

TOWN OF HIGHGATE
Selectboard Meeting
Thursday, August 15, 2024 @ 6:00pm
Approved Minutes

NOTE: All actions taken are unanimous unless otherwise stated

ZOOM LINK: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86452444272>

A. Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting was called to order by Vern Brosky III, Chair, at 6:00pm, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. **This meeting was a hybrid of in-person and Zoom video.** Participants were in-person unless otherwise noted.

Highgate Selectboard Members –Vern Brosky III, Chair; Richard Flint; Ben Lowell
Absent – Merry Souza, Vice Chair & Kyle Lothian

Highgate Office Staff – Wendi Dusablon, Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk; Sharon Bousquet, Town Administrator; Shelley Laroche, Treasurer & DTC

Public – Alice (Sue) Cota; Keith Ploof; Gary Greenough; Ralph Comiskey; Carolyn Towsley; Rick Schreiner; Christine Walton; Vern Brosky

B. Public Comments

- Sharon introduced the new Librarian / Director of Highgate Library and Community Center, Christine Walton. Christine is thrilled to be here and sat in on the VCMP meeting last night. She began her career over 15 years ago and relocated here from Toronto. Her first official day with us was August 12th.

C. HVFD Update

Gary Greenough (Chief) and Ralph Comiskey (Asst. Chief) were here for a fire department update. The utility box is scheduled to be installed Sept. 3rd. A deal was made with Scott Bessette to give him the old box in trade for storage of the old engine 2. With the VCMP barn being torn down they needed a new storage spot. The tanker is leaking, as Kyle mentioned at the last meeting. Costs for a new truck were discussed, as well as possible fixes. New trucks are three years out. The crack is on the top of the tank, if there was a failure the drains in the bays should keep up with it. The manufacturer of the tank is out of business. HVFD would prefer to not have a tank, they would like a pumper tanker. What they have is still usable and will run without a doubt, but they want to get ahead of the game before it isn't usable. Ralph spoke about changes to emissions laws. There was discussion about the hydraulic pump issues, and they are not able to use extrication tools without it. Gary has notified other departments around us of this issue. A new hydraulic pump is approximately \$48,000.00. We have put in for three grants and we have not been chosen. The board thanked Gary and Ralph for the update and all that HVFD does in our community.

D. VCMP Update

Sharon gave a brief update on the Village Core Master Plan committee. UVM has been doing some archeological digging on the property. Nothing was found and this is on the path forward. A corrective action plan is being approved by the state now. Lead levels were discussed and how the criteria has changed so more testing was needed. We have had interest in the property by someone considering a daycare facility as well as someone interested in the former Machia house to convert into apartments, but no actual offers yet. The VCMP committee met last night and discussed putting the former Machia property on the market to see if we could gain more interest. We don't want to see this property end up like the Mill Hill property.

E. Zoning Bylaws – Public Hearing

This is the final public hearing on the Town of Highgate zoning bylaw rewrite that has been in progress for quite some time. Vern asked for questions and / or comments and concerns from the public. Carolyn Towsley, Zoning Administrator, has some edits and concerns about some changes and formatting issues that had not been implemented into the draft being put before the Selectboard and shared with the public. Carolyn expressed a strong opinion to have a final and polished draft to put before the public and the Selectboard before it is finalized and sent on to the State of VT. Carolyn attended the Planning Commission hearing on 7/16 and the document was reviewed in detail at that meeting. Some of her edits and recommendations were not included and she doesn't understand why. She, as well as the DRB, use the document the most, and the bylaws are the driving force behind what she and the DRB do on a daily basis. Sharon let the board know that any more changes are holding up progress for Cathedral Square, who have been waiting on this finalized document for months. It was also noted that the document had already been sent along to the State of VT, prior to being finalized and approved by the Selectboard. Sharon was unsure if the document could be pulled back from the State for any changes to be made. Sharon disagreed with Carolyn's thoughts. These edits included some formatting issues and missing words, possible missing sentences, the extent was not clear. Sharon feels some of what Carolyn is asking for is also repetitive and not necessary. Sharon explained that the PC is in charge of the bylaw rewrite and that the document includes input from the PC, Selectboard, DRB (minimal), and the last five Zoning Administrators. NRPC has also been involved, as part of this process was paid for with grant funding. Carolyn did also speak with Sharon prior to this meeting. Sharon expressed frustration that Carolyn did not come to her sooner. Carolyn was not aware that the document was already at the State, and those present questioned why it was already there and how long it had been there. Because it had only been a number of days, not weeks or months, the Selectboard would like to see Sharon get that draft back and make the changes being discussed. Carolyn reiterated that she is not trying to drag this process out, but explained that her job is to interpret the bylaws literally. Vern agreed, the less ambiguity, the better. This document will also be in place for upwards of 10 years, as with our current document, so why would we not want the document to be as polished, professional, and complete as possible. Sharon added there is no such thing as a "perfect" document. Wendi asked what is the worst that will happen if we pull the document back for changes. Shelley stated that this is a document we hand to the public, so it should be correct, and why would we publish it if we know there are errors or omissions. Richard Flint had concerns about putting the cart before the horse – meaning the document was sent off to the State before this hearing. He wasn't comfortable with it. Any more changes will mean more work for Sharon, and she noted that Carolyn has nothing to do with that. Richard did have concerns about setting projects back with more changes, but it has only been a few days, according to Sharon's statement previously. The board had further conversation on making a motion pending the corrections that had been noted and signing off prior to seeing the document. Motion by Ben Lowell to accept the new zoning bylaws with corrections as noted in this discussion (text box extension / formatting / missing words or sentences) and to approve the corrected version with Sharon to send the corrected version to the State sometime next week. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint. Ben voted yes / Richard voted no. Richard just was not comfortable with it, so formalizing the motion was not completed. Richard stated that this process was gone about all the wrong way. Shelley added an error was made, let's correct it and move forward. After further discussion, the Selectboard will hold a special meeting on Aug. 19th at 5:30pm. Sharon will make the required edits and formatting changes as noted and have the final version for the board to review on Aug. 19th. Wendi will warn this special meeting.

