TOWN OF HIGHGATE
Planning Commission
& Sidewalk Committee Mtg.

April 19, 2016 @ 6pm

Approved Minutes

NOTE: All actions taken are unanimous unless otherwise stated.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Woodbury Rouse opened up the meeting @ 6:07pm.
Present for this meeting were:
Planning Commission Board Members; Woodbury Rouse; Barbara Chevalier; Luc Dupuis *absent – Bruce Ryan & Larry Simmons*
Town of Highgate staff: Heidi Britch-Valenta – Planning & Zoning Administrator; Wendi Dusablon – Planning & DRB Clerk
Public / Other: Corey Mack; Evangeline LaRocque; Stacy Carpenter; Jennifer Gagne; Connie Janes Beyor; Betsy Fournier; Amanda Holland; David Desorcie

II. SIDEWALK COMMITTEE

- **Lamkin Street Project – Trans. Alternatives Program – Corey Mack, RSG** – Corey Mack from RSG was present to give an update and overview of the Lamkin Street sidewalk project. The process has taken a long time, starting with a study done back in 2007 and revisiting the issue starting in 2013. The VTrans review took a long time and there were also environmental documents and an archeological review that had to be completed. We now have the environmental document we were waiting for and are moving into the next phase of the design. Documents are already prepared to move forward and the project is in good shape. A cost estimate has recently been redone and there should still be some surplus, our budget looks good and Corey doesn't see any big hurdles. The next phase will be the right of way acquisitions. He noted that where Mill Hill meets Lamkin Street the radius which widens out goes slightly onto the newly acquired property next to the library, a small sliver of about 60 square feet. This will have to be dealt with, working with the new landowners. Corey spread out some maps for everyone to gather around and review, he gave an overview of the project going from the Catholic Church on Lamkin Street down to the Municipal Office Building. In a few spots, the project gets close to some trees, so in those spots (Bolia property and Chevalier property) the sidewalk will be reduced to 4' wide instead of 5' wide, but will still maintain the street character. There will also be a 3' green strip separating the sidewalk from the travel lane. David Desorcie had some questions about drainage in front of the town park where the sidewalk will be going in. Looking at drainage is part of this process and they will be working with the state. Barbara Chevalier asked about drainage issues near her home as well. Corey said that good draining soils can be incorporated into the plan and design. The plan is to use the schools equipment to plow the sidewalks in the winter months, but Connie noted that plan will need to be revisited based on further conversations with the Town of Franklin and how that is going for them. Connie has spoken to Andy King already about this. Corey presented a schedule for the remainder of the project. For the rest of 2016 RSG, the Town of Highgate and VTrans will be working on the following; 60% PS&E, utility notices, utility clearance, 1111 permit submittal, 1111 letter of intent, ROW plans submittal, ROW review, acquiring easements, Final PS&E 85%, permit review & checklist, contract PS&E 100%, authorizing bids, advertising, bid periods and bid opening. Construction is estimated to happen in April / May 2017. The group discussed a possible crosswalk over to Desorcie's Market that is being recommended by VTrans. Corey also noted that it could be possible if we get through the other processes quickly that construction could start sooner than spring 2017, but he

recommends waiting because contract prices would be better. David Desorcie mentioned the construction could interfere with the Memorial Day Celebration. Heidi mentioned the open house planned for Sept. 20th here at the Municipal Building. We will be presenting the ADA study and that would be a good time to talk about the sidewalk project as well.

