

TOWN OF HIGHGATE

Selectboard Meeting

Thursday, October 3, 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; Bruce Butler; Randy Connelly; Richard Flint (arrived @ 7:03pm) *absent – Joshua LaRocque, Vice-Chair*

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

Public / Other – Woody Rouse; Jim Cota – AOT; Shaun Coleman – NRPC; Richard J. Noel; Chris Shepard; Ryan Martin – NW Riders

B. Public Comment(s)

- Ryan Martin is the new trail master for VAST / NorthWest Riders and is here with their annual landowner permission form. The form did not specify the locations, but it will be the same three locations requested in 2018 (along the gas line on Frontage Road, the bridge over the interstate on Carter Hill Road, and a section of Durkee Road). Motion by Bruce Butler to amend the form to indicate the same locations as requested in 2018. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED**. Motion by Bruce Butler to sign the form, as amended. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED**.
- Richard Noel reported to the board that there is interest from the community in renting space at the Village Core property location to store cars. The Franklin County Field Days site is full. Randy noted that he brought a similar request to the board previously, which was denied. There was discussion on insurance and liability. Heidi would like the VCMP committee to be involved in this decision also. The board would like to see contracts and policies that FCFD has in place for storage.
- Sharon apologized to Chris Shepard and the school board. She reviewed the tape from a previous meeting, and she did indeed make a statement that was unprofessional and should have not been made.
- Sharon also apologized to Richard Wilkens, Lisa Wells and Samantha Derosia with regard to the lister position discussion at a previous meeting. Things were said as part of that discussion that were not appropriate. Sharon noted if things rise to that level again the meeting will be shut down and everyone will go home!

C. Vermont Emergency Management – Lauren Oates

Lauren Oates participated in this conversation via conference call. Our board has questions about the FEMA grant for the transfer station slides. The main question is – if we apply for the whole grant and the time comes where we don't have the matching funds or for other reasons we decide on less of a repair, is that option possible? Lauren

answered YES, with the caveat that whatever scope we choose to accomplish, that one task has to have stand alone cost effectiveness. Per Jacob with GeoDesign, the fix near the landfill meets the threshold, but the sand shed location alone does not. Her recommendation is to apply for the full scope and should we, down the road and after further review, decide to reduce the scope we can. That would be easier than asking for an addition in the future. Bruce wonders what the cost would be to move the whole thing, and if we did would that grant still be applicable. Would FEMA allow us to use the grant funds to physically move the landfill? Lauren can't find anything that would disallow it, but she did ask FEMA and is waiting for a response. She will submit feedback from FEMA to Heidi. Heidi also clarified that if we accept FEMA money, we would still be able to transfer the property if we decided to stop and walk away. This project type does not carry any deed restrictions with it. Lauren added that if relocation is being considered that more funds would be necessary to work with GeoDesign. Shaun Coleman from NRPC was also present and added that the town has a Hazard Mitigation Plan that needs to be updated every five years. Shaun will be working with the Planning Commission and Heidi to update this plan so we don't lose our eligibility status. The new plan is due in February 2020. We have also reached out to Casella and maybe by the next meeting they will have some information. Motion by Randy Connelly to await Lauren's additional information before making a decision on the FEMA grant regarding the transfer station slides. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED**.

D. AOT District 8 – Jim Cota

Jim began by saying he is a technical resource for us and is here to help but is not telling us what to do.

- Painting Contract – The state has a handle on this. Weather permitting, VTrans paint crews will be stepping in to paint the missing links throughout towns.
- Hanna Road Reclassification Update – Letters have been received from both Highgate and Franklin. The goal is to have the entire packet ready by December 1st to go before the legislature.
- 2018 Class II Roadway Grant Amendment – Butch is looking to extend the deadline so paving on Frontage Road can be finished in the spring, which is out of the contract period. Jim can help us with an amendment and Heidi will follow up with Jim for the paperwork.
- Weight Limits on Machia Road – Enforcement of weight limits on town roads is the town's responsibility, not DMV. Towns have called DMV and they have come to spot check, but our town would need to come up with methods to enforce a weight restriction if that is the path we decide to take. Franklin takes this topic seriously, so we could reach out to them for feedback and guidance. Richard Noel asked about agriculture vehicles. True ag is exempt, commercial ag is not. Jim recommends talking with DMV more on the ag piece. There has also been a suggestion of closing one lane on Machia Road in the area of the slide that is fairly close to the edge. His technical opinion is that some engineering data would be helpful for justification. It is one thing to close a lane, but it might be difficult to open it back up, depending on the length of the project. If we do it, we would be in it for the long haul. Lane closures also have their own dangers. The town does have some funding for the Machia Road slide project, but we are at a point now that is "build to fit" and the costs are frightening. Sharon asked about liabilities and if we don't close a lane and if we are liable if something happens, even if it's an act of nature. Jim advised that we follow up with the town attorney on these questions. In his professional opinion, and

