

TOWN OF HIGHGATE

Selectboard Meeting

Thursday, August 15, 2019 @ 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 Sharon Bousquet, Chair @ 7:00pm, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Highgate Selectboard Members – Sharon Bousquet, Chair; Bruce Butler; Richard Flint; Randy Connelly *absent* –*Josh LaRocque* – Vice Chair

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

Public / Other – Alice S. Cota; Joseph Depatie; Woody Rouse; Steve LaFar; Evangeline LaRocque; Debbie Rouse; Marion Young; Mark Young; Gary Young; Keith Ploof; Beth Lockerby; Richard J. Noel

B. Public Comment(s)

- Steve LaFar commented the new roof looks good and he would like the board to investigate further insulating the valleys. Laz Scangas, architect, is already helping to put together an RFP to pursue this further.
- Debbie Rouse had a complaint about SAPD speeding in town. She will direct her complaint to them directly. Richard Flint would like an update from SAPD on a regular basis. An update was recently added to the drop box, Heidi will print a copy for Richard.

C. Machia Road Stabilization Project Local Concerns – DeWolfe Eng.

John from DeWolfe Engineering was present with an update on the Machia Road stabilization project. No work has begun at the site, other than drilling holes and monitoring. He had a presentation to share about their recommendations for the project. The town put out an RFP to come up with a solution to fix the next 300' section of the roadway bank. John has been working with Heidi here at the town, as well as Ross at VTrans and Tom at SW Cole. The geological report from August 2018 concluded that placement of crushed stone and rip rap in the adjacent repair would not achieve the desired factor of safety. Cost and site restraint for all solutions were significant. They then reviewed the report from November 2018 in which a soil nail wall in concert with horizontal wells for drainage was the preferred alternative analyzed. Analysis showed that stability was very sensitive to groundwater elevation and that there was insufficient data to determine the water table. Because of the uncertainty and difficulty achieving a desirable factor of safety, VTrans agreed to conduct an independent analysis for confirmation of the report findings. Another report in January 2019 concluded that the preferred option would be the construction of a soil nail wall on the upper portion of the slope with regrading of the slope below. They concurred with the SW Cole revised report that stability modeling at the site is very sensitive to the assumed groundwater elevation at the site. The report in April 2019 recommended that monitoring wells be installed to better establish a water table elevation for monitoring purposes. Also

recommended was that an additional boring be advanced on the north side of Machia Road to further develop the soil profile and refine the model parameters. Groundwater level monitoring has been taking place from April – July 2019 and has been monitored on a weekly basis. The water table peaked in mid-June – July. From all that VTrans and SW Cole have indicated, their solution will work. It does all depend on the funding that is available. Sharon asked John to back up some and clarify that the \$2,000.00 - \$3,000.00 figure is only for the nails, and only in the best case scenario would we only have to do the first 150' of the slope. This project has the potential to become a very large and more expensive project than we have grant funding for. Sharon does not want to mislead anyone on the potential project cost. John agreed, the overall project will be significantly more expensive. Marion Young asked if the first project in 1999 was a success, why aren't they using the same system this time? John deferred that to the decision of the technical engineers. It is their job and their license on the line and their technical opinion is that in this area, with the data available and info gathered, that they can't with confidence say that the same approach directly adjacent to it would be successful in this location. Richard Flint asked if they will still be "experimenting" while working on the project, and Richard also didn't feel that John was being very clear. John clarified, they will gather additional data to understand what they need to do while on site to fix the problem. There was discussion on how soil conditions change and layers are not consistent. Bruce Butler commented that as he understands it, SW Cole is saying the soils are changing as the soils move north. Sharon added that one reason the town went with DeWolfe on this project is because they had an excellent relationship with the engineer from the first project 20 years ago, and already had a lot of data. In order to create added safety measures the state is requiring more in depth data and technical expertise. Steve LaFar had questions about funding. Sharon answered that we don't know what all this will cost and the town will continue to work with the state, DeWolfe, SW Cole and our public works department to figure this out and get it solved. Heidi clarified that DeWolfe and SW Cole are not the only sets of eyes on the project. VTrans structural engineers did a thorough review and gave us enough information to go out for grant funding. Mrs. Young had questions about the timeline. John said hopefully we will go out to bid and have construction happen in the 2020 construction season. Gary Young asked about the majority of the work being done closest to the roadway. Mrs. Young asked what would happen if they find out this system doesn't work – then what? All involved parties believe the soil nail wall approach is the one that will work. Stone and rip rap will be required down lower. John hopes they can limit the area needing the soil nail wall because of the expense. There was discussion about the river below and how it is eroding from the bottom as well, so there are separate issues at this spot. There was also discussion about moving the actual road and how this would be only a temporary fix. There is also great concern about the weight of traffic on Machia Road and that is adding to the issue. The new bridge will be open full time by Oct. 1st. With the added traffic there may need to be a weight limit restriction on the stabilization area. Bruce mentioned possibly turning that area into a one lane road with lights and barriers for a period of time. It is something to consider. The next step is for John to get together with Ross at VTrans for the timeline to submit preliminary plans and performance specs for his review. That will likely be this fall and they will deal with environmental permitting over the winter. The package will, hopefully, be ready for spring. Mrs. Young is concerned about spring rains and that added stress to the bank. Sharon commented that the hope is to limit the inconvenience and impact to the nearby properties. The road will have to be closed when the project starts. The best time to start would be during low flow stream periods, which is typically July 1st – Oct. 1st. The pavement will need to be watched for cracks and sink holes. Mrs. Young referred to the

1999 project a few times and how successful that project was. She will reach out to the town if the situation in front of her home changes in any way, as she is right across the road. The board thanked John and the residents of Machia Road for attending.

