

TOWN OF HIGHGATE

Selectboard Meeting

Thursday, March 19, 2020 @ 6:30pm

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 @6:36pm, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Highgate Selectboard Members – Sharon Bousquet - Chair; Bruce Butler – Vice Chair; Richard Flint; Kyle Lothian *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 – Due to concerns surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, there were no members of the public present. A phone-in number with a code was advertised so community members could still participate (listen and ask questions) via phone. This meeting was also recorded by North West Access TV so community members could view it afterwards, which is our normal protocol with Selectboard meetings. Alice (Sue) Cota was the only person that phoned in.

B. Public Comment(s)

- Sue Cota (via phone) has concerns about the intersection of VT Route 207 (Highgate Road) and Brosseau Road. There have been four accidents at that site in the recent past. She asked about the possibility of blocking that section off and having motorists use Luke Street or Park Street instead. Sharon fears more incidents as a result if we do this. Richard has heard from residents that Park Street is already being used as a racetrack to get to Brosseau Road. Route 207 is a state road and they are aware of the issues there recently. Richard Noel is our representative on the Transportation Advisory Committee and he has worked with Bethany at NRPC to send a letter to AOT for us. The board thanked Sue for calling in. She did not wish to remain on the line for the remainder of the meeting. There were no other call-ins from the public for the remainder of this meeting.
- Sharon gave an update and spoke to the community regarding the COVID-19 virus. As of last night there are no confirmed cases in our county. Some are being watched, some are being tested. She asked people to please remain calm and take care of each other. If you know of anyone that is a shut-in and needs to be checked in on, or someone that is afraid, please reach out. The arena has cancelled programs for the time being and will re-evaluate the situation April 6th. The recreation director can be reached by phone, 868-4406 or email recredirector@highgatevt.org. The library is also closed for the time being. Staff is available to reach by phone 868-3970 or email librarian@highgatevt.org. WIFI is available at the library and there is info on the front door of the library. The library will continue to do different things to help out the children in our community. The Municipal Offices are also closed to the public

but open for business and will be staffed. Please call 868-4697 or email wduusablon@highgatevt.org. Many town functions can still take place over the phone and through the mail. All Selectboard members are available to address concerns. Sharon also asked that you use local businesses wherever possible. Do not hoard items, keep two weeks supplies and give others a chance to get their groceries and basic needs. We are all in this together and we will be fine. If things change, you will be notified. Sharon reiterated, please contact a board member or the town offices if you need anything.

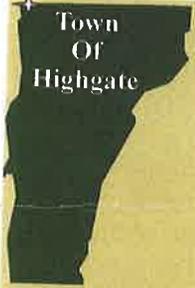
C. Town Treasurer Updates – Shelley Laroche

- The personnel policy and purchasing policy have been in Sharepoint for review. There was discussion on the personnel policy and if another section should be added with regard to emergency situations and shutdowns and town employees being paid during that time. There were questions on how many employees are hourly vs. salary. Motion by Richard Flint to continue to pay all town employees while this crisis is going on. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED**. Shelley will add a paragraph into the personnel policy regarding emergency pay and put this back before them at the next meeting. Motion by Bruce Butler to approve the purchasing policy as amended. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED**.
- Motion by Bruce Butler to sign the check warrants. The motion was seconded by Kyle Lothian – **APPROVED**.
- The new public works department truck is ordered.
- Not much has changed with delinquent taxes. One person has had to cancel their automatic payment plan and she understands, given the current situation. Shelley will reevaluate when she is planning the next tax sale and will work with folks during these times of unchartered waters.

D. Town Clerk Updates – Wendi Dusablon

- Motion by Kyle Lothian to approve the minutes from March 5, 2020, as written. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED**.
- Motion by Richard Flint to approve the minutes from Town Meeting Day March 3, 2020, as written. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED**.
- Sharon read aloud from the annual dog warrant. Motion by Richard Flint to sign the dog warrant for 2020. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED**. It was noted that the town does not want your dogs or to seize your dogs so please license and vaccinate your dogs.
- Motion by Kyle Lothian to sign the Certificate of Approved Location (COAL) for Rays Used Cars and Salvage. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED**.
- Sharon signed the paperwork for North West Solid Waste District with regard to the three-year appointment of April St. Francis. The motion was already made at the 3/5/20 meeting.
- Sharon signed the paperwork for the VT Department of Health with regard to the one- year appointment of Richard Souza as Deputy Health Officer. The motion was already made at the 3/5/20 meeting.