just off the cuff, he would not close a lane, but he is waiting to hear back from Callie about the data and to see if the slope has moved. That is his point of view, but it is our decision. We are doing our due diligence with this site and have hired an engineer to help us determine where we are at. He advised that we continue to monitor it by having our public works director and crew visit it regularly. There are typically signs before a failure. As far as posting a weight limit on the road, when the Machia Road bridge was posted we had engineers and data to back up why the weight limit was chosen. It makes sense to have the reasoning from professional engineers. This would not apply to true ag anyway. Randy asked about the suggested fix for the Machia Road slide site, which is concrete soil nails. Jim noted other locations that have used this method that have been successful, such as Route 100C in Johnson towards Eden. This site is holding up well since they lost the slope eight years ago. Soil nails have also been used on I-89 just north of the Lamoille bridge. They aren't pretty, but they are a fairly common practice. There was further discussion on the use of riprap at the base of the slide near the river. Riprap is heavy, so we need to control the weight that is put on the slope.

- Richard Noel asked Jim Cota about the new Machia Road bridge (B25) and the height of the guard rails. Richard measured them at 33", whereas the bridge in Highgate Falls has guard rails at 45". Sharon thanked Jim for helping us to repair and keep the old bridge open to the public until the new bridge was ready. Jim will check on the guard rail height and get back to us about Richard Noel's question.

E. Planning Commission Update

- Tax Stabilization Plan – Richard Noel was present from the PC. The PC has been working on a tax stabilization plan for the past several months. Other towns have similar policies, which were reviewed and tweaked to fit our vision. Before the board is the plan as well as an agreement form. This will be another tool in our toolbox to encourage business development in our town. The tax stabilization plan would defer tax increases over a five-year period on municipal taxes only (not education taxes). This will ultimately need to go before the voters in March, if the Selectboard decides to move forward. Motion by Richard Flint to put the tax stabilization plan before the voters in March as a warned article. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED**.

F. Town Treasurer Updates – Shelley Laroche

- Motion by Randy Connelly to sign the check warrants. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED**.
- Tax collection has been busy and what we will be focused on throughout the month of October. Contact Shelley if you will require payment arrangements. Due date is Friday, November 1st by 4:30pm.
- Motion by Richard Flint to sign the salt contract with Cargill at \$86.51 per ton. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED**.

G. Town Clerk Updates – Wendi Dusablon

- Motion by Richard Flint to accept the minutes from *September 5, 2019*, as written. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED**.
- Motion by Richard Flint to accept the minutes from *September 19, 2019*, as written. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED**.
- Motion by Richard Flint to accept the minutes from *September 23, 2019*, as written. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED**.

- 2019 Dog Registration Update – as of today 10/4/19 we have licensed 895 dogs in the Town of Highgate for 2019. This is the most we have ever had on the books. There are still three dog owners left to comply and they have been ticketed as per our ordinance. Tickets will continue to increase, per our ordinance, and Wendi will continue to work with Vonnie (ACO) so we can hopefully close the year by the end of October.
- CLA & Tax Rate Comparison Chart for Franklin County – Each year Wendi gathers data on tax rates and common levels of appraisal for each town in Franklin County to see where we stand. Our CLA is on the high end, but not the highest. Our tax rate, both homestead and non-homestead is the lowest. We will have a new CLA in December, which Wendi expects to go down based on sales over the past year.

**2019 TAX RATES &
COMMON LEVEL OF APPRAISAL
FRANKLIN COUNTY, VT**
as of September 30, 2019

TOWN NAME	CLA	HOMESTEAD RATE	NON-HOMESTEAD RATE
HIGHGATE	106.27%	1.7173	1.8711
GEORGIA	95.55%	1.7286	1.9678
ST ALBANS TOWN	101.87%	1.7684	1.9297
SWANTON	102.81%	1.7718	1.9307
FRANKLIN	101.21%	1.8068	1.9683
MONTGOMERY	103.59%	1.7907	2.0479
SHELDON	100.33%	1.7402	2.0076
BERKSHIRE	102.91%	1.7915	2.0503
BAKERSFIELD	98.70%	1.8322	2.1021
FAIRFAX	92.13%	1.8877	2.2802
RICHFORD	110.08%	2.0388	2.2937
FAIRFIELD	91.28%	2.2224	2.4025
ENOSBURG	105.16%	2.157	2.4242
FLETCHER	88.67%	2.6021	2.6364
ST ALBANS CITY	91.07%	2.5532	2.7337

