

**TOWN OF HIGHGATE**  
**Selectboard Meeting**  
**Thursday, June 6, 2024 @ 6:00pm**  
**Approved Minutes**

NOTE: All actions taken are unanimous unless otherwise stated

**ZOOM LINK: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88557608026>**

**A. Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance**

The meeting was called to order by Vern Brosky, 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; Ben Lowell; Richard Flint

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

**Public** – Alice (Sue) Cota; Ty Choiniere ; Brian Spears; Keith Ploof; Renick Darnell-Martin; John Bruyette; John Grismore – FCSO; Ed Adrian, Town Attorney (via Zoom, executive session)

**B. Public Comments**

- Sue Cota stated that the bake sale on Memorial Day went very well. She heard comments about the parade that the spacing was too far apart. Everyone enjoyed the band and festivities at the Highgate Manor afterwards. Sue also asked about the property owned by Mike Gervais and what was happening with that. There is another pending subdivision there and that will be on the DRB agenda for July 11<sup>th</sup>.
- Ty Choiniere thanked everyone that participated and helped with Memorial Day. They will hold a meeting to wrap up the year and discuss how to make things better. The group will meet on Sunday, June 23<sup>rd</sup> @ 10am at the town office or in the park, weather dependent.
- Vern Brosky III also acknowledged the Memorial Day festivities and work put into the event, as well as today being June 6<sup>th</sup>, the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D-Day.

**C. New Police Contract, Effective 7/1/24, Franklin County Sheriff, John Grismore**

Sheriff Grismore was present for this meeting and the board thanked him for being here. We begin a three-year contract with FCSO on 7/1/24. This will be for 40-hours of coverage per week, and we are looking forward to the collaboration. Their philosophy will be based on the needs of the community. The partnership needs to be honest, transparent, and have good communication to be successful. He will supply town officials with his cell number, and he wants to know as issues come up, he is always available. He is also willing to join our meetings at any time. All concerns are important, and they want to be a strong and effective presence in Highgate. People will take notice of them being in town 40-hours each week. Topics discussed were speeding, ATVs, drugs, vandalism, theft, and more. Highgate is not immune to any of these issues. We are considering opening up all our roads to ATVs and there was some good discussion on that topic. FCSO does not want to be adversarial towards anyone, they want to work with the town and our residents. Education and safety will be key when it comes to dealing with ATVs. FCSO is not opposed to visiting homes if necessary. Unwelcome ATV and other activity can be curbed through prevention. With ATVs they can work with the State's Attorney's office and seize vehicles, if necessary, they don't want to, but they can and they will. FCSO has a side x side vehicle that they are not opposed to using to patrol on the rail trail. FCSO partners with VASA for enforcement. Ben Lowell was our town constable and FCSO will need copies of our ordinances, which are available on our website. Ben considers FCSO to be top notch and he looks

forward to working with them in our town. There will be a transition between SAPD and FCSO as the month of June progresses. Richard Flint asked about the 40-hour per week contract and how that will work. The hours will be mixed up because we want to keep people guessing when they are in town. Winter months there is extra traffic on high school hockey nights, as an example of a target area. We have some control on how our resources are applied. The office line for FCSO is 802-524-2121 (dispatch), always call 911 in an emergency situation. Ty feels good about what he is hearing tonight. Shelley Laroche asked about staffing and fulfillment of hours. Sheriff Grismore said staffing is strong and he feels good about being able to fulfill their obligations with Highgate. Sharon Bousquet asked about drug issues and the increased need for services in our county, our state and everywhere, for that matter. There was good discussion on the drug issues and the snowball effect that it has on children and the school system and beyond. Rehabilitative services are limited and Narcan is not the answer, it encourages use. There was further discussion on the judicial system, community outreach and the ride along program. We are looking forward to an excellent partnership between Highgate and FCSO beginning on July 1<sup>st</sup>.

**D. School District Re-Vote Info. – MVSD Vice-Chair, Renick Darnell-Martin**

Renick was present to discuss the upcoming re-vote (round #3) for the Missisquoi Valley School District budget. We are voting again on June 18<sup>th</sup> and \$835,000.00 has been cut since the last vote. The Highgate school roof project was cut, because without a budget the contract could not be fulfilled at this time. The MVSD board listened to folks and cuts were made from other areas, not just capital projects. A flyer was mailed to all households this week, see the flyer at the end of these minutes. It contains great information on the vote, and where we go from here. The informational meeting will be June 10<sup>th</sup> at MVU or via Zoom. The way the State of VT funds education is working against MVSD. The budget will decrease taxes, but taxes will increase overall due to things at the State level. Fall sports and other things will be put on hold until we have an approved budget. And this is bad for kids. Richard Flint had questions about the bond that Highgate passed before the merger and why the roof and windows etc. weren't done. That was before Renick's time here, but he can find out. Lora McAllister is the person to ask. There are further consequences if we don't pass a budget, and the district is allowed to borrow up to 87% of last year's budget while we keep trying to pass one. Contracts can't be renewed (coaches etc.) and they could possibly have to dig further into programming. They have tried to avoid impacting students and student programs, but after school transportation could be cut next. MVSD has 500 employees overall and we are one of approximately 10% of school districts who still don't have a budget. The borrowing article was discussed, which failed by ONE vote the last round. Misinformation on social media has not helped. Sue Cota is concerned about empty buses on the road, or close to empty buses. Renick appreciates the examples and feedback from the community and would love for Sue to bring this up at an MVSD meeting. The ramification of cuts to transportation were discussed. The district is not required to provide transportation and that would hit families hard if it were not provided. Renick pointed out that slashing our budget now won't make any difference in Montpelier with so many of the higher spending districts already passing their budgets. We appreciate having Renick as a representative of our town and our schools. There was discussion on our community becoming larger with the housing crunch and more and more people moving to Franklin County, and the school district plays a large part in that. We want our kids to attend good and solid schools. Renick is available all year and will bring issues to the table if it makes sense, he will push for it. The lower spending school districts are the ones left to pass budgets. Highgate voters can vote on June 18<sup>th</sup> from 7am – 7pm at Highgate Sports Arena, or request an absentee ballot. The board thanked Renick for his time and the information.

