

TOWN OF HIGHGATE Selectboard Meeting

Wednesday, October 16, 2019 @ 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 Sharon Bousquet, Chair @ 7:24pm, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Bruce Butler apologized for the late start, there was some confusion with the date change to Wednesday.

Highgate Selectboard Members – Sharon Bousquet, Chair; Bruce Butler; Richard Flint *absent* – Josh LaRocque & Randy Connelly

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

Public / Other – Jason Wetherby, SAPD; Woody Rouse; Merry & Richard Souza; Richard Trombley; Gary Taylor, SAPD; Alice (Sue) Cota; Barry Domina, NWSWD; Ty Choiniere; Wuanita Hughes

B. Public Comment(s)

- Ty Choiniere reported that the shrubs have been removed from around the monument in the town park. This is the start of a larger project that will expand our monument(s) from the Vietnam era to present. More progress will be made in the spring.

C. St. Albans Police Department Update

Chief Gary Taylor and Lt. Jason Wetherby were present for a quarterly update. SAPD began patrolling in Highgate on 7/1/19. Both the town and SAPD feel that so far things have gone very well and that it is mutually beneficial. ATVs are still an issue, but they are getting somewhat of a grip on it. SAPD has begun to drill down on more individual neighborhood issues. Richard Flint had some comments and questions about patrolling at MVU and on the trails. SAPD has met with Swanton Police Department who has a contract with MVU for 24 hours per week. SAPD has backed off some knowing they have a contract in place but will continue to work collaboratively with Swanton PD. SAPD spoke highly of working with Highgate Vol. Fire Department on mutual calls. SAPD has also participated in walk to school days and a recent event with first responders held by the school at the arena. They will continue to make as many events as possible, even if it is not during covered patrol time in Highgate. There was discussion on community policing and tailoring the needs based on that particular community and its citizenship. Woody is glad to see SAPD cruising on all of our roads, some of which have rarely, if ever, seen a cruiser. Lt. Wetherby reported the following data for the quarter in Highgate: 24 arrests (most for DLS); 170 traffic tickets issued; 165 warnings issued. As of today, they have responded to 379 calls for us, broken down as follows: July – 108; August - 131; September - 68; so far in October - 72. Chief Taylor stated that reports have been sent to the town and more data can be provided if we need

it. SAPD has a great relationship with other law enforcement agencies in our area. They provide information to VSP about coverage as well. Maurice Lamothe has retired from VSP and is now the Executive Director of Communications for SAPD. Chief Taylor plans to bring him to a future meeting now that he is in his new role. Ty Choiniere had questions about tickets vs. warnings. SAPD average is approximately 60% warnings and 40% tickets. For this quarter in Highgate is was nearly 50/50. Ty also asked about drug and alcohol awareness and education in the schools. Chief Taylor noted that budgeting season is coming, and he would like to see Highgate increase to 30 hours per week of coverage (we are currently at 24 hours per week with SAPD). The Selectboard was interested in exploring that possibility. There was further discussion on the new tower being installed here at our municipal building and the benefits that will give to our first responders. At 65' we will have the best communication we have ever had. Another tower going up on Georgia mountain at 180' will also benefit many communities, including Highgate. There was also discussion on who to call or where to call in an emergency and / or a non-emergency situation. Calling 911 will get you the best results always. If you state it is not an emergency you may be put on hold briefly, but the appropriate agency or agencies will be alerted. People should not hold their calls until SAPD is on duty. Merry Souza works for Jolley Associates and stated that Border Patrol has assisted her when she needed help. Richard Flint spoke to an incident in our village last summer where police services were needed for a perceived safety issue. There is confusion about an emergency situation vs. a non-emergency situation and if the non-emergency office line should be called or not. Chief Taylor suggested the Selectboard draft a letter with their concerns. There was a story on the news just tonight about police coverage in rural parts of Vermont and the challenges communities and agencies are facing.

