

TOWN OF HIGHGATE

Selectboard Meeting

Thursday, June 4, 2020 @ 6:30pm

Approved Minutes

NOTE: All actions taken are unanimous unless otherwise stated

ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCE

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88558131690?pwd=engycmJBYUdmVkZyاملBc300aE5yUT09>

FREE CONFERENCE CALL

Dial in # 425-436-6365

Access code 188557

6:00pm – Executive Session (Zoom)

The executive session was called to order at 6:00pm by Sharon Bousquet.

Participating were: Brian Spears; Sharon Bousquet; Kyle Lothian; Karen Gagne Fortin; Bruce Butler; Shari Rainville; Ryan Maskell (joined @ 6:16pm); Richard Flint (joined @ 6:17pm); Ty Choiniere (joined @ 6:18pm). Motion by Kyle Lothian to exit executive session @ 6:36pm. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED**.

A. Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance

The video conference call / phone conference call meeting was called to order by Sharon Bousquet, Chair @6:37pm, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, changes to open meeting law allowed for this meeting to take place with no declared physical location. Everyone participated from their own location by video or phone.

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 Administrator; Shelley Laroche – Treasurer & DTC

Community Members / Others Participating – Andy King; Shari Rainville; Ryan Maskell; Karen Gagne Fortin; Ty Choiniere; Luc Dupuis; Steve Young

B. Public Comment(s)

- Karen Gagne Fortin let the board know that the drive through BBQ for MAHA on May 30th went very well. They sold 250 meals and there were never more than five cars in line at once. Cold Hollow Catering has given MAHA five additional dates to have more events like this. One is coming up in mid-June (pulled pork sandwiches) and they are working on other dates. Franklin members of MAHA are trying to organize one at Lake Carmi around July 4th and another data MAHA is looking at is around Labor Day. They are working hard to try and make up for lost fundraising revenue from other sources. Motion by Kyle Lothian to allow MAHA to hold these future drive through BBQ fundraising events. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED**. It was noted these are all pre-ordered and pre-paid meals.
- Ty Choiniere said the Recreation Commission has gotten three quotes to seal coat the arena parking lot. He will bring them to the office to be scanned and sent to the board members with the recommendation from the Recreation Commission.

- Kyle would like to talk about ATV issues on the rail trail but will wait until the Selectboard section of this meeting.

C. School Paving Project – Chris Shepard, MVSD

Chris Shepard participated in this meeting on behalf of the Missisquoi Valley School District board to request permission to pave the former School Street section of the parking lot, which is now the exit to the school parking lot. It was formerly a town road part of School Street that was closed down years ago. There is still a portion of School Street that comes off St. Armand Road which is not impacted by this request. Sharon asked if the recreation trail is still part of this project – yes, it is. The board had no further questions or comments with regard to this request other than verification of the section being discussed. Motion by Richard Flint to authorize the school board to access this section of School Street (now part of the school parking lot and exit area) to pave it at their discretion. The motion was seconded by Kyle Lothian – **APPROVED**. Chris is asking for a simple written statement from the town which Heidi can bring to Sharon tomorrow for signature. Motion by Bruce Butler for Sharon Bousquet to sign this document. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED**. Chris gave an update on how things are going with the schools in our district during the COVID-19 pandemic. He touched on issues such as remote learning, graduation ceremonies and noted that the district is financially in good shape for the upcoming school year because that budget was already approved in March. There are a lot of moving parts and the legislature is still working on things also. We don't know what the opening of the 2020-2021 school year will look like until it gets much closer. We all want to open on time and they are looking at scenarios for all sorts of options or hybrids of different learning options. Chris gave high praise to the bus drivers and food service workers in our district. Our district is feeding more children than any other district in the State of Vermont, with over 167,000 meals delivered since the schools shut down in March.

D. Machia Road Lane Closure Discussion

Steve Young joined this discussion via conference call. This is a carry over discussion from the last meeting. Heidi reached out to AOT and got no response. She did speak to the project coordinator who said if we move forward with a lane closure, we would need equipment to make that happen. She looked into pricing for both renting equipment and purchasing it. The pricing was very high, in the tens of thousands of dollars just for the equipment. Kyle has spent some time talking with retired farmers on the issue of the heavy ag vehicles traveling our roads, in particular Machia Road that is under so much stress right now in the area across from the Young's home. Kyle suggests having some dialogue with the large farms and figure this out. He had no idea how expensive it would be to close a lane and we have not budgeted for this. Richard agrees with Kyle, we need to start talking with the agricultural community and work together. Sharon let the board know that one mobile home on the river side of Machia Road headed towards East Highgate has only about five feet between the bank and their home. Steve Young added that the discussion last meeting about the weight of these vehicles far exceeds 40,000 pounds. If they are loaded, they weigh anywhere from 90,000 – 120,000 pounds. Mr. Young would like the conversation to happen and he would also like to see them driving more responsibly. Ultimately, it will also help the farming community if we are able to keep the road open. Motion by Kyle Lothian to, as a board or the board will decide which members will, talk with local dairy farmers and express the concerns we have to help each other alleviate the problems we are experiencing on the Machia Road. The

motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED**. It was noted this is a very difficult time for farmers and milk prices are very low.