F. Zoning Fee Changes

Per Sharon, nothing has changed since the last review of this. Motion by Richard Flint to accept the zoning fee changes with an *effective date of September 1, 2024*. The motion was seconded by Ben Lowell – **APPROVED**.

G. Town Treasurer – Shelley Laroche

- Motion by Ben Lowell to approve and sign the check warrants. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED**.
- Delinquent tax balance is \$50,855.93. The tax sale date is Oct. 3rd @ 10am here at the town office building.
- Auditors will be here Aug. 28, 29, and possibly 30 if needed. They do like to speak with Selectboard members on day two, please let Shelley know if you can participate.
- Motion by Richard Flint to accept the following tax rates for the 2024-2025 cycle: Homestead 2.0158 and Non-Homestead 2.2613. The motion was seconded by Ben Lowell – **APPROVED**. The breakdown is .4967 town / 1.5191 homestead education / 1.7646 non-homestead education. Please also refer to the attached flyer that will be shared with the public. The town and school have been very fiscally responsible, and we saw some increases at the state level. Vote in November to make changes on who represents us in Montpelier if you aren't happy with what you are seeing and paying. Tax bills will be mailed in Highgate around Sept. 19th with a due date of Oct. 31st by 4pm. On the homestead side the increase will be approximately \$196.00 on a \$200,000.00 assessment, as an example. There are many factors that go into this. Shelley will look into the percentage of the increase for next time.

H. Town Clerk – Wendi Dusablon

- Minutes from August 1, 2024 were tabled for approval until next time based on who was present on August 1st and tonight, August 15th.
- Motion by Ben Lowell to approve the minutes from August 12, 2024, as written. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED**.
- The State Primary Election was held on Tuesday, August 13th. Voter turnout was very low, as it usually is with primary elections. In Highgate we saw 286 people vote out of 2,450 on our checklist = 12%. Wendi checked on the SOS website and the average in our area was between 9-13% turnout. Of those 286 voters, 122 voted absentee, leaving 164 at the polls, making for a very long day. Next up we will have the General Election, which will be a very busy time. Ballots will be mailed at the state level to ALL ACTIVE REGISTERED VOTERS, likely around the end of September. A reminder to everyone that this IS YOUR BALLOT. You can vote early and mail it back or drop it off or use the drop box. Or you can bring it to the polls and vote there on Nov. 5th. If you need a new ballot, you will be required to sign an affidavit. Polls will be open in Highgate on November 5th from 7am – 7pm at Highgate Sports Arena in the lobby. So, the months of September / October will be all about bills and ballots.

I. Town Administrator – Sharon Bousquet

- Sharon provided a grant spreadsheet overview for the board and the public. A copy is attached to the end of these minutes.

Motion by Richard Flint to exit the regular Selectboard meeting @ 6:56pm. The motion was seconded by Ben Lowell – **APPROVED**.

