

# TOWN OF HIGHGATE

## Selectboard Mtg.

October 20, 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 @ 7:00pm. Chris asked for a moment of silence in remembrance of six Vermont teenagers who lost their lives in tragic accidents over the past few weeks, including one in our own community. This was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Highgate Selectboard Members** – Chris Yates, Chair; Sharon Bousquet, Vice-Chair; Randy Connelly; Josh LaRocque; Bruce Butler (arrived @ 7:08pm)

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

**Public / Other** – Jean Chevalier; John Patnode; Karen Fortin; Karen St. Lawrence; Daniel Nadeau; Alice S. Cota; Josh Aldrich; Debbie Roberts; Walter Krul – AmCare; Eric Chevalier; Denise Juaiere; Kellie Uzell; Rich Wilkens; Eric Bessette; Kelly Rainville; Sandra Stone; Janice Smith; George Greenwood; Bethany Remmers – NRPC; Meagan Gilmore; Ben Lowell – Constable; Katie Davis; David Rouse; Don Gilbert; David Desorcie; Greg Lamoureux – County Courier

#### B. Public Comments

None

#### C. AmCare Update – Walter Krul

Walt was given a list of questions in advance of this evening. Walt responded to the questions, followed by questions from the board, and then the public. Everyone was asked to be respectful with no side comments or remarks. Anyone showing any level of disrespect would be asked to be removed from the meeting. Chris thanked Walt for being here. Walt thanked the board for inviting him, noting they have been in service in Highgate since July 1<sup>st</sup> and they have had lots of positive feedback from our community. The list of questions given covered topics such as: an update on their experience in Highgate thus far; any problems, concerns and successes; staffing; call volume; response times; mutual aid; winter concerns; staging; expanding number of paramedics; first responders and more. AmCare is covering contact sporting events at MVU and will soon be at the arena as well. They are working closely with the HVFD and expanding their capabilities. There have not been any “problems” but there have been situations that were unnerving to his staff. They have been followed by residents, been photographed and confronted about their certification levels and why they have been staged in certain areas of town. Walt does not consider anything they do a success. In their profession they work towards goals and benchmarks. They have met with the Tyler Place management and staff, as well as with Customs & Border Patrol and the MVU Athletic Department. The coverage at MVU sporting events is not an additional charge. AmCare will also be having a meeting with the arena staff as well now that hockey season is gearing up. AmCare and HVFD have met on a few occasions. The fire chief has been very gracious towards AmCare and held an open house event here for a face-to-face hands on training. The focus should always be on the patient, so working together and having it be second nature is how it should be. A first responder course started in Highgate and they are about half way through the course. This is exciting to see the enthusiasm here. David Desorcie added that they have wanted to do this for years, and with MVR it was not allowed to happen. The next step will be to form a first responder squad in Highgate. With regard to staffing, AmCare has a crew in town now 14 hours per day, up from 8-9 hours per day earlier this summer. Walt stated that they have four more staff members currently in the paramedic program, which is a huge commitment. AmCare provided paramedic coverage at Franklin County Field Days this year. MVR was on site as well. AmCare is now a member of the Franklin County Special Response Team, which is a coalition of local law enforcement agencies. Walt explained warm zone trainings and what that means. EMS is a function of the health care system –referring to the “Do No Harm” motto they live and work by. EMS workers are trained to not make situations worse, so they are in a position to

