

TOWN OF HIGHGATE Selectboard Meeting

Thursday, June 6, 2019

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 Sharon Bousquet, Chair @ 7:01pm, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Highgate Selectboard Members – Sharon Bousquet, Chair; Joshua LaRocque, Vice-Chair (arrived @ 8:21pm); Randy Connelly (arrived @ 8:21pm); Bruce Butler; Richard Flint

Highgate Office Staff – Wendi Dusablon – Town Clerk / Public Meetings Clerk; *absent* – Heidi Britch-Valenta – Town Administrator & Shelley Laroche – Treasurer

Public / Other – Woody Rouse; Alice S. Cota; Bethany Remmers; Peter Magnant; David Bennion; Yvon Dandurand; Richard J. Noel; Ty Choiniere; Andy Godin

B. Public Comment(s)

- Sue Cota thanked everyone who donated and contributed to the bake sale on Memorial Day. \$450.50 was raised and a fund was started to update our memorials in the town park honoring our veterans.
- Woody thanked all the volunteers that have been working on the Village Core property clean-up project.
- Yvon Dandurand from Franklin complimented the Town of Highgate on our Memorial Day parade. He was impressed by the number of participants as well as the number of people that were in Highgate for the events of the day. Sharon thanked the volunteers who made it all possible.
- Ty Choiniere asked about the motion made at the last meeting with regard to contract with St. Albans Police Department. He questioned why the board did not give FCSO and their new leadership an opportunity. Sharon explained it was put out to bid and we did receive bids from several organizations. The board met with two of the choices and at this time, the board felt SAPD had more to offer us. It is nothing personal with FCSO but we felt a change was needed and the contract with SAPD is for one year. SAPD will provide 24 hours per week of services to the Town of Highgate, which includes the availability of the canine unit, drug task force, detectives and undercover officers. Looking at priorities, SAPD offered us more for our money. Sharon did add that SAPD is more expensive per hour. The board is certain we will be happy with the service SAPD will provide.

C. Franklin Selectboard – Hanna Road Reclassification Discussion

Four members from the Franklin Selectboard were present for this discussion – Yvon Dandurand, Peter Magnant, Andy Godin and David Bennion. Peter started the discussion by noting that a few years back Andy King from our Selectboard started this conversation with Franklin about the Hanna Road. Both Selectboards see the advantages to reclassifying the Hanna Road from a Class 3 road to a Class 2 road. The

advantages include more access to grant funding as well as our annual per mile appropriation we get from the state would be higher. Sharon asked Bethany Remmers about any downfalls to this process. VTrans could deny the request, that is the only downfall to trying. Bethany ran through the minimum threshold requirements with this process. We need need to engage Jim Cota from District 8, which is already happening. Each community would be submitting a request because Hanna Road runs through both towns, approximately 2.18 miles in Franklin and 2.53 miles in Highgate. The traffic study was already done in 2018. Yvon asked about environmental regulations, which are the same for Class 2 and Class 3. There is not much language that talks about the actual quality of the road, only if it is paved and how wide it is from shoulder to shoulder. Bethany had VTrans paperwork to share with the board members. Butch Brosseau (Public Works Director) was present and sees this is as a good thing as well. This is a highly traveled road in our community. Andy Godin pointed out that after the East Highgate (Machia Road) bridge is complete there will be further changes in the traffic pattern on Hanna Road. Both towns are planning to put on another coat of blacktop next year. The legislature is not involved in decisions with Class 2 and 3 roads, it will be the decisions of VTrans. The first step is a consensus from both towns if they want to move forward. Bethany will find out from Jim Cota if the application is filled out jointly or separately. Richard Noel represents Highgate on the TAC committee and sees this as a good thing also. Sharon noted that with Butch's blessing as well as the possibility of additional funding opportunities, she would be on board as well. Sharon would like to hold a public hearing on this issue at our next Selectboard meeting, June 20th, to give residents an opportunity to chime in on the topic. A formal decision will be made by the Highgate Selectboard on June 20th and we will be in touch with our neighbors in Franklin. The board thanked the Franklin Selectboard for being here this evening.

D. Public Works Department – Butch Brosseau

- Hanna Road project is complete and they are continuing to work on Frontage Road. Flaggers are needed and hard to get right now. Butch would like to do the paving at the same time as the box culvert so they could shut the road down but he has to meet deadlines with the grants also. Richard Noel noted there may be the possibility for grant timeline extensions due to the horrible spring weather we have had.
- Dirt roads are holding up well considering all the rain. They will be starting roadside mowing and chloride soon. The Mill Hill project will begin next week with Goodhue. Motion by Richard Flint to sign the contract with Scott Goodhue. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED**. Motion by Richard Flint to sign the paving grant for Gore Road. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED**. This likely won't happen this summer, we still don't have an estimate from Pike. Motion by Bruce Butler to sign the grant agreement for the box road culvert. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED**. We have an estimate from Camp PreCast exclusively for the box culvert \$78,355.00. Richard Flint commented that HVFD members are certified flaggers as well and some of them may be able to help out our highway crew. Richard will relay the info to HVFD members. There are funds left in their budget for flaggers if we can get some and we also budgeted for extra part time help in the upcoming budget.
- HVFD is looking for help from public works on installing a dry hydrant at Airoldi's pond on Hanna Road. The date given is June 24th. Butch is unsure about the timeline given all the other projects going on but they will do their best to help.
- There are many trees that need to be addressed throughout town. Ben Nye called today about some on his property. Butch will go take a look. Sue Cota reminded

