

TOWN OF HIGHGATE

Selectboard Meeting

Thursday, July 19, 2018 @ 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 @ 7:07pm. The Pledge was recited previously at the 6pm Special Town Meeting.

Highgate Selectboard Members – Sharon Bousquet, Chair; Josh LaRocque, Vice-Chair; Steve LaFar; Bruce Butler *absent* – *Randy Connelly*

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

Public / Other: Eric Chevalier; Alice (Sue) Cota; Donald Bessette; Woody Rouse; Ty Choiniere; Michael Frett – St. Albans Messenger; Joseph Depatie; Henry Rainville; Richard Flint

B. Public Comment

- Our sympathy to Jerry, our cameraman, on the loss of his wife, Nancy.
- Eric Chevalier asked for brief update on the land sales on June 28th. The Dalcourt property on Route 78 sold to VELCO for \$28,000.00. The Cherry Hill property and the Lamkin Street property (Elwood) did not sell. Sharon has reached out to Fish & Wildlife about the Cherry Hill property. We are legally bound by the courts on the Lamkin Street property. The \$28,000.00 was deposited into the general fund, as it was voted on to have any proceeds reduce the tax rate.
- Sue Cota updated the board on Monument Road. The state is looking at cutting trees and wrapping the bank.
- Heidi noted that the vice principal from Highgate Elementary School came by today. He is looking for sites around town that can be used in the event of emergency evacuations at the school as part of ALICE training. Motion by Josh LaRocque to allow the school to use the community room and parking lot areas for emergency preparedness. The motion was seconded Steve LaFar – **APPROVED**.

C. Agenda Amendment & Roof Replacement Update

Sharon thanked Abe Barnard from R&A Enterprises for being here tonight and being part of our Special Town Meeting that took place at 6pm just prior to this meeting. We did not have a large turnout, but those that did show up were informed when they voted. There was discussion on the color of the new roof. Abe will bring in a color chart. Motion by Josh LaRocque to replace the municipal roof, as voted on earlier at the Special Town Meeting at a price of \$102,250.00 (*see separate minutes of that meeting*). The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED**.

D. Treasurer Updates – Shelley Laroche

- **Check Warrants** - Sharon had a few earlier questions on the check warrants. She noted to the public that a large share of what we take in for marriage licenses and dog licenses goes to the State of Vermont. There were no further questions on the check warrants.

- **Copier RFPs** – We have received three bids from Office Solutions, Canon & Symquest. The bids were also posted in the office and on our website. They were opened and reviewed by the office staff already. Shelley sent them to Randy for further review, but he is not here tonight. The office staff is making the recommendation to move forward with the bid from Canon. This will save us a significant amount of money because it includes toner. Just last year alone we spent \$4,000.00 on toner (two machines, one which is color). Our current expense is a base amount of \$281.00 per month with Symquest. The new base amount is \$71.00 per month for one copier and one color printer. The maintenance contract is .008 cents per copy and is a five year (60 month) contract. The office staff did discuss the pros and cons of a four year contract as well. Service is also included in the contract. Brian from Canon came to see us about 1.5 years ago but we weren't ready at that time, but now our contract is coming to a close. On average we print between 5,000 – 6,000 copies per month. Our current machine is a Canon and has served us well. Motion by Josh LaRocque to approve the bid from Canon. The motion was seconded by Steve LaFar – **APPROVED**.
- **New Parks & Rec. Director** – Rob Sweet started in this new role on July 9th. He is doing a great job and the “to do list” is very long. The Recreation Commission has met with him twice already as a group. They have selected a website to use for programming and registration “My Rec”. \$3,000.00 was budgeted and the bid came in at \$3,295.00. They are looking for authorization to get this rolling before fall sports signs ups are due. Motion by Josh LaRocque to approve My Rec. for the Recreation Commission and Parks & Recreation Director and authorize Shelley Laroche to sign the contract. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED**. New programming has started, including cornhole tournaments and archery. Current hours for Rob Sweet are Monday – Friday 9am – 5pm. This will be changing in early August to accommodate other programs that we are offering. Josh would like some weed whacking to be done around the arena facility if Rob has time.
- **Fixed Asset Inventory** – This has involved a lot of research and the help of a lot from community members. All info associated with vehicles and properties is done, just a few more tough issues to tackle before Sullivan and Powers will come back. There is no deadline, but this allows us to meet the federal government accounting standards and open up opportunities for federal grants.
- **Budget** – A few invoices are still coming in from last fiscal year. All departments ended the year very well and within budget – great job!