- The rabies clinic has been rescheduled and will now be held on Saturday, May 16th from 10am – noon here at the Municipal Building. Late fees will be waived on dog licensing until after June 1st. If your dogs are current on their vaccinations, please license them ASAP.
- We have closed the Municipal Offices to the public, effective March 19th. See posting below that has been circulated on how we can still assist with many things during this time. We are here to help, please contact us, as the office is still staffed during regular business hours.



**Town
Of
Highgate**

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Randall Connelly
Sharon Bousquet
Bruce Builer
Richard Flint
Kyle Lothian
Highgate Selectboard

March 18, 2020

**Re: TOWN OF HIGHGATE MUNICIPAL OFFICES
CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC EFFECTIVE MARCH 19th**

The Town of Highgate Municipal Offices will be CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC beginning Thursday, March 19th. We will remain CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC until at least Monday, April 6th. The situation will be reevaluated at that time. Our office will be staffed during our regular business hours of 8:30am – Noon and 1pm – 4:30pm, Monday – Friday.

WE ARE HERE TO HELP! Vital functions performed at the town offices can still occur – see the list below.

- **TITLE SEARCHES / LAND RECORDS RESEARCH** – Our vault and digital records are available by appointment only, during our regular business hours. We will limit this to two researchers at one time, for a maximum of two hours. Contact the Town Clerk 868-5002 or wusablon@highgatevt.org. Please contact us at least two hours in advance before requesting an appointment to come in and review the land records. We do not carry title insurance so searches will not be performed for you. However, if you have book and page references we can email or fax you those documents with a written request and if payment arrangements have been made.
- **DOG LICENSES** – Payments can be sent via mail to PO Box 189, Highgate VT 05459 or can be made over the phone. The deadline to license dogs has been extended to June 1st and the rabies clinic in Highgate will be held on May 16th from 10-Noon.
- **TAX BILLS** – We can fax, email or mail copies of tax bills, just give us a call or send an email or visit <https://www.axisgis.com/highgatevt/>.
- **BUILDING PERMITS** – Contact the Zoning Administrator at 868-4697 x209 on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Building permits are also available on our website www.highgatevt.org and payment can be made over the phone or through the mail.
- **BIRTH-DEATH-MARRIAGE CERTIFICATES** – Contact the Town Clerk to make arrangements at 868-5002 or wusablon@highgatevt.org.
- **LISTER QUESTIONS** – Contact the listers office at 868-4697 x208 on Thursdays and Fridays. Our online GIS program is also available at <https://www.axisgis.com/highgatevt/>. Copies of maps, property cards and tax bills are available here and can be accessed from any computer or mobile device.
- **GENERAL INQUIRIES** – Call or email us, our contact information is to the left. Visit our website www.highgatevt.org or FaceBook page <https://www.facebook.com/TownofHighgateVT/> for lots of other information and all things happening (or not happening) in Highgate.
- **VOTER REGISTRATION** – This can be completed online by visiting <https://mvp.sec.state.vt.us/>
- **ROAD ISSUES** – Contact the Public Works Department at 868-4697 x207.
- **TAX PAYMENTS** – Contact the Town Treasurer for arrangements at 868-2741 or slaroche@highgatevt.org.

Respectfully,
Wendi Dusablon, Highgate Town Clerk
868-5002 wusablon@highgatevt.org