still help others. They have a heightened awareness of what is going on around them. All AmCare staff go through training regarding operating in the warm zone. Call volume in Highgate has averaged 10-15 calls per month, which is in line with other communities who have a similar population. Average response times were just over 11 minutes in Highgate, and since extending the coverage in Highgate to 14 hours per day, response times are now just over 8 minutes. These response times are in line with what they would expect in a rural community. There has been concern about AmCare passing by a location and having to turn around. Walt does not have an answer for why that would happen, other than the location not being clearly marked. He encouraged everyone to have 3" reflective address numbers visible from the road. Most are placed on a mailbox. AmCare shares resources with other agencies also. Eric Bessette thanked Walt and AmCare for the assistance they gave his daughter regarding the home birth of his granddaughter. HVFD also responded to that call and were very involved. To see a life come into the world is very rewarding and exciting. Response times are an emotional topic and are relative in rural Vermont. EMS agencies have to be very adaptive and use the resources available. There will be exceptions to every scenario. There are situations where every single squad finds themselves not able to keep up. By the same token, there are some that have just one crew, or no crew. One call can take some services out of operation, so it is all relative. Walt elaborated more on response times and the use of mutual aid. MVR now uses Alburgh as their backup. That is now their policy, which isn't good or bad or a judgement, it is now their policy and what they have decided to do. Alburgh is a good squad, a volunteer squad, and they typically respond from home. They have responded into Swanton as backup for MVR with response times of 20-30 minutes. People may look at that as outrageous, but it is a matter of resources. All are trained crews, everyone is on the same page and on the same team, regardless of where they respond from. Walt touched on the issue of people deciding to forego the 911 system and call their EMS provider of choice directly. The results of that are already being seen. It is understandable that these are our loved ones and we want the best for them, but when you go outside the system, you are breaking it down. This disrupts the system which is an integrated chain and can jeopardize the bigger system. The results of this are longer response times to get an ambulance on scene. When you exit the 911 system it fragments things and extends response times. This is bypassing a higher level of care that is already in town. There were more questions about mutual aid. Walt noted that who to call for mutual aid is always up to the crew chief or dispatch. Josh Aldrich referred to a recent incident on US Route 7 in Highgate Springs, asking if MVR should have been called. Greg Lamoureaux asked about pre-planning and protocol regarding situations like this. Walt answered that you don't always have all the information and people associate a building with EMS calls. A lot of bays have no one in them at the time. Kelly Rainville had some questions about AmCare responding from Sheldon. Chris pointed out that AmCare does have a bay in Sheldon, but Amcare is a dynamic service that moves around, again pointing out that they are already in Highgate 14 hours per day with an ambulance and a staffed crew. Kelly pointed out that with a dynamic service nobody knows where you are. It was pointed out that AmCare does not operate on the same frequency as MVR. We may know that MVR is in close range, but not know if they are in their bay or available to take a call. The latitude is left up to AmCare crew chiefs and they make the best judgement call they can with the information and resources available to them. There was some discussion on AmCare covering MVU. The MVU campus is almost entirely in Highgate. Only the southernmost portion of the driveway and lawn are in Swanton. Walt addressed a rumor that there was a theft from an ambulance on the MVU campus. He is not aware of any theft at MVU or anywhere else. Walt was asked how many paramedics he has on his staff. There are 7 paramedics, 6 full time and 1 part time. He also has 4 more currently in the paramedic program, 2 full time at Vermont Tech, 1 in a Massachusetts program and 1 in a South Carolina program. There are 2 or 3 on each shift and each shift is generally 24 hours. They may have up to 4 paramedics on a day or weekend shift. There is not necessarily a paramedic on every crew. The process to certify as a paramedic is a long arduous process, taking 1 - 1.5 years to complete. It is a very involved and expensive process. With winter approaching AmCare does not necessarily stage in the area of I89. They have been around for almost 30 years and base their staffing on historical data and anticipated call volume. Peak call volume is actually in the summer months. There was concern about AmCare being spread too thin in the winter months. John Patnode asked if AmCare planned to expand their number of ambulances and staff. This is a topic they deal with constantly. They have daily