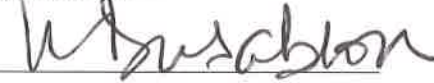
J. Executive Session

Motion by Richard Flint to enter into executive session @ 6:56pm with Sharon Bousquet and Rick Schreiner to discuss legal, contracts, and personnel, where premature general public knowledge would place the town and / or individuals involved at a substantial disadvantage. The motion was seconded by Ben Lowell – **APPROVED.** Motion by Richard Flint to exit executive session @ 7:45pm. The motion was seconded by Ben Lowell – **APPROVED.** Motion by Vern Brosky III to sign the 28 Mill Hill Road agreement presented by the town’s lawyer. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED.**

K. Adjournment

Motion by Richard Flint to adjourn the meeting @ 7:55pm. The motion was seconded by Ben Lowell – **APPROVED.**

Respectfully submitted by:



Wendi Dusablon
Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk

Minutes Approved by:



Vern Brosky III
Selectboard Chair

TOWN OF HIGHGATE – ZONING FEE SCHEDULE – EFFECTIVE DATE: SEPTEMBER 1, 2024

Fee schedule approved by the Highgate Selectboard – August 15, 2024

Note: AFTER THE FACT PERMITS
WILL BE **DOUBLE THE PRICE LISTED**

RESIDENTIAL

ADDITIONS & ACCESSORY STRUCTURES – LESS THAN 500 SQ FT	\$75.00
ADDITIONS & ACCESSORY STRUCTURES – 500 SQ FT OR MORE	\$150.00
NEW OR REPLACEMENT HOUSE OR MOBILE HOME	\$200.00 + .20 CENTS PER SQ FT
HOME OCCUPATION; HOME OCCUPATION SIGN; CHANGE OF USE	\$80.00
PERMITS FOR ADA ACCESS RAMPS	NO CHARGE
PERMITS FOR NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS	NO CHARGE
** PERMIT FEE FOR THE REPLACEMENT OF A STRUCTURE THAT HAS BEEN DESTROYED BY ACCIDENT OR BY ACT OF NATURE MAY BE WAIVED UP TO THE FEE FOR AREA OF THE ORIGINAL STRUCTURE – ANYTHING OVER THE ORIGINAL SQ FT IS .20 CENTER PER SQ FT ON THE OVERAGE AMOUNT **	

COMMERCIAL

CONSTRUCTION LESS THAN 10,000 SQ FT	\$400.00
CONSTRUCTION 10,000 SQ FT OR MORE	\$750.00
COMMERCIAL SIGNAGE	\$150.00

AGRICULTURE

In accordance with 24 VSA 4413 "no municipal permit for a farm structure shall be required" further, "a person building a farm structure shall notify a municipality of the intention to build a farm structure and shall abide by setbacks approved by the commissioner of agriculture, food and markets. Notification forms are available at the Town Office or on the website.

DRIVEWAY PERMIT

\$100.00

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD

LETTER OF COMPLIANCE	\$50.00
CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY	\$50.00
CERTIFICATE OF APPROVED LOCATION (COAL)	\$100.00
APPEAL OF ZONING ADMIN. DECISION TO THE DRB	\$150.00
CONDITIONAL USE REVIEW	\$200.00
SITE PLAN REVIEW	\$200.00
VARIANCE REVIEW	\$200.00
BOUNDARY LINE ADJUSTMENT	\$300.00
MINOR SUBDIVISION (1-3 LOTS)	\$500.00
MAJOR SUBDIVISION (4-9 LOTS)	\$1,000.00
MAJOR SUBDIVISION (10 OR MORE LOTS)	\$2,000.00

RECORDING FEES

FEES ARE SET BY THE STATE OF VT
MYLAR
DOCUMENTS

\$25.00 EACH
\$15.00 PER PAGE

Town of Highgate, VT

2024-2025
Tax Rates

HOMESTEAD

Education	1.5191
General Fund	0.1665
Highway Fund	0.2117
Capital Fund	0.1142
Veterans Exemptions	0.0031
Article 9—Field Days	0.0012

TOTAL HOMESTEAD

TAX RATE 2.0158

NON-HOMESTEAD

Education	1.7646
General Fund	0.1665
Highway Fund	0.2117
Capital Fund	0.1142
Veterans Exemptions	0.0031
Article 9—Field Days	0.0012

