

TOWN OF HIGHGATE
Planning Commission Mtg.
October 15, 2019 @ 6pm

Approved Minutes

NOTE: All actions taken are unanimous unless otherwise stated.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Luc Dupuis, PC Chair, opened up the meeting @ 6:05pm.

Present for this meeting were:

Planning Commission Board Members; Luc Dupuis – Chair; Tom Conley – Vice Chair; Ken Thompson; *absent: Richard Noel & Bruce Ryan*

Town of Highgate Staff: Heidi Britch-Valenta – Town Administrator & Planner; Wendi Dusablon – Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk

Public / Other: Rep. Lisa Hango; Rep. Charen Fegard; Virginia Holiman; Sharon Bousquet; Philip (Butch) Brosseau; Michelle Beaulieu

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Ken Thompson to approve the minutes from *September 17, 2019*, as written. The motion was seconded by Tom Conley – **APPROVED.**

III. LEGISLATURE UPDATE

Lisa Hango and Charen Fegard, FRA-5 Representatives, were present. They are here to listen and to answer any questions. A workshop is being held on Thursday, Oct. 17th @ 6pm @ Richford Town Hall. This workshop will focus on revitalizing villages and downtown centers. All information presented will be published and sent out via email and via social media platforms as well as in the newspaper. Lisa and Charen opened it up for questions and also stayed for the remainder of the PC meeting.

IV. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

- Public Works Department – Butch Brosseau, Public Works Director, was present. Butch had previously met with Shelley Laroche, Treasurer, on the CIP and was here to share information with the PC on their capital budget. Some line items were tweaked based on input from Sharon Bousquet and the PC members. The CIP for public works was lowered at this meeting by \$20,000.00 to a total of \$215,000.00 for FY2020-2021, so far broken down as follows: Mower \$20,000; Grader \$30,000.00; Loader \$25,000.00; Backhoe \$10,000.00; 2010 International Tandem \$50,000.00; 2014 Western Star Tandem \$25,000.00; 2015 Ford F550 \$10,000.00; 2016 International Single Axle \$25,000.00; Excavator and Equipment Trailer \$0.00; Wood Chipper \$0.00; Side Arm Mower \$20,000.00. There was discussion on last years CIP, which was very large at \$450,000.00 total. Sharon would very much like to see that number go down. Everyone took a big hit this year on taxes which is not sustainable, particularly for those on a fixed income.
- Highgate Library & Community Center – Virginia Holiman, Library Trustee, and Michelle Beaulieu, Library Director, were present. \$25,000.00 has been plugged into the spread sheet for FY2020-2021 in the library relocation line item. They had hoped to ask the voters for \$50,000.00 but understand the need to keep the CIP down overall. They currently have \$75,000.00 put away in the CIP. Last year they asked for an amendment from the floor to add the library to the CIP, which was voted down. Sharon feels strongly that the library will have better success at town meeting asking for \$25,000.00. There was discussion about the potential library relocation and the need for realistic numbers to be presented to the voters. Sharon reiterated that the library is vital in our community and benefits people of all ages. HLCC is so much more than books. A more precise plan was encouraged to be presented at Town Meeting. Lisa and Charen (FRA-5 Reps) had questions about the potential relocation and the plan for our current building if the library were to move. The perception in the community is that the library would cost 3-4 million dollars to relocate, which is not what we want or need. Virginia stressed the need for our town leaders (Selectboard) to support this and feels there are

many splintered groups and committees that need to get on the same page going forward. Heidi noted that the last VCMP meeting was a turning point and the town has reached out to the Preservation Trust for assistance with starting a capital campaign. Greta from NRPC has also been instrumental in assisting us. The library study that was done needs to be part of the discussion as well. Voters have allocated twice to the library relocation effort and surveys taken noted that folks would like to see the library located on the village core property and on the same side of Route 78 as the school and arena. There was further discussion on the value of keeping and restoring the Machia house or if it should be taken down. The waste water study is happening and will get us closer to understanding more about the property. Anything plugged into the CIP is all up to the voters from the floor in March. Luc Dupuis would like to see a library presentation in March. Sharon stressed the importance of reinforcing all the services the library offers in our town. The next Village Core Master Plan meeting is scheduled for Oct. 29 @ 6pm.

