

TOWN OF HIGHGATE
Planning Commission Mtg.
March 19, 2019 @ 6pm

Approved Minutes

NOTE: All actions taken are unanimous unless otherwise stated.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Luc Dupuis, Chair, opened up the meeting @ 6:01pm.

Present for this meeting were:

Planning Commission Board Members; Luc Dupuis – Chair; Tom Conley – Vice Chair; Ken Thompson; Richard J. Noel; Bruce Ryan

Town of Highgate Staff: Heidi Britch-Valenta – Town Administrator & Planner; Wendi Dusablon – Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk

Public / Other: Woody Rouse (DRB & VCMP); Michael Kravetz (DRB); Clarence Miller (VCMP-arrived @ 6:45pm); Richard Flint (Selectboard-arrived @ 6:05pm)

II. REORGANIZE THE PLANNING COMMISSION

Motion by Richard Noel to re-nominate our current Chair & Vice-Chair (Luc Dupuis, Chair / Tom Conley, Vice-Chair). The motion was seconded by Bruce Ryan. There were no other nominations – **APPROVED.**

III. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISCUSSION

There are a few members from other boards also present for this discussion (Woody Rouse - DRB & VCMP; Michael Kravetz – DRB; Clarence Miller – VCMP; Richard Flint – Selectboard). Taylor from NorthWest Regional Planning (NRPC) was not able to be here tonight, but did provide some guidelines for the discussion. 1) Determine the “charge” of the Highgate Economic Development Board / Commission / Counsel / Committee 2) Study the “charge” of what other local municipalities are doing 3) Draft a resolution to formally create the new Board / Commission / Counsel / Committee to eventually be passed by the Selectboard. There was discussion on if this would be a Board / Commission / Counsel / Committee and what the differences were. Most of those present thought it would be labeled a board but would like to let the idea float for a bit before we formally name it. Michael Kravetz (newly appointed to the DRB) would like to wait on the name and see what kind of needs the group will have or authority they would require. This new group would serve as a steering committee and provide continuity to prioritize projects and go beyond what the Planning Commission feels it is able to do. Michael had questions about if this was really happening or if this is just a possibility. He feels that makes a difference on the commitment level we will be asking of people. There was formerly an Economic Development Board in Highgate that also managed a revolving loan fund. Somehow the board fell off the radar. All in attendance feel the town should NOT be in the banking business. The issue with forming another group will be finding more volunteers. Many people already serve in multiple capacities on several boards already. All agreed, the new group should have five members, possibly seven, but no more than that. There was discussion on elected vs. appointed. Woody would like to see the members appointed by the Selectboard. Heidi shared bylaws from other nearby towns as an example, although they may not be ideal for our town. Milton has an Economic Development Commission, St. Albans City has a Downtown Board, Enosburgh has a Business Initiative and Swanton is doing something as well. Those present would like to see the bylaws of the former Economic Development Board in Highgate. Michael proposed that we consider an online site for commercial development and provide opportunities on that site, similar to a multiple listing service, to list commercial properties for sale / rent / lease in our town. And to take it a step further, to attract people to our town we have to promote destination resorts in our area, Jay Peak for example. This approach needs to be both strategic and practical. Richard Noel added that we need to have a place for them to come first. People want to see restaurants and hotels, etc. There was discussion on the bike trail on schedule to come through Highgate and into Canada, possibly this year. There was also great discussion on the former Machia property, now owned by the town, in our village core. This project is at the top of the list, but there are many others on a smaller scale we could work on as well.

WHAT IS AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL?

Economic Development: the outcome of planned, result-oriented, activities.

Economic Development: is a process of creating opportunities for economic development through a series of coordinated activities. It is a process for creating economic growth and jobs in a community. It is a process for creating a better quality of life for the community. It is a process for creating a better future for the community. It is a process for creating a better world for the community.

Council: an assembly of persons convened for deliberation or the like.

Who would be on the Council?

A mix of residents, officials, businesses, non-profits, civic departments, anyone interested in the long term health of the community.

Potential Candidates:

Planning Commission

Selectboard

Development Review Board

Recreation

Library

School

Historical Society

Businesses/farms

How would they be selected?

Appointed or elected?

Who would the Council Report to?

The Selectboard

How would they function?

By developing bylaws, procedural rules and priorities. Each town has to find their own vision for how this will be structured. We have information from other towns from which we can pick and choose a plan for Highgate that recognizes our unique assets and challenges. Maybe a small committee can work on this to push this forward.

What would they do?

Look at policy changes, projects and programs to improve economic climate and quality of life in Highgate. Create goals and an action plan and seek funding to implement their strategies.

How would they do that?