D. NorthWest Solid Waste District Update

Barry Domina is the Compliance Coordinator at NWSWD. Barry thanked SAPD for assisting him and residents with calls related to illegal burning and unsafe situations. Barry agrees that calling 911 is the best option and he will promote that with towns and residents he works with. The world has changed, and he no longer does door knocking with regard to violations. Barry touched on ACT148 and specifically food waste management. By July 1, 2020 everyone will be on the bandwagon by having to eliminate food waste and organics from going to the landfill. The future will not have landfills, only processing centers. Hudak Farm is a local composting center here in Franklin County. Barry noted there are enough farms here in Franklin County that the material should not have to be trucked clear across the county. If we take the food waste and organics out of the landfill, what is left is much more manageable. Sharon thanked Barry for his work dealing with illegal dumping and burning. We have had to contact him many times. It takes all of our efforts working together to make a difference. Barry is very good about communicating with the town, HVFD and local law enforcement to curb the behaviors and fines can and should be issued whenever possible. Barry wants folks to report things if they see them and if he can help, he certainly will.

E. Health Officer Update

Merry Souza (HO) and Richard Souza (Asst.) were both present as well as Wuanita Hughes, now owner of 14 Arthur Drive. Merry has completed this file with regard to the health order at 14 Arthur Drive. Ms. Hughes still needs to vaccinate and license her dog.

Ms. Hughes stated that Merry has been very good to work with and she appreciates the help she has received. The dumpster has been on site for a month and her home is in a much better situation than it was previously. Merry has removed the health order paperwork from the property. Ms. Hughes had new skirting installed on her trailer, which was \$400.00. She is asking for something in writing from the town that she has met the criteria and (in her words) she is "free". Richard Flint thanked Ms. Hughes for working with the Souza's to clean up her property and do what was needed to keep her in her home. The mobile home has officially been conveyed to Ms. Hughes and all the documents have been recorded in the town records. She plans to call Casella to thank them for the dumpster. Property taxes are due on Nov. 1st and Ms. Hughes is aware. Shelley can set up a payment plan if necessary. Merry is comfortable signing off that the health order is complete and satisfactory. Part of the process is the final inspection and Merry will send a letter to the State of VT. This situation has been a win / win. Ms. Hughes and her son are safe in their home which is much less cluttered. The access points are clear if there was ever an emergency at their home. Ms. Hughes stated that the heat is taken care of and she has running water as well. Merry has clearly told Ms. Hughes that because she lives in a MH park there will always be eyes on her and she needs to be vigilant in keeping up her property from here forward. There was discussion on our bylaws and cars in her driveway. She is being given an opportunity to stay in her home and it is up to her from here on out.

F. Town Treasurer Updates – Shelley Laroche

- Motion by Richard Flint to approve the check warrants. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED**.
- Taxes are due Nov. 1st by 4:30pm. As of today, we have collected \$2.9 million with still \$4.2 million to collect, so the next few weeks will be BUSY! We have had lots of comments about taxes going up. Payment plans are available, contact Shelley at 868-2741.

G. Town Clerk Updates – Wendi Dusablon

- Motion by Bruce Butler to approve the minutes from *October 3, 2019*, as written. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED**.
- We have received a letter of interest to fill the open seat on the Development Review Board. Highgate resident, Courtney Veeder, would like to fill the seat until March 2021. He is a survey technician and septic designer at Barnard & Gervais LLC. Rick Trombley and Woody Rouse from the DRB were present to support the appointment, if the board sees fit. This open seat has been advertised two separate times since July when Scott Martin stepped down. Motion by Richard Flint to approve the appointment of Courtney Veeder to the Development Review Board until March 2021. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED**. Rick shared with the Selectboard that the DRB very recently amended their Rules and Procedure and Conflict of Interest Policy.
- Partial road closure #571 - #781 Frontage Road from Oct. 21st – Nov. 1st as part of the large concrete box culvert replacement and other necessary road work project. This was noticed and shared with Frontage Road area residents, on social media, around town, with emergency services, in the newspaper, on our digital sign, on our website, with MVU and Highgate schools and the bus company.