E. Town Clerk Updates – Wendi Dusablon

- **Minutes** – Motion by Steve LaFar to approve the minutes from June 21, 2018, as written. The motion was seconded by Josh LaRocque – **APPROVED**. Bruce Butler abstained from the vote, as he was not present on June 21st.
- **State Primary Election** – Tuesday, August 14, 2018 from 7am – 7pm at Highgate Elementary School. Absentee ballots are available now, please contact Wendi @ 868-5002 or wdusablon@highgatevt.org.
- **Summer Sounds Concerts** – There are plenty of concerts left this season, Sundays in the Municipal Park @ 7pm and they are free – July 22, July 29, August 12, August 19, August 26. The weather has been fabulous so far!
- **Dog License Update** – As of today we have licensed 856 dogs in Highgate for 2018. We have just four dog owners left to come in and take care of this before the

year can be closed. The deadline was April 1st, as it is every year. A third round of municipal fines went out in mid- July @ \$100.00 per dog. Some people are very slow learners. Vonnie will continue to work on this so we can close the year.

- **Land Records Preservation Project** – Back in March we talked about sending out eleven volumes (#17 - #27) from our land records to be restored. They books were picked up in early April and just returned to the vault this week. They look amazing. The covers and bindings are new and the pages have been restored so they are no longer faded and difficult to read. It was a very expensive project and put a large dent in the preservation account, but much needed. We will schedule more preservation work as the account is built back up from recording fees.

F. Administrator Items – Heidi Britch-Valenta

- **Recreation Grant** – Motion by Steve LaFar to apply for this grant for \$20,000.00 that has a 50% match. The motion was seconded by Josh LaRocque – **APPROVED**. This will be used for the 24' x 36' storage building at the arena location to be shared by Parks & Recreation, Little League and MAHA. We already have \$10,000.00 in the CIP and this year another \$8,000.00 is being requested to be added to the CIP. The building will have three overhead doors, one man door, no heat just electrical and the potential for a water line. It was noted that Parks & Recreation should occupy the largest portion of the facility. This will be on a slab with crushed stone for a base. Henry Rainville just bid on one similar to what is being described here and it came in right around \$30,000.00. The match on this grant is a cash match, not in-kind.
- **Pacif Grant** – Randy is not here, but has spoken with Jason at MEI and we got a new quote that covers seven cameras, 1 exterior camera, switch, locking cabinet, cable and hardware for just under \$10,000.00. For a new fob system to serve HVFD that would be another \$750.00 and \$5.00 per fob. We also had another company come in for a comparison bid. The MEI bid can be integrated with the arena and controlled from here. Cameras are needed here for a variety of reasons; to protect our assets and help keep us safe. Earlier this year someone did get into the PWD side of the building and was able to access the office area through another door. We are all connected (highway, fire department, offices) so it's important to lock doors and protect what we have by investing in cameras. This has been discussed for a long time. This went out to bid a few years ago. There was discussion on how long the system will house information – Heidi believes up to one month, but is not certain. Motion by Josh LaRocque to approve the purchase of the camera system with this grant and we already have the rest of the money in the budget. The motion was seconded by Steve LaFar – **APPROVED**.
- **Dam Replacement** – This is in progress now and is on track to be complete by mid-August. The old bladder was donated to farmers to be used for cow matting.
- **Dehumidifier** – Ty gave an update on this. The gas line was bored and pulled through. He met with the subcontractor through Preferred Mechanical this week. Alpha was there today and will be back tomorrow to start the hard wiring. Ty received an email from John Meade stating if all the stars align the new unit will be starting up on September 3rd. Shelley noted that insurance has paid us already, so the funds are in hand.
- **Road Name Approvals** – Motion by Josh LaRocque to approve the roads names DESO DRIVE (off Lamkin Street) and MAPLE LANE (off Darlene Drive), both as private roads in the Town of Highgate. The motion was seconded by Steve LaFar – **APPROVED**. Josh signed both forms as road commissioner.

