

TOWN OF HIGHGATE Selectboard Meeting

Thursday, September 17, 2020 @ 6:30pm
@ Highgate Sports Arena

Approved Minutes

NOTE: All actions taken are unanimous unless otherwise stated

JOIN VIA ZOOM:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85673623881>

FREE CONFERENCE CALL

Dial in # 425-436-6365 Access code 188557

A. Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance

The in-person Selectboard meeting / video conference call / phone conference call meeting was called to order by Sharon Bousquet, Chair @ 6:32pm, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, changes to open meeting law allowed for this meeting to take place in various ways. The meeting was held at the Highgate Sports Arena for proper physical distancing for those who wanted to attend in-person. Zoom video or conference call was also available.

Highgate Selectboard Members – Sharon Bousquet – Chair; Bruce Butler – Vice Chair; Richard Flint; Kyle Lothian; Vern Brosky III (all in-person) *absent – Kyle Lothian*

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

Public / Other – Alice S. Cota; Steve LaFar; Rick Trombley; Kellie Uzell; Evangeline LaRocque; Luc Dupuis; Ty Choiniere; Joe Severy. (all in-person)

B. Public Comment(s)

- Sue Cota reported that the State has started work on the Monument Road bank and they will be, pending approval, extending it another 72 feet. She has been taking photos and they are doing an excellent job.
- Kellie Uzell is still waiting to hear back from VSP (Bruzzi) from a few meetings ago. He was going to check into her concerns from previous to the meeting that went unanswered. Kellie would like to have Border Patrol respond if VSP or SAPD can not. Vern's understanding is that Border Patrol would be an assist, not a primary and that they could respond but are not obligated to assist state and local law enforcement. He also noted that VSP is spread very thing but a call back to Kellie should have taken place by now.
- Evangeline LaRocque was happy to see the food truck in the park (municipal lot) but was not happy to have been subjected to the noise from their generator for such a long period of time. Richard Flint has spoken with Mr. Geraw from Pickles Snack Shack and he would like to use the power source in the park with Selectboard approval. If it can't be improved, Lene would like to see them relocated to the Machia property (VCMP) or the arena. Mr. Geraw is also on the next DRB agenda to work on a Conditional Use permit to operate on his own property located on

Carter Hill Road. Heidi noted that we will also have another vendor request in the near future. This one would be on an occasional basis, as more of a traveling vendor truck. There was discussion on the VCMP property and the Brownsfields program. Heidi has spoken to the Brownsfields program personnel and they are not willing to give permission to use the property for that type of use and still remain in the program. If the town issues permission to use it we would be risking our future in the program as well. Steve LaFar asked how was the community celebration in 2019 able to be held there? Heidi answered that the celebration was not held on the contaminated portion. Pickles Snack Shack was further discussed under the Selectboard section of this meeting.

- Joe Severy was present and not pleased that he had heard that the Recreation Commission would not be putting in ice until later in the month of October. As a taxpayer he does not agree with it and feels that the town is losing money. He has a good source in Essex that said they are willing to rent ice in Highgate. Joe would like to see the Selectboard dissolve the Recreation Commission and the decisions they are making. Sharon let Joe know that the meetings are all public and warned and that there are current members who would be willing to step down for others to participate. Joe can not join a board due to time constraints. He has been on the MAHA board and also a coach. He wants normalcy for our kids now more than ever due to COVID-19. There was further discussion about other rinks and their ice schedules. The Highgate Recreation Commission looked at other rinks and if snack bars and pro shops would be open. The Governor has extended the State of Emergency to Oct. 15th. We do not know yet what is going to happen with high school hockey. There was discussion on the time involved with putting the ice in as well as the expense of it and running the compressors, etc. The next Rec. meeting is Monday, Sept. 21st at 5:30 here at the arena. Joe also commented that he never sees Rec. meetings advertised on the digital board. Yes, they are, all our meetings are shared in the same manner (digital board, Instagram, FaceBook, website, newspaper, and several locations around town). Ty Choiniere has been in contact with the Essex scheduler. Joe stated that if MAHA does not start until Oct. 26th his son will play in Chittenden County this year. Vern is new to this board and knows very little about the ice season and what it takes to get everything going. Steve LaFar asked if the Selectboard was involved with the decision to put the ice in late. The Rec. board just met on Monday and made that decision. Rec. is also here to go into executive session later tonight.

