TOWN OF HIGHGATE
Planning Commission Mtg.
May 15, 2018 @ 6pm

Approved Minutes

NOTE: All actions taken are unanimous unless otherwise stated.

I. **CALL TO ORDER**

Luc Dupuis, Chair, opened up the meeting @ 6:03pm.
Present for this meeting were:
Planning Commission Board Members; Luc Dupuis – Chair; Thomas Conley – Vice Chair; Bruce Ryan; Barbara Chevalier
Town of Highgate Staff: Wendi Dusablon – Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk; Heidi Britch-Valenta – Town Administrator / Planner
Public / Other: Woody Rouse; Tanya Bailey; Betsy Fournier; Mike Lambert

II. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Motion by Barbara Chevalier to approve the minutes from *April 17, 2018*, as written. The motion was seconded by Tom Conley – **APPROVED.**

III. **SIDEWALK COMMITTEE**

Heidi provided maps and studies, some from several years ago, all paid for with grants and / or public funds with regard to pedestrian infrastructure. Barbara would like to see our current sidewalk issues resolved before moving forward with more. She pointed out some damage by plows to curbing, the need to reseed in some spots, as well as lots of sand on the sidewalks from over the winter months. There was discussion on the one way traffic in front of the library and how many people are still driving in both directions. Barbara asked about work currently happening in the town park. Parks & Recreation are doing some work to the benches and tables with funding approved at town meeting. Luc asked about the crosswalk paint. Twice it has been applied and twice it has almost immediately come up. It is being blamed on a product issue and they are still working on it and will be back at some point to apply it again to all the crosswalks. Betsy spoke about grant opportunities available related to healthy projects in communities. She will be attending a Safe Routes to School meeting on Thursday and will forward any more information to Heidi. Betsy gave some background on the Safe Routes to School program and encouraging walkability and the benefits of walking to school. Walk to school day in Highgate is this Friday, May 18th. HVFD and FCSO will be helping again at the crosswalks. Betsy also works as a crossing guard in Swanton and knows the barriers involved with walkability (speed, distance). There are educational components that can make a difference. There is a lot of data in the studies we have already had done which are of great value to us as a town and for future projects. The Gore Road crosswalk needs more signage, possibly a flashing beacon, and a speed feedback sign in the area of the arena / school as well. Bike and pedestrian grants are coming up soon. There was discussion on the school parking lot and how dangerous it is as it is currently set up. The condition of the pavement makes it worse. The walking path around the arena and school is a wonderful community resource, but part of the path is walking through the parking lot. Mike Lambert was present representing the Highgate Methodist Church on Route 78. He and the pastor spoke today and feel having a walkway to get from the church to the center of the village and school / arena would be a great idea. They have many events at the church, as well as a full time day care on site. Heidi shared a study from VHB which included islands at each end of the village to slow traffic. Those were met with mixed reviews by the public. Route 78 is wide enough to accommodate them, but the state is not favorable on maintaining them or having to work around them either. The town has explored taking over the village stretch that goes down Route 78. Betsy said that "pop ups" are great ideas to have temporary structures in place just to see how it works and if people like them. Tanya commented on the crosswalk across Route 78 and how even with the flashing lights some people do not stop. Pedestrian signs or cones in the middle of the road could help with that. The group further discussed areas of town that could be benefitted in the future with more pedestrian friendly infrastructure, such as sidewalks. The area from Gore

Road up to the Methodist Church (preferably all the way to McCuins would be better) seemed to be a popular opinion on this topic. We have experienced resistance from the Historical Society with regard to any sidewalks in that area. As part of the next meeting on June 19th, the Selectboard and residents along this route will be invited to join as part of a "walking fieldtrip" in the area of Gore Road up to McCuin's on Route 78 to get a feel for this area and any future potential. There will be future grant opportunities coming up to help us with lots of the issues discussed tonight. Mark Fenton will be visiting our area again, date to be determined. He will stop in Highgate to see the work we have already done. Mark gets people very excited about walkability and pedestrian friendly infrastructure. NMC / RiseVT will be creating a panel of community stakeholders. They will meet twice per year to discuss how communities see the future and how to make healthier choices the easier choice. The first meeting will also include a healthy breakfast at NorthWest Medical Center in the Green Mountain Room at 7:30am on June 19th. Heidi pointed out all the things RiseVT has helped us with, including: bike racks in the park; bike racks at the park & ride bus stop; water cooler at the arena; playground equipment at arena / ballfields; story boxes on the walking path; signage on the walking path. RiseVT is a very user friendly program. Betsy noted they also helped with gardening programs at the library and a water cooler was installed at Highgate Elementary School as well. Heidi will send a reminder email out about the breakfast meeting on June 19th.

IV. OTHER UPDATES

- Both village designation applications (Highgate Falls and Highgate Springs) were submitted. There is a board review on June 25th @ 1pm in Montpelier. These are new applications, so it is preferred to participate in person, rather than via phone. Heidi plans to attend if anyone wants to join her. Heidi recapped what the village designation applications are for those in attendance who were not familiar.
- Betsy is checking on funds to see if Highgate could be the recipient of edible plants (examples: blueberry bushes, plum trees, etc.) These would be a wonderful addition to our community.

V. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion by Luc Dupuis to enter into executive session @7:27pm to discuss personnel. The motion was seconded by Tom Conley – **APPROVED.**
Motion by Luc Dupuis to exit executive session @ 7:44pm. The motion was seconded Tom Conley – **APPROVED.**

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Bruce Ryan to adjourn the meeting @ 7:45pm. The motion was seconded by Barbara Chevalier – **APPROVED.**

Minutes respectfully submitted by:

_____, Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk — 6-19-18
Wendi Dusablon — Date

Minutes approved by:

_____, Planning Comm. – Chair — 6/19/18
Luc Dupuis — Date