staff meetings at shift changes. They are also always talking about improvements to buildings, vehicles and infrastructure. Technology is always improving, making it hard to keep up with constant upgrades. They will continue to expand as they see necessary. They have already increased their hours of operation in Highgate and are always reevaluating the need for new crew members. The Sheldon bay is staffed 24/7 as well. Walt noted that local business have been very kind to AmCare in the transition to coverage here. Walt does not dictate where crews stage in town, he leaves that up to each crew chief. He also encourages them to take advantage of any opportunity to be productive in the community. There have been no difficulties working with MVR. AmCare works with all squads, not just MVR, and have for almost 30 years. Katie Davis asked how far away the system is from dispatch contacting the closest provider. She would be relieved to know that she has options close to home. Walt has no answer for this, this is a much larger issue. David Rouse commented that with regard to mutual aid, it's always better for more personnel to show up to a call, than to not have enough. David Desorcie stated that HVFD cannot hear AmCare's calls. He feels the board did not do their homework with this transition with regard to setting that up ahead of time. The decision was made by the fire chief to not change the frequency right away. That transition will have to take place before the end of the first responder training, however. This is a quick and easy fix when HVFD is ready, and Walt would like to have the blessing of the chief first. Jean Chevalier did not have any questions, she said that all her questions had been answered already. Sue Cota is back to where she was 10 months ago – it's still about response time – it's crucial. Denise Juairé also voiced concern about response times. Kellie Uzell pointed out that when the first responders are finished with their training, chances are they will get to you in a short amount of time, which is a big benefit. Sharon thanked all those that are volunteering as part of the first responder program. It is a big commitment. David Desorcie again stated that Highgate has wanted this for over 10 years, and it is finally happening. Eric Bessette was a big opponent of AmCare servicing the Town of Highgate, but now he sees both sides of it. He added that while out at camp he has seen responses times up to 22 minutes with MVR. John Patnode asked for clarification on the number of crews on duty vs. the number of towns they cover. They have 4 crews on duty covering 6 towns. John also asked how AmCare can improve their service in Highgate over the next 3 years. Walt is hoping the community will tell him. AmCare is able to staff here in Highgate and they are doing it. They continue to evaluate additional staff needs, it does not happen at a particular time, it is a continual event. Kelly Rainville asked if another ambulance would be added. Walt pointed out that they already have more ambulances than staffed crews. Kelly also had questions about where the crews stationed in Highgate are staging. It is typically on the western end of town between Joey's Jct. and the interstate, generally. David Desorcie added that Walt is a business man. He has enough staffing to afford one of them to teach the first responder class, which is on his own time. Highgate does have a dedicated ambulance, and they are present in our town. David also said that as a business man, Walt isn't going to purchase another ambulance and add more staff that the numbers aren't showing is necessary, because he will lose money and he needs to make a living. Kelly Rainville answered that we are not in this to make a living for him. David further stated that the decision has been made, we are living with it and making better things happen from what some might call a bad decision. They are here 14 hours per day and we will also be increasing coverage by adding first responders in the near future. Josh LaRocque's concern is that we are vulnerable if AmCare is called away. That is why there is mutual aid and first responders. Sue Cota asked Walt if AmCare has a contract with the town of Georgia – yes, they do. She stated that she called the town of Georgia and was told no. Daniel Nadeau commented that issues are arising from people opting not to use 911 and use AmCare. There were questions if Amcare would have enough staffing to cover Swanton. That is not an issue, MVR covers Swanton. Debbie Roberts voiced concern about calling 911 and people who have Swanton mailing addresses and the confusion that may or does cause. She lives near the airport and they have cell phones, not land lines. Chris thanked everyone for a civil meeting and thanked Walt for attending.

