

TOWN OF HIGHGATE
Selectboard Meeting
Thursday, October 6, 2022 @ 6:30pm
Approved Minutes

NOTE: All actions taken are unanimous unless otherwise stated

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84147413092>

A. Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting was called to order by Sharon Bousquet, Chair @ 6:30pm followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. **This meeting was a hybrid of in-person and Zoom video.**

Highgate Selectboard Members – Sharon Bousquet, Chair; Kyle Lothian, Vice-Chair; Richard Flint; Vern Brosky III (all were in-person) *absent – Chris Agan*

Highgate Office Staff – Wendi Dusablon, Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk; Heidi Britch-Valenta, Town Administrator; Shelley Laroche, Treasurer & DTC (all were in-person)

Public / Other – Ty Choiniere; Alice (Sue) Cota; Catherine Dimitruk – NPRC (all were in-person); Ed Adrian – Town Attorney (via Zoom)

B. Public Comments

- Sue Cota stated that large items are being dumped again at the beginning of Monument Road. The board welcomed Sue back after a brief absence during her recovery.

C. Town Treasurer – Shelley Laroche

- Motion by Kyle Lothian to approve and sign the check warrants. The motion was seconded by Vern Brosky III – **APPROVED.**
- This is a very busy time of year with tax payments coming in. They have been coming in steady, either in person, by mail, by drop box, or payment online. The due date is 10/27/22 by 4pm, postmarks not accepted. Contact Shelley if a payment plan is needed. Vern asked about the tax rates and if they are lower. YES, they are down from last year, both residential and non-residential 😊.
- The tax sale process has begun and only two properties have come off the list, so we will see how this goes. These are not first timers on the list, so they know the drill.
- The audit is completely finished but we haven't heard anything back yet on the final report. Shelley will share that info when it becomes available.

D. Town Clerk – Wendi Dusablon

- Motion by Richard Flint to approve the minutes from September 15, 2022, as written. The motion was seconded by Vern Brosky III – **APPROVED.**
- Wendi thanked Dan Brosseau for the pumpkin delivery this past week. Our village is looking very festive, and it is much appreciated.
- A few upcoming fun events: Haunted Highgate and Trunk or Treat @ Highgate Arena on Oct. 31st beginning at 5:30pm. HLCC is organizing the craft and vendor fair at Highgate Elementary School this year on Nov. 19th. There are many other events going on around town this fall season, visit the town website, FaceBook page, or Instagram page for more details.
- The State of VT General Election is Tuesday, Nov. 8th. Polls open 7am – 7pm at Highgate Sports Arena. Ballots were mailed to all active registered voters in the state. Highgate's ballots were mailed on Sept. 26th so everyone should have received those by now. A total of

2,100 + ballots were mailed, and as of today we have 185 back. Please make sure ballots are received back by 7pm on Nov. 8th in order to be counted. You can vote at the polls with the ballot you received. A new ballot can be issued with a signed affidavit of no ballot cast. We are allowed to pre-process ballots 30-days ahead of the election. Just today the dates and times were posted for early processing of ballots – Oct. 14th, Oct. 28th and Nov. 4th all at 11am the JPs will be taking shifts to process ballots that have been received. This process is open to the public and there are Zoom links also available. We will be in the meeting room on those dates at 11am for those who wish to watch the process, or log on via Zoom. All info is on our website, FaceBook page and Instagram page, as well as posted around town.

- Wendi was contacted by the Missisquoi Valley School District. They are thinking ahead to Town Meeting Day 2023 and ways to increase voter participation on their school budget and other articles. MVSD is asking each member town's Selectboard to consider sending school ballots to all active registered voters. The SOS office was contacted for confirmation, and all three towns would need to agree and make a motion to send ballots to all for the school district. It's all or nothing. Each town runs their town meetings a little differently, Swanton is fully on the ballot, Highgate is a hybrid of ballot and floor, and Franklin is on the floor for their town portions. No decisions need to be made now, but please think about this as we get closer to January when decisions need to be made. Wendi proposed postcards to all on how they can get a school ballot. MVSD is considering this also. The workload would fall to the towns, but the cost would belong to MVSD. More to come on this issue and Wendi has reached out to Franklin and Swanton for comment also.

