

TOWN OF HIGHGATE

Selectboard Mtg.

January 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 Jeff Towle, Chair @ 7:00pm, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Highgate Selectboard Members- Jeff Towle, Chair; Chris Yates, Vice-Chair; Paulette Tatro; Diana O'Hara; Randy Connelly

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

Public / Other – Andy King – Public Works Director; Douglas Bonneau – VTrans Structures Project Manager; Christopher Mooney – VTrans Structures; Carolyn Carlson – VTrans Structures Senior Project Manager; David Peterson – VTrans Project Engineer; Jim Cota – VTrans District 8; Richard Trombley; Joseph Depatie – HVFD; Sarah & Eric Chevalier; Ben Lowell – Constable; Will Ruprecht – FCSO; Chad Miles – FCSO; Sheriff Robert Norris – FCSO; Gerard LaBrie; David Dragon; Jim Dragon; Morris St. Pierre; Dianna Emmons; Holly Sherman; Michael Casella – Cassella; John (Joe) Gay - Casella

B. Public Comment

None

C. VTrans Machia Road Bridge Presentation – Doug Bonneau & Carolyn Carlson

Present from VTrans were Doug Bonneau, Carolyn Carlson, Christopher Mooney and David Peterson. They had a presentation which was shared on the overhead screen. Their purpose this evening is to come back to the community with a set of preliminary plans with a different alignment for the Machia Road bridge. They are looking for the town's blessing on this new plan before moving ahead.

Some background information on the project:

- The structure is owned and maintained by the Town
- Machia Road is a Class II local road intersecting VT Route 78
- Funding will be 80% Federal, 15% State and our local share will still be 5%
- Machia Road is functionally classified as a rural local road
- Posted speed is 35mph (design speed)
- Existing bridge is a two span thru truss
- Existing bridge is 292' long (two equal spans @143') and 16' wide +/-
- Existing bridge was built in 1928 (88 years old)

Existing bridge deficiencies:

- Bridge deck rating 5 Fair
- Superstructure rating 4 Poor
- Substructure rating 4 Poor
- The bridge is structurally deficient and unable to carry design loads
- The bridge is functionally obsolete as it is too narrow for the roadway classification and design speed
- The bridge railing and approach railing are substandard
- The vertical and horizontal alignments are substandard
- The east abutment is showing signs of movement
- The west abutment is showing signs of undermining

Proposed project details:

- Complete bridge replacement
- 2 spans @ 140' – 140' (280' overall span length)
- 28' wide between face of rail (per town request)
- Horizontal alignment will be improved using a straight bridge alignment
- The new horizontal alignment also improves the intersection with VT Route 78
- Improves vertical alignment of roadway

Known issues to discuss:

- Length of closure periods based on new downstream alignment
- Acquisition of the property on the corner of Machia Road and VT Route 78 as part of the project
- Permanent power line relocation
- Changes to property impacts on the west side of the bridge based on the new alignment
- Slight realignment to TH#48 / Pines Plains Road to accommodate VT Route 78 intersection changes

The presentation continued with plans shared with regard to:

- Proposed roadway typical section
- Proposed bridge typical section
- Original layout of proposed bridge
- New layout of proposed bridge

Advantages to new alignment:

- Minimize road closure – keep traffic on existing bridge during construction
- No full time detour will be required
- Straight bridge is easier to design and construct and thus saves money
- Improve intersection with VT Route 78 and improve drainage in this area
- Improved guardrail throughout project
- Moves road further from two residences on the west side of the bridge
- Will move construction impacts further from delineated archeologically sensitive areas

Disadvantages to new alignment:

- Increased ROW cost to purchase building and relocate residents
- New road encroaches further onto farm property
- Keeping the existing bridge open to traffic may lengthen the construction duration of the project
- Minor realignment of TH#48 / Pines Plains Road
- Could push construction out to 2019 based on time to acquire ROW. Creates a greater risk of existing structure needing repairs or bridge closure

Traffic Maintenance:

- Existing bridge to remain open during new bridge construction
- Short duration closures could be possible during certain major construction activities (e.g. – truss bridge demolition)

