

TOWN OF HIGHGATE SELECTBOARD MEETING

Thursday, April 5, 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 @ 7:01pm followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

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

Public / Other – Craig & Amy Cowan; Lance Neveau; Alice S. Cota; Ty Choiniere; Eric & Sarah Chevalier; Richard Flint; Amy Nolan-Bouchard

B. Public Comments

- Sue Cota asked if there were any cameras in the area of the park & ride. It was brought to her attention that a car was damaged that had been left there. Sharon asked Sue to relay the information to please have this reported to FCSO so they can step up patrols in that area.
- Ty Choiniere stated there will be a seminar “Introduction to Backyard Composting” held at the Highgate Sports Arena on April 25th from 6-7:30pm. Highgate Recreation is teaming up with the NorthWest Solid Waste District and UVM to offer this for anyone who is interested. Discounted compost and food scrap bins will be available also. Contact Aaron Shepard with any questions, 524-5986 or by email ashepard@nswsd.org.

C. Animal Control Officer – Vonnie Lamotte

• Updates

Vonnie noted that licensing is going pretty well. Late notices will go out soon. She will be doing one courtesy call as well and residents with unlicensed dogs as of May 1st will be issued a municipal ticket, in addition to licensing fees.

• Nuisance Dog Hearing – 20 Meadow Lane

Vonnie gave the back story on why we are here tonight. We have received several complaints – written, verbal, email – as well as photos and video from neighbors regarding a dog at 20 Meadow Lane owned by Ron Downes. There were questions on how many dogs he owns. One dog, named Rusty, is licensed with the town for 2018. One neighbor also typed up a sequence of events over the last month noting when the dog has been loose. He chases vehicles and follows and growls at pedestrians. Mr. Downes has been issued two municipal tickets so far, \$25 and \$50. This past weekend Vonnie asked to have this situation put before the Selectboard, as it was not improving. Letters have been sent to Mr. Downes and Vonnie has visited the home. The dog does not seem aggressive, but is very skittish. A certified letter about this hearing was sent to Mr. Downes on Monday, April 2nd and Vonnie also

verbally told him about this meeting. Mr. Downes is not present for this hearing, but a few of the neighbors are. Vonnie stated they have a nice yard that is partially fenced. The dog needs to be on a lead with a run but she feels the owners are not taking her suggestions. She finds Mr. Downes to be pleasant to work with but noted his daughter has been rude and difficult through the process. The dog is not neutered, which is part of the problem and why he runs so much. Wendi has mailed Mr. Downes information on the VSnip program, which is an affordable way to spay and neuter pets. Vonnie can keep ticketing Mr. Downes but doesn't know if that will solve the problem. Randy noted that per our ordinance, upon the second written complaint the board can order the dog to be chained, confined or impounded. Mr. Neveau lives on Sandy Acres and has seen the dog on his property and doesn't appreciate having to clean up after a dog when he does not own one. The Cowan's next door on Meadow Lane were also present. She has called, emailed or stopped by the town office a few times recently. She noted that the dog(s) mostly get out when Ron and Debbie are not there. They have been neighbors for ten years and the Downes have had other dogs with no issues until now. This dog growls at them in their own driveway and at their dog as well. Craig Cowan noted that recently a dog from that property was hit by a car running up and down the road. No one wants to see any animal hurt or to cause any danger to the traveling public either. Bruce stated that per our ordinance, the dog can be ordered to be contained or we can impound it. That will become very expensive for the owner. Bruce also believes the town is well within their rights to rehome the dog if the situation does not improve. Motion by Josh LaRocque to send Mr. Downes a letter stating that the dog(s) must be chained or fenced in immediately to include an overhead run. If the dog(s) are found off the property and off a lead, they will be impounded. Mr. Downes must also register all dogs at his residence with the town within seven days of the date of the letter. If the dog(s) are impounded, fines and fees for boarding will be assessed that must be paid prior to releasing the dog(s) back into the owners care. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED**. The board will continue to follow the town's ordinance if this situation comes back before them. Amy Cowan feels badly for complaining, because she knows this is an additional expense for their neighbor. Sue Cota has a wireless system that is not in the ground and it works great – it is available locally at places like Tractor Supply. Vonnie stated she has been to the home and they already have a lead and chain for the dog. They need to use it, and chain the dog prior to opening the door so he does not get away. Vonnie and Kristy are amazing at rehoming animals if it comes to that point. Sharon thanked Vonnie for all her work with the animals in our town. She does a great job and we appreciate her for it. She always has the animals best interests at heart and during the flooding in January she was a tremendous help. **THANK YOU VONNIE!**

