8,000.00 and is not due until May.
- Steve and the highway crew are plugging away at back roads and hauling gravel. Chris noted that the mason (Jay) is ready to come up and fix the brick work on the highway side of the municipal building that was damaged in October. The highway crew will need to move some things inside the garage. Chris also noted that the outside protective wall that Henry Rainville built for us, Jay suggested moving it inside during the repair work to keep the garage secure. The overhead door can still be used and the walk in door will be removed in that corner. Chris will call Henry to see if he is available to build the wall inside and reuse some of the material.

E. ACO updates – Vonnice Lamotte

1. Draft job description – ACO

The board would like more time to review it.

2. Update on dog issues

Vonnice has hit the ground running as our new ACO for the Town of Highgate. She has had four instances since she took over the third week of March.

- Loose dog running around by the library, which she could not locate, but believes it came from Lamkin Street.
- Follow up on a previous hearing on the huskies owned by Brandy Gardner. The two huskies have been re-homed, she is keeping just one.
- Complaint on William Road (off Machia Road) regarding a rental unit with 7 large dogs that run free and getting into people trash etc. Vonnice has spoken with the neighbors, but is having issues reaching the dog owners. She will try to reach the homeowner, David Machia, also. She will have Ben Lowell accompany her, because there was an earlier issue of a neighbor shooting off a gun to scare the dogs off. In the process, Vonnice found a total of 11 unlicensed dogs (3 separate homes) just from this one phone call. Wendi has sent flyers / letters to each owner about licensing them, and Wendi will continue to follow up until they come in.
- Complaint on Ballard Road regarding two stray dogs and one was being held in the callers garage until the ACO could get there. Vonnice was not reachable, so Wendi called Kristy who responded to the call. The other dog had gone home, the dog quarantined in the garage had a tag and lived right on Ballard Road also. Both dogs belong to the same owner. Kristy talked to the owner about a possible run for the dogs, as her property is not very level for a fence.

Vonnice asked the board if they would consider boarding of picked up dogs at Kristy's home vs. bringing them to the FCHS right away. Kristy can provide insurance and proof that she is licensed to do so. Her house is under deposit so she will be moving, so we will have to wait until after that process is complete. Kristy would be available seven days per week, the FCHS is not open every day, and this could save the town some money. Chris asked if this would adhere to our ordinance. Heidi believes that the Health Officer manual and our ordinance do allow the ACO to determine where a dog will be kenneled, so there is some leeway to establish an alternative site. We also have kennels, so it was the intent previously to have the ACO kennel dogs to some extent. Chris is fine with it as long as it falls within our ordinance. The board will look over the job description and get back to Vonnice. The deadline to license dogs was yesterday, April 1st. Wendi will be sending out reminder / delinquent notices tomorrow, April 3rd. The fees are now \$18 and \$22. The date to respond is April 15th and then Vonnice will be knocking on doors. After May 1st, municipal tickets will be issued in addition to licensing fees. Vonnice and Kristy are collaborating together. If Wendi can't reach Vonnice, she calls Kristy, which so far has worked well. Jeff noted on the WCAX news they had run a story about dog licensing in Vermont and the April 1st deadline.

F. Town Treasurer – Tom Racine

1. Pay bills

Vermont Gas called recently looking for a current listing of our road inventory (list of private and public roads), which Tom sent to them. Paulette asked about the Xerox payment, which is a monthly payment for the land records software system we use. Tom explained how we apply recording fees, \$10.00 per page is broken down as follows; \$6.00 in the general fund, \$2.00 in the computerization fund and \$2.00 in the preservation fund. The monthly Xerox

bill is covered from the money in the computerization fund. Paulette also asked about the payment to MVR, which is monthly and equates to \$120,000.00 per year.

