

TOWN OF HIGHGATE
Selectboard Meeting
Thursday, May 2, 2024 @ 6:00pm
Approved Minutes

NOTE: All actions taken are unanimous unless otherwise stated

ZOOM LINK: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81037183467>

A. Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting was called to order by Vern Brosky III, Chair, at 6:00pm, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. **This meeting was a hybrid of in-person and Zoom video.** Participants were in-person unless otherwise noted.

Highgate Selectboard Members –Vern Brosky III, Chair; Merry Souza, Vice Chair; Kyle Lothian (via Zoom); Ben Lowell; Richard Flint (arrived @ 7:10pm)

Highgate Office Staff – Wendi Dusablon, Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk; Sharon Bousquet, Town Administrator; Shelley Laroche, Treasurer & DTC

Public – Fernand Gagne; Kevin Spears; Teresa LaBelle; Jeff LaBelle; Alice S. Cota; Keith Ploof; Tyler B. Johnson; Guy Machia; Ty Choiniere; Lisa Cornforth; Brad Cornforth; Gary Sturgeon

B. Public Comments

- Sue Cota has nothing to report, other than she wanted to know when her road (Monument Road) would be fixed before winter.
- Fernand Gagne was present for an update on the relocation efforts for Franklin County Field Days. They have possibly found a location right here in Highgate on Gore Road (Cassidy Property). They have made an offer and hope to move forward, but this is not a done deal by any means. Fernand stated that Dick Cassidy would be thrilled to have FCFD operating on his property. Neighbors have been contacted by the FCFD committee members. The biggest concern has been theft and FCFD has agreed that fencing and cameras will be needed. There is a well on site already that yields approximately 35 gallons per minute, so that is plenty of water. FCFD does not pay property taxes so that would come off the grand list if this all works out. VT Electric Coop has agreed that parking can take place on their property, which neighbors the parcel(s) being looked at. Vern asked about the existing building and if those will be moved or rebuilt. Kevin Spears asked if the property includes the former Bushey house (now L'Esperance). No, it does not. The FCFD committee hopes to include the Cassidy name in the new potential location. Shelley asked about the events like tractor pulls and truck pulls. Fernand pointed out that many Vermont fairs happen right in the center of town (Malone / Essex / Rutland) and that FCFD events only last four days during the summer, typically in early August. There were more questions and comments, including the entrance to FCFD coming off VT Route 78 instead of Gore Road. Wendi let everyone know that this is not a warned discussion, that Fernand wanted to just give the town a heads up on what was happening. There will be a longer conversation coming up as a warned agenda item and the Selectboard will be sure to have Fernand and FCFD come back to continue and give us another update. The community will want to weigh in as well.
- Jeff and Teresa LaBelle were present to discuss their new food truck. They read the Highgate ordinance for vendors, which was just redone in 2021. We have a cost per day, vs. a cost for the year, and they feel we have too many restrictions and would like it to be amended. They plan to donate \$1.00 per plate sold to HVFD. Jeff gave more feedback on our ordinance compared to other towns, noting that Swanton is working on a rewrite. They want to operate here in Highgate and the donation to HVFD is to honor their son, Logan. Their plan is to serve home cooked meals and sell it by the plate. They are business owners already so

would not be operating this truck full time. They have a generator and can also operate in the winter months. They are looking for a blanket permit to cover the calendar year to set up around town, and they are ready now. Vern asked Jeff and Teresa to submit their proposed changes for the ordinance to Sharon. The state permitting timeline was also discussed. If the ordinance is adjusted that would involve a public hearing(s) as part of that process.

- Guy Machia and Tyler Johnson, residents of McLaughlin Drive, were present. They, as well as other neighbors, have been experiencing issues with explosions happening across Route 78 with a new neighbor. Jeff and Teresa LaBelle confirmed this, as they also live on McLaughlin Drive. The houses shake, to the point that they thought windows would break. VSP was called and said they can't do much, because they are not using an illegal product. They believe the new neighbor is using Tannerite and wondered if a noise ordinance in Highgate would help them with the issues. Guy has been in touch with the company that makes it to understand how it works and what it is designed for. The neighbor does not have the space to properly use Tannerite as it is designed to be used. It is for long range target practice, and that is a small lot. The neighbor is shooting off the bank over the top of the river. Vern called a contact at ATF and Tannerite is legal when used in a legal way. Vern also contacted SAPD and our town attorney. Vern cited the state statute for noise. Ben Lowell found something in the state statute which he read aloud, which defines Tannerite as fireworks. Guy contacted town officials prior to being here tonight and our fire chief told him that they do not give out fireworks permits. Guy will be contacting the state fire marshall next. We do have one that lives locally, but if you call they will assign you to someone. Kyle and Vern are more than happy to speak with this person also and see if that will help the situation.
- Ty Choiniere said it was brought to his attention that on the far end of Lamkin Street on that last corner that we are close to losing the road and the mailboxes are not stable. We will have Nick look at this next week.