D. Public Works Department Updates – Butch Brosseau

- We have a request from residents to consider guard rails on the corner of Parent Road and St. Armand Road. Butch will look into pricing.
- John from DeWolfe will get with VTrans and Heidi will follow up if there is a recommendation for a weight limit on Machia Road (discussed in section C).
- The transmission has been rebuilt in the grader and they have started on the engine seals. The turbo on the motor is also being replaced. All is looking good, and at the same price we were originally quoted. The rented grader has been returned already. Sometime next week we should have our grader back in house.
- There will be a hearing with VTrans in Barre on August 28th @ 1pm to discuss the speed limit on US Route 7 from Monument Road past Decker Road being adjusted to 40mph. This is a state road and if you are unable to attend, send your comments to ian.degutis@vermont.gov or call 802-371-8827.
- Our public works department will continue winter maintenance on the arena parking lot because that is town property. Butch feels they have enough to do and the school parking lot is in such bad shape, now that it is owned by the district, he feels the town crew should not be responsible. Even after the issues are fixed at the school parking lot, it is a liability for the town to plow there. There was discussion on the new storage facility being built at the arena location for MAHA / Little League / Parks & Recreation so Butch can plan ahead for plowing at that location.
- Paving is complete and we have some funds left over because Mill Hill came in lower than quoted. A portion of Frontage Road is not complete yet and Butch will speak with Pike about a few sections of other roads he would like to get them back in town for. Shelley verified we have about \$50,000.00 left over. There have been great compliments on the Mill Hill project.
- Shoulder work is complete and they are continuing to work on driveway entrances on the newly paved roads. Butch will be double checking all the driveway entrances to make sure they are acceptable.
- The box culvert project on Frontage Road will happen hopefully this year, but there are no guarantees. We are still within the window of possibility, but have until December 2020 to finish it.
- The Massey is at Fourniers for work on the clutch and should be ready for pick up soon.
- Most of the roadside mowing has been done for the second time.
- Butch will be looking at rental prices for November to get a side arm.
- Randy asked about crosswalk painting. Butch said they will be working on the STOP bars in the village area and they will look at repainting the crosswalks that are not on Route 78. Our attorney is still looking into this on our behalf because this is in dispute.

E. Town Treasurer Updates – Shelley Laroche

- Motion by Richard Flint to approve the check warrants. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED.**
- Shelley gave a delinquent tax update – as of today the outstanding balance is \$45,519.34. There are quite a few parcels on the preliminary tax sale list.
- The auditors were here today and will be here again tomorrow to finish up, hopefully.

- Motion by Randy Connelly to accept the tax rates as presented for FY2019/2020, as follows: Homestead Rate – Education 1.3462 and Municipal 0.3711 = **Total Homestead Rate of 1.7173**. Non-Homestead Rate – Education 1.5000 and Municipal 0.3711 = **Total Non-Homestead Rate of 1.8711**. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED**.

| Town of Highgate, VT | | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| 2019-2020 | | | |
| Tax Rates | | | |
| <u>HOMESTEAD</u> | | <u>NON-HOMESTEAD</u> | |
| Education | 1.3462 | Education | 1.5000 |
| General Fund | 0.1005 | General Fund | 0.1005 |
| Highway Fund | 0.1543 | Highway Fund | 0.1543 |
| Capital Improvement Plan | 0.1116 | Capital Improvement Plan | 0.1116 |
| Town Mtg. Article #4 | 0.0019 | Town Mtg. Article #4 | 0.0019 |
| Veterans Exemptions | 0.0028 | Veterans Exemptions | 0.0028 |
| <u>TOTAL HOMESTEAD</u> | | <u>TOTAL NON-HOMESTEAD</u> | |
| TAX RATE | <u>1.7173</u> | TAX RATE | <u>1.8711</u> |

2019-2020 tax rates approved by the Highgate Selectboard on August 15, 2019

Common Level of Appraisal (CLA) = 106.27%
last updated December 27, 2018

F. Town Clerk Updates – Wendi Dusablon

- Motion by Richard Flint to approve the minutes from August 1, 2019, as written. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED**.
- We have two letters of interest for the listers office – Richard Wilkens (former Planning Commission member) and Samantha Derosia (current Zoning Administrator). Bruce was under the impression there were two seats to fill but there is only one vacant seat currently. The board would like our current listers, Aimee and Peter, to be at the next Selectboard meeting to further discuss this. The board will also further discuss this in executive session.
- Motion by Richard Flint to approve the private road name request Gabree Lane. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED**. Randy asked if there were any hearings associated with this request. There is a two lot subdivision process happening now through the DRB located off US Route 7. This is resulting in

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Wendi Dusablon - Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk

a third residence coming off a driveway, thus turning it into a road which needs to be named.

