

# TOWN OF HIGHGATE

## Selectboard

December 18, 2014 @ 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 Jeff Towle, Chair @ 7:02pm, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Highgate Selectboard Members-** Jeff Towle, Chair; Andy King, Vice-Chair; Diana O'Hara; Chris Yates; Luke Choiniere

**Highgate Office Staff** – Wendi Dusablon - Town Clerk; Heidi Britch-Valenta – Town Admin; Tom Racine – Town Treasurer

**Public / Other** – Ben Lowell (Constable), Vonnie Lamotte, Richard Trombley, Merry Souza and Richard Souza

#### **B. Public Comments**

Vonnie Lamotte is a resident of Highgate and is interested in being considered for the ACO position for the upcoming year or helping out. She will write a letter of interest also to present to the board, but wanted to be here tonight to introduce herself and express interest to the board. Luke asked her if she had any experience and what is motivating her. Vonnie stated she loves animals and she has rescued, fostered and re-homed animals. She is a firm believer that if people are not licensing their animals they are not properly taking care of them. She has been interested in the position for some time and has several dogs of her own. Andy thanked her for being here and expressing interest in the ACO position.

Rick Trombley is here on behalf of the PC and DRB to give the board a heads up. There are eight people (combined) on the PC and DRB boards, some people serve on both boards. They are interested in requesting a raise in their stipend, which is currently \$15.00 per meeting. Someone serving on both boards would have a maximum of 24 meetings per year, plus some site visits are added, depending on the situation. They will be submitting a letter to the Selectboard with an amount they are looking for.

#### **C. Traffic Ordinance Amendment B-25 weight restriction**

Heidi put this back on the agenda as another opportunity for people to comment. Letters were sent to property owners that would be affected by this change and none of them are here tonight or have contacted the office. This was also warned in the paper, posted online and around town as well as the mailing to property owners. January 20<sup>th</sup> will be the end of the 60-day appeal period on this amendment.

#### **D. Highway Department – Steve Ploof**

Steve Ploof was not present at this meeting.

#### **E. Town Treasurer – Tom Racine**

##### **1. Pay bills**

Jeff asked about refund payments on property taxes. Most are due to duplicate payments where escrow paid the second bill as well as the property owner. Tom suggests that if we are in this situation again with two tax billings, it would be worth a conversation to borrow the money and wait for the budget to pass, therefore having only one billing. The second billing was confusing and very labor intensive. Tom booked the

invoice from Clarks that was faxed over today for the repair of the International. It is considerably more than the first bill that was presented to us, as the first one did not include any labor. Tony apologized for the confusion. Andy said it is appropriate to pay Clark's because they did us a good service. As far as the disservice provided to us by J&B, we can discuss that in executive session as a potential legal matter.

## **2. Misc. from Tom**

- The second due date for tax collection has passed. The total billed for over \$5.9 million and we collected just under \$5.7 million. There is an outstanding delinquent balance of \$231,000.00, which is 4%. Collection was strong at 96%.
- The Selectboard members were all ok with Tom moving the transfer station funds to the CIP fund.
- Budgeting issues will wait until the end of this meeting.
- Tom asked the board to review the delinquent collection policy. The delinquent collector is not required to get Selectboard approval, but town counsel feels it's a good idea if they approve the policy. It was reviewed by Brian Monahan and he had some recommendations. Andy asked if this was available to read online. Tom will make it available on line. Anyone who has delinquencies receives a copy of the policy as well as a copy of or a link to abatement information. Seconded delinquent tax notices will be going out tomorrow, 12/19/14. Motion by Chris Yates to accept the delinquent tax collection policy. Motion was seconded by Jeff Towle – **APPROVED.**
- Tom spoke to Chief Stell in Swanton and also has an e mail in to Judy Dunn regarding dispatch fees. Tom is awaiting a response. This will also be further discussed during budgeting.

## **F. Town Clerk – Wendi Dusablon**

### **1. Minutes**

Motion by Andy King to accept the minutes from December 4, 2014 as corrected. Motion was seconded by Chris Yates – **APPROVED.**

Motion by Chris Yates to accept the minutes from December 16, 2014 as corrected. Motion was seconded by Jeff Towle – **APPROVED.**

### **2. Dog licenses**

Dog licenses for 2015 will be available starting on Friday, January 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Prices were set at the last meeting as:

<i>On or before April 1<sup>st</sup></i>	<i>spay/neutered \$12</i>	<i>not spay/neutered \$16</i>
<i>After April 1<sup>st</sup></i>	<i>spay/neutered \$18</i>	<i>not spay/neutered \$22</i>

## **G. Town Administrator – Heidi Britch-Valenta**

### **1. Resolution for ADA grant**

The board did accept this resolution at another warned public hearing this week. There will be a required public hearing for this on January 8<sup>th</sup>.

### **2. Landfill custodial care permit**

We have received notification from the Agency of Natural Resources that we have moved from post closure care of the capped landfill to custodial care. We have maintained this for 20 years. Moving to custodial care will save the town \$5,000.00 - \$8,000.00 per year. Highgate is the first town in VT that has been able to submit the application and be approved. There are some conditions associated with this that include; 1) The town is required to close all the monitoring wells. The highway department can do this by cutting them off and filling them with concrete. 2) There is a requirement to continue mowing the cap at least annually and to make sure there is no sinking of the shape 3) Corrective action is necessary and anticipated to stabilize the side slopes of the landfill. Heidi noted that we are still waiting to hear on the grant funding from FEMA with regard to this. The stability of this site is

critical to the stability of the landfill. 4) We will have to recertify in 2021. At this time they will come out and see if the situation is still ok and issue an extension. This is all very good news for us.

