

TOWN OF HIGHGATE Selectboard Meeting

Wednesday, March 20, 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 (arrived @ 8:10pm); Bruce Butler; Richard Flint; Randy Connelly (arrived @ 7:54pm)

Highgate Office Staff – Wendi Dusablon – Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk; Heidi Britch-Valenta – Town Administrator; *absent - Shelley Laroche – Town Treasurer*

Public / Other – Woody Rouse; Cheryl Fregeau; Tim Smith, FCIDC; David Rouse; John Grismore, Business Manager FCSO; Carrie Grismore; Lynnette Claudon, VT DEC-FED; Alice S. Cota; Steve LaFar; David Roddy; Richard J. Noel; Ty Choiniere; Sheriff Roger Langevin, FCSO; Deputy Sgt. Chad Miles, FCSO

B. Public Comment(s)

None

C. Waste Water Planning Advance – Lynette Claudon

Lynette Claudon works for the Facilities Engineering Division at the State of Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation, which promotes waste water systems and economic development within villages. The town has applied for an engineering planning advance, which is a funding mechanism set up in the 1970's by the legislature to help towns and villages to get ready to start a project. There is an opportunity to have the state claim your planning advance as a down payment on any future potential grants. The first step is having a waste water committee to steer the process. We have the Village Core Master Plan Committee (VCMP) in place already that is willing to do this. Steve, Richard, David and Woody are all here this evening. Lynette provided handouts with more information on the programs available. The town of Montgomery recently finished a project. Lynette spoke to having a survey available to look at uses in our village and to see what people know about their septic systems. The survey would also identify problems and needs as well as turn things into data and numbers. Highgate has very sandy soils, which is favorable to waste water systems. There was discussion on water tables. Lynette is willing to come back and brainstorm ideas with the VCMP committee. Within the paperwork being shared tonight is also information on various grants, revolving loan funds and planning loans. Heidi Britch-Valenta spoke to another program available with the Northern Borders Regional Commission. There are fine lines between what could be done with specific funds from different sources. Lynette also touched on projects completed in Wolcott and Burke. At the end of planning you receive an engineering report which unlocks funding doors for rural development and

state revolving funds. The report is a very powerful document which would need to be finalized before moving on to the next level. Members of the VCMP committee had questions about proration. Statue allows the engineering planning advance to be collected on a prorated basis. It is hard for the state to say today, without the report, what that proration would be. Proration depends on the overall village needs and can be prorated based on cost or based on flow / usage. There were also questions about if we don't own the commercial development parcel at the village core property (former Machia property) what will happen. It does get complicated but if a sale goes through and the town doesn't own that portion a shared septic could be considered. The town could recoup the amount required in the sale price. There were questions on if a system would be strictly for the village core property or for the village as a whole. Sharon noted that all meetings are open to the public and we encourage opinions and questions. David Roddy is afraid of seeing the town dump too much money into this. Ty Choiniere noted that we need to refer to this property as something other than the "Machia property". Others agreed that it is now our village core master plan property, or village core property and it is easy to refer to it as the Machia's because they owned it for so long. Richard Noel asked how many houses are still on the McCuin shared water system. Today there are just family members on that water line and they very recently had issues with it and the whole family was without water. The VCMP committee will continue to work with Lynette and Heidi on this WW planning advance. While looking at the VCMP property possibilities it only made sense to also look at the whole village area at the same time. The board thanked Lynette for being here to share this information with us.

ENGINEERING PLANNING ADVANCE

The Vermont Engineering Planning Advance Program is a financial program available to Vermont municipalities:

- without existing water or sewer rate payers for the purpose of obtaining a feasibility study or Preliminary Engineering Report for community-based drinking water or wastewater solutions;
- to assist regional planning and study efforts related to specific drinking water and/or wastewater needs;
- to assist with master planning for large scale, long term facility planning for one or more capital needs related to water quality or drinking water.

Advantages of the Engineering Planning Advance Program:

- repayment does not start unless and until the project goes to construction, if no project is built, no repayment is obligated;
- refinanced with the CWSRF or USDA R1 construction loan or can be credited towards a Vermont Pollution Control Grant if the project is eligible.
- some planning advances can be prorated to repay portions of the loans as they relate to multi-phased planning, long term planning, or regional planning.

Note: Engineering Planning Advance money may not be available and may need a special appropriation by the Vermont legislature. All repaid Planning Advance monies revolve and become available for future planning advance studies.

Need more information? Please contact [Lynette Clauden](mailto:Lynette.Clauden@vermont.gov), Engineering Planning Advance Lead.

[Application Form Download](#)

[Village Wastewater Solutions](#): A new interagency initiative assists communities in finding viable wastewater and drinking water solutions to help stimulate opportunities and reinvestment in our small towns. Find tools, resources and contact information at villagewastewatersolutions.vermont.gov.