#### **D. Library Update – Karen Fortin**

##### **1. MPG – Library Feasibility Study for signature**

Karen Fortin, library trustee / chair, and Bethany Remmers from NRPC were present, as well as Meagan Gilmore, library trustee / secretary. Karen recapped a list of library happenings which included the XC program, Fun Run,

Story Hours, High Five Campaign, Story Time Yoga in Swanton, Pre School Traveling Backpack Program, STEM activities, Magic Tree House Adventure club, STEM Robotics After School Program, Gardening program, and the upcoming Harvest Dinner, Highgate PTKO Trunk or Treat and Campfire Stories. There will be trick or treating at the HVFD and HPL on October 31<sup>st</sup> from 5pm – 7pm. The library also hosts tutoring sessions, family visits, and space for NCSS workers with their clients. CCV students and the Visiting Nurse Program also use the computers at the library. There has been a big spike in users at the library using computers to apply for jobs. Since last June the trustees have put a lot of effort into working towards a municipal planning grant. Karen listed a timeline of events that have lead to this point where they are asking the Selectboard to sign a resolution for a municipal planning grant to work towards a new or larger space for the public library. It's unclear if the space we have can be reworked to fit our needs, but the trustees are open to any and all suggestions and want to have done all their research before going to the voters. The trustees are meeting Nov. 2 and Dec. 7 and invite anyone to participate who wishes to become part of the process. Karen requested that the lines of communication between the Planning Commission and Selectboard regarding this topic all go through her. Bethany Remmers spoke about the process and the next logical step is to seek the expertise of a feasibility study to help us get where we need to be. This will include architectural services and planning services. This will provide conceptual layouts of what they need for space to provide programming and continue to grow the library. Bethany has received one quote so far of \$20,000.00 which is in line with her thinking. She is still waiting on another quote. Anything above \$8,000.00 has a 33% match. So at \$20,000.00 the library would have a \$4,000.00 match. This would go out to bid. The match cannot be in-kind, it is a cash match. Payment could be expected July 1<sup>st</sup> which would be next fiscal year and could be budgeted for. The end result would be plans and a tangible product, even if the project doesn't move forward immediately. Rich Wilkens spoke to the importance of having a plan and looking to the future. It was noted that this would be a conceptual plan, not a finished product. Tonight they are looking for permission to apply for the grant. The \$4,000.00 match would be a budget line item, not in the CIP, because it is under \$5,000.00. John Patnode asked for clarification on what this grant will cover. The \$20,000.00 would cover looking at our existing facility as well as building a new one. John did not feel our current building should be considered because it just doesn't have enough space. It was pointed out that some people may feel our due diligence was not done if we don't look at all the options. Katie Davis is very passionate about our library and wants this to be thorough and transparent. Shelley asked if the VISTA employee at HPL was for one year or more. They are looking at three years with that program, which this year cost the town \$6,000.00, so those funds can't be reallocated next year to cover this grant. It was asked if the public library could integrate with the school library. The school library is for K-6 only. HPL is no longer just about the books, it is moving towards being a community center and providing more services. David Desorcie asked questions and had more comments about process. Bruce Butler appreciates the comments and added that his experience in the town of Johnson gives him a different outlook on this. There they also worked towards a new library, which lead to more projects like a senior center. By doing the work for a planning grant they qualified for other things and reaped other benefits for the town. He further stated that the return on the original investment was substantial. David Desorcie also commented on when the municipal complex and arena were built in the late 1970's and that MAHA does a great job at the arena. John Patnode doesn't want to see the town spend money foolishly. Chris does not want to step on the toes of the trustees by editing their request. Motion by Bruce Butler to sign the resolution for a municipal planning grant for the Highgate Public Library. The motion was seconded by Sharon Bousquet – **APPROVED**. There were questions about Polar Express tickets. No information is being released yet. Liza is part of the first responder course, it will be very beneficial to have her trained and at the library.

**E. Town Treasurer Updates – Shelley Laroche**

- The tax sale has been postponed – date to be announced. The list has come down quite a bit and people still can come in any time to make arrangements or pay in full.