**E. Amend Zoning Fee Schedule – to include a start date**

A motion was made previously to adopt the new zoning fee schedule. A date was not attached to that motion. Sharon would like the fees to become effective 7/1/24. Wendi Dusablon spoke to Carolyn Towsley, Zoning Administrator, and she would like the fee schedule to coincide with the bylaw rewrite. We have a hearing on the bylaws on July 16<sup>th</sup> at the PC meeting and there will also

be a Selectboard hearing as part of the process. Carolyn has some questions but couldn't be here tonight, to include the certificate of occupancy requirement and would like this decision to wait. This discussion will be tabled until after those hearings and will be brought up again in August. Ty asked about the bylaws and enforcement. The situation with campers is a tough one, and we also deal with after-the-fact permits.

**F. Public Hearing – Neighborhood Designated Areas**

This serves as official notification that we are changing our bylaws to include river corridors and neighborhood designated areas within our bylaw document. This gives the public an opportunity to ask questions or make comments on the additions. The NDA area coincides with the village designated area. The application for this is going to the State of VT and is not yet approved.

**G. Treasurer – Shelley Laroche**

- Motion by Merry Souza to approve and sign the check warrants. The motion was seconded by Ben Lowell – **APPROVED**.
- Shelley located the grant agreement for the electric charging station, and we have to keep everything as is for a five-year period. She asked more questions and has not heard back yet. The town has pre-paid for everything within that five-year period.
- There are seven properties left on the tax sale list, three of which are in the ANDCO mobile home park. The total delinquent tax amount is \$69,735.20. She is hopeful that people will get caught up before the next billing cycle and not get into a snowball situation. Sue emphasized the payment plans. Shelley will be taking a webinar next week on the new payroll tax increase for childcare. The board needs to decide if the employer or employee will be paying the .44 percent tax, effective July 1<sup>st</sup>. A motion will be made on June 20<sup>th</sup>.
- The Town of Highgate will not mail any property tax bills until the school budget is passed. We will not mail two bills as was done in 2014 – that was a disaster / confusing / frustrating.

**H. Town Clerk – Wendi Dusablon**

- Motion by Richard Flint to approve the minutes from May 16, 2024, as written. The motion was seconded by Kyle Lothian – **APPROVED**.
- MVSD School budget revote – June 18<sup>th</sup> @ Highgate Arena 7am – 7pm – PLEASE VOTE 😊 . Absentee ballots are available by contacting Wendi – all ballots must be back by 7pm on 6/18/24 in order to be counted. So far 124 absentees have gone out and 52 have been returned. Richard Flint had questions about revote costs and if the town recoups any of the costs associated with the school revotes. Yes, we will bill the school district for our time, postage, and anything else associated with these revotes.
- Grievance hearings are being scheduled for Wednesday, June 26<sup>th</sup> from 10am – 4pm. Please contact Wendi for an appointment or mail in your documents. A mailing will be going out on June 12<sup>th</sup> for those who had a change in their assessment. Appointments are not required but help make things go much smoother throughout the day.
- The town offices are CLOSED on Tuesday, June 18<sup>th</sup> (for school budget revote) and also on Wednesday, June 19<sup>th</sup> (Juneteenth holiday).

**I. Town Administrator – Sharon Bousquet**

- Motion by Ben Lowell to sign the GeoDesign contract for services on the Machia Road stabilization in the amount of \$70,425.00 plus the extra option of \$15,500.00 for monitoring. The motion was seconded by Merry Souza – **APPROVED**. Sharon noted that there was a site visit on Wednesday and residents of the area were invited to participate and some did attend. Next week starting Tuesday, June 11<sup>th</sup> a portion of Machia Rd. will be down to one lane in sections when they start drilling wells to figure out the best options. The State is looking for us to move forward with soil nailing in front of the Young's house as part of that we had easement documents drawn up. They are not comfortable signing at this point due to being fearful of the disturbance and the effects on their foundation. So that easement

process is on hold. Ron Machia is ok with the easement. The initial drilling process will take two weeks and the monitoring will take place over time.