D. Town Treasurer Updates – Shelley Laroche

- **Check warrants** – there were no questions on the check warrants.
- **Misc.** - Motion by Randy Connelly to sign the contract with Sullivan & Powers for fixed asset inventory. The motion was seconded by Steve LaFar – **APPROVED**. This will hopefully start in May. Motion by Josh LaRocque to sign the corrected contract with Franklin County Sheriff's Office. The motion was seconded by Steve LaFar – **APPROVED**. It was noted that this is not a new contract, these are calculation errors that have been adjusted. Our current contract goes until 6/30/19 and it is a non-auto renew contract. Shelley is dealing with issues regarding the uniform contract with the Public Works Department. Our current company wants to charge us over \$7,000.00 to get out of our current contract. She is working with the

town attorney. If we can make the switch to the new company it will save us \$8,000.00 over the course of three years. Sharon asked about MPG funds (library) and if they have all been received from the state. No, we are still waiting on \$2,600.00. Sharon added that the library trustees have revised a policy with regard to emergency responders and it should be added to the town's personnel policy as well. Shelley is working with Comcast on the phone situation at the library. We only have two months of data so far, which is not enough to compare. Heating bills at the library are right on par from last year with VT Gas. There was some discussion on ways the library can save money on their heating costs.

E. Town Clerk Updates – Wendi Dusablon

1. Minutes

Motion by Bruce Butler to approve the minutes from *March 15, 2018*, as written. The motion was seconded by Steve LaFar – **APPROVED**.

2. Green-Up Day and Household Hazardous Waste Day – May 5th

Green-Up bags will be available in the coming weeks. Wendi asked for three cases this year because we ran out last year. HHWD will be held 8am – 2pm at the sand shed on Transfer Station Road. There is more information on accepted materials on the town's website and FaceBook page, or by contacting the town office, 868-5002.

3. Rabies Clinic and Dog Registration Update

The rabies clinic was held at HVFD on Saturday, March 24th. We licensed 101 dogs in two hours and vaccinated hundreds of animals. It was a very busy day. Thank you to Paws For Thought, HVFD and all the helpers – Liza, Libby, Vonnice, Sue, and anyone else that helped the day go smoothly! We have licensed 650 dogs as of today. There are 200+ animals yet to be licensed and late notices are going out in the mail tomorrow, April 6th. Municipal fines will be issued for any dogs still not licensed as of May 1st. Fees are now \$22.00 spay/neutered or \$26.00 not spay/not neutered.

4. Dog Warrant for signature

Sharon read aloud from the warrant that the board signs every year. It is the law in the State of VT to license and vaccinate your dogs. It is for everyone's protection – so please vaccinate and license your dogs with the Town of Highgate. Motion by Randy Connelly for all board members to sign the document. The motion was seconded by Josh LaRocque – **APPROVED**.

