

TOWN OF HIGHGATE
Planning Commission Mtg.
July 16, 2019 @ 6pm

Approved Minutes

NOTE: All actions taken are unanimous unless otherwise stated.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Luc Dupuis, Chair, opened up the meeting @ 6:00pm.

Present for this meeting were:

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

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

Public / Other: Ty Choiniere

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Richard Noel to approve the minutes from *June 18, 2019*, as written. The motion was seconded by Tom Conley – **APPROVED.**

III. TAX STABILIZATION

Heidi has printed out paper copies and also sent out digitally the proposed tax stabilization plan with edits, comments and suggestions from the last meeting. Bruce had questions about the program and who would benefit from it. Heidi pointed out the criteria that is part of the proposed plan. There was discussion on the wording from state statute with regard to forest and ag land. The current use program covers those, so they are covered under that entity. The group discussed the decision making process and the involvement of the Listers, Treasurer and Selectboard. There were questions on at what stage the Listers would become involved and if the plan should start April 1st each year to coincide with the grand list. The proposed plan states the applicant would apply prior to any construction. The Selectboard would have the final say and have discretion on amending or waiving portions of section #3 (application process). Bruce sees no value in the plan if the Selectboard can amend what they want. Others disagreed, noting that the Selectboard should have discretion on a case by case basis. Section #3 is the only section that would / could be amended or waived. Heidi agreed with Bruce, but noted that the same wording is included in our bylaws, giving the DRB discretion. Richard gave an example of something that could be amended / waived: 1 year financial information vs. 2 years as indicated on the application. Heidi will edit the text shown in capital letters in the plan. Heidi will seek assistance from VLCT and / or the town attorney for this section. The PC will present this plan to the Selectboard in the near future. The voters ultimately need to approve it at Town Meeting or a Special Town Meeting by a 2/3 vote. This will be back on the PC agenda in August, hopefully for approval.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

- Bylaw Review - Ty Choiniere was present. He asked the PC to consider requiring knox boxes on all new construction and / or renovations of commercial buildings and provide HVFD with a key to those establishments. Other towns are "strongly suggesting" it or requiring it now also. Ty hasn't spoken to Chief Depatie about this, but feels it would be wise for the future, and with the expansion of the airport, etc. Heidi would like HVFD to be included when the PC does the bylaw rewrite. Richard asked Ty about the placement of the flower boxes in the park, noting they appear to be too close to the sidewalk. They risk being damaged during snow plow season.
- The next VCMC Community Celebration planning meeting will be July 23rd @ 6pm. The celebration is planned for Aug. 17th 11am – 8pm.
- Leadership Summit – Aug. 12th in Randolph. Michelle Beaulieu from HLCC will be attending. Other are welcome and the town will pay the fee.
- Swanton's Economic Development Coordinator is arranging for USDA to come to our area regarding a revolving loan fund for lower income homeowners for repairs, etc. This is very similar to what the town offered years ago and it was managed through the town. The PC was not interested in getting into the lending business.

- Discover NorthWestern VT – Heidi shared the publication which displayed St. Albans on the inside. This is something to consider when we have our village project started to promote our town.
- The FAA gave VTrans the grant funding to put up a fence around the perimeter of the airport, which is happening right now. This process went before the DRB already. There was discussion on the airport and also the Handy 4-lot subdivision happening with the DRB currently.
- Hazard Mitigation Plan – we have a plan already, but it needs to be updated by Feb. 2020. This outlines our goals and things we have already done and intend to do to make our town more hazard resilient. We worked with NRPC in 2015 on this plan. Much will stay the same, but we need to update what we have done and update any new hazards. The fix we did at the transfer station site with GW Tatro in 2015 has failed. This is on the back side of the capped landfill. The lower part has failed and the pipe is out of the ground. We are, at the same time, in a drainage plan design phase that includes the drainage basin that is no longer functional. We don't know what will happen at the transfer station site, but we have had another bad spot there. There were questions if large trucks are making the issue worse. The engineers are saying no. It is the combination of sand on top of clay with a steep sheer. There is a lot of movement in a lot of locations at the transfer station site. Richard and Bruce remember when the Casella site was a deep ravine that was all bulldozed in. Discussion will need to take place on the future of that property. We will soon have estimates on what it will cost to fix it.

V. MUNICIPAL PLANNING GRANT (MPG)

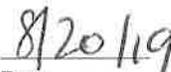
We have struggled with the ANR planning advance for the village and we can't use any of their funding for pre-engineering tasks (soil evaluations, surveys, etc.). Using the MPG to work with NRPC on the pre-engineering work is a possibility. This will be opening up in August. The VCMP committee will have to start meeting to hire the engineer and get those processes started. They are considering meeting with the PC to have steady meeting dates. We also need to consider delaying the economic development study, because this kind of study is already happening at the airport currently. Heidi asked the PC if it made sense to delay the development of the economic development plan and use the MPG for the pre-engineering services for the waste water study in the village and keep that moving forward. We will be able to use the planning advance as a match for the MPG and not have to put in any funds. This all saves the town money. The waste water study actually covers the whole village, not just the VCMP property (former Machia property). The PC was in agreement that this was a good idea. On that note, we also need to begin thinking, along with the VCMP committee, about being more assertive in marketing the VCMP site. We can learn from other communities and have guest speakers come in. Names were brought up as possible speakers, such as: Dominic Cloud (St. Albans), Tim Smith (FCIDC), David Fosgate, leaders from Winooski and Patricia Sears (AARP). Heidi will arrange for some of them to come in and speak to the PC, VCMP, Selectboard and anyone else who is interested. Buxton is a national firm that does data tracking to help communities understand what businesses would want and need to locate to towns. They are also willing to come in and share information with us. Bruce has spoken with Buxton previously.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Bruce Ryan to adjourn the meeting @ 7:21pm. The motion was seconded by Tom Conley – **APPROVED.**

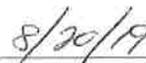
Minutes respectfully submitted by:

 Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk
Wendi Dusablon


Date

Minutes approved by:

 Planning Commission – Chair
Luc Dupuis


Date