

TOWN OF HIGHGATE

Selectboard Mtg.

April 21, 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, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Highgate Selectboard Members – Chris Yates, Chair; Paulette Tatro, Vice Chair; Randy Connelly, Josh LaRocque, Sharon Bousquet (newly appointed)

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

Public / Other – Jean Chevalier; Debbie Roberts; George Greenwood; Alice S. Cota; Eric L. Bessette; Sarah & Eric Chevalier; Kim Flint; Jeff Towle; Paul Smith; Lori Olds; Andy King; Wayne Bushey; Greg Lamoureux (County Courier); Karen Gagne-Fortin; Judy Laroche; Don Gilbert; Ty Choiniere; Vonnie Lamotte; Sheila & Jeff Hoague; James Maskell; Ronnie Conger; Michelle Monroe (St. Albans Messenger); Kellie Uzell; Mark Gilbert; David Desorcie; Ben Lowell (Constable)

B. Public Comment

There were several people present for public comment for items not listed on the agenda. Chris Yates set some criteria for the public comment section and limited it to ten minutes. He advised if there was a need for longer than ten minutes that interested persons should request to be put on a future agenda. Ty Choiniere wanted to publicly thank Woodmen of the World for donating the flag pole that was put up at the ball fields. Jean Chevalier thanked the board for the hard work they do. She has watched a lot of meetings on video and read a lot of documents online. Jean read aloud from a prepared statement (see page 2). Lori Olds presented a letter to Chris Yates, which Chris read aloud (also see page 2). In response to Lori Olds request, Chris stated that he did not share those emails with anyone, including the board. They were confidential between the senders and himself, and he did not even vote on this issue, therefore they do not have any bearing on the topic. Paul Smith stated that he has concerns about AmCare being able to satisfy response times. Eric Bessette also has concerns about response times, and gave an example of an AmCare response time to Shawville taking 29 minutes. Mr. Bessette further stated if anything happens to his kids he will be coming back to this board. George Greenwood spoke to some of the experiences he has had with MVR and also with AmCare over the years. Mr. Greenwood feels MVR does a good job in our community and said AmCare had a hard time finding his house. Jeff Hoague spoke in favor of MVR. Sue Cota has been to all the meetings and still has concerns about response times. Sharon Bousquet, newly appointed Selectboard member, is new to this whole thing. She asked if the Highgate Selectboard has signed a contract with AmCare – yes, we have. She also asked, because it was asked of her, if signing a three year contract is legal, seeing as we only budget one year at a time – yes, it is legal, and we sign multiple year contracts with the Franklin County Sheriff's office also.

April 21, 2016

Deer Highgate Selectboard:

Let me say thank you for all the hard work that you put into being a select board member. I have read the Town Plan, thoroughly studied the Capital Improvement Plan, and I have watched hours of select board video on the website. You do a hard job, no doubt about it. Thank you.

In the 2015-2020 Town Plan, pages 46 and 47, Ambulance and Rescue Services were discussed. One quote that stood out in that Town Plan was, "The quality and ability of MVR to provide service at this time is excellent". The plan was adopted by you, the select board on July 23, 2015 and by adopting it, I am assuming that you agreed with everything in that plan. So I am wondering what happened?

It is evident that the real issue of Missisquoi Valley Rescue versus AmCare has nothing to do with the capability of MVR or the cost of MVR. The townspeople at the meeting overwhelmingly agreed that we are willing to pay the extra taxes in order to keep MVR. Isn't that every selectboard's dream when taxpayers are willing to pay extra taxes? So, what is the real story? Was this payback because the voters amended your Capital Improvement Plan? Was this payback against Swanton because their voters chose not to become part of the Arena Tri-Town project? Was this a personal vendetta between a selectboard member and a member of MVR? Or, all of the above? The voters were willing; why wasn't the selectboard? Why, what is the real reason that AmCare was chosen over MVR?

The Board has the legal right to enter into contracts. So, one could argue that the voters have no legal say in the ambulatory service chosen to serve them. Someone was legal when, but it certainly wasn't right!

I guess I am naive enough to believe in the "good" of people, and I thought the selectboard would do the right thing. I believe that democracy, in its purest form, starts at the town level. With the power given to any person serving the people, also comes great responsibility to use that power for the good of the townspeople and not their own agendas or vendettas.

If the selectboard would put this to the voters to choose the provider they wish, then I will say okay with whatever outcome the voters choose. I am not a supporter of the Arena project and it was voted down the first time, but when it came back for a vote again, the people passed it. That is democracy... we almost because they were led to about the Arena ever being a viable and self-sustaining enterprise. However, the will of the people was heard and so be it. Since the majority of the residents at that meeting were willing to pay the extra tax dollars, it again begs the question of why you voted for AmCare and not MVR.

