

TOWN OF HIGHGATE

Selectboard Mtg.

November 19, 2015 @ 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; Diana O'Hara; Randy Connelly; Paulette Tatro

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

Public / Other – Andy King – Public Works Director; George & Cliff Coy – Franklin County Airport

B. Public Comment

None

C. Franklin County Airport Update – George & Cliff Coy

George Coy and his son, Cliff, were present for an update. The airport is a good tax base for the town. They have seen a steady growth of hangars, and have the most hangar revenue of any airport in the state. The property at the airport is quite vast and includes the Franklin County Field Days site as well as commercial buildings closer to Route 78. Looking towards the future, they have several plans, one is to introduce a smaller runway in the back for smaller aircraft. That project has been put on hold for now. They would potentially like to develop commercial aviation properties in the back. FAA requires that they be aviation related or it would require a waiver. Jim Harrison has purchased the sand pit behind the airport. It is a possibility to have a light industrial park back there, but Jim is also interested in potentially developing a solar farm there too. The term "through the fence" means to move goods and services around the perimeter of the property. Cliff is technically the airport manager now, he is running the airport and the maintenance business. Cliff stated in the next few years they are looking to develop a taxiway and additional hangars for aviation related business. The connector from Montreal to I89 will be finished in 3-4 years and that will make a difference. This will put Highgate and the airport in a good location to have something coming out of Montreal to our airport and from there to anywhere else in the country very quickly. The Franklin County Field Days site is also in constant development. George and Cliff have been in touch with economic development to assist them with future plans. They hope to leverage federal funds to approve the projects through AOT for all the permitting processes, which will save developers time and money, and the same for water and sewer permits. Paulette asked about extending the existing runway. The current runway is 3000', which they would like to extend to 4000' and widen it for commercial operations. The airport is mostly on sand, except for the west side where there are some archeological issues. Chris Yates asked to confirm, the runway would extend towards Route 78 – yes. Cliff clarified, this would not be for passenger aircraft. Chris asked about the proposed hangars and the location of them, behind the Habitat for Humanity building – yes. Diana has questions about the amount of land included at the airport. The Franklin County State Airport has existed since the 1920's, and there are a total of 9 airports that the state owns. Newport just expanded to a 5000' runway. Approximately 20% of our hangar owners in Highgate are from Canada. Paulette asked if 4000' would be the most they could expand to – yes. Any more than that they would have to go further south and deal with abutting properties. The third Sunday of every month there is a pancake breakfast held at the airport. They do a lot with schools and after school programs giving an overview of aviation and career opportunities. They have hired local kids over the years who have gone on to be mechanics and / or pilots who are now leading great careers all over the

world. Dan Marcotte is another local (Bakersfield) who has done great things in the aviation field. The board thanked the Coy's for coming and for the update.

D. Solar Project Public Comment Session

There were no comments from the public on this topic. This was put back on the agenda because we have been approached about other potential projects in town and wanted to give the public an opportunity to ask questions if needed.

E. Town Treasurer – Shelley Laroche

1. Pay bills

Paulette had questions about the general fund and some items that were paid using the debit card. Shelley will note who the vendor is on future warrants. There is one vendor Shelley will look up and get back to Paulette, \$36.84 is the recurring monthly amount. Paulette asked for the heading above the board members signatures to be modified.

2. Finance committee

The first finance committee meeting was held on November 16th. Heidi, Shelley, Paulette and Ron Nye were present. They are still looking for a member of the Planning Commission to join. They are rewriting the appropriations policy and will get into the Capital Budget Policy and Reserve Policy in the coming weeks. They will meet again on December 1st @ 6pm at the municipal office.

3. Budgeting schedule

Shelley would like to have budgeting complete by the beginning of January. In the coming years she would like to have appropriations set by December 1st. Shelley will sit down with the Public Library, Public Works Department and the Fire Department and then begin working on the town report. Hopefully by the second Selectboard meeting in December she will have something to present to the board. Heidi asked about personnel and insurance decisions prior to mid-December and the need to meet at least once in December separate from a regular meeting. There will be a budgeting meeting on Wednesday, December 9th @ 6pm at the municipal office.