- **St. Armand Road & Route 78 Intersection Safety Study** – There have been a couple of site visits to this intersection with the Office of Road Safety to address concerns. There is a very large solar project proposed for St. Armand Road, and we anticipate an acute problem at this intersection that is already tricky. One of the things that came from the site visits was a plan for striping on the north side of Route 78 to prevent cars from parking in these locations to improve site distance. There was also discussion about moving the stop line on St. Armand Road closer to the travel lane. The diagonal striping east of the intersection is a good idea to prevent people from using it as a turn lane or for parking. A concrete island was originally suggested, but would not allow for delivery space and parking on that side of the store. The stop sign near the market should be moved or another one added, as the current one sits way back and should be closer to Route 78. Connie Beyor believes that the stop sign being where it is slows people down, which helps with cars pulling in to the store or backing out. Betsy Fournier asked if a flashing light for the crosswalk could be incorporated into the plan if funds are left over. This would also get people to slow down.
- **Route 78 Local Ownership** – The Town of Highgate will further look into taking over the village designation section of Route 78. This would provide more opportunity for us to have more local control over signage, parking and other things along that stretch of Route 78, which is a state road. AOT has offered to meet with the Selectboard to present the pros and cons and what else to consider. This has worked well for the towns of Swanton, Enosburg and St. Albans in their downtown / village districts. Amanda Holland from NRPC suggested having Andy King put together some numbers for what it would cost the town to maintain that stretch of road. Heidi noted that the state gives a stipend to towns that take local ownership of a portion of a state road. Corey added that the town would have greater flexibility on things like crosswalks and speed limits, but a study would need to be completed with regard to speed limits.
- **Route 78 Study – Bike & Ped Program – VHB** – Heidi gave some background, stating that the town hired VHB to look at the village corridor. The study documents put the town in a position to apply for construction funds. The Selectboard has looked at the study and the different proposals. We now need to clarify what we want to see and push something forward over the next several years. Traffic calming islands seemed to be a favorable option, one at each end of the village designation. The distance from the intersection of Route 207 down to McCuin's is approximately ½ mile. David asked if it will be more difficult to put in the islands if the town does not take over that section of road. Heidi isn't sure if AOT would support them, it probably depends on what safety data we present to them. Connie noted that the village of Danville is a beautiful example of how the islands can work and look very nice at the same time. Corey believes that Danville owns the right of way through there and he also believes that project was state funded. Amanda added that all these things can be tied together in one grant, and we would have to work with AOT on the design.
- **Safe Routes to School Program – Jennifer Gagne – Highgate School Nurse** – Jen stated that the school just started working with Safe Routes to School this year. She has met with Maren Hill and they have worked on a parent survey and a student tally to determine how kids get to school and how they get home. Maren provided maps that showed different radiuses, and 174 students live within 2 miles of the school. Parents have safety concerns about their students walking to school, even to walk on the rail trail, they still need to get to that point safely. There will be a highly promoted "Walk To School Day" on October 5th. Students can be dropped off at McCuins and there will be adults waiting to walk the students in groups to the school. A crosswalk will be going in soon in the vicinity of the Highgate Historical Society across Gore Road by the veterinarian's office which leads to the walking path. Heidi added that the October 5th event can be promoted at the open house on Sept. 20th. Jen will connect with the PTKO group for added support. Betsy added the idea of handing out information at parent conferences. Amanda also stated

that she and Amy Brewer can be of assistance, as they will be taking over for Maren Hill.