According to the VLCT Handbook, selectboards can rescind motions already passed when new evidence is brought to bear. Based on the voters' overwhelming willingness to pay the extra tax dollars to keep Missisquoi Valley Rescue, and the conflict of interest by the Chair, it would behoove the selectboard to consider rescinding the vote to contract with AmCare. It might be wise to enter into a contract with MVR until such a time as it can be properly vetted and put to a public vote via paper ballot on Town Meeting Day or Australian ballot or call a special meeting sooner.

The VLCT Handbook states (page 21 section C #2) "When a conflict of interest is identified and disclosed, the proper course of action is refusal from participation in the matter, i.e. from discussing, questioning, commenting and voting. While some officials may feel it is sufficient to just refrain from voting, complete refusal acknowledges that the outcome of events and decisions often rests on more than the final vote. A conflicted official should not be allowed to use his or her position to influence others's decisions. Practically speaking, this can mean leaving the room, or at least the table, where the discussion is occurring."

Mr. Yates, you should have recused yourself from all proceedings issued on your ongoing family feud with a member of MVR. You opened the door to that information at the April 6th meeting even though many people knew about it long ago. It is a conflict of interest. I don't care why you have a feud and you may be perfectly justified in your disagreements with that family, but it certainly reflects a conflict of interest.

No matter how private it may seem, a conflict of interest such as Mr. Yates must be addressed by the selectboard. VLCT Selectboard Handbook states on page 18 paragraph 5 "Beyond humans to one's reputation, there are other, perhaps more direct reasons to avoid conflicts. For example, conflict of interest may result in void contracts."

Again, according to the VLCT, selectboards can rescind motions already passed when new evidence is brought to bear. Based on the voters' overwhelming willingness to pay the extra tax dollars to keep Missisquoi Valley Rescue, and the conflict of interest by the Chair, it would behoove the selectboard to consider rescinding the vote to contract with AmCare. It might be wise to enter into a contract with MVR until such a time as it can be properly vetted and put to a public vote via paper ballot on Town Meeting Day or Australian ballot or call a special meeting sooner.

Jean M. Chevalier

APRIL, 21st, 2016

TOWN OF HIGHGATE VERMONT
HIGHGATE SELECTBOARD
2996 VT RTE. 7B
HIGHGATE CENTER, VT. 05459

ATTN: CHAIRMAN CHRISTOPHER YATES

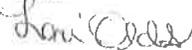
SUBJECT: E-MAILS

Mr. Yates,

During the public meeting for ambulatory services on April 6th, you advised everyone in the room that you had only 1 small in support of Missisquoi Valley Rescue, and 25 emails in support of AmCare Ambulance. Due to the fact you're the Chairman of the selectboard, and you made this public, those e-mails are public knowledge. I am formally requesting a copy of those e-mails, both in reference to the support of MVR and AmCare, as well as any other emails pertaining to this matter.

Thank you,

Lyni Odeh



C. Town Treasurer – Shelley Laroche

1. Check warrants

Paulette asked why there are two accounts for the library, one is attached to their debit card, which is only loaded with \$200.00 at a time. Chris asked about G&K Services and how long our contract is with them. They say its through 2018 but Andy isn't sure if that is valid. The invoice from Wiemann Lamphere will come out of the arena fundraising account. Paulette asked about the design invoice from Shaw for the arena.

2. Misc. updates

- Repro Graphics has presented us with a two year contract for the town report. Shelley would prefer to sign for only one year. We are not in a hurry, so Chris would like Shelley to get one or two more quotes before we sign.
- GIS mapping quote – the listers use this program, as well as the rest of us in the office and the public. It is a great tool to have. Sharon agrees, it's a great program and very user friendly. Motion by Paulette to retain the services of CAI Technologies for GIS technology services for a term of one year in the amount of \$1,800.00. The motion was seconded by Josh LaRocque – **APPROVED**. Sarah Chevalier asked about the program and how to access it.
- The next Finance Committee meeting will be Monday, May 2nd. Shelley is working on some changes to the CIP policy. She has also drafted a general journal entry policy. The committee will also be looking at a conflict of interest policy as well as a reserve fund policy. Paulette Tatro and Ron Nye are addressing the concern from the audit of having other people involved in balancing the monthly bank statements. This is so there is another set of eyes involved in the process, aside from who is making the deposits and writing the checks. Jordan from Sullivan and Powers will be here on July 5th to go over some things as a pre-audit.