C. Public Hearing – Proposed Zoning Fee Changes

We have not had an update to our zoning fee schedule since June 2016. Vern read through the list and proposed fee structure. There were no questions or comments on this. A copy of the proposed fees is attached to the end of these minutes.

D. Public Hearing – ATV Ordinance Change

We have opened certain roads in town to VASA beginning this month. We will also be looking at our ordinance in June to possibly open all our roads. Ty would like us to look at Swanton's ordinance. He feels we are putting too much of the rule making in the hands of VASA and not the town. He also noted adding hours of operation should be considered, as well as defining "operator" and more. Swanton's ordinance was updated in June 2022. There was discussion on having the VASA decal and why that is important. It provides proof of registration and insurance as well as other important things. The VASA registration is \$75.00 per year and well worth it. Shelley added a comment that her brother lives along the rail trail and there has been a lot of ATV activity there, to the point that his kids are not safe in their own yard. We do not yet have all our roads open, and it's important that we hear from our residents on this topic. Please reach out or attend a meeting / hearing as part of this process.

E. Cemetery Updates – Kevin Spears

Kevin Spears was present, as well as Keith Ploof – both are Cemetery Commissioners. Kevin gave an update on the fence project at the Highgate Center Cemetery behind the town offices. Even with the mild winter we had there is quite a bit of damage this year so they will be working on repairs with the budget they have. They are brainstorming ways to widen the entrance to the East Highgate Cemetery on Hanna Road. Kevin will connect with Richard Flint on this, who had not yet arrived to this meeting. The raven issue in East Highgate continues to be an issue, but not as bad as in the past due to previous measures taken.

F. Town Treasurer – Shelley Laroche

- Motion by Merry Souza to sign and accept the check warrants. The motion was seconded by Ben Lowell – **APPROVED**.
- We have received an updated uniform agreement from CINTAS. Pricing has remained the same for uniforms as well as the runners (rugs). Shelley will talk to Jes and Christian at the recreation facility about uniforms. Motion by Merry Souza for Shelley Laroche to sign the CINTAS agreement for five years on behalf of the town of Highgate. The motion was seconded by Ben Lowell – **APPROVED**.
- The delinquent tax balance is \$69,735.20 and the tax sale list is shrinking. Most accounts are on a payment plan.
- The fiscal year is quickly coming to an end (June 30) and it will be audit season before we know it.

G. Town Clerk – Wendi Dusablon

- Motion by Merry Souza to approve the minutes from April 18, 2024, as written. The motion was seconded by Ben Lowell – **APPROVED**.
- Tuesday, May 7th we will have the MVU Student Government class here as part of their curriculum.
- Dog licensing is moving along slowly – at this point folks are over a month late. Fees are now \$22 or \$26 per dog. We have licensed 760 dogs as of end of business today. Final notices went out today and Shelby will issue fines after May 23rd. This is a busy election year, and we need to wrap up dogs ASAP.
- Green Up Day is this weekend, May 4th. We had 300 bags and have distributed most of them, we have about 30 available. They will be under cover at the drop box location for the weekend. Full bags can be left along the roadside for pick up on May 6th or brought to the public works department. Thank you for Greening Up Highgate 😊.
- The MVSD school budget revote was held on Tuesday, April 30th at Highgate Arena. Highgate sent 438 ballots down to Swanton to be co-mingled and tabulated at the end of the night. Thank you to John Ferland and Bruce Gagne for delivering our ballots safely and helping with the process (again). **The budget failed: 594 YES to 895 NO. The second article about borrowing in anticipation of taxes also failed: 743 YES to 744 NO (failed by one vote).** The school board will be meeting soon (meeting originally scheduled for 5/7 has since been canceled). Once a third round of voting is set it will be widely advertised. Voter turnout was low in our district – VERY LOW INFACIT. Wendi and Shelley feel that ballots sent to all active registered voters would help definitely increase participation, but all three towns would need to be onboard with that decision. It is a lot of work, but we are willing to do it if that is decided. Stay tuned or more info on MVSD.
- Painting in the meeting room and hallway begins on May 11th so the next Selectboard meeting on May 16th will need to be held at the arena, which has been reserved.