5. Vault Maintenance and Book Preservation

Joel from The Royal Group out of Rutland VT will be here on April 23rd to service the vault door and replace the old dial pad. It has not been serviced in many years (if ever) and we are starting to have issues with the dial pad. The lock will be replaced with a digital key pad. This will be paid for with computerization fees collected from recording fees. The combination has also not been changed in many years (if ever). Wendi is also working with Joe from Kofile out of Essex Junction VT on preserving some of our older land records books in the vault. Together they went through the vault and volumes 17-27 were in the most need of attention. These books will be going out to be fully restored. These funds will also be coming from recording fees (preservation). It is our responsibility to care for and restore our town's history, which is the purpose of the preservation fund. Motion by Josh LaRocque to use the preservation funds to restore the noted volumes with Kofile. The motion was seconded by Steve LaFar – **APPROVED**. It was noted that the preservation is very costly, over \$28,000.00 for the eleven volumes alone. We have plenty in the preservation account to cover this and will build the fund back up to continue preserving books as necessary. There was discussion on recording fees (set by the state) and how we break them out as a town. Currently, for every \$10.00 per page

recording fee, it is broken out \$5.00 to the general fund, \$4.00 to computerization and \$1.00 to preservation. Shelley would like to lower computerization and up the preservation amount. The board also had questions about the preservation process for the books. The time frame for them to be returned to us is 8-10 weeks and we can call them for scans of pages if needed in the meantime.

F. Administrator Items

1. AOT Grant Applications – Frontage Rd.

Jim Smith is working on a design and estimates. One is for paving on Frontage Road and the other is for sub base and ditching work. Motion by Sharon Bousquet to approve the AOT grant forms with the final signature by Josh LaRocque, who will represent the entire board. The motion was seconded by Steve LaFar –

APPROVED.

2. VCDP ADA Modifications Grant Award Conditions

We were given a notice of award but we are not signing a contract yet. We have conditions that need to be met first. Motion by Josh LaRocque to sign the anti-displacement relocation plan form. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED.** Motion by Josh LaRocque to sign the municipal policies and codes form. The motion was seconded by Steve LaFar – **APPROVED.** The town has to contribute \$25,000.00 which is in the CIP. Heidi can claim up to \$7,200.00 for administrative costs as in-kind. Motion by Josh LaRocque to sign the form stating that we have the funds and are ready to move forward. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED.** An environmental assessment on the town building needs to be done as well. The most favorable bid was with KAS and they are prepared to start. Motion by Randy Connelly to sign the contract with KAS for \$2,125.00. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED.** Bruce asked about the ADA timeline. After the assessment we should have a contract in a short amount of time. We have to hire a clerk of the works and put it out to bid for construction. We already have the design from Laz Scangas.

3. Roof Repair Bids

We have two bids from R&A Enterprises and VT Copper dba: Slate Affair. There was a great deal of discussion on these bids. R&A – *the undersigned proposes to furnish all labor, materials and equipment as necessary for the selected roof repairs at the Highgate Municipal Office, 2996 VT Route 78 in Highgate Vermont in accordance with plans and specifications prepared by Arnold & Scangas Architects dated Sept. 2017 for the lump sum of \$35,500.00.* *VT Copper Inc – Repair as spec in the bid documents \$27,500.00; Replacement of roof in the valley areas only, including valleys and metal panels attached to the valleys. Also included is replacement to cupola details \$90,000.00; Replacement of all roofing and cupola details \$170,000.00.* R&A noted that when they went up on the roof there was a lot of pitting and it should also be painted or will start to rust. R&A will be doing the school roof in August. Josh had questions on the specs of the project and comparing apples to apples. Heidi shared the plans that were given to both firms. Bruce would be in favor of sealing the roof and start to plan for a full replacement of it, if necessary. He also feels these prices are too high. Sharon feels the school got a better deal than what the town is being quoted and she agrees with Josh about having an apples to apples comparison. *(Josh LaRocque exited the meeting @ 8:21pm).* Heidi will contact R&A and ask them to show us some options, like what VT Copper has done. Sharon wants to see more detail from both firms on exactly what they are planning to do, and get a time frame from VT Copper. Both firms will also be asked to include painting the roof in their bids.