D. ACO Update – Vonnie Lamotte

Spring is here and things are starting to get busy. Vonnie picked up a cocker spaniel today on Carter Hill Road, no collar or tags and the dog was full of ticks. He is at FCAR and is in good hands. One dog was surrendered to FCAR by her owners that were struggling to care for her and the dog kept getting loose and picked up by Vonnie. The dog has since been adopted out, so that ended well. Vonnie made the board aware of an ongoing issue between neighbors where the dog was getting caught in the middle. Vonnie doesn't feel the dog (Buddy) is the issue, but she has had several calls, and underground fencing is supposed to be going in soon. If the problems continue there might need to be a meeting. Chris would like to see the documents on this issue, Wendi will send them to him tomorrow. We have licensed 625-630 dogs and last year we licensed 860 total. We have a lot left to do, and Vonnie (ACO) and Ben (Constable) will be issuing tickets starting May 1st, in addition to licensing fees. The issue on Spooner Road has improved. The owner acknowledged receipt of the letter we sent and Josh stated he has not seen the dogs out in the road, so this should be taken care of.

E. Town Clerk – Wendi Dusablon

1. **Approval of Minutes**

- Motion by Chris Yates to approve the minutes from April 6, 2016 as written. The motion was seconded by Paulette Tatro – **APPROVED**.
- Motion by Chris Yates to approve the minutes from April 14, 2016 as written. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED**.

2. **Dog registration update**

As Vonnie noted, this process is moving along. Late fees are in effect \$20.00 spay / neutered or \$24.00 not spay / not neutered. Late notices were mailed to everyone on April 4th and Vonnie and Ben will be out knocking on doors after May 1st.

3. **Welcome Sharon!**

Wendi welcomed Sharon Bousquet to the Selectboard.

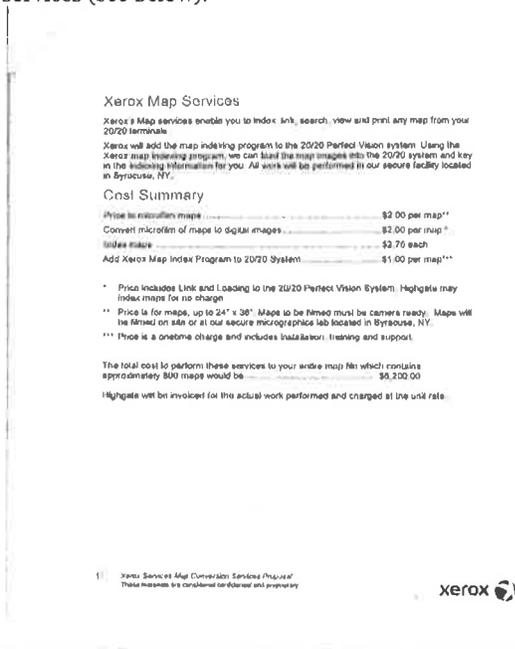
4. **Wedding season catering requests**

Wedding season is coming and nearly every weekend there will be an event at the Franklin County Field Days site, as well as possible other locations in town. Wendi receives catering requests from different entities and those need to be turned around in a timely manner and sent to DLC for their ultimate approval and they issue the permit. Wendi is asking for permission to sign off on these requests and forward them to DLC. This will keep the process going smoothly, as the board only meets twice per month. Chris asked for a list of caterers for the next meeting for them to view prior to giving Wendi the authority to sign off. Wendi will get them a list of all the caterers used over the last two seasons.

5. **Xerox mapping services proposal**

Xerox is the company that provides us with our land records software (formerly known as ACS). We are digitized in our land records back to August 1999. The feedback that Wendi is getting from people that use the system is that our

mapping (mylars) should be digitized as well. They are large and cumbersome and very difficult to copy. Wendi has obtained a quote of \$6,200.00 for the following services (see below).



The funds will come from recording fees, which is \$10.00 per page and broken down \$6.00 general fund / \$2.00 computerization / \$2.00 preservation. We will be using funds built up in the computerization account to cover the \$6,200.00 cost. Xerox will be in Vermont next week and can scan our maps on site, rather than ship them all out of state, which is a huge plus! Motion by Chris Yates to hire Xerox to perform the necessary work to digitize and index 800 maps/mylars at a cost of \$6,200.00 with the funds coming from the computerization fund. The motion was seconded by Josh LaRocque – **APPROVED**. Josh asked if there were other companies around that do this type of work. Yes, there are, but they would not have the ability to load them onto our current 20/20 land records system.

F. Town Administrator – Heidi Britch-Valenta

1. ADA resolution – sign

A motion was made regarding this on April 14th, tonight Heidi needs signatures from the board to keep the ADA grant moving forward. Sharon asked for clarification on the ADA grant and what it will be used for.