Scope – Cost – Schedule:

- The project cost and schedule cannot be determined until the scope of the project is clearly defined

Preliminary Engineering	\$ 500,000
Right-of-Way	\$ 400,000
Construction w/ CE and contingencies	\$4,050,000
Total	\$4,950,000

- Construction is currently scheduled for 2018
- Many factors can affect construction year
- Project is funded 80% Fed / 15% State / 5% Local
- Construction year is assuming Federal & State funding is available

Next steps – this is a list of a few important activities expected in the near future. This is not a complete list of activities:

- Get official town backing of new conceptual plans
- Proceed with preliminary plans and design
- Utility relocation process – ROW required for
- Environmental impact permitting – NEPA
- Confirm town's responsibilities in Right-of-Way process
- Right-of-Way process – including purchase of affected properties and relocation of residents in the building on the corner of Machia Road and VT Route 78

Questions / Comments / Concerns:

David Dragon owns the agricultural property on the western end of the bridge. He does not like that this project could get pushed out another year. Carolyn noted that they need construction easements for all the corners and for the power lines, and that takes time. It may not get pushed out another year, but it is possible. David also stated that Ron Machia owns the apartment house on the corner and he could not be here tonight due to a prior commitment. VTrans has right-of-way staff that will come out and meet with affected property owners. Plans will be developed to determine how property owners should be compensated for the project. Sometimes property owners are not willing to work with VTrans, which can also lengthen the process. Mr. Dragon stated that Mr. Machia is willing. It has taken longer than expected to approve the 106, we are almost there and once that is in hand it will move more quickly. Jeff asked what changed from 18-24 months ago when Mr. Machia offered to sell the property to the town. This is a new team and part of the decision to re-look at that property is because there have been issues at that intersection. Previous project managers stated this new bridge could be built in 12 weeks, which would be very difficult to do, even with today's technology. The new bridge can be completed in one construction season and later the truss will come out. Doug stated that typically, even with a willing seller, they don't purchase property if they don't have to. They don't want to put people out of their homes. Jeff wanted to clarify, the match for the town is still 5% - yes. The old bridge, if it remains open during construction, will be open only to posted traffic, keeping the weight limit in place. There will be an unrestricted weight limit on the new bridge, but technically as a town highway it will have a limit of 24,000 pounds. Jeff asked what is the length of a construction season – April 15th through December 1st. VTrans is hoping to advertise late in the previous year and get the steel ordered, so come April 15th they are in there and will start preparing. Rick Trombley had some questions about the alignment and if it would be a straight shot coming down the hill – no, it will be a slight left hand turn. There was a road safety audit site visit on Tuesday to this intersection (Machia Road & VT Route 78) and also to the intersection of St. Armand Road and VT Route 78. Mr. Dragon is in favor of the new design, but another year of him having to drive around will cost him another \$25,000.00. Carolyn added that delays are possible, even if the Machia property is not acquired, it is hard to say. Jeff asked about fast tracking the project as mentioned by previous project managers. Carolyn replied that building a curbed girder in just twelve weeks would be difficult. The pier is the issue because they can't get into the water until the middle of June. Jeff likes the design, but has an issue with 2019. There could be issues with funding if the state does not have enough money in the budget, there is always that chance. The goal is to work hard to get everything advertised in the fall of 2017. The bridge was last rated in September 2015 and is on a yearly schedule. Chris asked if we can do anything to improve the surface in the meantime. The general public sees the deck, but the real issues are with the pier and abutments. It has been years since the town put pavement on the bridge, and the machines weigh too much. David Dragon stated it would be fine, they won't fall through, he already knows. The key to keeping the bridge useable in the interim is to keep heavy loads off the bridge. The NEPA document is close to being complete, which is great progress. Jeff appreciates their work and this revised presentation. Carolyn does understand our frustration. Once the town writes a letter of support regarding the new plan, they will get started right away. Part of the process will be relocating families in the apartment building. They have to have rented there for a certain period of time to qualify for relocation services. Once they are relocated, the house can come down. If Mr. Machia is willing to sell and that happens quickly, that would help. Mr. Dragon wants to see the new bridge going ASAP. Heidi added that the town has to be pleased with the new project team. They have happily looked at this