D. Franklin County Sheriff – Roger Langevin

Newly elected Sheriff, Roger Langevin, was present as well as FCSO Business Manager, John Grismore and Deputy Sgt. Chad Miles (Highgate resident). Sheriff Langevin assumed command as of 2/1/19 and retained the previous personnel. Two officers left in December prior to Roger Langevin assuming his new position. A power point presentation was prepared and shared. FCSO provides coverage in several Franklin County towns, including Highgate. We are currently in a shared contract with the Town of Sheldon. They also provide school resources officers in three FC schools. FCSO also partners with St. Albans Police Department Special Response Team, Customs & Border Protection, VAST and VASA. They promote community policing and getting their officers out of their cars and interacting on a more personal level. They intend to increase communication and provide more press release information as well. Their FaceBook page and website will be reinvigorated and a Twitter feed will be developed. John also touched on topics such as personnel development, performance appraisals, drug task force, drug recognition experts, death investigations, leadership, VT intelligence center liaison, equipment assessment and replacement and expanding radio coverage. FCSO provided specific information with regard to data in Highgate from 2018. Traffic stops were the highest volume, followed by property watches, vehicle complaints and agency assists. Looking month to month, August was the busiest month, but all year there was a steady call volume. There was a total of 1,236 calls responded to between Highgate and Sheldon in 2018. The average calls per officer, per year, for both towns is 888. For comparison purposes, St. Albans PD officers are at about 600 calls per officer, per year. With regard to motor vehicle enforcement, a large portion was speeding, followed by defective equipment. Arrest data was shared, which included driving with a criminally suspended license, excessive speed and driving under the influence. Again, August was the busiest month with arrests. Major crimes in our area – recently there were arrests made for two robberies, and in 2018 a homicide was investigated in Highgate with arrests made as well. Our community, just like all others, is not immune to major crimes and drug issues. FCSO operates very much like a business. They are dependent on town contracts with high quality service and need the community to provide them with feedback. Sheriff Langevin discussed aggressive motor vehicle enforcement. Cars today are faster than ever before. He is a firm believer in motor vehicle enforcement. FCSO is reaching out to all towns they contract with and even those they don't and are working with VSP on directed patrols. This gets the message out that police are out there working together. There are a total of 35 officers with FCSO. Steve LaFar asked about the property checks and if there is a charge – no, there are no additional costs. Richard Flint asked about ATV issues we have here in Highgate and how they will deal with that problem. Richard expressed frustration with the lack of enforcement we have received in the past, even after an ordinance was passed. He also spoke to a recent night when a large hockey game was happening in Highgate. There was a great deal of traffic in our town and the FCSO cruiser was parked at McCuins. Richard went up and got him to have him relocate closer to where people were gathering. Sheriff Langevin is aware there is an ATV issue, here as well as in other towns. Our Selectboard wants to be involved in the plan to address the ATV issue. The issue is not the farmers, sugar makers or fisherman going from point A to point B. The issue is the few that ruin it for the rest by racing down our roads, often on two wheels,

with no regard for the safety or peace of others. FCSO needs people to report it and be willing to follow up – and they will issue tickets. If they attempt to pull over an ATV it is likely they will take off. If residents know who is responsible and can identify these people, FCSO will follow up. There are ATV issues all over our town, specifically mentioned were Gore Road, Lamkin Street and Frontage Road. FCSO is set up so if the Sheriff is not in, you will speak to someone – either Paul Talley or John Grismore. Their goal is for towns to be satisfied with the service and the follow up. Sharon Bousquet added that many people in our town are not satisfied with the service we have received in the past from FCSO. Deputy Sgt. Chad Miles is here, and is a Highgate resident. He wants to hear these comments and address concerns. Many folks feel we are not getting value for our tax dollars from FCSO. It was noted that the new administrator took over just over one month ago. Sheriff Langevin and his crew are willing to listen. Sue Cota spoke to seeing FCSO on Lamkin Street and asking them to address an issue up the road with some teens being unsafe. They responded to her concerns and it was addressed. Woody Rouse would like to see the officers out of their cars and speaking to residents. Bruce Butler would also like to see improved communication. Highgate developed and passed an ATV ordinance in order to facilitate FCSO putting controls on undesirable activities. We were basically told by the previous administration that they weren't going to do anything. This is very discouraging. Bruce would like to see a "stick and carrot" approach to clamp down on the undesirable activity and give people outlets to legally use their machines. There was discussion about writing tickets to ATV riders at the gas stations. Richard Noel doesn't want to see an overzealous officer giving tickets to people doing the right thing, driving respectfully and using their machine or 4x4 for farming, fishing or other ag uses like sugaring. Steve LaFar would like to see machines towed and let those doing the wrong thing find their own way home. Cheryl Fregeau spoke that she and her husband go to NH to ride their machines because they can't do it here. She wanted to confirm that she would not be ticketed for riding down the road to help her husband with health issues pull a deer out of the woods. Officer discretion was discussed, and it is very easy to recognize the difference. John added that our ordinance DOES matter but we still need to have a partnership and the Town of Highgate does have a say in how things are done. Ty Choiniere asked about non-emergency issues and who to call. Depending who is on duty, the correct agency will be sent (VSP or FCSO). FCSO is poised to grow and eventually they hope to see FCSO covering in every FC town. Bruce commented that law enforcement visibility is important – giving Danville as an example. Richard Flint would like to see FCSO in our schools talking to our children and getting them thinking. Sheriff Langevin recently participated in the walk to school day event. He also attended a home owners association meeting in Highgate to discuss issues they are experiencing. If one FC town succeeds, we all benefit from that. Josh LaRocque agrees, getting involved with the children at a young age makes a difference. Sheriff Langevin spoke about creemee cards they have given out for kids getting caught doing the RIGHT thing. Coffee cards were discussed for adults also doing the RIGHT thing. Ty would like to see FCSO and all law enforcement getting involved with our youth and early drug education. Sharon added to the discussion about the drug epidemic here in our town, our county, our state, and all across the country. Sheriff Langevin suggested a depository location for needles. This could help with finding them all over town in public places, particularly any that are found near children. The board asked FCSO to please stay and join them in executive session at the end of this meeting.