F. Public Works Director – Andy King

1. Shipyard Bay Drainage Project – letter of support

Andy and Heidi have discussed the proposed plan with the land owners and Friends of Northern Lake Champlain, who wrote the grant. The town is agreeing to improve the ditch and maintain it. FNLC will put in a big rain garden above it to capture water coming down off the lawn and the land owner will maintain that. Given the nature of the area, this will be functional and aesthetically pleasing. A land owner on Parker Place will be replacing the culvert under the driveway to eliminate ponding. A new culvert will be installed under Wood Duck Drive also. This is a highly visible spot, and will serve as a model for future projects. Motion by Chris Yates to sign the letter of support for the Shipyard Bay drainage project. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED**.

2. Misc. Updates

- We have reacquired about 75% of the signs back from Meadow Lane, they showed back up in the center area of the grass. The stop sign is still missing. There will be new signage installed for the desired traffic flow that is necessary to perform winter maintenance.
- Installation of the arena water line was completed Nov. 9th and 10th with the help of Chevalier Drilling. There are a few more hoops to jump through as far as permitting before the arena will be using the new well.
- There is a large culvert on Tarte Road that will imminently fail. A fair amount of water goes through there, a hydraulic study may be necessary.
- We generally hire a local contractor to jet out plugged culverts. Andy would like to get with the HVFD and utilize town equipment and do it ourselves to save money. Andy will coordinate with St. Albans dispatch for coverage for the fire department during this time.
- Ditching needs to be done along Rollo Road when the backhoe is ready. There was a cooler failure on the backhoe and the part will be here tomorrow and serviced in house. The part is expensive, about \$2,000.00.
- Andy will have more information in the coming weeks regarding the street light conversion with VELCO. Paulette had questions about what determines where a street light is placed. We have no written policy, but as a general practice in village areas and outside of immediate village areas,

intersections should be lit. Chris noted that policies he has seen reference hills, curves and intersections as areas that require street lights. Intersections should definitely be part of the review process with the DRB regarding new developments going forward. Chris added that some towns do every-other-pole with a street light, particularly where there are sidewalks. Paulette asked because the area of Hanna Road and Route 78 going up the hill is very dark. Andy added that switching everything to LED will save money and allow us to light up more areas for the same amount of money or less.

- Andy was encouraged by the AOT District 8 Regional Supervisor to accomplish a road audit for classification. Andy has a list of roads in the drop box for the board to review. Paulette had questions about the roads and how ceasing winter maintenance operations will affect the people who live on those roads. From a town liability standpoint, some of the roads are so minimal that it creates a high level of liability to bring a plow truck down those roads. If any roads are declassified from a Class 3 to Class 4 we would need to discuss it further. Even with a pickup truck it is tight on those roads, and the one ton would be as well. State statute would need to be followed prior to making any changes. Given the time of year, it would be highly inappropriate to make any changes now regarding winter maintenance, we can digest this over the next few months and perhaps make changes for next plowing season. Diana asked how many homes / families are on each of these roads. A few examples are - Childs Rd. 1; Decker Road 3; Therrien Road 1; Waugh Farm Road 1 (at the end). Andy wanted to get this conversation on the radar.
- VLCT was here today, Nov. 19th, for a flagger training course. Highgate hosted the training which was attended by some folks from Enosburgh and Franklin as well, and everybody passed!
- December 10th Heidi and Andy will be attending a VT Local Roads training in Essex.
- Equipment updates – a new toolbox has been installed on the F550. The backhoe will be up and running by tomorrow morning. The loader is at Britch Welding for some sand blasting and painting. The plows, wings and sanders are all installed on the trucks and ready to roll. The trucks are all polished up and pretty, will be a shame to get them dirty.
- Culvert maintenance and grading is ongoing. The crew is trying to get as much done as possible before the roads freeze up. The Tarte Road culvert is a looming project.
- We have quotes from uniform companies coming in. Andy would present them tonight, but the G&K quote is incorrect. The G&K contract was for 5 years and the renewal contract was for 3 years, which was signed in January 2013 and will expire in January 2016. Paulette had questions about what the PWD is looking for with regard to uniforms. What they have now are very uncomfortable and hard to work in. They would like to go back to a working uniform, cotton shirts, comfortable, looks professional and costs less. The high visibility apparel items are expensive. Andy has found good deals on jackets and vests that we can maintain in house.
- Hanna Road issue – there is a spot on Hanna Road completely covered in manure. Andy and Chris were up there last night and again today and have sternly asked (and asked again) for it to be scraped up, it is a serious safety concern and we have had multiple calls. Heidi has been in touch with water quality, the small farm inspector, District 8, VSP and FCSO. There is no clear path, but we are working with the land owner to resolve the issue and the bottom line is that the land owner is responsible for any problems that happen. We have an ordinance that requires all vehicles on the road to contain what they are carrying. The small farm inspector will be taking a look at the issue. Driving through there is just terrible, and will require a trip to the car wash. There are funds available for stone, cement pads, etc. so hopefully there will be some assistance for the farmer in the future so this does not happen again, the condition of the road is unacceptable. The deep wheel ruts and weight of heavy equipment make it very difficult to clean off the road. Members of the Franklin Selectboard have received calls on this too. It may be time for agricultural vehicles to be held responsible for these type of things. We are trying to be sensitive about the issue also. We understand the need to get the material on the field, but we cannot compromise the safety of the traveling public. Diana inquired if there were other ways for the farmer to get to his fields – no, the other alternative is