project again and have been very responsive. Carolyn had asked Heidi to put together a public hearing to keep the process going and stay on schedule. Many projects get lost in NEPA for a long period of time, so while we wait on that, the rest of the project is still moving forward. The permit for the truss is a federal permit. Carolyn leans on VTrans whenever and wherever she can to move things along. They ran into some problems because this bridge was on a list of bridges to be saved. Chris added that a lot of earlier concerns are being addressed with this new alignment, because it is moving the project further away from properties on the western end, including the Bousquet property. Jim Cota had some questions regarding elevation levels. Paulette asked about the old structure and what happens to it. It will be documented, photographed and cut up to be removed. Jim Cota also noted that the town has been taking care of issues, like sealing cracks and some other small things. Carolyn ended by stating that the sooner VTrans hears from the town the better. Motion by Chris Yates to approve the preliminary design change to a straight bridge with two new acquisitions as presented tonight. The motion was seconded by Paulette Tatro – **APPROVED.**

D. Franklin County Sheriff Department Update
Will Ruprecht / Chad Miles / Sheriff Robert Norris

Will Ruprecht and Sheriff Norris have been here multiple times to present information. Tonight they brought along Chad Miles who was recently promoted to Sergeant and is also a new Highgate resident. For the calendar year 2015 the FCSO handled a total of 2,563 complaints in Franklin County. Of those calls, 696 of them were calls to be handled in Highgate, which is an increase of 40% over the previous year. Part of this reason is an increase in property watches which impacts the numbers. In general, crime is up, due to the heroin problem in our area and state. There were 43 arrests in Highgate during 2015, an increase of 27% and 212 tickets were issued in Highgate, an increase of 56%. The new focus for FCSO is motor vehicle interdiction. Incidents by call type include traffic stops, property watches, suspicious events and directed patrols. VT Route 78 and Highgate Road (VT 207) were hot spots, both are state roads and highly traveled. Arrests by offense include 16 for suspended licenses, 8 for DUI, 4 for negligent operation and 4 for reckless endangerment. Top locations for arrests were VT Route 78 and Frontage Road. There were 78 speeding tickets issued in Highgate in 2015, followed by 48 tickets for defective equipment and 28 for suspended licenses. FCSO issued 85 warning and 205 traffic related civil tickets, including 7 for marijuana possession. By locations for tickets and warning were all over the map in Highgate. Ticket demographics were 48% white males. The focus for 2016 will also be increasing DUI arrests, both alcohol and drug related. They will also continue to enforce speed and seatbelt violations as well as motor vehicle interdiction. Gerard LaBrie commented on the problems that legalizing marijuana will create. Jeff asked about a heroin task force in Franklin County. Funds were allocated for a state task force. FCSO is part of a new street crimes task force with members from the St. Albans PD, Swanton PD and VSP. Chris asked what could be done to improve coverage in Highgate. Flexing hours worked great this past summer. Sheriff Norris noted that something to think about would be increasing our coverage hours by another 12 hours per week, he would be happy to sit down and talk with us or with us and Sheldon together. The demand seems greater in Highgate and as we continue to grow we will need to consider increasing coverage. We could increase coverage incrementally so tax payers would not get walloped any further than they already are with everything else. Statistics in Highgate are higher than those in Sheldon. Arrests went down, which is good. There are multiple reasons why our calls are going up. People are much more aware, so they are calling and our population is increasing and changing somewhat. Chris asked Sheriff Norris about our traffic ordinance. He would like to sit down with Heidi, Andy and anyone else to discuss our traffic ordinance. He made reference to the one way rotary on Meadow Lane. Anytime you add new developments it's a good time to review the ordinance. Jeff thanked them all for coming and they reminded us that the speed cart is available if we need to use it.