H. Town Administrator Items – Heidi Britch-Valenta

- Motion by Bruce Butler to allow Heidi Britch-Valenta to sign the change order for Millbrook Building & Remodeling for the public works office and bathroom renovations. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED.**

- The work was put out to bid for the bollard installation (inside and out) on the public works side of the building. Millbrook Building and Remodeling was the only bid we received \$16,750.00. We have received a PACIF safety grant for \$5,000.00 and the rest was budgeted for. Motion by Bruce Butler to allow Heidi to sign the agreement with Millbrook for the inner and outer bollards for the public works department. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED**. The project is set to start on Oct. 15th with the priority being the bollards before cold weather. They will then move into the public works office/bathroom area. There is a plan in place with Butch as far as the trucks during the bollard project.

I. Selectboard Items

- We received only one sealed bid for the insulation work on the second floor and in the attic space. Sharon read the details of the bid from Kilbury Construction aloud and the bid price of \$9,375.50. Heidi will send the information to Laz Scangas, architect, to make sure the bid is compatible with the RFP. The bid did not ask for proof of insurance, that can be verified after we hear back from Laz. The insulation work was not budgeted for. This work was highly recommended by the roofers to prevent ice jams and damage to the roof, which was just fully replaced this year. Shelléy suggested we use the surplus money from Swanton Village last year to pay for this. VT Gas has approximately \$3,000.00 available in funding that we could apply for, but Heidi has not heard back from them on exactly what this entails. The bid was all handwritten and the board would have liked a more legible form. Richard would like to look into this further. The RFP states that we don't have to accept any bids and have the ability to put it back out to bid. Randy would feel more confident if Laz inspects the bid documents and signs off afterwards. Motion by Richard Flint to table this decision until the next meeting on Wednesday, Oct. 16th and to have Laz Scangas review the bid documents. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler. There was further discussion on this involving the time frame and the need to have this job done before winter, if at all possible. Bruce would like to put it back out to bid unless Laz feels this particular bid is legitimate and satisfactory. Following this discussion, the motion to table this until Oct. 16th was **APPROVED**.
- Chris Shepard from the MVSD School Board was present. Wendi had sent him an email regarding the presidential election in November 2020 and the need to use the school. The municipal building parking situation is not adequate for an election of this size, and the arena is not available to us because it will be ice season. Chris noted the board does not have a policy in place yet, but it is on their radar.
- Scott Martin from Highgate Elementary School reached out to Butch to see if the town could provide trucking for cold patch to be used on the school driveway. Butch plans to do that this coming week. Chris Shepard added that they are putting together RFPs and RFQs for the school parking lot project in the summer of 2020.

J. Upcoming Events

Oct. 6	10-2	HVFD Open House @ Fire Station
Oct. 8		Town Clerk's Office hours are 1-4:30pm
Oct 10	6pm	DRB Mtg.
Oct. 14		Indigenous Peoples' Day – Town Offices are CLOSED
Oct 15	6pm	Planning Commission Mtg.
Oct. 16	7pm	Selectboard Mtg. - NOTE DATE CHANGE
Oct. 23	5pm	Board of Abatement Hearing
Nov 1	by 4:30pm	TAX BILLS DUE

Motion by Sharon Bousquet to exit the regular Selectboard meeting @ 8:19pm. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED.**

K. Executive Session

Motion by Sharon Bousquet to enter into executive session @ 8:19pm with Heidi Britch-Valenta 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 Richard Flint – **APPROVED.**

Motion by Richard Flint to exit executive session @ 8:45pm. The motion was seconded by Sharon Bousquet – **APPROVED.**

L. Adjournment

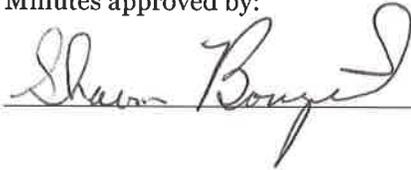
Motion by Richard Flint to adjourn the meeting @ 8:45pm. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED.**

Minutes respectfully submitted by:



Wendi Dusablon – Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk

Minutes approved by:



Sharon Bousquet – Chair, Highgate Selectboard