E. Recreation Update

Ty Choiniere provided an update for the board. Our new Recreation Director, Dan Beauregard, started with us today. He came here from Massachusetts, but has ties to our community and is happy to be here. His hours for now will be Monday – Friday 9am – 5pm with office hours noon – 2pm. There were issues with the zamboni (hydraulic hose broke) on Friday night and Ty thanked Sharon and Fleetpride for getting them up and running so quickly and finishing out the ice season. The ice is now out and Ty thanked Fernand Gagne for the use of his dump truck, and McCuins for the use of their tractor. The town dump truck and tractor were also used. It was the smoothest ice out process Ty has seen yet. The turf is going in on Sunday, March 24th. Turf rental begins on April 1st. The Recreation Commission is asking that all members have town email addresses so they can stop using their personal email accounts. Motion by Bruce Butler for town email accounts to be set up for all Highgate Recreation Commission members. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED**. Randy asked if Dan Beauregard has what he needs as far as a computer, office equipment etc. Yes, he has access to email, website and will be getting access to the recreation FaceBook page as well. The board wants to know if things don't go smoothly. Dan will be invited to an upcoming Selectboard meeting also. David Roddy asked about the life expectancy of the zamboni. It has a whole new engine and there will be some preventative and proactive maintenance before putting it to bed for the summer.

F. Town Treasurer Updates – Shelley Laroche

- Shelley was not present at this meeting, but had submitted the check warrants for approval. Motion by Josh LaRocque to sign the check warrants. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED**.

G. Town Clerk Updates – Wendi Dusablon

- Motion by Richard Flint to approve the minutes from *February 21, 2019*, as written. The motion was seconded by Josh LaRocque – **APPROVED**.
- Motion by Randy Connelly to approve the minutes from *Town Meeting 2019 – March 5, 2019*, as written. The motion was seconded by Josh LaRocque – **APPROVED**. These were also reviewed by Kyle Lothian, Moderator, and Chris Shepard, School Board Chair. They will be coming in to sign them as well.
- Our annual dog & cat rabies clinic was held last weekend, March 16th and it was a HUGE success – our busiest one yet! Hundreds of animals were vaccinated and many Highgate residents also licensed their dogs. Thank you to HVFD, Public Works, Paws for Thought and to Wendi's helpers, Shelley and Libby. If you missed our clinic, Swanton is holding their clinic at the Swanton town garage on Saturday, March 30 from 10am – noon.
- Green Up Day and Household Hazardous Waste Day will both be held on Saturday, May 4th. Stay tuned for more information!
- Motion by Josh LaRocque to appoint Kristy Brow as Asst. ACO for a one year term. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED**. Vonnie Lamotte is always the first point of contact and Kristy does a wonderful job for us filling in when Vonnie is not available. Bruce asked about the third lister position, which remains unfilled. No one ran at town meeting and no one got enough write in votes – the

most any one person had was 3 write ins and 22 were needed. Bruce would like to see this position filled.

- Sharon read aloud from sections of the 2019 Dog Warrant that is signed every year. Motion by Josh LaRocque to sign the warrant. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED**.