H. Town Administrator – Sharon Bousquet

- Sharon and Keith gave an update on Memorial Day events, Monday, May 27th. HVFD BBQ starts at 11am / \$12 per person, parade starts at noon (line up 11:15am) at Highgate Arena. Decorated bike contest for kids up to age 15. No politicians in the parade. Sue Cota will have the bake sale again this year. Donated baked goods can be dropped off to Sue beginning at 8:30am in the park on Memorial Day. Proceeds from the bake sale go towards upgrades to the memorial in the park (lighting, as an example).
- Father / Daughter dance @ Highgate Arena on June 8th. Contact Highgate Recreation for more info or sign up online!
- The recreation department would like to purchase new playground equipment from Willy Goat Playgrounds. The Brooks Towers Play System will cost \$32,500.00 and they would like to use their ARPA funds. Our insurance company said what we have there now is not commercial grade. Our current structure is used a lot and was generously donated by the

Bushey family. The recreation department would also like to place a plaque on it in memory of Mr. Bushey. Motion by Merry Souza to approve this purchase with ARPA funds. The motion was seconded by Ben Lowell – **APPROVED**.

- We applied for a MERP mini grant for the recreation department which we have received, in the amount of \$4,000.00, to be used towards energy efficiency at the arena. This will be used to get an architect to finish the plans that the recreation commission has already started. Motion by Ben Lowell to accept this MERP mini grant. The motion was seconded by Merry Souza – **APPROVED**. Vern signed the document.
- A request was made for a speed limit sign on Durkee Road at the hill by Steve Machia's house. Motion by Merry Souza to drop the speed limit to 35mph in this area of Durkee Road, closest to the river, pending Sharon looking into if a speed study if needed. The motion was seconded by Kyle Lothian – **APPROVED**.
- ARA bid opening for the archeological assessment at 1030 Monument Road is being put off for now. Because of the sensitive site, the Abenaki council has contacted Sharon with concerns about digging. Sharon reached out to the state, and they will be coming up to meet with Sharon and the Abenaki council to look at the site and what needs to be done. 1030 Monument Road is owned by Randy Machia and is going through the FEMA home buyout process due to flooding. The state may do the work themselves and pay for it, so we will wait and see.
- VCMP Pole Barn – we don't have the data for this yet.
- We applied for additional grant funding: FEMA 2023 flood slide hazardous mitigation grant and FEMA hazard mitigation grant for Machia Road. We are short on money for the Machia Road project and if we decide we need to move the road the funds are available.
- We had a previous discussion on 4/18 concerning the zoning bylaw rewrite and not being able to apply for other permits when previous conditions have not been met. Our attorney's opinion was not to do that and to instead take legal action by going to court. Motion by Merry Souza to rescind the previous motion / decision from 4/18/24 as stated above. The motion was seconded by Ben Lowell – **APPROVED**.
- The NW Rail Trail Council and VTrans are passing along this message: To whomever is picking up scrap metal and other items and bringing them up onto the trail, please stop. It is believed that this person is trying to do a good deed, but VTrans is getting upset. The NW Rail Trail Council is also trying to connect with Ty as our new rep. Ty got in touch with them yesterday.
- We have a public water supply (well) at the arena and Sharon received an email on the former town administrator's email account that we are in violation. The contact information needs to be updated. Butch Brosseau used to be the contact person and our certified tester. We are not in violation as far as testing, but we need to get the name change completed to be fully compliant. Nick Scott has always gone with Butch. Vern signed the document.
- Sharon shared photos of the transfer station project which is in full swing and will be ongoing for the summer.
- Ty asked about the orange flags at the Village Core property. That is part of the survey process with Barnard & Gervais. Vern asked about Cathedral Square and how that is going. They are applying for funding and moving along.
- Bids for the airport infrastructure project are due tomorrow, May 3rd by 1pm, so we will know what that project will cost us very soon.

I. Selectboard Items

- Richard Flint had arrived at 7:10pm. Kevin Spears had a few things cemetery related to go over with Richard from the earlier conversation.
- Merry asked about the library and how the hiring process was going for the HLCC Director. The trustees are putting it back out for applications, it was just posted again today, with applications due by May 16th. They were unsuccessful in finding the right person during the

first round. Sarah is helping out during the transition and the library hours are being amended starting May 6th. The asbestos issue at the library has also been taken care of.

- Vern had a PSA about the school budget and taxes: Participate in the school board meetings, in person or via Zoom, educate yourself, and definitely vote!

Motion by Ben Lowell to exit the regular Selectboard meeting @ 7:20pm. The motion was seconded by Merry Souza – **APPROVED**.