G. Selectboard Items

- **911 Road Naming Ordinance** – The copy we have from a previous Selectboard is not dated or signed. Heidi will put this on the next agenda for the board's approval and signatures. This will be **TABLED** until August 2nd.
- **Casella WW Permit** – This was previously approved on June 21st. The board signed it at this meeting.
- **Library Updates** – HLCC has hired two temporary employees to help out through the summer months. The trustees are very excited about the new staff members. They are reviewing applications now for the head librarian / director position.
- **Public Works Director** – Applications for the PWD are due by Friday, July 27 @ 4:30pm. The board will be discussing how to move forward with hiring a part time winter employee. Josh thanked Pat Loyer for his service to the town and wished him the best.
- **Flooding Follow Up** – There will be a meeting in Swanton at the Village Complex on July 26th @ 5:30pm. This is an after action review meeting from the flooding in January.
- **Traffic Counters** – There are various roads in Highgate that have traffic counters run across them. Heidi inquired and it is part of a state wide program done on a regular basis.
- **ACT46** – There was a meeting held in Newark VT on July 18th @ 9am. Many people simply can't make a meeting at that time or that far away, but many people also did make the trip to voice their concerns and frustration with the State Board of Education. We will know in October for sure, but they are trying to force a merger of our district, even after all the towns in our district voted against it. Franklin is exploring the possibility of selling their school back to the town and opening a private facility to educate their students. If that happens, the vote in our SU will be four from Swanton and two from Highgate. Richard Flint feels that Highgate would have the same support as Franklin if we decided to go in that same direction. Steve LaFar and Bruce Butler were present in Newark. Steve feels the state doesn't care and their minds are made up. There are three more meetings scheduled, all are far away from Highgate. Ty feels this merger will be a failure and the children will suffer from it. It is disappointing that the Department of Education referred to our individual town votes as "town sentiments". Sharon strongly advised everyone to contact their school boards, representatives and the State Board of Education. If there is a merger, Highgate taxpayers will be taking on debt from other towns and our assets become everyone's assets. There was further discussion on our school selling the property back to the town for \$1.00 with the commitment that children will continue to be educated on that property. It would be a shame to develop the Machia property and have the adjoining property sold out from underneath us. Ty commented on the articles of agreement with regard to closing schools. Henry asked the Selectboard to connect with the School Board and advertise a joint meeting. If it is well publicized there should be a good turnout. Richard Flint suggested getting ahold of the ACT46 committee as part of this process. Josh would like to get together with the school board sooner than later and get this conversation moving forward. It was also noted that closing small schools throughout the state is going to negatively impact the economy in the affected towns.

H. Fire Department Update – Joe Depatie, Chief

HVFD recently put \$1,500.00 into Engine #1 with regard to the transfer drive and water getting into the case. A while back HVFD purchased extrication tools from Swanton.

They were recently installed on Engine #2 and the department is being trained on using them. There is classroom training as well as hands on training with these tools. Water polo with Franklin was Sunday, July 8th. It was a lot of fun for both departments and was followed by a BBQ in the town park. Eric Chevalier had questions about parking in front of dry hydrants. He travels Route 7 often and the Rock River dry hydrant is not accessible a lot of the time. There was discussion on a possible ordinance. HVFD is currently working on two proposals for dry hydrants on private property. Ty had questions about the State Fire Convention in St. Albans this weekend. All muster team events were cancelled. The parade will be held on Sunday, July 22nd.

I. Upcoming Events

August 2-5		Franklin County Field Days
Aug. 2	7pm	Selectboard Mtg.
Aug. 9	6pm	DRB Mtg. – CANCELLED
Aug. 14	7am – 7pm	State Primary Election @ Highgate Elementary School

J. Executive Session

Motion by Sharon Bousquet to enter into executive session @ 8:47pm with Joe Depatie, Fire Chief, and Heidi Britch-Valenta, Town Administrator, to discuss contracts, personnel and legal, where premature general public knowledge would place the town and the individuals involved at a substantial disadvantage. The motion was seconded by Steve LaFar – **APPROVED**.

Motion by Josh LaRocque to exit executive session @ 10:35pm. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED**.

Motion by Josh LaRocque to instruct Ed Adrian, Town Attorney, to approach the court in the Elwood case with a request to be allowed to own the Elwood property on Lamkin Street with no restrictions on the sale price or end product because it will never sell for what the town has invested in remediating the health hazard. The motion was seconded by Steve LaFar – **APPROVED**.

K. Adjournment

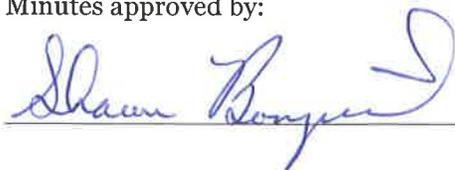
Motion by Josh LaRocque to adjourn the meeting @ 10:40pm. The motion was seconded by Steve LaFar – **APPROVED**.

Minutes respectfully submitted by:



Wendi Dusablon – Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk

Minutes approved by:



Sharon Bousquet - Chair, Highgate Selectboard