E. Casella Waste Systems – John (Joe) Gay and Mike Casella

Joe and Mike were here to put some faces to their names and let the board know who is responsible for operations at the Highgate Transfer Station. Joe is an engineer and has been overseeing operations in VT for 15 years. He is responsible for permitting, compliance, engineering and construction of the Highgate facility. Joe works for Mike Casella in those aspects. Mike is responsible for the day to day

operations and employees on site at the facility. He is based out of the Williston location. This is the family business, and Mike has been involved since he was very young. Formerly he was in the Montpelier market. Mike spoke briefly about ACT148 and ACT175. They are all ears and will try to accommodate us and our concerns. Jeff noted that Racheal at the Highgate Transfer Station is great! Casella was put on the agenda tonight and we have a few people in the crowd that have some issues. Chris asked about engineering and the point of contact for FEMA issues / erosion issues / landslides at the site. Jeff asked about possible increased hours on Saturdays. They are currently only open until 11:45am, and the feedback he is getting is they should be open later. Mike will take a look at this and see if there are possibilities. It is mostly residential customers that come in on Saturdays. Jeff also stated that the complaints we are receiving from Highgate residents, Casella customers, is that there is inconsistent pricing and scale fees. Jeff would like to see increased communication between Casella and the Selectboard so we don't see any increased dumping on the side of the roads. Morris St. Pierre stated he cleaned up his basement and was charged \$45.00 for 300 pounds of garbage, most of which was bagged. Mike stated that the reason there are minimum scale fees is to keep people off the scales that don't need to be there. Chris added that when he brings bagged garbage, he is directed to the scales. Diana stated that she goes there with bags of garbage, she is not put on the scales. Particularly on Saturdays they are trying to keep the congestion off the scales. Mr. St. Pierre did not accept the answer about keeping people off the scales, he did not feel that was an acceptable answer to his concerns about pricing. He feels it should be all be by tonnage and prorated so everyone is being charged the same. Jeff gave an example of someone he knew that had 12 tires to get rid of, and at \$12.00 per tire, that is pretty steep, so those tires probably ended up somewhere else, not the land fill. Pricing like that is not encouraging people to do the right thing. Mike will take a look at that also. Mr. LaBrie goes every few weeks to the transfer station and has a carrier on the back of his car for his garbage. It was \$3.75 per bag and before Christmas he was told not to go on the scale anymore and was charged \$15.00 for two bags. Mr. St. Pierre feels that someone was putting money in their own pocket, and noted that the employee is no longer there when he goes. Eric Chevalier went to the transfer station today for the first time and he brought 6-8 bags of garbage and was charged \$22.00 which he thought was good. It's all a matter of consistency. E-Waste is no longer being accepted at the Highgate Transfer Station facility. The state handles E-Waste contracts and it has been put out to bid again as a whole by the state. From an operations standpoint, it does not make sense for Casella to collect E-Waste at this point in time. Chris asked about the size of a bag vs. the weight of a bag. If the weight of the bag is a factor, it should be indicated on the pricing list. If that is the policy, it should be clearly stated so people know what to expect because perception is huge. Mike would like new signage so people are clear on where to go and the traffic flow would be better. The board thanked Joe and Mike for being here. Casella wants to work with the town and will be on the agenda more in the future. This is the pricing list that Wendi obtained from Racheal at Casella on 1/6/16.

CASELLA / HIGHGATE TRANSFER STATION PRICING

as provided to the Town of Highgate January 6, 2016

15 gallon bag	\$ 1.87
30 gallon bag	\$ 3.75
50 gallon bag	\$ 7.50
Minimum scale fee	\$ 48.16
Tonnage rate	\$137.61

Questions should be directed to Racheal @ 802-651-5491. Thank you.