E. Traffic Ordinance Update

Heidi started the conversation with the board on this ordinance that has not been updated in quite some time. It involves road number clarifications and duplications, some road name changes / additions / clarifications, as well as some roads that are now maintained by the town. She has worked with the Public Works Department as well as with Richard Noel on this. Sharon wants to invite Richard Noel and Butch Brosseau to a future meeting and spread out some maps, when we are able, and go through the edits and / or changes in detail.

F. Town Treasurer Updates – Shelley Laroche

- Randy had asked a question earlier this week about the travel reimbursement for Nick Scott. This was for a truck that was brought to Jericho for repair. Shelley also spoke with Rebecca from the Library Trustees about the library cleaning service. There was one cleaning done after the library closed in late March. The cleaning service has not been back to the library yet as they have not been open to the public. The cleaning service has been happening weekly at the town offices after a few weeks off in early April. Shelley noted that she debited the library budget \$150.00 for cleaning services and charged the town, per her conversation with Rebecca. Motion by Richard Flint to approve the check warrants and sign them at a later date. The motion was seconded by Kyle Lothian – **APPROVED**.
- Shelley is working on wrapping up the fiscal year and will be going through everything in detail. She has sat down with Ty for Recreation and with Butch and Nick already for Public Works. Public Works has overspent this years budget, but they did have a surplus in their fund balance. The library, cemeteries and fire department are all fine. She will have it all in order prior to the auditors coming in.

G. Town Clerk Updates – Wendi Dusablon

- Motion by Bruce Butler to approve the minutes from May 21, 2020, as written. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED**.
- Motion by Richard Flint to approve the minutes from May 28, 2020 (executive session), as written. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED**.
- The due date for dog licensing was Monday, June 1st. Late fees are now in effect \$22.00 per dog (spay / neutered) or \$26.00 per dog (not spay / not neutered). Late notices were mailed today. Fines will be assessed after July 10th. Vonnie (ACO) has the list and will also be calling people. We currently have 575+/- dogs licensed with the town and last year we did almost 900. Please mail your dog license fee and proof of rabies vaccination to PO Box 189, Highgate VT 05459 before July 10th to avoid a fine in addition to licensing fees.
- The town offices are open for land records research by appointment on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. We are booked up with appointments through the next few weeks. Richard said people are asking him when we will be open full time to the public and that people want to see us open. There was discussion that the offices are *CLOSED to the public, but we are OPEN for town business and have been all along*. Most things can be taken care of over the phone, email, mail or fax. If anyone needs to come in please contact us to set up an appointment so we can control the number

of people in the office. We have a small space to work in. Wendi will post information to the public ASAP about this topic. Anyone that has called or emailed the town office has gotten a reply and is getting what they are asking for. Sharon agreed that anytime she messages the office she gets an answer very quickly. Kyle also replied that he is not hearing anything about it and that the town employees are doing their jobs to the letter of the law and following the Governors guidance. Kyle has zero problem with the way things are going. The way we currently do business is a change, and change can be hard. The girls are in the office – contact the town if you need anything, 868-4697. There was also discussion on how much longer we need to have our meetings via Zoom. We may be able to meet in person for our June 18th meeting if we can properly space out.

- The Town of Highgate signed a contract with Avenu Enterprise Solutions, LLC to have our land records available online. This should happen within the next eight weeks, so sometime this summer. Wendi thanked the board for their support with this. The pandemic proved to be a substantial amount of extra work for Wendi getting documents to people when we were not open for research. This is another tool for the public to access records and documents digitally, without having to come to the town office. They can be viewed for free or printed for a per page fee.
- Sharon would like to look at our personnel policy to establish guidelines to work from home. There are times that this would be beneficial to our employees going forward.