- **Rise VT – Betsy Fournier –** Betsy is a health specialist for Rise VT. They work with municipalities on promoting wellness and pedestrian friendly spaces (walking / biking). Betsy and her co-worker, Dori, sat down with Heidi and highlighted some of the awesomeness going on in Highgate. Every Tuesday in the St. Albans Messenger they highlight a different community. Stacy Carpenter was also present. She works with the Health Department and Rise VT as a technical assistant, it is a very collaborative effort. Stacy is also willing to assist Jen at the school with promoting her event. Heidi noted that Rise VT was instrumental in installing the water cooler at the arena and also for bike racks at the park and ride. Rise VT will also be helping the town with getting a bus shelter at the park and ride.
- **Park & Ride Updates –** As mentioned already, we will be getting bike racks at this location (Route 78 & 207) as well as eventually having a bus shelter constructed to accommodate the GMTA bus riders. This should also increase ridership for GMTA if people have a sheltered location to wait for the bus. The park and ride has come a long way in the last year, and now looks like a real park and ride that is being well utilized. Andy is working with a company to provide the green space at the front of the park and ride. AOT asked us to do this so there will be a separation from the road. There is currently temporary curbing there.
- **Gore Road crosswalk –** As also mentioned earlier, this will be happening very soon. Maren from Safe Routes to School has had a few visits with us and talked about how our kids get to and from school. We also have a day care on Route 78 (Methodist Church) that was now longer allowed to walk children around our village or to school for safety reasons. This crosswalk will really help that situation and improve walkability across Gore Road to Route 78 or towards the school and recreation path. This crosswalk will be striping on the road in the vicinity of the Historical Society over to the veterinarian's office. Andy has ordered signage for this area as well.
- **River Walk / Bike Path – idea for the future from the past –** Heidi shared an old study from 2000 that included plans for a river walk in the area of Route 207 down towards the old town forest. There is a road that continues on to Waugh Farm Road. The design in 2000 was to turn this into a river walk that follows the river and could easily be turned into a bike path for travel to Swanton without having to go onto Route 78. Highgate is along the Northern Forest Canoe Trail, so people do cross on the foot path over towards that road. If Highgate and Swanton were to collaborate on this it would be a grand project for tourists and make us a destination town. She took measurements on our GIS program and from the canoe portage on Route 207 to the end of Waugh Farm Road it is just over 5,100'. Heidi shared the plans that were done by Dubois & King. Heidi also found a safety study done in 2008. Someone paid for multiple studies and it would be a shame not to use them to benefit our town.
- **Leadership for the committee -** To date, our sidewalk committee has been very informal and started with a much larger group than is here tonight. We have lost some momentum and the key will be to move forward with a Highgate resident leading the charge, not Heidi. Betsy pointed out that someone on the Parks & Rec. Committee might be a good choice. Connie has a full plate already, so it would not be a good fit for her at this time. Barbara would be a good choice as well.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Larry Simmons and Bruce Ryan are both absent tonight. Both were present on March 15th but Luc Dupuis was not. The minutes from March 15th will have to wait to be approved until the next Planning Commission Meeting on May 17th.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

- **Native American Site District map** – Amanda had sent a draft of the map for the PC to review. The PC would like to see a buffer added to the map along the US Route 7 side. Amanda will relay this information to Emily at NRPC and create a new map for them to review in May.
- **Misc. Updates – 1)** Amanda asked if we are on track for the next steps with the CIP. The next steps are to make sure Shelley meets with department heads and gets all the information she needs by June to

prepare for the July 19th meeting. **2)** Andy King will be working on a road inventory to address any erosion issues and work on a plan for the future and for grant applications. He will be accompanied by Jimmy who is the AmeriCorps representative tomorrow, April 20th. We very recently (Friday, April 15th) submitted four grant applications for failing culverts. **3)** Heidi had some updates on the status of several proposed solar projects in town. A sub-committee has been formed to negotiate on behalf of the town – Heidi, Chris Yates and Jeff Towle. Ranger has recently let us know they are moving forward with the St. Armand Road project. The sub-committee will be meeting with them on Thursday morning. They have scaled back the project some, it is no longer in the village designation or behind the arena, but will still be visible from the road. The town has asked for compensation on the large projects for things that may impact us, such as damage to the roads, traffic control and / or addressing any safety issues associated with the projects. We have also asked these developers to contribute to the town, so hopefully we will be able to put some funds back into the CIP. **4)** Upcoming PC meetings, we will have other committees coming in to share information with us. May 17th meeting with ADA Study Committee , July 19th meeting for the CIP, August 16th meeting with the Sidewalk Committee.

V. UPCOMING EVENTS

April 20	6pm	Historical Society Mtg.
April 21	7pm	Selectboard Mtg.
April 25	5pm	ADA Study Committee Mtg.
May 3	6pm	Parks & Rec. Mtg. @ arena
May 4	6pm	Library Trustee Mtg. @ library
May 5	7pm	Selectboard Mtg.
May 7		GREEN UP DAY – pick up bags at the municipal building
May 7	8am-2pm	Household Hazardous Waste Collection @ sand shed / Transfer Station Rd.
May 12	6pm	DRB Mtg.
Sept. 20		Open House Event – details to follow!

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Woody Rouse to adjourn the meeting @ 8:05pm. The motion was seconded by Luc Dupuis – **APPROVED.**

Minutes respectfully submitted by:

_____, Planning & DRB Clerk 5/17/16
Wendi Dusablon Date

Minutes approved by:

_____, Planning Comm. – Chair 5-17-16
Woodbury Rouse, Jr. Date