F. Fire Dept. Update – Joe Depatie

Joe took over as Chief of the HVFD on January 1st. Prior to this, some of the vehicles had needed repairs, all are up and running. He does not have any invoices yet. Engine 1 was down and needed a total rebuild of the pump. Engine 2 had valves repacked and some remaining work will be done in better weather. Desorcie's will be back in four months to look everything over and come back automatically on a yearly basis. The clutch went in the tanker at the last fire, it is also now up to par and working. There are no maintenance records on the trucks so they are working to get a baseline. Joe wants to know from the board what will be expected of him. He will be learning the ropes with his fellow officers helping him as much as they can. They will have actual officers meetings with minutes to present to the board afterwards. Jeff doesn't want Joe to beat himself up too much, the communication has improved, and the board is here to back him up. Chris noted that the biggest request is to get Joe plugged in to the county meetings. As he attends those, he will develop relationships with surrounding chiefs. Swanton is interested in training with Highgate and vice versa. Currently, HVFD only has two members that are firefighter 1 certified and they have 4 members interested in going to firefighter 1 training. Joe feels the firefighters are much more relaxed lately and there is less friction. Chris added that last year they utilized Tim Stetson to help with the bylaws, and we always have the ability to work with him again. Vehicles will be Joe's main priority and he hopes to have everything in place with records and inspections by the end of February. He would like to get a truck committee in place also, but they need to get their house in order before they start looking at new trucks. Andy can assist Joe by utilizing the new FLEETIO software, the fire department vehicles are already included. Andy has agreed to be the training officer for the department. Joe had questions for the board regarding legalities of the HVFD and unsafe situations for residents, carbon monoxide issues as an example. With VT Gas expanding in town, this is a great chance to train with them, or reach out to local propane companies. Heidi noted that scholarship funds are available for training and support. Chris added that the Chief has the authority to have residents leave the premises if deemed unsafe. If they made the call for assistance, they are giving emergency responders the authority to make those decisions. Chris will reach out to some contacts and see what he can find. Joe had questions about the fire department floor and when that will be repaired. Huge chunks of concrete are coming out of the floor now and its affecting an area approximately 20' x 20'. Joe has drilled test holes and there is a gap there, he is unsure if it is wet or dry down there. The new lockers that were obtained for the department, we will need an electrician to move some power around to accommodate them being installed. Andy has an electrician coming tomorrow to the garage, so he will bring him to the fire department as well. Chris wants to see the electric heaters gone in the fire department. Jeff reminded everyone of the fundraiser this Saturday, Jan. 23rd at the My-T-Fine to benefit HVFD member John Gale who lost his home and belongings in a house fire. There will be dinner, music and a silent auction. Tickets are available at the door.

G. Public Works Dept. – Andy King

- Andy will work with the Sheriff and Heidi on the traffic ordinance.
- Fleet maintenance software is proving to be an amazing tool to track fuel and repairs on the town vehicles.
- A few minor breakdowns have been repaired.
- Minor changes to plow routes have saved about 40 minutes off the routes.
- Chris thanked the crew for their help at the library with shoveling and plowing, the library staff has expressed their gratitude. Andy gave credit to Butch and Pat, they go above and beyond in all they do. They have a super crew, and team work makes the dream work!
- They are experimenting some with a little more salt which is drying up the pavement more quickly and working well. They will continue to develop a strategy that makes sense.
- Chris asked about the fencing on Durkee Road / Hanna Road and if that should come down in the winter months, the fence is in the right of way. Years ago the fence came down in the winter, now the animals are there and they are fed at the edge of the road all winter. Andy noted this is a prime location for a new street light. Andy has a list of three locations in the VELCO area that could benefit from more lighting. Andy will work with Chris on this.

H. Town Treasurer – Shelley Laroche

1. Pay bills

There were no questions on the warrant.

2. Misc.

- Shelley contacted VLCT regarding amending line items from the floor at town meeting. She did get some answers and will forward those to Chris.
- The town report (2015) is going to the printers tomorrow for the draft. Paulette asked if we had everything we needed from MVR. Shelley received something today, but has not thoroughly looked through it. Paulette asked how we will deal with incomplete financial reports if we have requested them and they are not received. Shelley could add a short narrative that we asked for more data and did not receive it. Chris added that in past years we have not had any more detail than what we have already received. Paulette further added that with the amount of money that Highgate pays MVR it is not unreasonable for us to have the total financial picture. We are asking for a balance sheet that shows assets and, more importantly, what they have for liabilities. We should have an idea of how financially strong the entity is. The information could come in tomorrow, we just don't know. Paulette pointed out that Shelley has put the revenue and expenditure reports in the drop box for year to date. This is public knowledge and good to see how departments are spending. Shelley will start doing this monthly for department heads so they can keep an eye on their budgets.