E. Town Administrator Items – Heidi Britch-Valenta

- The Machia Road slide stabilization presentation has tentatively been rescheduled and info will be put out to the public on how they can participate without being present.
- Mr. & Mrs. Fiske thanked the town, via email, for their support and action with regard to placement of warning and regulatory signage along the dangerous section of VT Route 78 in East Highgate. The Fiske's are hopeful the state will install the new signs this spring. They brought up another concern, as did Terry Dragon, about the intersection of Machia Road and VT Route 78 by the new bridge. There was discussion about tractor trailers needing to take wide 90 degree turns headed west down the hill. Mrs. Dragon shares the same concerns, and others. Heidi read aloud from her email dated 3/18/20. Mrs. Dragon is concerned about parked cars and street signage blocking the view of the motoring public, as well as the height of the sides of the bridge. Sharon added that the bridge was designed by the state, and the town had nothing to do with the height of the sides of the bridge itself. There will be a final inspection done soon and would be a good time to bring these issues to their attention. Some of these issues have been brought up already and they are aware.
- Motion by Bruce Butler to sign the Vermont AOT Annual Town Letter, Annual Financial Plan, Town Road and Bridge Standards, Grant Application, Reimbursement Forms and Centerline Paving Marking Letter. The motion was seconded by Kyle Lothian – **APPROVED**.
- By the next meeting we should have information on the structures grant for the Rice Hill Road box culvert replacement project. Randy Reed put together an estimate for us. We will also submit for paving funds but will be low on the priority list.
- We have two applications for Rural Business Development Grants. One is focused on economic planning concepts for the Planning Commission to start exploring impact fees and/or a TIF district. This is a \$30,000.00 grant and our match for in-kind hours will be \$8,506.00. Motion by Bruce Butler to sign the grant application for \$30,000.00 from Rural Development. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED**. The other is for consultant time to help compile all the information that we have gathered so far with regard to the VCMP property and to help the community come to a final design concept. Motion by Bruce Butler to sign the grant application for \$30,000.00 from Rural Development. The motion was seconded by Kyle Lothian – **APPROVED**.
- Heidi noted that with regard to expanding infrastructure to the Franklin County Airport, Jeff Carr (Economic & Policy Resources) provided her with info that as many as 1,200 jobs could be created in five years.
- Motion by Kyle Lothian to sign the Tax Stabilization Policy that was approved at Town Meeting. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED**.
- The library is working with AARP on a wonderful program for our senior residents. Funding would be used to hire GMTA to pick up folks that don't have the resources to attend programs. They would open the library on a day it is closed and work with Age Well to serve lunch and have some kind of activity as well. Motion by Richard Flint to sign the letter of support for this application. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED**. We won't hear back on this until late May. The Community Center at the Methodist Church has also offered space for this program. Age Well has been looking for a space in Highgate to serve these meals and this will hopefully lead to something sustainable. RiseVT is also involved in this program.

- Municipal Roads General Permit (MRGP) was a legislative decision to use clean water funds to hold towns accountable for repairing erosion that was leading to problems in our lake. Each town has to submit an annual report. A bill will also be sent in June that we have to pay. Motion by Bruce Butler to sign the MRGP report. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED**.
- The Village Core Master Plan Committee applied for funding from RiseVT to host another community celebration. Motion by Richard Flint to accept the RiseVT grant for \$1,500.00. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED**. Sharon added that RiseVT does a lot in our town and in our county. Heidi agreed and elaborated more on what RiseVT does. The last two years the Town of Highgate has received awards from RiseVT as well.
- Motion by Bruce Butler to allow Heidi to sign the contract extension with Economic & Policy Resources (EPR). The motion was seconded by Kyle Lothian – **APPROVED**.
- Last meeting the decision was made to remove the ice command suits from the PACIF grant request. HVFD has verified they do have trained personnel and there is still time to add them back in. Motion by Kyle Lothian to add the ice command suits back into this grant request with PACIF for an additional \$2,900.00. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED**.
- The VCMP Committee would like to have Paul Costello from Vermont Council on Rural Development come for a community visit. He has recently worked with Montgomery and Swanton. RiseVT feels it is time for us to take this step. VCRD can help us with intensive support and to host forums on what our issues and goals are. This would not be until 2021, as they are currently working with other towns. Paul has agreed to come to Highgate on April 16th. He is willing to do a Zoom presentation, so we would need to get the link out for folks to participate remotely. Bruce is quite sure that VCRD worked with the town of Johnson and it was very beneficial.
- Heidi shared a list of upcoming VLCT trainings with the board. She also shared an updated grant spreadsheet. Several presentations have been bumped to upcoming meetings: Machia Road slide presentation is now scheduled for May 7th and there is Zoom capacity for that also. Rob Fish, State Technology Specialist, has been cancelled and will not be rescheduled for now. Fish & Wildlife has reached out again about the property they are interested in. They will have a written proposal for the next meeting. Casella plans to come back on April 2nd but will send us info ahead of time.
- Heidi shared a letter from the Planning Commission with regard to their recommendation for appointment on the 3-year seat (see appointment below).

F. Selectboard Items

- Shari Rainville has attended meetings with the Recreation Commission and is interested in filling the empty seat on that board. Shari has submitted a great letter which was presented to the Selectboard. Motion by Kyle Lothian to appoint Shari Rainville to the Recreation Commission for a 2-year term. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED**. Welcome and thank you, Shari!
- Tom Conley and Scott Bessette submitted letters of interest for the Planning Commission seat. Tom has been serving on this board and Scott is interested in getting involved. The Planning Commission submitted a letter recommending Tom

Conley remain on the PC. Motion by Richard Flint to appoint *Tom Conley* to the Planning Commission for a 3-year term. The motion was seconded by Kyle Lothian – **APPROVED**. We have a current PC member who is willing to step aside to get younger people involved. Luc Dupuis was going to reach out to Scott and see if there is any interest in other town boards, like VCMP, and Heidi will reach out and make sure Scott receives the information.

