

TOWN OF HIGHGATE Selectboard Meeting

Thursday, April 4, 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 @ 7:00pm, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Highgate Selectboard Members – Sharon Bousquet, Chair; Joshua LaRocque, Vice-Chair; Bruce Butler; Richard Flint; Randy Connelly

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

Public / Other – Pat LaBrie; Gerard LaBrie; Alice S. Cota; Woody Rouse; Merry Souza; Ty Choiniere; Dan Beauregard; Brian Spears; Lisa & Kevin Briggs

B. Public Comment(s)

- Sue Cota let everyone know that the river is ok on Monument Road. She spoke with Eugene Rich (Swanton / Abnaki building) and he noted that the State will be putting in stones where the trees were cut.

C. Franklin County Animal Rescue – Kevin & Lisa Briggs

Kevin and Lisa Briggs were present to discuss where FCAR is at and where they are headed. Kevin is a member of the FCAR board and provided handouts with information to share. FCAR will be traveling to all Franklin County towns to listen and hear what their needs are. He was made aware of a feral cat issue here in Highgate. The closure of FCAR in 2017 left towns in a vulnerable situation without assistance for animals in need. Kevin provided background on the organization and issues from the past. He went over FCAR's current needs and services, as well as unmet needs. FCAR is seeking input to create a vision for companion animals in FC. Back in early 2017 FCAR closed their doors rather suddenly for a variety of reasons, which Kevin explained. They reopened in October 2017 after the community stepped up and contributed financial support. From Oct. 2017 – Oct. 2018 FCAR impacted the lives of 824 animals through various shelter programs. 538 cats and dogs found their forever homes. 420 cats and dogs were spayed / neutered. 168 cats were fostered by volunteers. 19 cats and dogs were reunited with their owners. The average time in the shelter for cats – 35 days and dogs – 15 days. Today, FCAR needs space/resources; a vision with each FC town, a close relationship with each town's ACO, and to continue their various programs (barn cat program, mobile vet services, community development / workshops, trap / neuter / release, outreach to schools, low cost spay / neuter clinics). Their expenses annually are \$250,000.00, which is a balancing act to maintain financial stability and meet the needs of each community. Kevin understands that trust was lost when FCAR closed and that the community is definitely the heartbeat of the organization. Donations are always welcome and appreciated. Dogs and cats are available for adoption. Stop by the shelter across from

Sticks & Stuff in St. Albans on Sunset Meadows, or call 524-9650 for more information. Volunteers are always needed, and an application is on their website <https://www.franklincountyanimalrescue.org/>. Adoption center hours are: Tuesday - Friday: 2:00pm to 6:00pm; Saturday: 10:00am to 3:00pm; Sunday - Monday: Closed. Mr. & Mrs. LaBrie had questions about feral cats. FCAR will be coming up with strategic plans for all towns. Sharon applauds FCAR for trying to make this work and provide these services to our community. Bruce asked about an alternative to contracts with towns and a possible warned article. FCAR used to send an appropriation request every year. Once FCAR stopped supporting us, we no longer sent them an appropriation. Ty Choiniere had questions about the situation in Richford and how that drained FCAR resources and if anything has changed in the legislature to prevent this from happening again. No changes that Kevin is aware of. The board thanked Kevin and Lisa for coming and sharing this information with us.

D. Recreation Director Updates – Dan Beauregard

Dan Beauregard started as our new Recreation Director on March 20th. He updated the board and the public on several topics, including turf, annual inspections and upcoming events. The Recreation Department will be hosting an Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday, April 20th at 9am at the Highgate Sports Arena. Flyers are posted around town, online and will be going home with the school children next week. Dan is acclimating himself with the position, our town, and the building – and so far, so good! The Recreation Commission members have been a great support for him. Baseball / Softball season has started on the turf, as well as Milton Lacrosse, men’s indoor soccer league and Swanton Baseball / Softball. For now, his office hours are noon – 2pm every day, so that is the best time to catch him in his office, 868-4406 or recdirector@highgatevt.org. There are plans for new programming in the future, but nothing concrete yet. The cornhole league and archery will be coming back again this year. Randy asked about upgrades to the facility. This summer the lobby bathrooms will be upgraded, as well as one of the entrance doors and dividers being placed in the locker room bathrooms. Sue Cota would like the issue of ice outside of the front doors addressed for safety reasons, as well as everyone wearing helmets that is on the ice. Ty added that this has been discussed at their meetings. Ty also let the board know that Matt Choiniere will not be able to join the Recreation Commission due to timing of their meetings. Brian Spears was present and would like to be reappointed to the Rec. Commission. Motion by Randy Connelly to re-appoint Brian Spears to the Highgate Recreation Commission for a 2 year term. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED**. The board would like Dan to stay for executive session at the end of this meeting.