I. Town Clerk – Wendi Dusablon

1. Minutes from Jan. 7

Motion by Jeff Towle to approve the minutes from *January 7, 2016* with one correction. The motion was seconded by Paulette Tatro – **APPROVED.**

2. Petitions for elected offices – due Jan. 25 by 5pm

We will be open until 5pm on Monday to accept petitions and certificates of nomination for the ballot on March 1st. Jeff added we have two selectboard seats open, a two year term and a three year term. Jeff and Diana will not be running for re-election.

3. Town Meeting Warning

This must legally be posted publically by Jan. 31st. We have what we need from the school and there were no changes from the board for the town articles. Wendi will print up a final version for everyone to come in and sign next week.

4. Hockeyville

We are continuing to do well, and currently have 10% of the overall nominations. Keep nominating through March 11th, three times with each email address you have!

5. Town Report

As mentioned above by Shelley, the draft will be sent to the printers tomorrow.

6. Pre Town Meeting Info Session

Thursday, February 4th @ 7pm at the Highgate Elementary School Library. This will be a combined meeting with the Highgate School Board.

7. Dogs

License your dogs by April 1st to avoid late fees. The rabies clinic is March 19th from 10am – noon at the HVFD. We have 50+ licensed so far, about 850 to go!

8. Certificates of Appreciation

We will be sending out certificates to all donations of \$1,000.00 or more to the Arena Renovation Project. The board approved the certificate design. Wendi will get these out in the mail tomorrow.

9. Smoking Prohibition Ordinance

This became effective on Jan. 13th. Rise VT is interested in helping us with education and outreach. Wendi will notify all departments that this is now in effect.

J. Town Administrator – Heidi Britch-Valenta

1. Road safety audit

Tuesday we had lots of people here most of the day. It was awful weather but fruitful visits to the two sites (Route 78 & Machia Road and Route 78 & St. Armand Road) and lots of conversation.

2. AmeriCorps letter of support

Motion by Chris Yates for Jeff to sign the letter of support to the AmeriCorps VISTA Program for the Highgate Public Library. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED.**

3. Selectboard report for 2015 town report

This is in the packet and needs a few edits, otherwise is good to be added to the draft going out tomorrow.

K. Selectboard Items

1. Personnel policy

This was discussed last meeting during executive session, but no motions were made.

2. Misc.

- Chris looked at the phones at the library and with their E-rate funding its cheaper for them to stay with what they currently have.

L. Other Business

None

M. Upcoming Events

Jan. 23		Fundraiser for John Gale @ My-T-Fine
Jan. 25	by 5pm	Petitions and Consent forms due for elected offices
Feb. 4	7pm	Pre Town Meeting Info Session @ Highgate Elem. Library
Feb. 11	6pm	DRB Mtg. w/ site visit @ 5pm
Feb. 16	6pm	Planning Comm. Mtg.
Feb. 24	by 5pm	Last day to register to vote on town meeting day!
Mar. 19	10am-noon	Rabies clinic @ HVFD

N. Executive Session

Motion by Jeff Towle to enter into executive session @ 9:26pm to discuss contract negotiations and a legal matter where premature public knowledge would put the town at a severe disadvantage. The motion was seconded by Chris Yates – **APPROVED.**

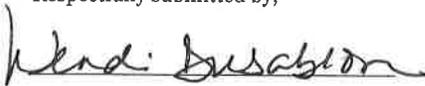
Motion by Jeff Towle to exit executive session @ 10:45pm. The motion was seconded by Chris Yates – **APPROVED.**

Motion by Paulette Tatro to change the date in the personnel policy regarding setting the amount the town contributes to employees for health insurance from January 1st to July 1st to match the budget and fiscal year. The motion was seconded by Chris Yates – **APPROVED.**

O. Adjournment

Motion by Chris Yates to adjourn the meeting @ 10:46pm. The motion was seconded by Diana O'Hara – **APPROVED.**

Respectfully submitted by,



Wendi Dusablon, Highgate Town Clerk

Minutes approved by



Jeff Towle, Chair – Highgate Selectboard