4. Dehumidifier Contract for Review

The rental unit is leaving the arena tomorrow. We have a contract for the replacement but it is not finalized. Heidi is hopeful the board is willing to approve signing the contract pending a few details from insurance and the schedule. The unit has to be installed before our next ice season in the fall. We would rather be billed in regular increments associated with milestones of the project. We discussed last time about going with Preferred Mechanical for a number of reasons. Money wise we were going to be slightly short. We did receive \$8,000.00 from Efficiency VT. We have presented everything to our insurance company and they will be covering the full amount, minus the \$8,000.00 credit. The dehumidification unit was completely covered by Efficiency VT and our insurance. Insurance also covered the cost of the rental unit and our lost revenue. Our insurance provided has been extremely responsive to this situation. This provided a win/win for the town in numerous ways. Ty asked about the gas hookup, which was included with the bid. The only thing not included is for VT Gas to actually connect. Motion by Randy Connelly to accept the contract with final edits pending for the final purchase of the dehumidification unit and installation. The motion was seconded by Steve LaFar – **APPROVED.**

5. VCCD PG – Resolution to apply for Airport Planning Grant

We are working with the Village of Swanton to discuss extending the water line from MVU to the Franklin County Airport to facilitate economic growth. The airport will also be extending their runway to accept larger planes, including cargo planes. The potential is there to foster spot development. We have an opportunity to apply for \$45,000.00 to fund a very thorough feasibility study to talk about the cost of the project as well as the economic return. The matching funds will come from Franklin County Industrial Development Corporation, Airport Sand & Fill and the State of VT. The town has no investment in this but would be the lead applicant as the municipality of the project. Growth in that area will grow our grand list which lowers tax rates. The airport believes they would be able to contract and lease more hangars as well, as part of any upgrades. A warned hearing is part of this process and will happen at the next meeting. The board will be required to make a resolution to move forward. This is a project for water only, not waste water. The airport facility currently does not have potable water. The area is, however, capable of supporting significant waste water systems because of its sandy soils. Bruce asked about further development heading east on Route 78. Ty had questions about the water line to MVU and where it comes from. Sharon noted that the line to MVU has a “T” in it for potential expansion further down Route 78 towards the airport. The board would like to pursue any and all opportunities for development in this area. There was further discussion on state owned land and leases with tenants.

6. Clean-Up Projects

We have some terrible dumping sites in town that require significant clean up (Hempyard Road and Lamkin Street). Casella has been good about taking materials. Tires continue to be an issue. There is an estimated 400-500 tires down the bank on Lamkin Street. Casella will take half at no charge, the others will be at \$3 each at town expense. The work crews through Alex Airolti are available for \$19 per offender per day. The board would like to tackle Hempyard Road first and see how that goes. Sharon reminded the public that dumped garbage often has identifiable items and that people will be held responsible. Barry Domina with NWSWD is very helpful and follows up on these issues for us. Motion by Bruce Butler to take care of Hempyard Road first with Alex Airolti’s crew from corrections and with the assistance of NWSWD. The motion was seconded by Steve LaFar – **APPROVED.**

G. Selectboard Items

1. ATV Ordinance

Our attorney has vetted the ordinance and cleaned up some language as well as added a few suggestions. The board is happy with the edits and advice. The table of contents will also be removed. Motion by Randy Connelly to approve the ATV ordinance with the final edits as written. The motion was seconded by Steve LaFar – **APPROVED**. This will go into effect in sixty days, unless the board is petitioned.

2. Boone Drive

Boone Drive is off Homestead Lane, which is off Brosseau Road. We have had a request to take over this road. The cul-de-sac is adequate based on what the DRB requires and what is noted in our bylaws. We already plow Homestead with the ton truck. There are currently three homes on Boone Drive. As the bylaws are re-written we will look into having cul-de-sacs and turn arounds be accessible for tandem trucks in the future. The question was asked why we would take over Boone Drive but not Thak Blvd. Thak Blvd. has green space in the middle of the cul-de-sac. We have a road acceptance policy which has a procedure. The town would make a temporary acceptance and monitor it for twelve months. During that time, any recommendations could be made before it is formally accepted. Heidi will have that in the packet for the next meeting and we can vote on it after the board sees the documents.

