

TOWN OF HIGHGATE Selectboard Meeting

Thursday, January 2, 2020 @ 6:30pm
(budgeting session @ 6:00pm)

Approved Minutes

NOTE: All actions taken are unanimous unless otherwise stated

6:00pm – 6:40pm – Budgeting Session in front office:

Present were: Shelley Laroche, Sharon Bousquet, Josh LaRocque & Bruce Butler

A. Call To Order & Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting was called to order by Sharon Bousquet, Chair @6:42pm, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Highgate Selectboard Members – Sharon Bousquet - Chair; Joshua LaRocque – Vice-Chair; Bruce Butler; Richard Flint arrived @ 7:50pm during executive session; *absent –Randy Connelly*

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

Public / Other – Alice (Sue) Cota; Wayne & Nancy Fiske; Merry Souza; Woody Rouse; Joseph Depatie; Ty Choiniere; Shaun Coleman – NRPC; Chris Uzell; Luc Dupuis; Tom Conley

Sharon asked for a moment of silence for Mr. David Roddy, who passed on December 17th. We lost a strong community leader, volunteer and friend. Thoughts and prayers go out to the Roddy family.

B. Public Comment(s)

- Sue Cota passed on information for anyone interested in housing an exchange student from Brazil for five months, please contact Michelle @ 802-370-0073.
- Wayne and Nancy Fiske were present to seek the town's assistance with additional signage on VT Route 78 in the area of a recent fatal accident (McLaughlin Drive). Nancy called VTrans and was told the request would need to come from the town. That area on VT Route 78 is very winding and there is a history of accidents, particularly with tractor trailers. Mr. & Mrs. Fiske would like to see additional signage warning of the winding conditions as well as the grade of the road. Motion by Josh LaRocque for the town to send a written request to Jim Cota @ VTrans to address the issue of additional signage in this area of VT Route 78 with signage, temporary and immediate, as well as something long term. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED**. Woody Rouse also expressed concern with the intersection of VT Route 207 and Brosseau Road.

C. Planning Commission Updates

Luc Dupuis and Tom Conley from the PC were present.

- Capital Improvement Plan – The PC met just prior to this Selectboard meeting to firm up the CIP in order to present it. Sharon added that the Selectboard was also

finishing up budgeting prior to this meeting and a few more adjustments were made by the Selectboard as well: The Machia Road slide line was increased to \$50,000.00 from \$30,000.00, which should be enough for the rest of our match if our grant is approved. The Transfer Station slide line item is now also at \$50,000.00. With these changes to the CIP as well as the town budgets to be approved at Town Meeting, our town tax rate should stay virtually the same. There were questions from the PC about the \$32,500.00 set aside for stormwater grant match funds. That can be reallocated by the voters at Town Meeting from the floor. Woody had questions about the possibility of moving the landfill and if that was still an option. A Casella rep was going to attend this meeting tonight but could not make it. Luc went through all the line items in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for FY20-21. By category the amounts are: Parks & Rec. \$20,000.00; Highgate Library & Community Center \$25,000.00; Highgate Vol. Fire Dept. \$25,000.00; Public Works Department \$205,000.00; Transfer Station Slope Stabilization \$50,000.00; Machia Road Slide \$50,000.00 – TOTAL BEING PRESENTED TO THE VOTERS ON MARCH 3, 2020 = \$375,000.00. This CIP is down \$75,000.00 from last year. Motion by Josh LaRocque to accept the CIP as amended, presented and discussed this evening by both the Highgate Planning Commission and Highgate Selectboard. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED**. Sharon thanked the PC for taking the time to meet with all the departments and putting this CIP together.

- Hazard Mitigation Plan – Shaun Coleman from NRPC was present and had also met with the PC prior to this meeting at 5:30pm. Shaun explained what a Hazard Mitigation Plan is and why the town has one, as well as the benefits that come from having one in place. More edits were made at the PC meeting tonight. Sometime this winter we will have a formalized plan in place. Sharon thanked him for all his efforts and for all the assistance and knowledge that NRPC has given us with various projects over the years.

D. Treasurer Updates – Shelley Laroche

- Check Warrants - Motion by Josh LaRocque to sign the check warrants. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED**.
- Delinquent Tax Update - As of 12/31/19 the delinquent tax balance is \$160,087.14. There are still eleven properties on the tax sale list and the attorneys should be in soon to do the title work. Contact Shelley for payment arrangements, 868-2741.
- Town Report 2019 - Deadline for town report submissions is January 15th. Our book will look different this year, as our merged school district will have their own book. It should be less costly for us and our book will be thinner than in the past. The board thanked Shelley for her work on budgeting, the CIP and delinquent taxes.

E. Town Clerk Updates – Wendi Dusablon

- MVSD Request - MVSD (Missisquoi Valley School District) is asking to have a Q&A session prior to our Town Meeting for interested taxpayers to stop in and have their questions answered. MVSD will also have their own info session about their budget. Motion by Josh LaRocque for MVSD to host a Q&A session at the Highgate School prior to our Town Meeting. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED**. The school library was discussed as a good location for this. Wendi will relay the information to MVSD tomorrow and help them get the word out to taxpayers about this informational opportunity.