far too steep. The PWD will be back on Hanna Road tomorrow to mitigate the safety issues, as this is at the crest of a hill in the worst possible spot.

G. Town Administrator – Heidi Britch-Valenta

1. Allocation request letters

Paulette would like to include participation statistics in the letters but we don't have them back from Karen Gagne Fortin yet. The letters for Sheldon, Franklin and Enosburgh look fine as is, the letter for the other town can wait until we see what the user numbers look like.

2. Sidewalk Committee update

There was a very lively conversation at the PC meeting on Tuesday night with good representation from many organizations. They came up with a location for a crosswalk in the location of the Jolley Store / Paws For Thought / Historical Society vicinity. There will be another informal visit and if all goes well, we will have taken another step forward in having a crosswalk.

**3. Franklin County Humane Society contract review
(nka: Franklin County Animal Rescue)**

There is an error in the contract that refers to us as Berkshire, not Highgate. Kristy Brow has also submitted a proposal to help board dogs when space allows. Heidi will ask FCAR to come in and chat and have Vonnie and Kristy here as well to answer all our questions.

4. DBGS – community grant opportunities

We were awarded \$25,000.00 last year for electrical upgrades at the arena. It was noted that the deadline for this grant is tomorrow, Nov. 20th, so it probably won't happen this year.

5. Healthy communities grant opportunity

This is a planning grant for alternative transportation opportunities and is due in January.

6. PACE – program literature

This program is regarding energy efficiency upgrades and to create an enhanced district in our town. This program would require a warned article at town meeting. Heidi and the board have not read all the material completely yet.

7. Machia Road bridge update

Heidi was previously asked to check into what we can do to open up the corner by the former store / now apartment building near the bridge. This option is not off the table, as the state is just now getting into the stage of looking at right of ways. We have a new project manager, Carolyn Carlton, and she will do more research on this. She suggested a safety audit be done there for evidence of need. Chris noted that signs were recently hit on that corner, as well as a beam on the porch of that building.

8. Misc.

- There is a letter of support in the packet for the Northern Forest Canoe Trail project on the old dam in East Highgate. This is a boating hazard that creates a vacuum type situation and makes it very dangerous, so it needs to go. The Village of Swanton owns the dam. Motion by Paulette Tatro to sign the letter of support for the NFCT watershed grant application. The motion was seconded by Chris Yates – **APPROVED.**
- We have received a letter of interest from Barbara Chevalier to join the Planning Commission. The PC has expressed interest in moving to a five member board instead of seven, as seven seats have been very hard to fill and maintain. Motion by Chris Yates to appoint Barbara Chevalier to the Planning Commission with a term expiring March, 2018. The motion was seconded by Diana O'Hara – **APPROVED.**
- We have received a letter of interest from Shawn Neill to fill the vacant seat on the NorthWest Regional Planning Commission as a representative from Highgate. Shawn has formerly served on the Planning Commission as the chair. Motion by Chris Yates to appoint Shawn Neill to the NRPC as a Highgate Representative with a term expiring March, 2016. The motion was seconded by Diana O'Hara – **APPROVED.**