3. Health Officer Appointment Forms

The board appointed Merry Souza for a three year term. There are now forms that need to be sent to the State of Vermont. Motion by Steve LaFar to sign the forms. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED**. Merry's appointment will be official once we receive everything back from the state.

4. NorthWest Solid Waste District Appointment

We have received a letter of interest from April St. Francis. Motion by Steve LaFar to appoint April St. Francis as our representative for NWSWD for a one year term. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED**. Ben Lowell has offered to go with April for her first meeting or two.

5. Correspondence

The board signed an edited letter to Perrigo thanking them for allowing an employee to have time away from work to assist with the flooding at HVFD.

6. Misc.

- Steve Ducham, attorney, was in today working on the municipal properties we will be selling. There are only two that were approved to sell – Cherry Hill (Rheaume Rd.) and Dalcourt (Route 78). We do not have a town agent, but Ed Adrian will serve as the town agent for this process. Most towns don't have a town agent any longer and are using their attorneys.
- Sharon updated everyone that the Parks & Recreation Committee met with the Arena Facilities Board and with Highgate Little League on April 3rd. This process is moving forward and a memorandum of understanding is being initiated that shows LL having priority use of the fields during the season and clears up any misunderstandings between the town and LL. The job ad is out for the Director of Parks & Recreation and there has been a great amount of interest so far! Applicants should submit their package no later than Friday, Apr. 27th @ 4:30pm. Visit www.highgatevt.org for more information under "announcements".
- The annual Norm Lavallee plant swap & book sale will be May 26th from 10am – noon. Motion by Randy Connelly for HLCC to use the municipal park for this event.

The motion was seconded by Steve LaFar – **APPROVED**. If PTKO is interested in using the park for a lawn sale, as they have before, HLCC would love to share the park with them.

- Highgate LL will be raking the parks next week Friday and Saturday. Ty asked if the highway crew could break up the snow and sod on the edge of the parking lot. The old dehumidifier unit is in a location that is a potential hazard once the LL season starts and should be moved. There was discussion on if the insurance company is done with the unit or if Hodgdon's can take it away. Ty also wanted to put it on the radar that Wendi and Shelley are both on the same three year term cycle. That puts the town at a real disadvantage if they were to ever both go at the same time. Wendi will check with VLCT on this but recalls her first term here was specifically a two year term to intentionally get her on the same cycle as Tom, the previous treasurer. There was discussion the turf storage and the storage building that the town started savings for in the CIP this year. We do have two buildings, one at the Machia property and one on Frontage Road, that are possibilities for storage in the meantime.

H. Upcoming Events

April 12	6pm	DRB Mtg.	May 5		Green Up Day
April 17	6pm	Planning Comm. Mtg.	May 5	8am-2pm	HHWD @ sand shed
April 19	7pm	Selectboard Mtg.			

I. Executive Session

Motion by Sharon Bousquet to exit the regular Selectboard meeting and enter into executive session with the Town Administrator @ 9:14pm to discuss legal and contracts, 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 Sharon Bousquet to exit executive session @ 10:10pm. The motion was seconded by Steve LaFar – **APPROVED**.

Motion by Randy Connelly to accept the Village Core Master Plan (VCMP) Committee recommendation and award the consulting contract to BUILD of Montpelier. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED**.

J. Adjournment

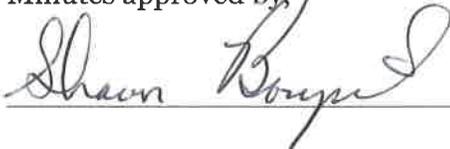
Motion by Randy Connelly to adjourn the meeting @ 10:15pm. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED**.

Respectfully submitted by,



Wendi Dusablon, Highgate Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk

Minutes approved by,



Sharon Bousquet - Chair, Highgate Selectboard