- Richard Noel stated he will no longer be mowing the former Machia property (Village Core Property, now owned by the town). He has been mowing it and now that the celebration is this weekend he will be done with that. The board thanked Richard Noel for all he has done and the property looks very nice!

G. Administrator Items – Heidi Britch-Valenta

- The Community Celebration is this Saturday, August 17th from 11am – 8pm. The day will be filled with food, vendors, historical items, events for people of all ages, and displays for all to enjoy. Richard Flint added that Highgate's only donkeys will be there ☺. Courtesy of the Enosburg Opera House we will have historical costumes for people to take selfies in a photo booth. Volunteers will all receive t-shirts and some shirts will be given away as prizes and some will also be for sale. The t-shirts are black with orange, which are the original colors of Highgate High School. At 1pm and 4pm there will be historical round table discussions. The Highgate Historical Society will be open for visitors.
- There is a grant update in the Selectboard packets for their review.
- The ADA construction project is coming along nicely and we are nearing the end of that project. We went into the project carrying a \$12,000.00 surplus to handle unexpected issues, and we still have this balance. The highway office and bathroom area was an alternate addition to the original bid. Additional bollards have been discussed around the ramp out front. Richard Flint has been hearing a lot of comments about the front ramp being done with lumber and wanted to know where that choice came from. The highway department office and bathroom was part of the original proposal but could not be funded with ADA funds, so the project was put off to the side. We also had not had any testing done. Millbrook has given us a quote of \$9,890.00 to repair the office and bathroom in the highway department. To get rid of the asbestos, Shelley would like to use our buildings and grounds line item in the budget. Heidi has met with Millbrook and Laz Scangas about the specs. Shelley noted we also have not touched the surplus from Swanton Village from last year and we could use that to properly insulate the roof valley areas. This would have to go out to bid. Motion by Richard Flint to use the funding we have available to do the work in the public works department office and bathroom areas. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED.**
- Tuesday, September 17th at the regularly scheduled Planning Commission meeting we will have a guest speaker, Dominic Cloud from St. Albans City. The discussion will center around different strategies for public and private development. This is open to anyone who wants to attend and the Selectboard members are highly encouraged to attend.
- Motion by Richard Flint to sign the HAIS (Highgate Airport Infrastructure Study) survey cover letter. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED.**
- Motion by Richard Flint to approve applying for the Tiny Libraries Grant. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED.**
- The Frontage Road project was discussed earlier under section D. Motion by Bruce Butler to sign the applications for stream alteration and wetlands. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED.**

H. Selectboard Items

- We have been offered a free outdoor camera from Channel 15 that used to be mounted at the intersection of Route 207 + Route 78. This camera no longer works for their system. It was put up at Joey’s Junction as live feed, but is capable of recording. Randy sees no harm in taking it and seeing what we can do with it, and Sharon agreed.
- We have received more information from Duane Tremblay with regard to him wanting the town to take over Thak Blvd. Motion by Richard Flint to table this issue until further review. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED.**
- Sharon sent a shout out to a couple of Highgate volunteer angels who helped clean up the property next door in the park. They know who they are and do not wish to be recognized, but what a wonderful thing to do. Sharon is very proud of these Highgate residents. THANK YOU!

I. Upcoming Events

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|----------|------------|--|
| Aug. 17 | 11am – 8pm | Community Celebration |
| Aug. 19 | 5:30pm | Recreation Commission Mtg. @ arena |
| Aug. 20 | 6pm | Planning Commission Mtg. |
| Aug. 21 | 6pm | DRB Mtg. (re-scheduled from Aug. 8 th) |
| Sept. 2 | | Labor Day – TOWN OFFICES ARE CLOSED |
| Sept. 5 | 7pm | Selectboard Mtg. |
| Sept. 12 | 6pm | DRB Mtg. |
| Sept. 17 | 6pm | Planning Commission Mtg. – Dominic Cloud guest speaker |

Motion by Richard Flint to exit the regular meeting @ 9:00pm. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED.**

J. Executive Session

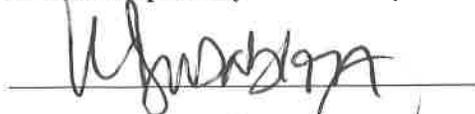
Motion by Sharon Bousquet to enter into executive session @ 9:00pm with Heidi Britch-Valenta to discuss personnel, legal and contracts, where premature general public knowledge would place the town and/or the individuals involved at a substantial disadvantage. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED.**

Motion by Richard Flint to exit executive session @ 9:45pm. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED.**

K. Adjournment

Motion by Richard Flint to adjourn the meeting @ 9:45pm. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED.**

Minutes respectfully submitted by:



Wendi Dusablon – Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk

Minutes approved by:



Sharon Bousquet – Chair, Highgate Selectboard