TOTAL NON-HOMESTEAD

TAX RATE 2.2613

2024-2025 tax rates approved by the Highgate Selectboard on August 15, 2024

Common Level of Appraisal (CLA) = 78.83%
last updated January 2024

Town of Highgate Grant List
8/15/2024

FUNDING SOURCE	PROJECT NAME	GRANT ID	GRANT AMT	PROJECT AMT	LOCAL MATCH	IN-KIND	MATCH %	NOA/ CONTRACT	END DATE	NOTES
AOT Muni Hwy & Stormwater FY 2017	MACHIA RD BANK STABILIZATION	STPM181E101 Contract #CA0531	\$1,394,800.00 \$	2,697,646.00	\$348,700	NO	20%	11/9/2020	1/31/2025	ROW issues/awaiting additional funding
AOT CLASS II	MACHIA RD PAVING		\$200,000.00 \$	254,100.00 \$	\$4,100.00 \$	YES	20%	5/7/2024	9/30/2024	Awaiting Payment - Closed
AOT GRANT IN AID STORMWATER FUND	ROAD EROSION WORK- Lemkin Street & Mill Hill Road, Partlow & Ballard		\$18,000.00	\$18,000.00	N/A	Yes	20%	7/1/2023	9/30/2024	Currently working on projects to be finished by 9/30/2024
AOT Grant In Aid - FY24/25	ROAD EROSION WORK		\$12,200.00	\$15,250.00	\$3,050.00	Yes	20%	5/1/2024	9/30/2025	Scoping needed
CLEAN WATER STATE REVOLVING FUND	VCMP WW SYSTEM DESIGN FUNDS	CWSRF STEP 2 DESIGN	\$125,000.00	\$205,650.00	N/A	NO	0%	9/10/2021	8cnd Bank Agreement	100% forgiveness. Money for final/legal approved; public vote 7-20-23. Closing on land 12/28/2023
CLEAN WATER STATE REVOLVING FUND	VCMP WW SYSTEM CONSTRUCTION	CWSRF STEP 3 CONSTRUCTION	\$1,550,000.00	\$6,894,615.00		NO		9/26/2023	NO CONTRACT YET 9/26/2023 Funding increased to \$2,550,000.00	Awaiting Final Design/Permitting
Clean Water/State ARPA Fund	VCMP WW SYSTEM CONSTRUCTION	Land purchase/Construction	\$1,457,791.00	\$5,097,462.26		NO		10/5/2023	12/31/2025	Awaiting final construction 2025/09/28
Clean Water/State ARPA Fund	VCMP WW System Step II & III	WW Construction	\$4,000,000.00	\$6,894,615.00		NO			12/31/2026	Awaiting Official Contract
VCDF/MPG	VCMP PLANNING WORK	07110-MP-2-23- Highgate-02	\$16,000.00 \$	17,786.00	\$1,786	YES	10%	4/11/2023	1/31/2025	Awaiting Invoices
NBRC INFRASTRUCTURE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	AIRPORT INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT	NBRC206DA04	\$507,107.00 \$	3,500,000.00		IN PART	Match was waived for all but the EDA contribution	10/18/2020	9/30/2024	Contractor ECI start 9/2/2024 - Finish 5/30/2025 Awaiting Deadline Extension (asked 8/2/2024)
EDA PUBLIC WORKS	AIRPORT INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT	01-00-155933 Public Works	\$1,538,000.00	SAME AS ABOVE	\$ 738,000.00	NC		9/20/2022	9/20/2025	EDA approved use of CRP Funds for local match 9-2-23. construction funding : Contractor in place/Sept 2024 start
VTRANS/BAL AND AVIATION	AIRPORT INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT	VTRANS20221M	\$1,000,000.00	SAME AS ABOVE				5/31/2021	MOU signed June 2024	VTRANS CONTRIBUTION TO PROJECT ALSO COVERS HOOK UP TO STATE BUILDINGS/ est. \$800,000 available for our project

Town of Highgate Grant List
8/15/2024

Gary Sine Foundation	"Jaws of Life" Equipment	\$42,248.00	\$42,248.00	0	NO						Fire Dept Rescue Equipment	
MRPC/Cleanwater Gra	Machia Road Bank Sta Possible match	1302846	2697546	0								
Sanders Appropriation	Village Wastewater	500000	5097262.26	0	NO						Chosen to move in Budget	
Balint Appropriation	Village Wastewater	750000	5097262.26	NO							Chosen to move in Budget	
Vtrans Bike/Ped	Sidewalks	\$350,000.00	\$425,000.00	\$ 75,000.00							Awaiting Notification	
FEMA Stormwater	Transfer Station Plan	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00								On Hold - FEMA OUT OF MONEY	
FEMA Transfer Slide	Slide from 2023 Flood	Engineering	\$100,000.00	\$2,000,000.00							On Hold - FEMA OUT OF MONEY	
Library Capital Fund	New Library Construct	Construction	\$1,500,000.00	\$2,100,000.00							Awaiting Notification	
TOTAL PENDING												\$4,595,094.00