- Minutes - Motion by Bruce Butler to approve the minutes from December 5, 2019, as written. The motion was seconded by Josh LaRocque – **APPROVED**.
- Minutes - Motion by Bruce Butler to approve the minutes from December 10, 2019, as written. The motion was seconded by Sharon Bousquet – **APPROVED**.
- Dog Licensing – 2020 dog licensing began today 1/2/20 and it was a busy first day with 31 dogs on the books already. Reminder mailing was sent out in late December. License by April 1st to avoid late fees and fines! The rabies clinic will be at HVFD on March 21st from 10am – noon.
- Town Meeting Updates & Deadlines – Warned article petitions are due 1/16/20 by 4:30pm with a minimum of 112 registered voter signatures. Consent forms and petitions for elected positions on the ballot are due 1/27/20 by 5pm with a minimum of 22 registered voter signatures. Available positions are: Selectboard 2 year; Selectboard 3 year; Lister 3 year; Trustee of Trust Funds 3 year; Cemetery Commissioner 5 year; Library Trustee 5 year; Moderator ensuring year. Absentee ballots can be requested at any time by contacting Wendi, 868-5002 or wduablon@highgatevt.org.
- Town Meeting Lunch – This is a transitional year for us with not having a school floor vote, our meeting should be much shorter than usual. There was discussion on having a lunch vs. having other options available. It was decided for this year to offer coffee, juice, water, pastries, snacks at a table in the gym with a bucket for donations. Our meeting starts at 10am so we could be done by lunch, we just don't know. There is a warned article to start at 9am for next year. HVFD is on board with the plan and will help facilitate this and have items to eat and drink available.
- Draft Warning – Wendi put together a draft of the Town Meeting Warning for March 3, 2020. There are a total of 13 articles and the board was pleased with what was presented. One article is an appropriation that will be dependent on the signatures being turned in on time. Motion by Bruce Butler to approve the proposed 2020 Town Meeting Warning and articles to be amended with final numbers from Shelley for the CIP, General Fund and Highway Fund. The motion was seconded by Josh LaRocque – **APPROVED**. Wendi will have a finalized version ready for signature at the Jan. 16th meeting.

F. Administrator Items – Heidi Britch-Valenta

- ANR Planning Advance Contract – We have asked for the dates to be modified and they have agreed but we have not received a new contract yet. Motion by Bruce Butler to sign the ANR grant with the date change modification to December 31, 2020. The motion was seconded by Josh LaRocque – **APPROVED**.
- Cell Coverage Meeting – There is email correspondence in the packet from Robert Fish, Rural Broadband Technical Assistance Specialist. He has provided us with stats on Highgate and what we have for service currently as well as understand what we can do going forward. Heidi will connect with him regarding coming to a future Selectboard meeting.
- Grants – PACIF safety grants just opened up, these are 50/50 match up to \$5,000.00. USDA just announced another round of grants. These are rural business grants that can be used for planning or development of a property. A letter of intent is due by Jan. 17th and Heidi is looking for a green light from the Selectboard. These are \$30,000.00 grants with no match. She will have more details at the next meeting. Bruce would like to see if the airport projects could

benefit from this type of grant. Heidi will bring the info to both the Village Core Master Plan Committee and the Highgate Airport Infrastructure Study Group at their upcoming meetings. Heidi will also have to attend a workshop in Montpelier. Motion by Bruce Butler to move forward with the letter of intent that is due by Jan. 17th. The motion was seconded by Josh LaRocque – **APPROVED**.

G. Selectboard Items
None

H. Upcoming Events

Jan. 6	5:30pm	Recreation Commission Mtg.
Jan. 8	6:30pm	Library Trustee Mtg.
Jan. 9	6pm	DRB Mtg.
Jan. 14	6pm	VCMP Mtg.
Jan. 16	6:30pm	Selectboard Mtg.
Jan. 20		Town Offices are CLOSED – MLK Jr. Day
Jan. 21	6pm	Planning Commission Mtg.

Motion by Sharon Bousquet to exit the regular Selectboard Meeting @ 7:33pm. The motion was seconded by Josh LaRocque – **APPROVED**.

I. Executive Session

Motion by Sharon Bousquet to enter into executive session @ 7:33pm for personnel with Joe Depatie, Chris Uzell and Heidi Britch-Valenta where premature general public knowledge would place the town and / or the individuals involved at a substantial disadvantage. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED**.

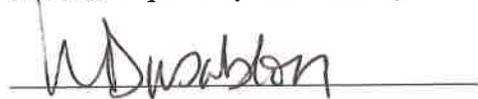
Richard Flint arrived @ 7:50pm and participated in executive session.

Motion by Bruce Butler to exit executive session @ 8:35pm. The motion was seconded by Josh LaRocque – **APPROVED**.

J. Adjournment

Motion by Sharon Bousquet to adjourn the meeting @ 8:35pm. The motion was seconded by Josh LaRocque – **APPROVED**.

Minutes respectfully submitted by:



Wendi Dusablon – Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk

Minutes approved by:



Sharon Bousquet – Chair, Highgate Selectboard