2. Auditors proposal

Fred Duplessis is our current auditor with Sullivan & Powers. The proposed fee arrangement for 2015, 2016 and 2017 is approximately \$18,000.00 per year. Tom thought that a three year contract would soften the cost, but no. They have more stringent requirements than in years past. Rather than going out to bid, since they completed our first audit, if the board is not comfortable with spanning three years, we could ask for a single year quote first. Paulette would have thought that our first audit would have been the most expensive. They did our most recent audit in September 2014, which was our first outside audit since Tom has been treasurer here. Fred will hopefully be here on April 16th to go over our most recent audit with the board. Heidi asked for clarification on if we had an audit or a compilation. We most recently had an audit, prior to that we had completed a compilation. This was done in the event that we were successful with the Tri-Town bond vote we would have needed the compilation for the bond bank. Jeff feels it makes sense for Sullivan & Powers to do our next audit, and if all goes well we could contract with them for longer. Paulette asked about the dollar amount required for us to seek bids. It is \$5,000.00 by policy, but there are no state driven statute requirements. Tom will ask Fred to bring a one year proposal with him when he visits with the board. Paulette noticed there was no commitment on their part to when a first draft would be available. She would like to see a commitment on how long it will take them to get us a draft.

3. Misc.

- Tablets – Heidi shared with Matt Bouchard what the board had discussed. Tom recommends that if the board is leaning towards the Apple operating system, we should be pricing out at a minimal capacity of the device. Anything to cut costs will be helpful. If we use the drop box, we don't need all the memory space on the device. Apple does do government pricing, and Small Dog is doing 20% off for their 20th year. Tom will look into it.
- Treasurer position – Heidi reminded the board that Tom has limited time left here and that we need to come up with a job description and a shorter piece for the advertisement of the job. Tom pulled some verbiage off the VLCT website and from other towns. The language needs to be massaged a little bit. Tom noted that the treasurer position is allowed to have an assistant that would act more in a bookkeeping capacity and the treasurer would be the administering elected official. By Vermont statute, the treasurer needs to be a resident of the town. That limits the scope of who can apply. In the event that the applications we receive are limited, we could look at more of a bookkeeping position with the elected treasurer position being somewhat different in nature. This would only be if we have a hard time finding the right person who is a Highgate resident. Paulette asked for clarification that the treasurer position would be elected and the bookkeeper position would be appointed – yes. It isn't clear to Tom if we need to go in that direction, if the appointment would be by the treasurer or the Selectboard. The advantage would be widening the pool of applicants, but we could have several qualified applicants come forward who are residents of Highgate. We won't know until we advertise. From a timing perspective, we should get it posted next week for two weeks, which would bring us to early May to schedule interviews. Allowing someone to give a two – three week notice at their current job, they could be job shadowing with Tom in the month of June. Tom and Jeff were comfortable with the timing. On a personal note, Tom's property in town and the property in MA are both scheduled to tentatively close during the month of May. Paulette asked where we would advertise the job. It will be posted in various locations around town, on the website, on the FB page, in the St. Albans Messenger and possibly County Courier, and on Front Porch Forum. The "grapevine" or word of mouth will also be a way to get the word out. VLCT does job posting listings for towns also. Randy asked if we would be appointing a treasurer until the next election. Yes, whomever is appointed would need to run for a three-year term at Town Meeting in 2016. We need to form a hiring committee, which should include Tom, Wendi and Heidi, as well as a few Selectboard members. Chris confirmed, whomever we appoint for treasurer will also be appointed as the Delinquent Tax Collector. Yes, there was a legislative change allowing the treasurer to also collect delinquent taxes. Keeping the DTC process in house

works well. Tom will have the language for the job posting ready next week and forward to the board for approval.

G. Town Clerk – Wendi Dusablon

1. Minutes from March 19th

Motion by Chris Yates to approve the minutes from March 19, 2015, as written. Motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED**. Paulette noted that this is not a correction, but what was said as it pertains to the ice making system being installed at the arena was not what was intended. We were under the impression when we did the upgrade to tonnage that it would remain a scroll compressor, and it is actually a screw compressor. To clarify the minutes from March 19th, it is a screw compressor.