Sharon asked if there would be any additional funds from the Machia Road Bridge project (B25). The final inspection has been done but we don't know the final numbers yet. Sharon feels the \$20,000.00 that was lowered from the public works CIP should go towards the Machia Road slide repair fund. Sharon also questioned if the \$20,000.00 plugged in for the transfer station slope stabilization project is enough. Heidi will double check if \$25,000.00 being set aside for matching funds for stormwater grant projects is needed. No funds have been set aside in this CIP for the Village Core Master Plan. If possible, Sharon wants to see that \$25,000.00 be moved over to VCMP. Heidi doesn't believe the reserve money for VCMP has been touched yet, approximately \$20,000.00. Heidi is hopeful we will have information by town meeting to know whether the former Machia house will be taken down or not. Sharon isn't interested in allocating more funds to VCMP if we don't have a direction by March. We squeaked by on the ADA project and were able to also do the work in the public works office and bathroom. The bollard project was budgeted for and we will be using PACIF grant funds also. The Recreation Department and Highgate Vol. Fire Department will be coming to the PC meeting in November to discuss their capital budgets. Recreation needs to look at putting money towards a zamboni and also towards new indoor turf. HVFD just ordered a new truck, so they need to start saving for their next new truck purchase. Both Lisa and Charen were impressed that Highgate is so forward thinking with the CIP. There was discussion on the value of saving and working towards major purchasing vs. borrowing the money. The arena bond vote is a good example of that. Highgate has seen many changes in the last several years – forming a Development Review Board, changing from calendar to fiscal year cycle and adding sidewalks in town – just to name a few!

V. OTHER BUSINESS & UPDATES

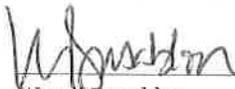
- FCIDC is coordinating a meeting about revitalizing the Highgate Welcome Center. November 12th @ 5:30pm here in the community room.
- Heidi put a project list and timeline together, which is in the PC packet.
- The hazard mitigation plan needs to be approved by February. Shaun Coleman from NRPC will be at the next meeting to go over the plan with the PC and see if more revisions will be needed. The PC and Heidi went through the plan and began the list of revisions, additions, deletions, updates etc. to the plan. This conversation will continue at the next PC meeting on Nov. 19th.
- The PC is also serving as the economic development council until such time they feel they can't shoulder the workload. Impact fees and a TIF district were discussed, as well as a list of potential economic development projects. Dominic Cloud from St. Albans did a great job on his presentation last month. We will work on having more speakers come in with regard to developing our village core. The VCMP committee has invited David Desorcie to come to their Oct. 29th meeting to discuss his vision for his store and see if he wants to be involved in the development of the VCMP property.
- The PC signed a thank you note for Dominic Cloud.
- Highgate has previously looked at impact fees, but we were not eligible because we did not have a capital budget – but now we do! Heidi handed

- out a document for the PC to review before their next meeting. We need to have a master plan on what impact fees would be used for.
- The community celebration held on Aug. 17th was recapped. With the Ben & Jerry's grant and money raised from vendor fees, t-shirt sales and the dunk tank we came out ahead by \$471.00. T-shirts will continue to be sold at town meeting and other large events.
 - Wendi puts together a yearly spread sheet of tax rates in Franklin County VT. Highgate's rates are the lowest, both homestead and non-homestead.
 - A list of improvements completed in our village was shared.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Tom Conley to adjourn the meeting @ 8:25pm. The motion was seconded by Ken Thompson – **APPROVED.**

Minutes respectfully submitted by:

 Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk
Wendi Dusablon

12/17/19
Date

Minutes approved by:

 Planning Commission – *Vice*
~~Luc Dupuis~~ Tom Conley

1/21/2020
Date