

TOWN OF HIGHGATE

Selectboard Meeting

Thursday, November 15, 2018 @ 7pm

Approved Minutes

NOTE: All actions taken are unanimous unless otherwise stated

6:30pm – Village Core Master Plan (VCMP) conference call

A. Call To Order & Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting was called to order by Sharon Bousquet, Chair @ 7:03pm, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Highgate Selectboard Members – Sharon Bousquet, Chair; Bruce Butler; Steve LaFar *absent* – *Randy Connelly & Joshua LaRocque*

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

Public / Other – Alice (Sue) Cota; Daniel Favreau; Woody Rouse; David Roddy; Rob Naramore; Ty Choiniere; Chris Shepard

B. Public Comment(s)

- Sue Cota let the board know that she spoke with Eugene Rich and the Abenaki Council does not have the funding to help on Monument Road. He will be in touch with Sue with regard to this. She has not heard anything from the State of VT.
- Mitch Durfee contacted the town with regard to connecting power at 224 Lime Kiln Road. The house was built in 2009 but power was never connected to it. VELCO would like the town to sign off on this road crossing request before they connect the power. Motion by Bruce Butler to sign this request. The motion was seconded by Steve LaFar – **APPROVED.**
- Mr. Favreau commented that he was recently in the area of Hempyard Road and there is a lot of garbage and tires there. We do have a clean-up scheduled for that area. Sharon asked for diligence from our community members if they see illegal dumping to report it.

C. VAST Update – Daniel Favreau

Daniel Favreau was present from the NorthWest Riders Snowmobile Club to get permission from the board to use certain sections of town roads in Highgate. They are the same roads as requested in prior years: along the gas line on Frontage Road, the bridge over the interstate on Carter Hill Road, and a section of Durkee Road. Mr. Favreau let the board know they carry a million dollar insurance policy. Motion by Bruce Butler to sign the document. The motion was seconded by Steve LaFar – **APPROVED.**

D. Treasurer Upates – Shelley Laroche

1. Check Warrants

There were no questions on the check warrants. Shelley did note that several refunds were issued for property taxes due to the fact that the State of VT was very behind on issuing credits on homestead filings. Taxes were paid in full and then the credits came through, which were refunded to the taxpayer. Shelley mailed out the first round of delinquent notices and people have been responding.

E. Town Clerk Updates – Wendi Dusablon

1. Minutes

Motion by Bruce Butler to approve the minutes from November 1, 2018, as written. The motion was seconded by Steve LaFar – **APPROVED**.

2. Recap Nov. 6th Election

This was a very busy day, with 1,143 ballots counted in Highgate. This is 52% of our voter checklist! For comparison purposes:

Nov. 2018	1,143	mid-term election year
Nov. 2016	1,402	presidential election year
Nov. 2014	989	mid-term election year

2018 State General Election – Results: Governor - Phil Scott; Lt. Governor - David Zuckerman; Senate (Franklin County) - Randy Brock & Corey Parent; FC Sheriff – Roger Langevin (close race with Tom Oliver 9126 to 8893); Secretary of State – Jim Condos; Franklin-5 House of Representatives – Joshua Aldrich & Charen Fegard; Highgate Justices of the Peace – John Ferland, Clarence Miller, Patty Rainville, Connie Janes Beyor, Dennis Nolan, Anne Harper and Claude Chevalier; Probate Judge – Vaughn Comeau (close race with Robert Farrar 8972 to 8716). Mr. Farrar has requested a recount on the Probate Judge race. Our ballots and election materials were dropped off with Jim Pelkey at the courthouse in St. Albans already. The recount is set for Nov. 29th.