2. Dog update

It has been a very busy week here. As of the end of the day on April 1st, we have licensed 527 dogs on time in the Town of Highgate. Compared to 2014, we ended the day April 1st at 484, so we are ahead of last year, which is great! Wendi ran some numbers, and there are still 319 dogs unlicensed for 2015. This number is based on what is already in our system and also a list of people we know have dogs that have never licensed them. She will be sending out delinquent notices / reminders tomorrow, April 3rd on all of these dogs. Vonnie has asked for a reply by April 15th, which Wendi will put on the notices. Fees are now \$18 or \$22, which will also be noted on the notices going out. There will be some who no longer have their dogs, or their dogs have passed away, but we don't know unless we are notified by the dog owner. Wendi also had prepared the annual dog warrant for the board to sign. Motion by Chris Yates to sign the annual dog warrant for Vonnie Lamotte, ACO, and Kristy Brow, 1st Alternate ACO for the Town of Highgate. Motion was seconded by Paulette Tatro – **APPROVED**.

3. Kraft Hockeyville update

We will not have the official word until April 11th if we have been deemed a TOP TEN FINALIST in the Kraft Hockeyville USA 2015 competition. The nomination round ended on March 18th at 11:59pm. We ended the nomination round 2nd in the country for number of nominations, with 2,339. We were surpassed in the final hours by a facility in Johnstown, PA, who had a total of 2,471 nominations. This was a tremendous accomplishment for our little community to rally and come up with these kinds of numbers! If we are placed in the top 10, the next round of voting will be April 14-16, and you can vote by PHONE, TEXT, or ONLINE – up to 50 times per day, per method. So you could really vote 150 times per day! As soon as we hear, Wendi will circulate the information ASAP, fingers are crossed for the Highgate Sports Arena. Being in the top 10 guarantees us \$20,000.00 in arena renovations, and potentially more, depending on how we would do in the voting rounds!

4. Liquor licenses – Tyler Place & My-T-Fine II

Motion by Chris Yates to exit the regular meeting @ 8:30pm and enter the liquor control board. Motion was seconded by Jeff Towle – **APPROVED**. Jeff Towle recused himself from this first application from the Tyler Place. Motion by Chris Yates to approve the outside consumption permit for the Tyler Place. Motion was seconded by Diana O'Hara – **APPROVED**. Note: this is a second outside consumption permit for the Tyler Place, that was approved by the board last year also. Motion by Jeff Towle to approve the application from the My-T-Fine II. Motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED**. Motion by Jeff Towle to re-enter the regular Selectboard Meeting @ 8:33pm. Motion was seconded by Chris Yates – **APPROVED**.

H. Town Administrator – Heidi Britch-Valenta

1. BBR workshop

As mentioned earlier, Heidi will be attending this on April 9th. Chris asked if Steve Ploof will also be attending. Heidi will ask him.

2. Misc.

- The scholarship grant through PACIF was submitted. This would cover costs for a consultant to do specific training with the fire department and some restructuring.
- The equipment grant is offered to any department in a town for any equipment that will reduce loss. The focus for this will be for a security system at the arena for interior and exterior cameras, with a focus on the back of the building. They have three separate quotes and the grant is good for \$2,500.00 and would cover half the cost. MAHA would like to ensure there are no further thefts or vandalism over there. Paulette asked if any of the systems would

allow administrative review of the information off site. Yes, the quote from Bouchard can allow you to review remotely. Motion by Chris Yates to have Jeff Towle sign the 2015 PACIF equipment grant for a security system at the Highgate Sports Arena. Motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED**. There is currently a very basic system in place from Black Dog. We just have to apply for the grant tonight, and not choose a system. Jeff asked if all the companies were given the same opportunity on the bid. There is no official RFP. Don Gilbert dealt with each individual quote. Chris noted on the third quote that it was 7 cameras, and the other two have 8 cameras.

- Heidi has some thank you letters to send to some former board members, which the board signed.
- Heidi noted some things under upcoming events that she had added.

I. Selectboard items

1. HVFD van

Chris said the van has been stripped of everything that they want to save. Originally they wanted to cut the side panels off and save the painted murals. They have changed their minds as a department, and will no longer be taking them off. They are suggesting to give the van back to the board and allow it to be disposed of. Motion by Chris Yates to have the fire chief bring the van to Hodgdon's and return the check to the town treasurer. Motion was seconded by Jeff Towle – **APPROVED**.