E. Town Administrator – Heidi Britch-Valenta

- There is a letter in the packet regarding a commitment for a \$2,000.00 cash match for the VT Community Development grant for the VCMP project. The in-kind match will not pay for the consultant. This is to nail down the water piece for the VCMP project and have it set to go before the voters in March. VCMP has \$15,000.00 in the CIP for this use also. Motion by Kyle Lothian to sign this document. The motion was seconded by Vern Brosky III – **APPROVED.** Sue Cota asked for clarification if we will be voting on the VCMP project in March. Only the wastewater piece. We have the \$1.285 million dollar grant for the wastewater construction and we are working through final design right now. The town has a \$200,000.00 commitment for that project, and we are ready to ask the voters if they will support that system. We will continue to develop the library plan and work towards a presentation on that at Town Meeting in 2024 for construction of a new facility. We still need a water plan and to determine the status of the current building on the property. The purchase and sale contract for the wastewater system will be discussed in executive.
- We have a request from a property on Rollo Road to put up a gate on Brewer Road. This is allowable on a class four road. We have received a message from a resident on the other side of the border also about some funny business happening up there. Sharon stressed treating everyone the same, referring to issues on Ballard Road that the board has also discussed. The Swanton sector of Customs and Border Protection has seen a HUGE increase – over 400% - in illegal activity and crossings on the US border with Canada. In Kyle's opinion, all these roads should have gates. There is more discussion to be had on this topic. How much of this should fall to Customs and Border Patrol vs. how much falls to the town(s)? Heidi clarified that the resident is not asking the town to install the gate, they are prepared to do it. This topic will be on the next agenda again for a follow up conversation.
- FEMA came through on the grant for the transfer station stabilization project. Heidi called attention to the fact that they missed a tiny amendment amount that we previously had requested. We signed a commitment match form back in March of this year for a small bump to cover overages for the consultant which is not factored into the grant agreement. It should be \$1,000.00 higher. They suggested we sign the document to lock down the funds and in January we can apply for an amendment. VT Department of Public Safety / Vermont Emergency Management grant \$1,721,916.00 is the federal share, the total match for the town to come up with is \$594,950.25. Also in the packet is a letter from VT Emergency

Management that they will be using ARPA funding to cover our match, which is a major score! Motion by Vern Brosky III to sign the grant agreement. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED**.

- It was noted that Ed Adrian, Town Attorney, had joined the meeting via Zoom. He will go into executive with the board later.
- Heidi updated the grant spreadsheet and copies were on the table. She ran through some of the items on the spreadsheet and figures associated with different projects.
- Heidi met with VTrans over by the Rail Trail at the arena property to discuss further plans for a pavilion. The pavilion is proposed to house bike storage for rentals, as well as a kiosk and other things to promote Highgate along the LVRT. The grant will be submitted by Nov. 1st.
- Doug Rollo has been here and taken some measurements on the septic line issue outside under the parking lot. We are one step closer to taking care of that issue so hopefully the pipes will not freeze and back up into the building, as they have almost every winter.

F. Selectboard Items

- Sharon shared big news on our award of \$1.538 million for the airport water and sewer expansion project from MVU up to the airport. The board thanked Heidi for staying on this to have the funding committed.
- We are still searching for representatives on the Communications Union District board. They have money to spend, but we need representation on that board. Contact the town office if interested!
- Vern brought up the topic of mail in voting. He had an unopened ballot with him that was mailed to his daughter for the Nov. 8th General Election. He stated that his daughter, a college student, has been registered to vote in another state since the summer of 2021. Vern spoke with Wendi previously and we have not been notified by the SOS office of this change, so his daughter had not been challenged or purged from the Highgate voter checklist. His daughter has since been challenged when this was brought to the town's attention. Vern would like anyone who has received a ballot for a family member that is no longer there to contact him. Vern also contacted the SOS office about this.

Motion by Richard Flint to exit the regular meeting @ 7:01pm. The motion was seconded by Vern Brosky III – **APPROVED**.

G. Executive Session

Motion by Richard Flint to enter into Executive Session @ 7:01pm with Heidi Britch-Valenta, Ty Choiniere, Catherine Dimitrik, and Ed Adrian to discuss personnel, contracts, and legal, where premature general public knowledge could place the town and / or the individuals involved at a substantial disadvantage. The motion was seconded by Vern Brosky III – **APPROVED**.

Motion by Sharon Bousquet to exit executive session @ 8:32pm. The motion was seconded by Kyle Lothian – **APPROVED**.

Motion by Richard Flint to authorize Sharon Bousquet to sign the purchase and sale agreement once it is completed. The motion was seconded by Vern Brosky III – **APPROVED**.

Motion by Sharon Bousquet to sign the inclusivity statement. The motion was seconded by Kyle Lothian – **APPROVED**.

H. Adjournment

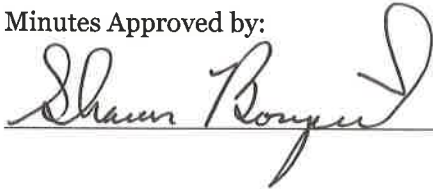
Motion by Sharon Bousquet to adjourn the meeting @ 8:35pm. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED**.

Respectfully submitted by:



Wendi Dusablon
Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk

Minutes Approved by:



Sharon Bousquet
Selectboard Chair