# TOWN OF HIGHGATE
# JOINT MEETING
# Planning Commission & Development Review Board
# February 13, 2020 @ 6pm
# Approved Minutes

***NOTE: All actions taken are unanimous unless otherwise stated.***

## I. CALL TO ORDER

Richard Trombley, DRB Chair, called this joint meeting to order @ 6:01pm, noting there was a quorum of both boards (PC & DRB) present.
Present for this meeting were:
**Planning Commission Board Members**: Luc Dupuis – Chair; Tom Conley – Vice Chair; Ken Thompson; Richard Noel; Bruce Ryan
**Development Review Board Members**: Richard Trombley – Chair; Woody Rouse; Michael Kravetz; Courtney Veeder *absent – Tim Reynolds – Vice Chair*
**Town of Highgate Staff**: Heidi Britch-Valenta – Town Administrator & Planner; Wendi Dusablon – Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk; Samantha Derosia – Zoning Administrator
**Public / Other:** David Cadieux; Lucas Cadieux; Chris Boudreau; Edward (Bud) Hemond; Sharon Bousquet

## II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES & DECISION LETTER

- Motion by Woody Rouse to approve the DRB minutes from *January 9, 2020*, as written. The motion was seconded by Michael Kravetz – **APPROVED.**
- Motion by Richard Noel to approve the PC minutes from *January 21, 2020*, as written. The motion was seconded by Bruce Ryan – **APPROVED.**
- The decision letter for Ferland Family Trust was signed by Richard Trombley, DRB Chair.

## III. OTHER BUSINESS – Part I

David Cadieux and his son, Lucas, were present and had questions for the DRB about a potential subdivision off McKinnel Road. David shared plans from an earlier subdivision done in 1993. David is considering another two-acre lot to sell to his son. The discussion was cut short when the two boards had to switch gears for their tutorial on Sharepoint with Matthew Bouchard who was remoting in.

## IV. SHAREPOINT TUTORIAL WITH MATTHEW BOUCHARD

We are no longer using DropBox so all board members needed to install the new Sharepoint software on their town issued iPads. This was a lengthy process which took the better part of an hour, but nearly all DRB and PC board members were connected by the end of the session.

## V. OTHER BUSINESS – Part II

Chris Boudreau and Bud Hemond were present to ask a couple questions of the DRB. Chris would like to subdivide his property on Jewell Avenue. Question #1) Would the town grant an easement across the property for more than one dwelling? When the State owned it, it was restricted to one. Woody feels this would involve the Selectboard because of town property being part of the request. Mr. Boudreau would like to branch off from his driveway and add two more lots. It would turn from a singular easement

right of way that solely benefits Mr. Boudreau to benefiting him as well as two others. This would trigger A76 standards and blacktop. There was discussion on the other homes on Jewell Avenue and if they would be involved at all. Courtney suggested doing their research and pulling deeds of the other properties. Question #2) What are the requirements for a shared driveway? Woody reiterated the 3rd home would trigger A76 standards. Jewell Avenue was established around 1990. Because of time constraints and a busy agenda the boards needed to move on with the rest of the meeting.

## VI. TAX STABILIZATION PLAN

There was brief discussion about this because it is on the Town Meeting warning to be voted on from the floor. The PC worked on this over several meetings and the Selectboard has already seen it as well. Ultimately, voter approval is necessary to move forward. This will happen on March 3rd and the floor meeting begins at 10am.

## VII. IMPACT FEES

The PC is looking for an opinion from the DRB on the potential of impact fees in Highgate. The Town of Georgia has an impact fee ordinance and it was presented as an example. Courtney feels there are good and bad aspects to impact fees, for example they would be very good with regard to stormwater prevention. We could look for grants to work with a consultant to go through the details and find out what the town will need and how to plan. Impact fees and a TIF (tax increment finance) district are ways we can protect the town's ability to support the increase in necessary services that happen with growing residential developments. Sharon Bousquet asked the boards to think about how we want the town to look in ten, twenty or thirty years. Michael Kravetz asked for clarity on what the goal is. Are we looking to increase revenue? Are we looking to support development we already have? Impact fees would only affect development going forward. With increased development comes an increase in need for services such as ambulance and police services, as well as extra wear and tear on our roads, and the potential for additional children in our schools. As a town we are fiscally responsible and only have one loan now which is for the arena. We are talking about sustainability and looking to the future and what expenses that might entail. Impact fees would be an additional revenue stream. Courtney spoke to his experience with the Georgia impact fees. It was noted that Highgate does not have town water or sewer. Michael added that the perception needs to be that it is fair and sustainable. It was again noted that impact fees would only affect new builds and new businesses, not those that are already here. If the PC and DRB both feel this would benefit the town, we should find a funding source and bring a consultant on board. We have a capital budget, so we meet the criteria. Michael asked about record keeping as well as where the funds go and how long they are kept. This would bring more accounting work and Shelley (treasurer) would need to be involved in the conversations. Courtney asked about the transfer of ownership of homes. That is a discussion for later in the process. The PC has already made a motion to move forward with exploring this further, Heidi asked for a motion from the DRB. Motion by Woody Rouse to proceed with exploring the possibility of imposing impact fees for the Town of Highgate. The motion was seconded by Michael Kravetz – **APPROVED.**

## VIII. DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS REWRITE DISCUSSION

The bylaws were last fully rewritten and finalized in 2015. NRPC took us through that process. The DRB has a list going of changes, additions and edits. The town applied for a Municipal Planning Grant to use for the wastewater study already, but this will open up again in the fall and we could apply then. Michael has some ideas that have been sent to the attorney. The attorney said we have the tools in our bylaws already. There was discussion on developers and their obligations, or lack thereof. Our town is run by citizen boards and we are not lawyers. We do have bylaws which we apply and

are to be respected. In Michael's opinion there is no accountability for the developer, thus, if there are no bylaws for a given situation, the process stops. He explained in detail a few tenants he would like to see added to the regulations. He feels we need the expertise to clean up the language and add due process. Heidi stated that a consultant can take us through the entire process and involve legal opinions if necessary. The bylaw rewrite will also involve public input. For example, we currently have one-acre zoning – town wide. Is this something we want to change, and if so, what does that mean? What zoning districts would changes be wanted or needed in? Courtney expressed concern with wording in our current regulations with regard to driveways. Richard Noel brought up a few issues, for example demolition permits. We currently do not require them. Heidi pointed out if there are just minor corrections to be made we probably do not need a grant or a consultant for that. Rick Trombley suggested separating out the categories of the changes, additions, edits and errors in our bylaws. Richard Noel asked if we want to "wash the car" or "repaint the car" that is what we need to decide. Heidi also noted that the road acceptance policy is referenced in our bylaws and addresses building roads to town standards. She gave a word of advice for when people come to the board with no plans, no history, no information – we do not have to offer them an opinion. They can submit a proposal to the board and the board can take the time to understand what conditions are already on the property and do our research. Some of the older developments have different conditions – the town has been much more uniform in the last several years.

## IX. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Rick Trombley to adjourn the joint meeting of the PC & DRB @ 8:24pm. The motion was seconded by Courtney Veeder – **APPROVED.**

Minutes respectfully submitted by:

Wendi Dusablon, Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk — 3/12/2020

Wendi Dusablon — Date

Minutes approved by:

Luc Dupuis, Planning Commission –PC Chair — 3/17/2020

Luc Dupuis — Date

Richard Trombley, Richard Trombley –DRB Chair — 3.12.2020

Richard Trombley — Date