- Highgate resident Kevin Loomis has completed the photo collage for us on the Machia Road bridge replacement project. Kevin framed this for us, as he did with the dam replacement project. We also have a flash drive with many other photos and drone videos. The board thanked Kevin very much for capturing the many phases of both the dam and bridge projects for us. The board then signed a thank you letter for Kevin as well. We will be using some of Kevin's photos for the 2019 town report cover also.

H. Administrator Items – Heidi Britch-Valenta

- The insulation bid that was opened at the last meeting was sent to the architect and was not a qualified bid. This will be put back out to bid. Laz Scangas is making some edits and we will hopefully have it back soon to advertise again.
- Jim Smith is coming up with an estimate for us on a new sand shed as part of our decision making with regard to the FEMA grant funds at the transfer station. Casella will also be here on November 7th. There was discussion on bonds and how many we can have at one time through the bond bank. It was noted that our arena bond is actually through Community Bank.
- Heidi mentioned that concern has been raised about the height of the guardrails on the Machia Road bridge. There is an explanation from the project manager in the Selectboard packet. The final inspection on B25 has been done and we should know our final expenses in the near future.
- Tim Smith from FCIDC is organizing a group to try and improve the Welcome Center in Highgate Springs. A meeting will be held here on Nov. 12th @ 5:30pm.
- The asbestos removal is complete in the public works department office area. The contractors are supposed to be here tomorrow to begin their work.
- The bollards have arrived for the public works department but are too large. Millbrook is working with Jim Smith on this also. The concrete cutter should arrive on site soon.
- The board signed a thank you letter to Dan Brosseau for the Halloween decorations and pumpkins for our building and the fire department.
- A thank you letter to Dominic Cloud, St. Albans City Manager, was also signed.

I. Selectboard Items

- John Poulin and Tammy Brown stopped in and are waiting on a resolution for the upcoming plowing season on Platt Road. Heidi contacted both Butch Brosseau, public works director, and Josh LaRocque, road commissioner, by email to get back in touch with them.
- There was discussion regarding helmets and if they are required for arena employees that are on the ice. Helmets are not required for employees and parents will be provided grippers when moving the nets. Richard Flint would like to see parents kept off the ice and have the refs move the nets. Dan Beauregard will reach out to Milton's athletic director on this topic as well. This will be on the agenda for Monday night at the recreation commission meeting. Youth hockey is governed through USA Hockey, high school hockey is governed through the VPA.
- We have not heard any more or gotten any more information with regard to renting out the VCMP property garage to store cars / boats. The board is fine with two picnic tables being stored there from the arena. The public works department will be under construction for the next few weeks. They also can make use of that space if needed.

J. Upcoming Events

Oct. 21	5:30pm	Recreation Comm. Mtg.
Oct. 23	5pm	Board of Abatement Mtg.
Nov. 1	by 4:30pm	TAX BILLS DUE
Nov. 4	5:30pm	Recreation Comm. Mtg.
Nov. 6	6:30pm	Library Trustee Mtg. @ library
Nov. 7	7pm	Selectboard Mtg.
Nov. 11		Offices are CLOSED – Veterans Day
Nov. 12	5:30pm	Welcome Center Mtg

Motion by Sharon Bousuqet to exit the regular Selectboard Meeting @ 8:52pm. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED.**

K. Executive Session

Motion by Richard Flint to enter into executive session with Ty Choiniere and Heidi Britch-Valenta @ 8:52pm 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.**

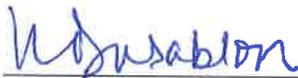
Ty Choiniere exited executive session @ 8:55pm.

Motion by Richard Flint to exit executive session @ 9:05pm. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED.**

L. Adjournment

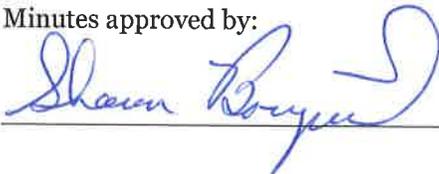
Motion by Bruce Butler to adjourn the meeting @ 9:05pm. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED.**

Minutes respectfully submitted by:



Wendi Dusablon – Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk

Minutes approved by:



Sharon Bousquet – Chair, Highgate Selectboard