- There have been two public hearings regarding the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). We do not have a record of the CIP being approved by the board. Amanda at NRPC is looking for a motion and a date to complete the plan and put it in a finalized format. There were some minor tweaks made and suggested at the previous hearings and meetings. Motion by Paulette Tatro to approve the Capital Improvement Plan. The motion was seconded by Diana O'Hara – **APPROVED**.

H. Town Clerk – Wendi Dusablon

1. Approval of minutes

Motion by Chris Yates to approve the minutes from November 5, 2015, as amended. The motion was seconded by Diana O'Hara – **APPROVED**.

2. 2016 meeting schedule

Motion by Chris Yates to approve the 2016 monthly meeting schedule for the Highgate Selectboard. The motion as seconded by Jeff Towle – **APPROVED**.

3. Misc.

- Dog licensing is complete for 2015 and the year has been closed with **858** dogs licensed in the town of Highgate.
- Petitions to run for office and have your name appear on the ballot at town meeting (March 1st) will be available in early December. The deadline to have them turned back in to Wendi is Monday, January 25, 2016 by 5pm.
- Stay tuned for more details on Kraft Hockeyville as we get closer to January.

I. Selectboard items

1. No smoking policy adoption

Chris had some questions regarding the title of the policy and if it could be reworded. Motion by Chris Yates to approve the Town of Highgate Municipal Property Smoking Prohibition Ordinance. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED**.

2. Personnel policy update

Heidi only saw one spot that needs to be modified regarding salaries, as the Public Works Director is now a salaried position. The policy is a lengthy document which everyone should read in full before they make any further modifications. Jeff added that the issue of comp time being used by Dec. 31st each year will be difficult, so we should review that as well. Diana asked about relief drivers and if we have any – yes we do, and anyone else who would like to be considered should contact Andy directly. This will be back on the agenda for December 3rd.

3. Welch thank you letter

Congressman Peter Welch sent us a nice card regarding the renovation project at the arena. Jeff signed a thank you to send back to him.

4. Misc.

- Operation Happiness is in full swing and (non-perishable) food drop boxes are available in communities for those who want to contribute and help those in need. There is a drop box here at the municipal office until December 11th. Steve and Linda Bushey are in their final year of coordinating OH in Highgate, we thank them for their service and dedication. Julie Rice will be taking over in 2016.

J. Upcoming Events

Dec. 1	6pm	Finance Committee Mtg. @ Municipal Office
Dec. 1	6pm	Parks & Rec. Mtg. @ Highgate Sports Arena Office
Dec. 3	7pm	Selectboard Mtg.
Dec. 4,5,12		Polar Express –sponsored by Highgate Public Library
Dec. 9	6pm	Budget Mtg. / Workshop
Dec. 10	6pm	DRB Mtg.
Dec. 13	10am-2pm	Santa Day @ Highgate Vol. Fire Dept.
Dec. 15	6pm	Planning Commission Mtg.
Dec. 20	4:30-5:30pm	Skate with Santa @ Highgate Sports Arena

K. Executive Session

Motion by Jeff Towle to enter executive session @ 8:48pm to discuss contract negotiations and a legal issue. Executive session is necessary because premature knowledge on these issues would put the town at a disadvantage. The motion was seconded by Chris Yates – **APPROVED**.

Motion by Paulette Tatro to exit executive session @ 9:50pm. The motion was seconded by Chris Yates – **APPROVED**.

L. Adjournment

Motion by Jeff Towle to adjourn the meeting @ 9:55pm. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED**.

Respectfully submitted by,

Wendi Dusablon, Highgate Town Clerk

Minutes approved by,

Jeff Towle, Chair – Highgate Selectboard