E. Treasurer Updates – Shelley Laroche

- Randy had one question on the check warrants about cemetery mowing \$4,000.00. This is paid 1/2 in the spring and 1/2 in the fall and is hired separately through the Cemetery Commissioners. Motion by Josh LaRocque to sign the check warrants. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED**.
- Budgets are updated in the drop box. All departments are on track and doing well.
- Taxes continue to come in and we are down to \$85,000.00, excluding Jedware.
- We finally received our audit as well. We are still waiting on the fixed asset inventory. Chad from Sullivan and Powers will be here in May, hopefully.

F. Town Clerk Updates – Wendi Dusablon

- Motion by Randy Connelly to approve the minutes from March 20, 2019, as written. The motion was seconded by Josh LaRocque – **APPROVED**.

- Dog Licensing Update – as of the deadline on April 1st, we had licensed 664 dogs in the Town of Highgate for 2019. Late fees are now in effect \$22.00 per dog spayed / neutered or \$26.00 per dog not spayed / not neutered. As of today we are up 678 licensed dogs. Late notices are being mailed this weekend for the 200+ dogs still out there. As of May 1st, Vonnie (ACO) will be writing tickets so please license by May 1st to avoid any additional fines!
- Green-Up Day and Household Hazardous Waste Day – Saturday, May 4th. Green-Up bags will be available here at the town offices in mid-April. HHWD will be held from 8am – 2pm at the sand shed location. A list of accepted items is posted here, online or call Wendi for a copy.
- Special Vote April 30th – we voted as a unified school district to now vote via Australian ballot. Our new district will be named Missisquoi Valley School District. Tuesday, April 30th from 7am – 7pm we will vote via Australian ballot on our permanent board members and the articles of agreement. This will be held at the HIGHGATE SPORTS ARENA at 243 Gore Road. Our space here is too small and parking is not good. The school is in session, so that is complicated with us being there. The arena is available to us, so the vote will be held there. Absentee ballots will be available and should be here next week, contact Wendi at 868-5002 or wduablou@highgatevt.org or stop by the office to vote early. Town offices will be closed on April 30.

G. Administrator Items – Heidi Britch-Valenta

- Village Core Master Plan Committee meets on April 8 at 6pm. This is open to the public also.
- There is an application in the packet for AOT annual opportunities. This covers the Frontage Road large culvert project (structures grant) and there are two budgets attached to it. One for the full concrete culvert project and the other is an estimate for a plastic arch pipe. Butch Brosseau, Public Works Director, is of the opinion that it is well worth the investment for the full concrete.
- We will also be applying for grant funding to pave the Gore Road from Cassidy to Tarte. We have been awarded several times, so realistically we are low in the ranking. If not awarded this year, we can resubmit next year. Both these grants are due prior to the next meeting. Motion by Josh LaRocque to apply for these grants. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED**. It was clarified to apply for the concrete culvert.
- Heidi put information from NRPC in the drop box with regard to new road standards going into effect. Comments are accepted until April 29.
- ADA construction RFP is out. A site visit is scheduled for tomorrow at 3pm. Contractors will meet with the architect and go over the project. Bids are due by April 18th.
- Wells were dug at the Machia Road stabilization location. Good news is they did not have to go as deep as they thought and it will cost us less. More good news is it only took two days, not three. Our budget should be reduced. Monday at 7:30am we will meet them on site to go over the testing procedure.
- The Airport Infrastructure Planning Grant group will meet tomorrow at 10am for the first time.
- There is a draft of the AARP place making grant in the packet. The maximum is \$3,000.00. This will be used for the community celebration at the former Machia property – now the Village Core property – this summer. Motion by Randy Connelly

to sign the Selectboard letter of support. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED**. Sharon attended the Library Trustee Meeting and our librarian, Michelle Beaulieu, noted that there is a VT historical trivia game that can be borrowed through the VT Historical Society. No date has been set for the celebration – late summer perhaps – but the date may be decided at the meeting on Monday night.

- Airport Planning Grant Resolution for signature – this is a collaboration with Swanton Village. Heidi presented the wrong form for signature last time. The board signed the new form. Ty asked if impact fees were being considered with development at the airport. There has been discussion with the Selectboard / DRB / Planning Commission about resurrecting the Economic Development Board. This board would look at impact fees, among other things.
- Northern Forest Canoe Trail has been awarded funds to repair the trail section in Highgate. They are asking for assistance from the town. The proposed plan and budget are in the packet. Public Works is ready to help, but timing will be a challenge, as they have many projects already lined up for the summer months.