- Sharon asked about the Elwood property and the total cost. The total, including legal fees, looks to be in the \$30,000.00 range. A lien will be placed on the property when the town has been given permission to sell the property. This sale will be separate from any tax sale and there will be no redemption period.
- Tax payments are coming in steadily – the due date is Oct. 27<sup>th</sup> by 5pm.
- Shelley would like to start budgeting in early December. She will meet with other departments prior to coming to the Selectboard. She will fine tune the process from last year. The Planning Commission will be coming to the Nov. 3<sup>rd</sup> Selectboard meeting to get the ball rolling and chat about the CIP and Open House.

**F. Town Clerk Updates – Wendi Dusablon**

- Motion by Chris Yates to approve the minutes from October 6, 2016, with one edit. The motion was seconded by Josh LaRocque – **APPROVED**.
- The General Election is Nov. 8<sup>th</sup> at Highgate Elementary School. Polls will be open 7am – 7pm for voting. Absentee voting is going strong, with 220+ ballots being sent out already. Absentee ballots can be requested right up until Nov. 7<sup>th</sup>. They must be returned by 7pm on Nov. 8<sup>th</sup>. The deadline to register to vote is Wednesday, Nov. 2<sup>nd</sup> by 5pm. This is a very busy time between tax payments and the election.

**G. Administrator Items – Heidi Britch-Valenta**

- 1. AOT paving grant for signature**  
Motion by Chris Yates to sign the Class II paving grant for \$175,000.00. The motion was seconded by Josh LaRocque – **APPROVED**.
- 2. RSG grant amendment for signature**  
This is a sub grant within the Lamkin Street sidewalk project for the consultant doing the design. Several things were thrown into this at the last minute, including a safety study on the corner where a large solar project may be coming in. This lead to another discussion about the corner and relocating a crosswalk. This is basically taking funds from within the grant and shifting them to the planning process. It is an extra expense but important to make our first crosswalk something people can live with and not put the wrong spot. Chris has not reviewed this entirely yet and would like to bring it back for the next Selectboard meeting on Nov. 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- 3. Open House update**  
Nov. 15<sup>th</sup> from 5pm – 7pm. The PC will be at the next Selectboard meeting Nov. 3<sup>rd</sup> and there is more information in the drop box. The flyer is seen below.



**Town of Highgate  
OPEN HOUSE**

\* Sidewalks \* ADA Compliance  
\* Capital Improvement Plan

\*Tour the building ~ Fire Dept, Public Works Dept. & Municipal Offices ~ We need and value your feedback

**November 15th**

**5pm - 7pm**

Join us for snacks & refreshments!  
Hear and see more about town projects!

**Highgate Municipal Building**  
2996 Vermont Route 78  
Highgate Center

Thank you to our local businesses that donated: Desorais Market, Joey's Jr., Highgate Bakery, Highgate Irving, Sweetie Pies, The Traveling Chef



#### 4. LVRT update

We have received an invite to their annual meeting on Nov. 9<sup>th</sup> in Jeffersonville 5:30pm – 8:00pm. They are interested in connecting with Highgate. This spring our section will be completed. They are working on a marketing plan to connect with local stores and businesses. Sharon added that JP Sicard did a fabulous job on the washout sites.

### H. Selectboard Items

#### 1. **Hempyard Road – Airport request**

We have a request from the FC Airport to close off their section of land on Hempyard Road that is used illegally by cars, ATVs, etc. It is a federal offense to be on airport property without permission. It was a Class IV road, but a previous board changed the classification of the section at the airport to discontinued and the section from Frontage Road to the airport is a legal trail. AOT has no issues with it. Our attorney said we have no reason to tell them to stop, it is their own property and the road is discontinued. They want to place jersey barriers and AOT employees will do the work. Randy expressed concern for people going through there being unaware of the change, not knowing it's closed. Reflective paint could be used. We will send along our concerns.