3. Misc.

- Meals on Wheels has a critical need for drivers in our community. Contact 802-662-5249 or emarks@agewellvt.org.
- Operation Happiness 2018 – Highgate residents who would like to request a food basket or toys need to call in on Nov. 26th @ 868-9400 between 9am – noon or 4pm – 7pm. Donations of non-perishable food items or toys can be dropped off here at the town office by December 14th.
- HVFD is participating in Operation Firecuffs. They are collecting presents to deliver with Santa at UVM Children’s Hospital. A list of age appropriate donations is available by calling the town office, 868-5002, or calling Liza at HVFD 868-7722.

F. Highgate Elementary School Update(s)

- Rob Naramore was present. He is managing the easement with VELCO and the school district. He gave a brief history on the project and easement. This project has been in the works for three years. The purpose is to update and upgrade the easement from an electrical transmission only to a transmission and telecommunications easement. Each landowner along the easement has to be contacted and approval given. This easement will expand the fiber optic network starting at the Highgate substation all the way to Derby (approx. 300 landowners). A basic easement was presented to the school board back in September and a survey has been done. The actual transmission poles do not run through the school property, they run down the old rail bed and there is an encroachment into the easement of the school. Virtually all easements now include danger tree rights, which allows cutting of trees outside the easement that could possibly fall onto the lines. VELCO is offering the school \$4,534.00 for the easement upgrade. In the title search process it was determined that the town will also have to sign off, as well as the school. The new easement won’t be widened at all and no new poles are proposed, it is strictly adding new fiber optic lines. The fee is based on a formula that involves square footage or acreage within the easement area and also includes the

town's assessment of the property. There is a statewide push to expand the fiber optic network. Ty asked for clarification on if the easement went onto the arena property at all – no, it does not. Ty also asked about the \$4,534.00 going only to the school district and not the town. Mr. Naramore stated that conversation would be between the school and the town. The Selectboard has seen the draft documents already. Sharon would like five signature lines on the final document for all members of the Selectboard to sign. Ty questioned what residents should do if they feel they were overlooked in the process. They should contact VELCO directly.

- Chris Shepard, Chair of the Highgate School Board, was present for an update. The school board is still waiting on the State Board of Education's final ruling on the merger. Once we have the final word, a draft of the terms of agreement will come our way which will be reviewed at the next Supervisory Union meeting. The town is still pursuing the law suit with other towns. There are seven lawyers working on, most pro bono. There is also a Go Fund Me page set up which can be found on the FNWSU website. Once the State Board rules, the attorneys will ask for an injunction which puts everything on hold. Even if Highgate wasn't involved and another town in our district is, it would put a halt to everything, which means we stay as is for now until it's sorted out. The injunction needs to happen immediately, because we are right in the middle of budgeting season for the next fiscal year. We should know by the next School Board meeting on Dec. 13th. We did not do a 706B study, so there will be equal representation from each town, two from each. The new board put into place could change that, making it three from each town, which would make an odd number. All the physical locations of our schools will stay the same. This merger is not about physical buildings, it is about the governance structure of the schools in our district. It will be one unified board governing all four schools (Swanton, Highgate, Franklin and MVU). We would also need to select one style of voting. Currently Swanton and MVU vote by ballot, whereas Highgate and Franklin vote from the floor. There would have to be a separate informational meeting as a town for our local school budget. This could happen on town meeting day, however the polls open at 7am so we would not catch everyone to see the presentation before they vote. However, budget informational sessions held separately from town meeting day have very poor attendance, so town meeting is the best way to catch the most people. The school roof project is nearly complete, with trim work yet to be done. The weather has been very wet and cold which has held them up. The municipal roof project will likely not happen until spring at this point. Ty advised those that want to know about ACT46 should attend the Supervisory Union meetings and get informed. He feels our new Superintendent is doing a great job of informing the SU board members of what she knows. The next SU meeting is December 10th here in Highgate at the school.

G. Town Administrator Items – Heidi Britch-Valenta

1. Grant / Project Update

This is in the drop box for the board to review.