H. Administrator Items – Heidi Britch-Valenta

- Heidi spoke with Greta at NRPC who spoke with the consultant that understands the contamination on the Village Core Master Plan (former Machia) property. He basically said it is up to the town if we want to allow a vendor to set up on the VCMP property. They won't stop it or say if they think it's a bad idea. We need to look at the liability and make a decision. VLCT commented that using a municipal property comes with its own liability, and they suggested an agreement with anyone we allow to use town property. We would want to have some sort of hold harmless agreement. Insurance companies won't cover the contamination which the vendor won't be able to obtain and neither would the town, except at great expense. There was discussion on other locations in town that might work for Mr. Langlois to set up his concession truck. This is uncharted territory and our vendor ordinance is very old. It was designed for the Grateful Dead concerts in the 1990's and was for one day events, not to cover an entire season. There was discussion if Mr. Langlois would be an exclusive vendor or if this would be offered to others as well. Kyle agreed with Richards comments that if someone else comes along we should not allow another vendor with the same types of products. The town doesn't make any money off it, other than the \$15.00 permit, per the vendor ordinance. This would be offering a service to the town and it might draw people in to spend money at other Highgate businesses while they are driving through. Shelley asked why the park in Highgate Falls is not being considered as a location. There is plenty of space and parking along Park Street at that location. Route 207 is a state road with plenty of traffic also. This location option will be shared with Mr. Langlois. Power is not required, they use generators.
- At our next Selectboard meeting on June 18th will be the final hearing on the Airport Infrastructure Study. This is a requirement to close out the grant.

- Heidi read aloud from a letter prepared to send to the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation / Clean Water Initiative Program. This is a request from NRPC and the auditors to have each town state that they own the equipment. *“Highgate requests a transfer of ownership from the State of Vermont for the hydro-seeder purchased through the SFY19 Municipal Roads Grants-in-Aid program. This equipment was purchased on 12/4/2018 for \$5,878.00. Its current estimated market value is \$4,500.00. The equipment will continue to be used for the same use and intended purpose as outlined in the Municipal Roads Grants in Aid agreement.”* Motion by Kyle Lothian for Sharon Bousquet to sign the letter. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED.**
- The Census Bureau has been sending us regular updates. Highgate is listed at 51% response rate which is lower than usual due to no door-to-door knocking happening. They are asking towns to consider putting literature on the 2020 Census in with our tax bills. We do not bill until mid-September, so Shelley would like to check on the percentages at that time.

I. Selectboard Items

- Our Emergency Management Plan has been updated and edited. All board members have looked at it, as well as office staff. Motion by Richard Flint to accept the Emergency Management Plan. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED.** This has to be signed by both the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Selectboard, so Heidi will connect with Sharon and Bruce.
- VLCT is circulating a resolution for towns to sign in support of financial hardship for towns and municipalities. It is titled: *Resolution: All cities, towns and villages in Vermont are essential, and Vermont local officials support fair and direct federal emergency aid to reopen and rebuilt local American economies.* Motion by Kyle Lothian for the Town of Highgate to sign this resolution. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED.**
- Kyle asked why the former dump off Route 78 (fka: Young Landfill) is not blocked off. There was a fire there a few weeks ago. That property is not owned by the town.
- There are major issues with the rail trail section connecting Route 78 by the former Gilles Rainville property down to the Highgate Sports Arena. Not only are ATVs going down through there, but actual vehicles including a UPS truck have gone down through there. The traffic happens all times of the day, including the wee hours of the morning. Kyle was given information to connect with Ken Brown at VAST as well as another contact, Ken Hopner. Mr. Hopner did return his call and is no longer associated with VAST, but many calls to Mr. Brown have gone unanswered. There was discussion on blocking off that section of the rail trail and if the town had the legal right to do so. Andy King believes that Lamoille Valley Rail Trail would be the governing committee to contact. Heidi will forward Kyle that information. This discussion was tabled for now and Kyle will do the leg work reaching out to LVRT.
- NorthWest Access TV will begin filming meetings again starting June 15th. They are asking that their employees are sent into safe spaces where boards are observing all regulations carefully. It was decided to hold the June 18th meeting at the Highgate Sports Arena where we will have the ability to properly space out for an in person meeting.

J. Upcoming Events

June 11	6pm	DRB Meeting via Zoom
June 15	5:30pm	Recreation Commission Mtg.
June 16	6pm	Planning Commission Meeting
June 18	6:30pm	Selectboard Meeting @ Arena

Motion by Sharon Bousquet to exit the regular meeting @ 8:18pm. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED.**

K. Executive Session

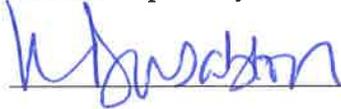
Motion by Richard Flint to enter into executive session @ 8:18pm with Heidi Britch-Valenta, Wendi Dusablon and Shelley Laroche to discuss personnel, contracts and legal where premature general public knowledge would place the town and / or the individuals involved at a substantial disadvantage. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED.**

Motion by Kyle Lothian to exit executive session @ 8:40pm. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED.**

L. Adjournment

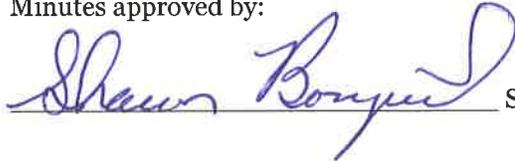
Motion by Richard Flint to adjourn the meeting @ 8:40pm. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED.**

Minutes respectfully submitted by:



Wendi Dusablon – Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk

Minutes approved by:



Sharon Bousquet – Chair, Highgate Selectboard