- A motion was made at Town Meeting to dedicate the new Machia Road (B25) Bridge to Mr. Richard Noel. The motion passed from the floor. There was discussion on a sign vs. a plaque and it was agreed that a stand alone sign would be best. Heidi will look for images before the next meeting. A bridge naming celebration / ribbon cutting ceremony will be planned for this year.
- The VCMP wastewater study presentation for March 24th has been cancelled. We are still asking that people take the time to fill out the surveys that were mailed out. We have 25 back so far. Call Heidi at the town office or Greta at NRPC with any questions.
- We received just one packet back for the Legal Services RFP, it is from Monaghan, Safar & Ducham PLLC, our current legal team. We are very satisfied with them, it was put out to bid as a grant compliance issue and in accordance with our purchasing policy. Sharon read aloud from their proposal which includes a \$25.00 per hour discount for being a municipality: \$175.00 per hour for their lead attorney, \$135.00 per hour for their associate attorneys, \$75.00 per hour for paralegal services. They are also on the VLCT approved list, which Shelley explained means if we have an issue, for example personnel, and we reach out to VLCT and they recommend we contact our attorney, because we called VLCT first we would receive one hour free. Motion by Bruce Butler to accept Monaghan, Safar & Ducham PLLC to provide legal services for the Town of Highgate for a three-year contract. The motion was seconded by Kyle Lothian – **APPROVED**.
- We received four packets back for the Fire Safety Systems Maintenance / Monitoring RFP. This is more confusing because there are two components and not all companies provide both. Heidi did open one by accident, it appeared to be a bill and did not specify it was a reply to the RFP. Each board member was given a proposal to read aloud. Our fire department currently uses Impact Fire Services, which used to be Fire ProTec, and they did not submit a packet. We currently use MEI for monitoring, and they did not submit a packet. There is no rush on this to make a decision. It would be helpful to share this information with Joe, Gary and Ralph from HVFD and get their input. The proposals received and opened at this meeting were from: The Royal Group; Summit Fire & Security LLC; Johnson Controls Fire Protection LP; Fire Safety VT LLC. Each board member read aloud from what was submitted. Kyle isn't sure about comparing the bids, for example, what Fire Safety VT LLC submitted is very different than what we received from Johnson Controls Fire Protection LP. Fire Safety did not include in their proposal the cost for new extinguishers. Heidi will reach out and get that pricing from Fire Safety VT LLC because that was not a requirement of the RFP. Bruce would like to see annual costs associated with the fire alarms and monitoring bids. There is no rush on this, we can take some time to investigate and circle back to it at a future meeting after HVFD has their input. It was noted that Summit has worked with Highgate Elementary School so we will get some info on their experience with Summit as well.

G. Upcoming Events

March 21		Rabies Clinic – CANCELLED
March 24		VCMP Wastewater and Water Study Presentation – CANCELLED
April 2	6:30pm	Selectboard Mtg.
April 9	9pm	DRB Mtg.
April 16	6:30pm	Selectboard Mtg.
April 21	6pm	Planning Comm. Mtg.
April 24-26		Maple Festival – CANCELLED
May 2		Green Up Day & Haz Waste Day 8am – 2pm
May 16	10am-Noon	Rabies Clinic @ Highgate Municipal Bldg.
June 1		Late fees are waived on dog licensing until June 1 st

Motion by Sharon Bousquet to exit the regular Selectboard Meeting @ 8:06pm. The motion was seconded by Kyle Lothian – **APPROVED.**

H. Executive Session

Motion by Sharon Bousquet to enter into executive session @ 8:06pm with Heidi Britch-Valenta to discuss personnel, legal and contracts 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 Bruce Butler to exit executive session @ 8:20pm. The motion was seconded by Kyle Lothian – **APPROVED.**

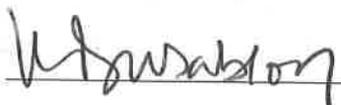
Motion by Sharon Bousquet to nominate Richard Flint as Highway Commissioner for a 1-year term. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED.**

Motion by Richard Flint to nominate Kyle Lothian as Fire Commissioner for a 1-year term. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED.**

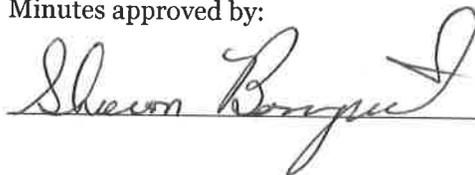
I. Adjournment

Motion by Richard Flint to adjourn the meeting @ 8:35pm. 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