### 3. Misc. from Heidi

- The conservation project with VT Land Trust is ready to move to closing. This has been a long process.
- The requirement for annual filing of weight restrictions is coming due. Chris asked if this was regarding seasonal restrictions or permanent restrictions. We have 5-7 dirt roads that are temporarily weight restricted in the spring. Heidi noted the paperwork asks for a start date and end date so it's prudent to file them if you want to enforce it. Heidi will follow up with Steve Ploof.
- Heidi has received a plan for the waiver of setback at the Laroche property located on St. Armand Road. The site is flagged, but not all board members have had a chance to see it. This will be moved to the next agenda on January 8<sup>th</sup>.
- Jeff asked if our legislators have been in contact with us and can assist with any of the issues we are facing. Heidi noted that Steve Beyor stops in regularly and is currently seeing what he can find out with regard to dispatch fees. Chris noted that the legislature is back in session on January 7<sup>th</sup> and our next meeting is January 8<sup>th</sup>.
- There are some miscellaneous things in the Selectboard packets that they can look at, including the FCSO monthly report, an invite to the police chief's luncheon and a solid waste management workshop.
- Chris asked if we have heard anything back from the school on the education funding topic. They met on December 11<sup>th</sup>. No, we have not heard anything.

## H. Selectboard items

### 1. Zoning bylaws

Rick was here for this discussion. Jeff has not completed all the reading and Andy is about ¾ through. The board would like to extend this discussion to the January 8<sup>th</sup> meeting to give everyone a chance to complete the reading.

### 2. Appropriations list

Tom supplied a list of yearly appropriations for the board. There were some recommendations about moving some of the appropriations to different parts of the budget such as All Arts Council to Recreation or Culture, Little League to Recreation and holiday decorations to Parks. VLCT recently put out a policy on this, which raises some questions. Tom does not know what the process would be if we were looking to reduce an amount, but he will find out. Andy feels that given the depth of the list, it would be worth taking the time to look at the list. Chris noted that other towns are at 1-2% appropriations, and we are upwards of 4%. We do not require people to ask every year. Historically they petition once and send a follow up request letter each year. Chris added that it would be helpful if in their requests they noted how their request ties in with the town of Highgate. Jeff would be interested in seeing the VLCT policy.

### 3. Update from Ben Lowell - Constable

Ben has no pressing issues. He has noted an increased activity with snowmobiles. He is looking for clarity on the VAST contract and state statutes. He has a ride along with FCSO this weekend and is inquiring about DUI checkpoints during the holiday season and has offered his assistance with that as well.

### 4. Misc. Selectboard items

- MVU Substance Free Graduation Celebration – class of 2015 – has sent in a request for town support again this year. Motion by Jeff Towle to support them in the amount of \$250.00, the same amount as last year. Motion was seconded by Andy King – **APPROVED**.

- Jeff noted that Steve Ploof is not here, but they did meet with the highway department on December 17<sup>th</sup> for reviews. The highway crew did recommend some items that would make the garage more efficient. One was a low profile oil pan with wheels that had a pump. Currently they are using a cut off 55 gallon barrel. Chris has researched them and read the reviews. They are available in the \$300.00-\$400.00 range. Motion by Jeff Towle to have Steve Ploof purchase the 110 version of this at a cost not to exceed \$400.00. Motion was seconded by Andy King – **APPROVED**. Andy agrees this would be a good purchase. Steve can reach out to Chris if he needs the data on what he found or has questions on the reviews that Chris read. Another item the highway crew recommended is a flat bottom carbide blade for the grader. This will do a better job with less wear and tear. Steve Ploof will need to research the cost further.
- Chris noted that during reviews they discussed a winter checklist for duties that need to be accomplished around town and who will be assigned to do them (clearing snow at the school, park & ride, arena, around dry hydrants, etc). All agreed this is a good idea to stay organized on what needs to be done and by whom.
- Heidi noted that the gentleman who will be doing the masonry work in the spring has asked for the door to be replaced first. The company that installed the door will be stopping by tomorrow. Henry Rainville previously raised the question if we even need that door, or does it make more sense to block it off and re-brick the whole thing. The highway crew does not use that door. We are checking with Chris Boyd to see if that is a fire exit or if it matters.
- The RFP has been issued for construction manager services at the arena. We have so far received 6 responses from people interested in submitting a proposal. The deadline for submission is January 5<sup>th</sup>.

**I. Upcoming Events**

Jan. 8	7pm	Selectboard Mtg.
Jan. 15	6pm	DRB Mtg.
Jan. 20	6pm	PC Mtg.

**J. Executive Session**

Motion by Jeff Towle to enter into executive session @ 7:45pm for a personnel issue and a possible legal issue. Motion was seconded by Andy King – **APPROVED**.

Motion by Jeff Towle to exit executive session @ 9:58pm. Motion was seconded by Chris Yates – **APPROVED**.

**K. Adjournment**

Motion by Chris Yates to adjourn the meeting @ 10:00pm. Motion was seconded by Jeff Towle – **APPROVED**.

Respectfully submitted by:

\_\_\_\_\_ Wendi Dusablon, Highgate Town Clerk

Minutes approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_ Jeff Towle, Chair - Highgate Selectboard