H. Administrator Items – Heidi Britch-Valenta

- Heidi understands we are moving forward with the waste water planning grant. She would like permission to submit a letter of intent to the Northern Border Regional Planning Commission to apply for those funds to get us the additional services, which include pre-engineering costs and other tasks, depending on the proposal. The proposed budget is in the drop box. We need an excellent survey of the property which would be covered under this. This is an opportunity to look at the village for water and waste water solutions. The VCMP Committee will be taking on this responsibility as the steering committee. They want to look at the whole village with a specific focus on the former Machia property – now known as the village core property. This is not a commitment, but an investigation. The funds are only ever repaid if we go to construction on a system and prorated based on what is constructed. Motion by Josh LaRocque to approve Heidi sending a letter of intent. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED**. The application is not due until May.
- Sheryl Wilkins from Paws For Thought (veterinarian) is interested in purchasing land from the town as a buffer around her property. She will confirm with the VCMP group and it will be brought to the Selectboard. She is looking for just a driveway width around her building in order to get around, if needed.
- Heidi attended a workshop last week on Place Making. This was a prerequisite to apply for a mini grant of \$3,000.00. She shared this information with the Planning Commission last night at their meeting also. The concept is very low cost options to give people opportunities to enjoy their community. Heidi had a power point to share with the board. Motion by Richard Flint for Heidi to apply for this grant with AARP. The motion was seconded by Josh LaRocque – **APPROVED**.
- Butch Brosseau (Public Works Director) will be meeting with Jim Smith on annual AOT grant opportunities. The application needs to be done by April 15th. Butch wants to work mostly on paving Gore Road from Cassidy Rd. to upper Tarte Rd. There is also a large culvert on Frontage Road to be replaced that utilizes a hydraulic study. Motion by Josh LaRocque to accept and sign the annual financial plan for town highways. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED**.
- Motion by Josh LaRocque to put out the RFP for the ADA renovations with a change to the site visit date. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED**.
- The board has already authorized Heidi to sign both agreements for the ADA construction and the airport planning grant. Motion by Josh LaRocque to sign the grant agreement resolutions for both projects. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED**.
- The GeoDesign report for the transfer station slides is in the drop box.
- The first meeting for the airport planning grant is April 5th @ 10am

I. Selectboard Items

- David Rouse was present to see why the land sale notice had not been posted yet for 293 Lamkin Street. It was advised by the town attorney to read it on camera first so there are no complaints. Sharon read aloud from the proposed real estate conveyance documents from the Town of Highgate to David Rouse for \$5,000.00. The property is located at 293 Lamkin Street. If anyone disagrees with this transaction taking place, a petition signed by 5% of the town's registered voters (110) needs to be turned in to Wendi Dusablon, Town Clerk, within the time frame specified. Josh added that we tried to sell this property last summer and there were no offers.
- The draft vehicle damage policy will be on the next agenda.
- The Emergency Operations Plan needs to be updated each year. It was emailed to everyone for input and edits. It can be adopted at the next meeting. NRPC put it together for us and added in the list of flood properties in the Monument Road area from the flooding in January 2018. This is due back to the state by May 1st.
- We have been told by the state and engineers that we need to do some boring on the Machia Road slide to see how much water is going through there. This is an additional \$19,000.00+ out of the whole project amount. The more we spend on this phase, the less we have for construction. Bruce is concerned that we will never be able to permanently fix that road and it will be a non-stop landslide with a bridge to nowhere. This is possible but we have to do something. The state has been involved in the conversations. There was discussion on removing trees to improve the situation. Motion by Josh LaRocque to sign this document. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED**.
- A reminder that the Franklin North West Unified Union School District organizational meeting will be held tomorrow night, March 21st @ 7pm @ MVU in the theater.

J. Upcoming Events

March 21	7pm	FNW Unified Union School District Organization Mtg. @ MVU
March 25	8-9:30am	Legislative Breakfast @ St. Albans City Hall
April 4	7pm	Selectboard Mtg. – Franklin Co. Humane Society
April 11	6pm	DRB Mtg.
April 13	11-Noon	Coffee hour with FRA-5 Reps Charen Fegard & Lisa Hango
April 17	6pm	Planning Comm. Mtg. (note date change)
April 18	7pm	Selectboard Mtg.
April 18, 19, 20		MVU Musical – The Addams Family
May 4	8am-2pm	Green Up Day @ Household Haz. Waste Day

Motion by Sharon Bousquet to exit the regular Selectboard Mtg. @ 9:29pm. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED**.

K. Executive Session

Motion by Sharon to enter into executive session with FCSO @ 9:29pm to discuss contracts, legal and personnel where premature general public knowledge would place the town or the individuals involved at a substantial disadvantage. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED**. Motion by Bruce Butler to exit executive session @ 10:45pm. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED**.

L. **Adjournment**

Motion by Randy Connelly to adjourn the meeting @ 10:45pm. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED.**

Minutes respectfully submitted by:



Wendi Dusablon – Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk

Minutes approved by:



Sharon Bousquet – Chair, Highgate Selectboard