C. VCMP Update – Steve LaFar

Steve gave an update on the Village Core Master Plan Committee. They walked the two sites being considered for water and wastewater and Wright's sand pit on Lamkin Street was the preferred one. Test pits will happen next and then we will see how it goes. Steve spoke about different grant opportunities. There was discussion on the former Machia house and what the historical assessment had to say with regard to possible restoration. The VCMP committee meets on Sept. 29th and they have asked for the full report to be completed by that date. They need to know dollar amounts to go along with the report as well. For the price we paid, we tend to fall to the bottom of the priority list. The next time we work with the Brownsfields program will not be until the final design. If the town were to sell the VCMP property tomorrow, the new owner could still clean it up but would not have access to the same funding that the town does. There was discussion on the contamination and Richard asked for clarification on where the

contamination specifically is located. The VCMP is steering the ship and giving the information to the Selectboard. Kellie would like the town to sell the property. HLCC (library) is working with VCMP members. Virginia Holiman and Rebecca Howrigan would like to be appointed to the VCMP committee.

D. Planning Commission Update – Luc Dupuis

Interviews for the Zoning Administrator position were held on Tuesday night. A recommendation will be made later in executive session. The PC will be working on updating some town ordinances. They will also be involved with the DRB and VCMP groups on their projects as well as looking at TIF districts and impact fees. It was pointed out that 27 new home permits have been issued since January 2019, so we are definitely growing! Sharon gave an update on the airport expansion project and the possibility of extending water and sewer from MVU up to the airport. Mr. Harrison had started his subdivision project but still has a few meetings left with the DRB when he is ready to return. Bruce has been involved with the airport project as well and he will be working with Heidi to find additional funding to lower the impact to the taxpayers. Commercial growth will help our tax base and support those new homes and the expenses associated with them. Bruce listed off the members of the group that are working on this airport project. They will continue to brainstorm ideas and look for funding. The State will be expanding the runway at the FC Airport and that will be the real driver of the economic activity. Bringing water and sewer is a big part, but not the biggest. If this flies and we can make it affordable for the taxpayers it will be a huge economic benefit for the entire county in general. Sharon thanked the VCMP, PC and DRB members for all they are doing and working on.

E. Town Treasurer – Shelley Laroche

- Sharon had questions about the repairs to the mower and the bills for the fire department Ford F350. The mower bill at Fourniers was for parts and the gear and guard were most of the bill. Richard commented how great the roadsides look. Shelley also listed off the parts and labor breakdown for the F350 utility truck. Motion by Richard Flint to sign the check warrants. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED**.
- The outstanding delinquent tax balance as of Sept. 15th is \$59,537.80. As soon as it is allowed there are 14 people that will get tax sale notices. These properties have made zero communication efforts with the town to take care of their delinquent taxes and we have new bills going out tomorrow.
- There is a budget update in Sharepoint.
- Tax bills are going out tomorrow, 9/18. Due date is 10/30 by 4:30pm.
- Our drop box is ordered but we don't know when it will ship and arrive. This will be helpful with ballots and tax payments, as well as throughout the year for other reasons. It will be placed, as recommended, in a well lit area that is monitored by a security camera and ADA compliant and accessible. We will be reimbursed up to \$1,000.00 by the SOS Office. The plan is to place it by the back entrance, anchored to the concrete.

F. Town Clerk – Wendi Dusablon

- Motion by Richard Flint to approve the minutes from August 24, 2020, as written. The motion was seconded by Sharon Bousquet – **APPROVED**.

- Motion by Bruce Butler to approve the minutes from September 3, 2020, as written. The motion was seconded by Vern Brosky III – **APPROVED**.
- HLCC has re-opened with limited hours, which began Monday, Sept. 14th. More information is available on the library website and FaceBook page, as well as the town website and FaceBook page.
- Wendi would like the board to start thinking about our appropriations policy and if any changes will need to be considered for petitions for warned articles at town meeting. No action needs to happen now. We currently require a petition with 5% registered voter signatures for petitioned warned articles, or appropriation requests over \$1,000.00 which is about 115 signatures. With COVID-19 we may need to look at this as we move into the winter months.
- The General Election will be Nov. 3rd from 7am – 7pm at Highgate Sports Arena for those who wish to vote in person. However, all active registered voters state-wide will automatically be sent an absentee ballot starting Sept. 21st. If you choose to vote at the polls that absentee ballot mailed to you needs to be accounted for, so please bring it or be prepared to sign an affidavit before you can vote in person. We appreciate everyone's patience as we work through this very strange election cycle. Vern had questions about replacement ballots if voters make an error. Those can be swapped out by contacting Wendi, 868-5002 or wduusablon@highgatevt.org. Once they are mailed no changes can be made.