G. Arena Facilities Board update

Don Gilbert, Karen Gagne-Fortin, Judy Laroche, Ty Choiniere and Mark Gilbert were present for this discussion. The hockey season went well with the new ice system, just a few bumps in the road. Dealing with the computer system and sensors can be tricky. The dehumidifier has some issues during the cold weather, and the biggest issue has been support from the manufacturer. Issues have been reported on this type of unit from all over, including several Walmart locations in the northern climate, so the problems are not unique to us, they are unique to the system. The ice season was extended an additional month in 2016 with a spring league, it was a big success, with 133 skaters signing up from MAHA, Milton, St. Albans, Rouses Point, Plattsburgh and Bedford. The feedback was very good and they had three teams at each level, except bantams. Randy asked if with the new ice system they would have ice earlier in the fall as well. Don's goal is to have ice by mid-September and be open before October 1st. This summer will depend on what happens with the phase II arena projects. Josh LaRocque is also on the arena facilities board and noted there is a possibility of having a fall league instead of a spring league, but we will see how the timing works out. The spring league was a great deal, 12 hours of ice time for \$100.00 per player! It was very affordable for

families, and MAHA has three new hockey families as a result. MAHA and the facilities board are always looking for ways to put money back into the facility. The turf is down and several programs are going on at the arena including; kids indoor soccer, men's league soccer, field hockey and softball clinics. Turf rental is \$50.00 per hour and is the same price for a resident or non-resident. Highgate Little League and Highgate Parks & Recreation do get a discounted rate. Karen takes care of booking the facility and turf rental. Individuals can rent the turf and batting cage, helmets are required. There will be some fairly extensive repairs done to the zamboni this summer. The tin on the west end of the building will also be replaced, and the lighting above the bleachers will be new (to hopefully shine down on some new bleachers as part of the phase II project)!!!! Josh brought up the issue of storage. Little League, MAHA and Parks & Rec. could all use more space and it might be a good idea for the three entities to collaborate on a combined effort to make that happen. Josh would also like to eventually see one-way traffic around the rink, but there are private well lines to consider and there are also concerns about ice coming off the roof. MAHA is currently in a one year lease with the town, which expires at the end of June. This will be discussed more in executive session.

H. Selectboard Items

- Tanya Bailey lives next door to the public library and came in today inquiring about trimming and cutting trees along the property line. She will work with Liza on this and Chris will have them mark with survey tape what they want to come down before the fence raising party at the library on April 30th. Motion by Chris Yates to allow the public works department to trim the trees on the property lines between the public library and the Bailey property. The motion was seconded by Josh LaRocque – **APPROVED.**
- The public works department would like to start their summer hours on May 1st. This gives them the ability to work four 10-hour days once the spring clean-up work is done. Sweeping is almost done and they are working on cold patching in different parts of town. Motion by Chris Yates to allow the public works director to have his department start summer hours from May 1st – October 1st at his discretion. The motion was seconded by Josh LaRocque – **APPROVED.**
- Paulette asked about winter OT hours and how that came out. Salt usage was up, sand usage was down, OT was down, but Chris doesn't have the exact figures. We should be in good shape budget wise.

I. Other Business

Ty Choiniere asked about the cell tower project and when the hay dams will be picked up. Chris will contact SBA about that. Paulette asked for clarification on which carriers are active on the tower. T-Mobile is the only active carrier at this point. Residents are urged to contact your carrier about getting on the tower in Highgate Center to help with coverage and it will also help the town with revenue as well.

J. Upcoming Events

April 25	5pm	ADA Study Committee Mtg.
May 3	6pm	Parks & Rec. Mtg. @ arena
May 4	6pm	Library Trustees 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 event @ sand shed / Transfer Station Rd.
May 9	6pm	Arena Phase II Construction Committee Mtg. @ arena
May 12	6pm	DRB Mtg.
May 17	6pm	Planning Comm. Mtg.
May 30		Memorial Day in Highgate
		HVFD BBQ @ 11 / Parade @ 1 / HVFD Auction to follow
Sept. 20		Open House – info to follow!!!!

K. Executive Session

Motion by Chris Yates for the Selectboard and the Town Administrator to enter into executive session @ 8:03pm to discuss a lease contract and two other contracts where premature general public knowledge could place the town or the individuals involved at a substantial disadvantage. Also attending from MAHA will be Don Gilbert, Karen Gagne-Fortin, Judy Laroche, Mark Gilbert and Ty Choiniere. The motion was seconded by Paulette Tatro – **APPROVED.**

MAHA representatives left executive session @ 9:01pm

Motion by Paulette Tatro to exit executive session @ 9:48pm. The motion was seconded by Sharon Bousquet – **APPROVED**.

L. Adjournment

Motion by Chris Yates to adjourn the meeting @ 9:49pm. The motion was seconded by Paulette Tatro – **APPROVED**.

Respectfully submitted by,

_____ Wendi Dusablon, Highgate Town Clerk

Minutes approved by,

_____ Christopher Yates, Chair – Highgate Selectboard