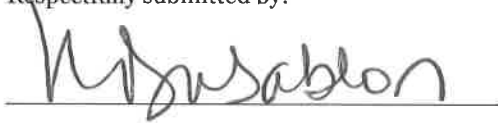
J. Executive Session

Motion by Vern Brosky III to enter into executive session @ 7:20pm with Sharon Bousquet, Kevin Spears, Brad & Lisa Cornforth, and Gary Sturgeon to discuss contracts, legal, and personnel, 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 @ 9:08pm. The motion was seconded by Kyle Lothian – **APPROVED**.

K. Adjournment

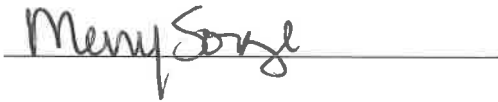
Motion by Richard Flint to adjourn the meeting @ 9:08pm. The motion was seconded by Kyle Lothian – **APPROVED**.

Respectfully submitted by:



Wendi Dusablon
Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk

Minutes Approved by:



Merry Souza
Selectboard Vice-Chair

TOWN OF HIGHGATE
Notice of Public Hearing

May 2, 2024 at 6pm

ALL TERRAIN VEHICLE AND SNOWMOBILE ORDINANCE CHANGE

The following shall be added to the current ordinance adopted June 5, 2018:

- **Beginning May 15, 2024; VASA Members ONLY, with valid Trail Access Decals and valid registrations shall be allowed the use of the following trail on Highgate Public Roadways:**

Swanton Town Line on the Frontage Road right on Carter Hill Road to Campagna Road to right onto St. Armand Road only to Parent Road on the left. Parent Road left onto Tarte Road all the way to Gore Road turning right and immediately left onto Buck Road until the Franklin Town Line. Fuel Access will be granted on St. Armand Road, from Parent Road to Village Center and back.

This trail use requires helmet use and is restricted to VASA posted speed limits. This trail allows the legal traffic of ATV riders to continue their rides in other parts of the State; but use will be enforced by VASA and the Town of Highgate and any service that the Town or VASA contracts with or allows Municipal fines from.

VASA membership – see vtvasa.org

Town of Highgate
Public Hearing Notice
Selectboard Mtg, May 2, 2024 at 6pm
Municipal Building

Proposed Zoning Fee Changes

See Attached

**Questions, Comments & Concerns can be
addressed at the Public Hearing**

Town of Highgate

Zoning Fee Schedule -- Proposed May 2024

Previous Amendment was June 2016

<u>Residential:</u>	<u>Now</u>
Additions and accessory structures, less than 500 sq ft	\$75.00
Additions and accessory structures, more than 500 sq ft	\$150.00
New or Replacement House or Mobile Home (under 1000sqft)	\$ 200.00 + \$.20 sqf
New or Replacement House or Mobile Home (over 1000sqft)	\$200.00 + \$.20sqft
Home Occupation & Sign	\$80.00
Change of Use	\$80.00
ADA Access Ramp Permit	N/C
Permits for Non-Profits	N/C

Proposed

Permit Fee for the replacement of a home that has been destroyed by accident or by Act of Nature may be waived up to the fee for the area of the original home – anything over original footprint is \$.20 sq ft on the overage amount of sq ft

Commercial:

Construction less than 10,000sq ft	\$400.00
Construction more than 10000sq ft	\$750.00
Signs	\$150.00

Agriculture:

In accordance with 24 VSA SS4413 "No Municipal permit for a farm structure shall be required"... "a person building a farm structure shall notify a municipality of the intention to build a farm structure, and shall abide by the setbacks approved by the Commissioner of Agriculture, Food, and Markets." Notification forms are available at the Town Office.

<u>Driveway Permit</u>	\$100.00
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Development Review Board:

Certificate of Approved Location (COAL)	\$100.00
Letter of Compliance	\$ 50.00
Conditional Use	\$200.00
Site Plan	\$200.00
Variance	\$200.00
Boundary Line Adjustment	\$300.00
Minor Subdivision (1-3 lots)	\$500.00
Major Subdivision (4-9 lots)	\$1,000.00
Major Subdivision (10 or more lots)	\$2,000.00

Recording Fees

Mylar	\$25.00
Documents, per page	\$15.00

Set by State of VT.

Create story

Annie Hartman

Missisquoi Valley S...

Kim Delor



Missisquoi Valley Sch...

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The results from our 4/30/24 budget revote are in. Unfortunately the budget did not pass.

The specific results are as follows:

Article I: Shall the voters of the Missisquoi Valley School District approve the school directors to expend \$49,744,437 which is the amount the school directors have determined to be necessary for the ensuing fiscal year?