G. Administrator Items – Heidi Britch-Valenta

- Motion by Bruce Butler to sign the consultant agreement with Aldrich & Elliott. The motion was seconded by Vern Brosky III – **APPROVED**.
- Motion by Bruce Butler to sign the consultant agreement with EPR. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED**.
- A few grants have been closed out and the final numbers are in the packet. The Rollo Road project is anticipated to start early next week.
- We are working with two different firms on an overall update on what we have for equipment for fire alarm systems, extinguishers and security cameras. It is a large project and Heidi does not want to tackle it alone. She would like to work with someone who is interested and has knowledge. She will check with HVFD. The fire alarm panel in the (now) listers office is outdated and they have not manufactured parts for it since 2006. Simplex was supposed to meet with Summit (new company) and did not show. The panel is old and they no longer are willing to service it due to its age. We have an estimate for a new system using all of the system wiring and switches.
- We have previously discussed having Vern be the point person for the video monitoring system. The surveillance system policy has never been executed. The draft was reviewed and edited. We annually could appoint someone from the board to monitor the system after town meeting day when all other appointments are made. Vern does not mind taking on this role but would like a secondary person also. Kyle Lothian was mentioned, although Kyle was not present. Further edits to the policy were discussed. It is recommended that the system is looked at monthly to make sure it is functioning properly. One computer in the office with software which is password protected was discussed as well as remote access. Vern will get back to Heidi with some additional wording.

- Fire extinguishers were inspected and we were reminded to have them looked at monthly internally. Richard Flint will cover the municipal building. The library and arena are already covered.
- For future planning, the fire alarm panel at the arena is also getting old. Ty will keep this on the radar for the CIP.
- The library camera system has not been working since a spring storm. We have received a bid from Summit for a new analogue system or to go IP like the other systems. If we go with the IP system we would be able to take it with us if HLCC relocates and it is easily expandable to a larger space.
- We have been having meetings at the arena for several months but that will be coming to an end with the ice season starting. Our Oct. 1st meeting will be here at the arena but we will need to consider a bay at HVFD or maybe the school for larger gatherings.

H. Selectboard Items

- Motion by Bruce Butler to sign the purchase and sale extension agreement with VT Fish & Wildlife for the Cherry Hill property. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED.**
- Randy Connelly is happy to serve as our rep on the CUD and a motion was made at the last meeting. We can also have an alternate member if anyone is interested.
- Richard circled back to the conversation about Pickles Snack Shack and if they are able to plug into the electrical service in the park. There was discussion on what would be a fair rate to charge him and what would be a good solution if the electrical is not compatible with what his food truck requires. Bruce suggested a flat rate for the rest of the season. Shelley suggested that it all be prepaid. Motion by Richard Flint to charge Peter Geraw (Pickles Snack Shack) a flat fee of \$125.00 for electricity for the remainder of the season through the end of October, to be prepaid. If he is not able to hook up successfully he will need to reconfigure the placement of his generator and direct the noise in a different direction and muffle the sound as much as possible to lessen the noise as discussed under public comment. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED.**

I. Upcoming Events

Selectboard Mtg.	Oct. 1	6:30pm
Recreation Comm.	Oct. 5	5:30pm
DRB	Oct. 8	6:00pm
Planning Comm.	Oct. 20	6:00pm

Motion by Sharon Bousquet to exit the regular Selectboard Meeting @ 8:21pm. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED.**

J. Executive Session

Motion by Sharon Bousquet to enter into executive session with Heidi Britch-Valenta, Shelley Laroche, Ty Choiniere, Rick Trombley, Luc Dupuis, and Steve LaFar @ 8:21pm for contracts, legal and personnel 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 Sharon Bousquet to exit executive session @ 9:44pm. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED.**

Motion by Richard Flint to appoint Rebecca Howrigan and Virginia Holiman to the VCMP Committee The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED.**

Motion by Bruce Butler to table the issue of the first right of refusal for the VCMP property. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED.**

K. Adjournment

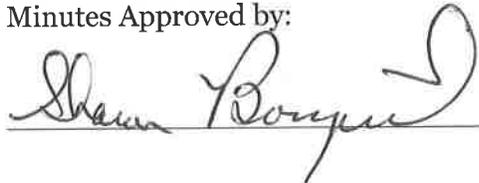
Motion by Richard Flint to adjourn the meeting @ 9:48pm. The motion was seconded by Vern Brosky III – **APPROVED.**

Respectfully submitted by:



Wendi Dusablon
Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk

Minutes Approved by:



Sharon Bousquet
Selectboard Chair