Butch of the tree on Monument Road. Butch elaborated some on the many duties he feels are going on the back burner to accommodate grant deadlines. Ty Choiniere added that as an outsider looking in, he sees the grants as good things, but it seems that we are at a point that we need to let go and back off because day to day duties are getting neglected. Richard Flint agrees, and if we are putting too much on the plates of public works, Butch needs to let the board know they are overwhelmed. Butch sees them getting through this summer but if it continues year to year, more and more things will suffer neglect and he isn't ok with that. He noted that ditching and road shoulders, as well as road side mowing and trees all need to be dealt with, as well as grading and chloride. The public works crew would also like to be able to take a vacation this summer after the winter they just had. Heidi recently gave Butch another grant opportunity to look for another project opportunity, but he just doesn't have the time. We will either need to hire a crew just to work on grant projects or hire another crew member to keep up with it all and meet all these deadlines. Sharon concurred, that with the miserable winter and spring, combined with all the upcoming deadlines for grant projects, we have put our crew in a bad situation. Bruce wonders if we need to hire more seasonal help. We have been talking about dead trees for years. This will need to be addressed in future budgets as well. There was discussion about funding within grants to contract work out – case in point, the Mill Hill project that we ultimately had to contract out with Goodhue. Our Public Works Department does an excellent job and we have a GREAT crew!

E. Community Celebration Update

Woody gave a brief update on this, as well as what was mentioned under public comment. A small crew from the VT Corrections Department was there on Monday and MVU teachers and students have been on site the rest of this week. Most of the kids have been great workers! McCuins donated some white paint and gloves – thank you, McCuins! Snow fence will be put up to section of pieces of the property we do not want accessed. HVFD still has some items from their auction on the property. Those will need to be moved soon. Sunflowers were planted and a mural will be painted as well. The VCMP committee will meet again June 11 @ 6pm.

F. Town Clerk Updates – Wendi Dusablon

- Motion by Bruce Butler to approve the minutes from May 22, 2019, as written. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED**.
- MVSD Budget Vote will be Tuesday, June 11 @ Highgate Arena 7am – 7pm. We will be electing three more board members (1 from each town) and voting on a budget of \$37,001,935.00. Absentee ballots are available now. The informational meeting was held on June 4th. Sharon noted that the budget information shared was not very transparent and many people still have a lot of questions with regard to this budget being presented. She thanked the Highgate Town Office staff for all they do and we are lucky to have such a good staff watching over our records and funds on behalf of the taxpayers.
- Dog licensing is moving along – we are 860 on the books with 20 +/- to go! A second round of fines will be going out on June 12th at \$50.00 per dog, in addition to licensing fees.
- Good luck to both teams – BFA St. Albans and Missisquoi Valley Union Varsity Girls Softball Programs – who are playing each other Saturday @ 2pm in Castleton for the 2019 Division 1 State Championship. **GO THUNDERBIRDS!**

G. Administrator Items – Heidi Britch-Valenta

Heidi was not present at this meeting, but had a grant / project update as well as her Town Administrator updates in the drop box for the board to review.

H. Selectboard Items

- Motion by Bruce Butler to accept the invitation to participate in the Municipal Roads Grant In Aid Program. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED.**
- Josh supports the decision of Butch and his crew to move forward with no new grants and to let them get caught up on their work.
- Randy asked about the crosswalk paint. This has already been redone and last we knew it was blamed on issues with the manufacturer.
- Josh would like Chief Gary Taylor from SAPD to come to a meeting in the near future to introduce himself and let the public ask questions.
- Sharon recapped some of the meeting for Randy and Josh, as they arrived late @ 8:21pm after the ball game.

I. Treasurer Updates – Shelley Laroche

Shelley was not present at this meeting, but had prepared the check warrants and supporting documents ahead of time for the board.

- Randy and Josh had asked to approve the check warrants last on the agenda after they arrived. Both have concerns and questions about the invoice for new computers. Richard would like to receive a hard copy of the check warrants, not just digital. Sharon had questions about the Cummings invoice for the electric charging stations at the park and ride. This was the second payment, and both were for the same amount. It was noted that the invoice for the computers \$8,600.00 was not coming from tax payer dollars, but instead from the computerization line item, which originates from recording fees. After this potential purchase, there will still be \$14,000.00 left in the computerization fund. Josh and Randy both feel we need to get more quotes. They both feel the quote we received was steep and it is above the threshold in our policy that requires a bid process. Randy also noted he feels we can save money by going out to bid. He would also like to see a staggered cycle for replacement and not all at once. Motion by Josh LaRocque to approve the check warrants, with the exception of this invoice for computers. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED.**
- Shelley reported to Sharon that delinquent taxes are down to \$63,000.00 +/-, not including the Jedware property.

J. Upcoming Events

June 10	10am	Highgate Airport Infrastructure Study Group Mtg.
June 11	7-7	MVSD vote @ Highgate Arena – Town Offices CLOSED
June 11	6pm	VCMP Mtg.
June 13	6pm	DRB Mtg.
June 18	6pm	Planning Comm. Mtg.
June 20	7pm	Selectboard Mtg.
July 4+5		Town Offices are CLOSED

Motion by Sharon Bousquet to exit the regular meeting @ 8:31pm. The motion was seconded by Josh LaRocque – **APPROVED.**

K. Executive Session

Motion by Sharon Bousquet to enter into executive session @ 8:32pm to discuss personnel, legal and contracts, where premature general public knowledge would place the town and / or the individuals involved at a substantial disadvantage. The motion was seconded by Josh LaRocque – **APPROVED**. Motion by Josh LaRocque to exit executive session @ 9:29pm. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED**.

L. Adjournment

Motion by Josh LaRocque to adjourn the meeting @ 9:30pm. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED**.

Minutes respectfully submitted by:



_____ Wendi Dusablon – Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk

Minutes approved by:



_____ Sharon Bousquet – Chair, Highgate Selectboard