2. Electric Vehicle Charging Station Grant Resolution

This needs to be signed by the Selectboard as well as the Planning Commission. The motion from the last meeting needs to be redone to calculate in the signage. The state is still covering our match. Motion by Steve LaFar to correct the amount in the motion from Nov. 1, 2018 (section F, #3) to \$18,393.00 with the state covering our match. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED**. Bruce asked for clarification on what the state is covering – the State Park and Ride Program is

covering our match and there is zero cost to the town. There will be two charging stations at our park and ride location.

3. Animating Infrastructure Grant – Letter of Intent

This is not ready yet, but will be in the next packet.

4. Northern Forest Canoe Trail Letter of Support

This is for a proposal to apply for funding to fix the canoe portage route. VYCC crews will be coming to assist. We are applying for a \$20,000.00 grant. The estimate is higher than the grant in the event our town crew can't do the work. There is no match required. This will be focusing on just the trail. The storm water issues will still remain. Friends of Northern Lake Champlain will be working on the storm water issues. This is a great collaboration that will help us to meet requirements under our Municipal Roads General Permit. FNLC would like to come to the next meeting to discuss this with the board. The canoe portage is at the bottom of Mill Hill Road. If you use your canoe you can only go so far then you need to physically walk around to get back down to the river. This project will create a better space for that to happen. The area down by the bridge was recently cleaned up and looks great! Jim Smith helps us a lot with designs and does a great job! Motion by Bruce Butler to sign this letter of support. The motion was seconded by Steve LaFar – **APPROVED.**

5. Misc.

- Once testing is back from the wells, hopefully that will be the end of the line and we can move forward with the ADA modifications.
- The State has planned a public meeting with regard to changes at the airport for Tuesday, Nov. 20th @ 6pm at Highgate Elementary School (library). This is the same night as the Planning Commission meeting here. Heidi has a large binder in her office regarding the project if anyone wants to look at it.
- Heidi was notified today that our request for planning funds for the airport infrastructure was approved. This is \$45,000.00 to look at costs associated with extending the water line and possibly waste water from MVU to the airport. There is a \$15,000.00 match that was covered through contributions from FCIDC, Airport Sand & Fill (private land owner) and also Heidi's hours. There will be no cash match for this grant and we can finally start on this.

H. Selectboard Items

1. HVFD Election Results

Motion by Bruce Butler to ratify the following election results for Highgate Volunteer Fire Department, effective January 1, 2019: Matt Depatie, Lt. (2 year term) and Joe Depatie, Chief (3 year term). The Motion was seconded by Steve LaFar – **APPROVED.** Ty asked if HVFD meetings are open to the public. Yes, their business meetings are held the first Monday of each month @ 7pm at the fire station.

I. Upcoming Events

Nov. 20	6pm	PC Meeting – Capital Budget
Nov. 20	5:30pm	Recreation Comm. @ arena
Nov. 20	6pm	Airport meeting @ school library
Nov. 22 + 23		Town Offices are CLOSED – Thanksgiving Holiday
Nov. 27	6pm	VCMP mtg.
Dec. 6	7pm	Selectboard Mtg.
Dec. 13	6pm	DRB Mtg.

Motion by Sharon Bousquet to exit the regular meeting @ 8:04pm. The motion was seconded by Steve LaFar – **APPROVED.**

J. Executive Session

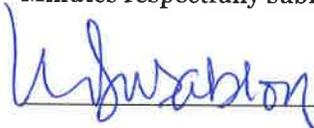
Motion by Sharon Bousquet to enter into executive session @ 8:05pm with Heidi Britch-Valenta, Ty Choiniere and Shelley Laroche to discuss personnel, contracts and legal, where premature general public knowledge would place the town and / or the individuals involved at a substantial disadvantage. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED.**

Motion by Steve LaFar to exit executive session @ 8:54pm. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED.**

K. Adjournment

Motion by Steve LaFar to adjourn the meeting @ 8:55pm. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED.**

Minutes respectfully submitted by:



Wendi Dusablon – Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk

Minutes approved by:



Sharon Bousquet – Chair, Highgate Selectboard