#### 2. **Land donation discussion**

Last Friday, Chris and Josh walked the property and looked at the building. There is a large pile of sand that Andy looked at. The building is just a shell, but the roofline is square and structurally good. It could be used for storage with minimal investment to secure it. The sand pile is good quality washed sand and there is 15-20 years worth of sand there that the town could use, which will more than offset the cost of any lost tax revenue. We could not sell it without a permit, but we can use it. Sharon asked how we can enforce the laws for others but not enforce them for the town? If we are given the property, we can use the sand that was extracted with a permit. There would be no conflicts. If we were to try to sell it for profit, we would need a state permit to do so. There is also a 4-5 acre parcel on the corner of Frontage Rd. and Hempyard Rd. that is flat and dry and developable. We could sell it, market it, or build on it. The other two properties are essentially useless. One idea was to give the furthest point to the airport to square up their property line. The school also looked at the land and building. They are interested in using the space for composting and growing vegetables, etc. There is enough room for the town and school to co-exist on the usable space there. It would not cost much to add chain link fence to close off the area and protect our assets. The recommendation from the negotiating committee is to look at accepting this donation. A Phase One Environmental Study will be done and Kirt Mayland will clean up the tires and shingles that have been dumped there. Chris will tell Kirt to have the study done and the property surveyed. The town will look at giving that piece to the airport. There is another section that is a "party" spot that is of concern. There is a gate there and that could be used to slow the problem.

#### 3. **Police coverage options**

This discussion stemmed from a previous discussions regarding the need for more investigative work in town and what options we would have. Now is the time for this discussion if we want to present something to our voters in March. Sheriff Norris was present for this discussion this evening. There are many things that can be done but he needs to know what we are looking for, how many hours and funding we would want to designate towards it. Adding additional patrols in Highgate (not split with Sheldon) would be advantageous to us, as Highgate is a very large area. Community involvement is key, and can curb some of the activity. This discussion will continue in executive session with Sheriff Norris.

#### 4. **Misc.**

- Don Gilbert was present for a few quick items. The invoice for \$412.00 for the fry-o-lator at the arena needs to be paid. Don said there was resistance from the town to pay it, but the kitchen appliances are ours and we maintain them. Heidi clarified, there was no resistance to pay the invoice. Don will get the bill to Shelley and it will be paid.
- MAHA would like to issue Highgate residents a card to present at the arena for a discount. They would like the cards issued by the clerk's office and the residents will present the card to MAHA for their discount. For example, a seasons pass for public skating for a family is typically \$50.00, and will be \$40.00 for a Highgate resident who has this card. Wendi will work on this over

the next few days. This is a way to give Highgate residents a break on fees, vs. residents from other towns who use the arena.

- Eric Bessette expressed concern over the speeding on St. Armand Road.

**I. Upcoming Events**

Oct. 27	by 5pm	Property taxes are due – postmarks no longer accepted
Oct. 31		Trick or Treat at HPL and HVFD
Nov. 2	by 5pm	Last day to register to vote
Nov. 3	7pm	Selectboard Mtg.
Nov. 8	7am-7pm	General Election @ Highgate Elementary School
Nov. 10	6pm	DRB Mtg.
Nov. 11		Municipal Offices CLOSED – Veterans Day
Nov. 15	5-7pm	Municipal Open House Event
Nov. 24/25		Municipal Offices CLOSED – Thanksgiving Holiday

**J. Executive Session**

Motion by Chris Yates for the Selectboard to enter into executive session @ 10:07pm with the Sheriff and Town Administrator to discuss contracts and real estate where premature general public knowledge could place the town and the individuals involved at a substantial disadvantage. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED**.

Motion by Chris Yates to exit executive session @ 11:08pm. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED**.

**K. Adjournment**

Motion by Chris Yates to adjourn the meeting @ 11:09pm. The motion was seconded by John LaRocque – **APPROVED**

Respectfully submitted by,

\_\_\_\_\_ Wendi Dusablon, Highgate Town Clerk

Minutes approved by,

\_\_\_\_\_ Christopher Yates, Chair – Highgate Selectboard