2. Misc.

- Motion by Chris Yates to sign the letter of intent for DEW to contract a concrete cutting company to cut the arena floor into 3' x 7' sections, with a cost not to exceed \$27,500.00. Motion was seconded by Paulette Tatro – **APPROVED**. It was noted that the amount differs slightly because the amount of \$27,500.00 is in the DEW budget. Jeff clarified, it will be cut into 3' x 7' chunks and will be moved with an excavator, fork lift / skid steer, and put into our town trucks to haul them off or stack them outside, so we can get the frost out of the floor. Paulette also added that this is only the concrete where the ice surface is, not the entire concrete floor throughout the facility. There will also be a header trench from the mechanical room out to the ice surface, per Chris. Jeff also would like to see the entire process documented on film. It would be great to have a time lapse video of the entire process.
- Hazard Mitigation Grant – Jeff met with Denise Smith in Highgate Springs about potential erosion projects. Missisquoi Bay is a critical area where some projects will need to be done. He lives in that area and is familiar with it. Denise has someone from AmeriCorp and Alesha from Franklin Watershed also available to help. We will put in for a grant for the boat launch area for erosion control and culvert issues. They will be in contact with the board after some legislation hopefully passes, and starting in July we can work towards completing some projects.
- Heidi noted that at 4:30pm on April 7th, Steve Bushey has arranged for North West Access TV (channel 15) to be at the arena. They are asking people to share their comments about the arena and they will put a nice video promotion together for us on the arena project. There will also be an arena fundraising committee meeting following that at 6:00pm on April 7th at the Municipal Building.
- The boards have been removed from the arena and are up for bid. Specifications are: 185' x 86' with 29' radius. Wood with steel frame, mixed tempered glass and plexiglass, age 35 years, condition is fine, selling AS IS, transportation will be the bidders responsibility. Inspection of the boards is by appointment, 868-4697 x3 to set up. To submit a bid, place your bid in writing including full name, organization if applicable, day and evening phone numbers, email if applicable, address and desired bid amount, along with any other information that may assist in the decision making process, in a sealed envelope. Postmark or hand delivered to the Highgate Town Clerks Office by April 14th at 4pm. All bids will be opened at the Selectboard meeting on April 16th. Late submission will not be considered. Preference will be given to community service organizations. All decisions of the committee are final. Mail bids to: Highgate Arena Construction Committee, c/o Boards For Sale, PO Box 189, Highgate Center, VT 05459. The submitter of the winning bid will have two weeks from the date of notification to arrange payment and to receive the boards. Failure to do so will void the bid, and the second bid will be notified. Payment must be made in cash, certified check, money order or other verifiable form of payment.

J. Upcoming Events

April 8	6pm	Selectboard Mtg. with St. Albans Dispatching
April 9	6pm	DRB Mtg.
April 9,10,11		MVU Musical "SHREK"
April 11	11:30-2pm	Cailey's Closet at Highgate Public Library – free prom dress swap
April 16	7pm	Selectboard Mtg. – mini pumper bids, ADA planning Grant Hearing
April 21	6pm	PC Mtg.
May 7	7pm	Selectboard Mtg. – ANR, Buzz Surwillo, Casella – TDSRS
May 9	8-1pm	Household Hazardous Waste Day @ Transfer Station

K. Executive Session

Motion by Jeff Towle to enter executive session @ 8:50pm for a legal matter, personnel issue and contract. Motion was seconded by Chris Yates – **APPROVED.**

Motion by Chris Yates to exit executive session @ 10:38pm. Motion was seconded by Jeff Towle – **APPROVED.**

L. Adjournment

Motion by Jeff Towle to adjourn the meeting @ 10:40pm. Motion was seconded by Chris Yates – **APPROVED.**

Respectfully submitted by,

_____ Wendi Dusablon, Highgate Town Clerk

Minutes approved by,

_____ Jeff Towle, Chair – Highgate Selectboard