594 Yes 895 No

Handwritten circled number: 1,489

Article II: Shall the voters of the Missisquoi Valley School District authorize the board of directors to borrow money to pay the current expenditures in anticipation of taxes pursuant to Title 16 562(9)?

743 Yes. 744 No

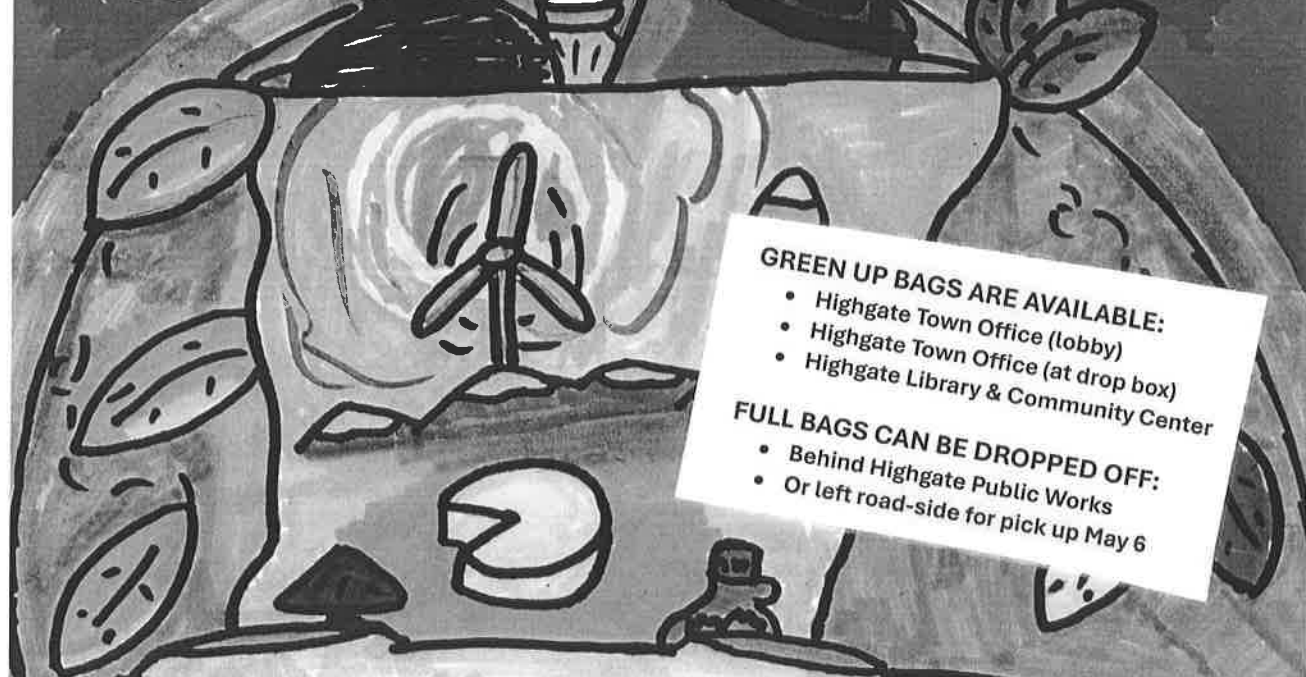
Handwritten circled number: 1,487

Thank you to everyone who has worked so hard to promote this budget. We will be going out again until we have a budget.

1

5 shares

GREEN UP DAY



GREEN UP BAGS ARE AVAILABLE:

- Highgate Town Office (lobby)
- Highgate Town Office (at drop box)
- Highgate Library & Community Center

FULL BAGS CAN BE DROPPED OFF:

- Behind Highgate Public Works
- Or left road-side for pick up May 6

Art by Adelyn O. EMS



May The Fourth Be With You!



Saturday May 4, 2024

Join our Guinness Record attempt
VT Top to Bottom



greenupvermont.org

#GWR24 #togetherwecan #greenupvt

May 27 @ noon



HIGHGATE

MEMORIAL DAY PARADE

BEST DECORATED BIKE CONTEST

For Ages 0-15

Prizes awarded for

1st Prize - \$20.00 & Ribbon

2nd Prize - \$10.00 & Ribbon

3rd Prize - \$5.00 & Ribbon

Be a part of the Parade!

Lineup @ 11:15 @ Arena

Join the community in honoring the
service of our military heroes



**Town of Highgate
Memorial Day Events
May 27, 2024**

***Fire Department BBQ Starting at 11:00am**

***Parade Line-up at 11:15am at the Arena**

***Parade Start at Noon**

***Invocation, Speech & Awards at Memorial
Immediately after Parade**

***The Highgate Manor will have Live Music
And Light Refreshments following the activities.**

All are Welcome!