H. Selectboard Items

- Motion by Randy Connelly to sign the updated Emergency Operations Plan. The motion was seconded by Josh LaRocque – **APPROVED** (4 YES / 1 NO, Richard Flint). Richard has not had a chance to read it and felt the board was going too fast. Richard did read through the EOP during the meeting and was ultimately ok with signing it. Sharon and Josh signed the EOP. The only changes were any contact information and / or personnel changes. Flood prone properties were added this year as well.
- Recreation Department has some concepts in mind for grants coming up through RiseVT. These are mini-grants in the amount of \$1,500.00. Ty hopes to meet with Highgate Elementary School building and grounds committee soon to make sure the walking path can be completed on school property when they do their parking lot project. An agreement needs to be in place by July 1. We have a great upper path and lower path, but no safe route through the school parking lot. There are no guarantees that the walking path will stay in place. Articles of agreement have been adopted and are going to be voted on 7am – 7pm on April 30. Woody Rouse had questions about the Cassidy property. That property had a recorded document on file that stipulates the use will remain as is, for agricultural education.
- Video Surveillance Policy – Randy has not had time to read through this and asked for more time.
- Road Conditions Policy – Josh would prefer to keep this simple. What we have has served us pretty well, but we do need to tweak it. Damage has been claimed by the public and our insurance has basically said it can be claimed, but the onus is on the person alleging the complaint to prove gross negligence on the part of the town. Our policy speaks to damaged mailboxes, but not vehicles. Motion by Josh LaRocque to edit the wording on our policy and have Heidi put a draft before the board next meeting. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED**.
- The back section of the municipal roof is done. They are saying they will wait for warmer weather to complete the front so town vehicles can be parked outside. There are concerns about timing and Memorial Day if the roof is not done. The Village Core property could be used for the HVFD auction if necessary.
- Memorial Day is coming and volunteers are needed to plan the day's events. There was discussion about moving the time of the parade earlier. Sharon Bousquet, Dan

Beauregard, Ty Choiniere, Richard Flint and Tom Conley will be on the committee and others are welcome to join! The first meeting will be Friday, April 12th @ 6pm here at the town offices. Wendi will warn this meeting.

- VT Gas has approached the town with regard to a certificate of public good and they are looking for our approval. They are looking to expand their infrastructure in our town. Comments and / or questions can be directed to the town office or any Selectboard member. Documents are available to view at the town office.
- Ty asked for an update on the cell tower for our municipal transmitter. There are plans for this, but we need to connect with St. Albans and see their plans.
- Ty wants to know if the PWD has time to move the snow banks in the park so the Little League players can rake the park in two weeks. Josh will connect with Butch on this. If they are too busy, Ty can do it with the tractor.
- Merry Souza asked Sharon if she had received a phone call from the VT Department of Health regarding an inspection. Sharon has not. The state is saying that we don't have the authority to do inspections when Merry can't or has a conflict of interest. In this case, Merry felt she had a conflict of interest. VT Department of Health was not happy with the situation and told Merry that even with a conflict she would need to be present at the site visit. Merry will stay for executive session as well.
- Roads in Highgate are posted for weight limits. Stay off the roads with heavy equipment except with perishable items like milk or sap. Contact Butch for more information or with questions, 868-4697 x207.

I. Upcoming Events

April 8	6pm	VCMP Mtg.
April 11	6pm	DRB Mtg.
April 13	11-noon	Coffee Hours with FRA-5 Reps at Town Office
April 17	6pm	Planning Commission Mtg. – <u>note date change</u>
April 18	7pm	Selectboard Mtg.
April 30	7am - 7pm	MVSD Special Vote @ Highgate Arena
April 30		TOWN OFFICES ARE CLOSED
May 4		Green Up Day
May 4	8am – 2pm	HHWD Day at Sand Shed Location

Motion by Sharon Bousquet to exit the regular meeting @ 8:19pm. The motion was seconded by Josh LaRocque – **APPROVED.**

J. Executive Session

Motion by Sharon Bousquet to enter into executive session @ 8:20pm with Shelley Laroche, Merry Souza, Dan Beauregard and Heidi Britch-Valenta to discuss 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 Josh LaRocque – **APPROVED.** Shelley, Dan and Merry left executive session @ 8:30pm. The Selectboard had a conference call with counsel regarding a legal matter. Josh and Randy recused themselves from the conference call and left the room. The conversation ended at 9:30pm and Randy and Josh returned to the discussion. Motion by Richard Flint to exit executive session @ 9:40pm. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED.**

K. Adjournment

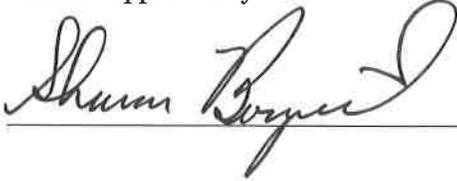
Motion by Josh LaRocque to adjourn the meeting @ 9:40pm. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED.**

Minutes respectfully submitted by:



Wendi Dusablon – Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk

Minutes approved by:



Sharon Bousquet – Chair, Highgate Selectboard