By meeting with representation from town departments, businesses, non-profits, and groups to take input, recognize community needs, develop plans to address the needs, set long term goals and work with the Planning Commission to update the Town Plan and Zoning Bylaws to achieve those long term plans. By reviewing Grant Opportunities, prioritizing project concepts, making recommendations to

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL PROJECTS:

- MACHIA PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT
- LIBRARY RELOCATION
- AIRPORT EXPANSION
- WATER AND SEWER INFRASTRUCTURE EXTENSION TO AIRPORT BUSINESS AREA
- BUSINESS PARK CREATION
- COLLABORATING WITH THE SCHOOL AND AIRPORT TO FOSTER AN EDUCATIONAL INTERNSHIP FOR AERONAUTIC MECHANICS PROGRAM
- PARKS AND RECREATION EXPANSION OF PROGRAMMING
- RECREATION FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS- CONTINUE TO RESTORE THE BUILDING
- STORAGE SHED FOR RECREATION EQUIPMENT
- PARK PAVILION FOR CONCERTS & GATHERINGS
- HIGHGATE FALLS PARK DEVELOPMENT
- SIDEWALK AND WALKING PATH EXPANSION
- RIVERWALK/ N.F.C.T. IMPROVEMENTS TO PORTAGE ROUTE/ TOURIST ROUTE
- SENIOR HOUSING/ PROGRAMING
- EXPANSION OF BUS SERVICE
- FARMERS MARKET
- SHIPYARD BAY BOAT LAUNCH UPGRADE
- INFORMATION KIOSK NEAR RAIL TRAIL
- DEVELOPING PARK AREA IN HIGHGATE SPRINGS
- ASSESS THE VALUE OF A TAX STABILIZATION POLICY
- ASSESS THE VALUE OF AN IMPACT FEE POLICY
- ASSESS THE VALUE OF A TAX INCREMENT FINANCING (TIF) DISTRICT
- REVIEW ZONING BYLAWS FOR COMPATIBILITY WITH DEVELOPMENT
- RECRUITING BUSINESSES TO OUR BUSINESS AREA AND VILLAGE AREAS
- SUPPORTING EXISTING BUSINESSES
- PARTNERING WITH OTHER NON-PROFITS TO CREATE A VIBRANT VILLAGE WITH ACTIVITIES, SERVICES AND GATHERINGS

Northern Forest Canoe Trail was awarded \$20,000.00 to work on the segment in our town from Mill Hill to Route 207. Once this is repaired it will be a huge step forward. Taylor from NRPC has offered to attend a meeting with us, his schedule is very tight as he meets with many towns. Taylor is available on Apr. 24 so the April PC meeting will be moved from April 16 to April 24 @ 6pm. Heidi noted that we will hopefully be receiving a \$30,000.00 grant to study wastewater potential at the village core property. There will be further discussion at the Selectboard meeting on Mar. 20 (tomorrow). There will be a meeting here on April 5th regarding the airport infrastructure planning grant. Richard Noel asked about the Jedware property. Airport Sand and Fill has applied for funding as a prospective buyer and they have been awarded funding for a phase one assessment. There was further discussion on the Jedware property, which was formerly a dump. Mr. Harrison has no obligation to purchase prior to going through phase one and phase two assessments to find out how much will be involved in the clean-up. He is not looking to do any digging there or have any employees on site.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Richard Noel to approve the minutes from February 19, 2019, as written. The motion was seconded by Tom Conley – **APPROVED**.

V. OTHER BUSINESS & UPDATES

- Heidi attended a workshop last week on “Place Making”. She shared some information as well as a presentation. People look for 1) places to sit 2) things to do and 3) something to eat / drink. Pop-ups were discussed as a way to see what will work in a certain area without making it permanent. The PC did not hold an open house this year, but instead opted for a summer event. Ideas were shared and the group would like to hold an open house / summer event over on the village core property. Heidi would like to apply for a \$3,000.00 AARP grant that could help with expenses. The grant is due by April 12. Motion by Luc Dupuis to have Heidi apply for this grant. The motion was seconded by Tom Conley – **APPROVED**. The group would like to see if the Summer Sounds concert could possibly be moved to this event once a date is decided.
- There is an economic development conference coming up on March 27 if anyone is interested in attending.
- Members of the DRB are compiling a list of proposed edits to the zoning bylaws for when we start our next re-write.

VI. UPCOMING EVENTS

March 20	7pm	Selectboard Mtg.
March 21	7pm	FNWSU Unified District Organization Mtg. @ MVU

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Bruce Ryan to adjourn the meeting @ 7:34pm. The motion was seconded by Richard Noel – **APPROVED**.

Minutes respectfully submitted by:

 Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk
Wendi Dusablon

4-17-19
Date

Minutes approved by:

 Planning Commission – Chair
Luc Dupuis

4/17/19
Date