- The archaeological phase one on the VCMP property came out great. That project is a go. Cathedral Square is having geo technical data done and will have equipment over there. GeoDesign will be on site June 10, 11, 12.
- Brownsfield did some digging in May at the VCMP property and they are looking for additional lead levels. We are waiting for that outcome. There is a meeting the third week of June and we will know more then.
- The RFP was put out for the pole barn on the VCMP property and also for an architect for the new entrance at the arena.
- The town's John Deere tractor was vandalized and attempted to be stolen on 6/3. They cut into the ignition wires and smashed the side door and window of the cab. We have a claim into VLCT and they gave us the ok to get an estimate for repairs. The public works crew added additional flood lights in the back of their department. Sharon would like to do the same for the HVFD side. Summit Security will be here tomorrow at 11am to discuss added cameras or if a whole new camera system is our best option.
- The insurance claim for the asbestos removal and clean up at the library is a no go – it will not be covered.
- Sharon said FYI as of July 1<sup>st</sup> new State law if you pass a bicyclist, horse back rider, or walker you need to leave 4' of space between your vehicle and them.
- Sharon prepared a letter for signature for a sidewalk project grant. The VCMP property will be torn up on the side of the road for the wastewater pipe, so it would be good time to add sidewalks. The grant is through the VTrans Bike & Pedestrian program and has a 20% local match. We have the funds for the match through ARPA. This is for pre-consideration for the grant, though if we use extra ARPA funds on wastewater it could be a double match for the sidewalk and ww projects. Richard had questions about where the sidewalk leads to. Sharon explained along the VCMP property (Route 78) and considering extending along Lamkin and fixing the portion by the church that is often under water. The Lamkin Street portion would potentially end just prior to Ladimi Circle near the Wright property and where the town just purchased for the leach field. We have received notification that we will be receiving added ARPA funds for the ww system, but there is no guarantee how much, we are hopeful it will be in the millions. Our ww project quote was \$4 million and it is now up to \$7 million. This sidewalk grant is up to \$385,000.00. We may get a small portion or more. Richard would like to see a crossing and a light from the VCMP property over to Desorcie's Market. There was further discussion on this and the ARPA fund portion. Motion by Merry Souza to sign the grant application with 20% local match. The motion was seconded by Ben Lowell – **APPROVED.**
- Letters were mailed to residents about being possible end users on the village wastewater system to see who would be interested in connecting. The VCMP meeting is June 12<sup>th</sup> at 6pm and hopefully some interested residents will show up for more info.
- VT DEC performed a site inspection at our brush depot for compliance and that all went well.
- The Recreation Department would like approval to purchase a stage for the summer sounds performances and other uses. They have the funds in their CIP and the ask is \$17,000.00 for the aluminum stage, waterproof, portable, and able to be set up by one person. The size is 12' x 20' with adjustable legs. This will be taken down and used inside when needed. The weight limit is 157 pounds per square inch (later clarified as 157 pounds per square foot), with a two-week window for shipment. It could be here before the first scheduled concert if approved for purchase. Motion by Richard Flint to purchase the stage with details and funding stated above. The motion was seconded by Kyle Lothian – **APPROVED.**
- The father / daughter dance is June 8<sup>th</sup> from 5-7pm. There are 50 dads and 56 daughters signed up to attend.
- Motion by Kyle Lothian to sign the subsidized loan agreement for \$125,000.00 from the CWSRF (Clean Water State Revolving Fund) for our wastewater project. There are

numerous places for signatures and Shelley will also have to sign it. The motion was seconded by Merry Souza – **APPROVED.**

**J. Selectboard Items**

- Ty Choiniere asked about rules or added signage regarding no long-term parking at the park and ride location (Frog Pond). There has been one vehicle there for multiple weeks with no movement. Sharon will look into it.

Motion by Vern Brosky III to exit the regular Selectboard meeting @ 7:52pm. The motion was seconded by Merry Souza – **APPROVED.**

**K. Executive Session**

Motion by Vern Brosky III to enter into executive session @ 7:52pm with Sharon Bousquet and Ed Adrian (town attorney / via zoom) to discuss personnel, legal, and contracts, where premature general public knowledge would place the town and / or individuals involved at a substantial disadvantage. The motion was seconded by Merry Souza – **APPROVED.** Motion by Kyle Lothian to exit executive session @ 9:04pm. The motion was seconded by Ben Lowell – **APPROVED.**

**L. Adjournment**

Motion by Kyle Lothian to adjourn the meeting @ 9:04pm. The motion was seconded by Ben Lowell – **APPROVED.**

Respectfully submitted by:



Wendi Dusablon  
Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk

Minutes Approved by:



Vern Brosky III  
Selectboard Chair

**OFFICIAL BALLOT  
MISSISQUOI VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
SPECIAL MEETING  
JUNE 18, 2024**

**INSTRUCTIONS TO VOTERS**

- Use BLACK Pen to fill in the oval. **DO NOT USE PENCIL.**
- To vote, fill in the oval to the right of your choice.
- If you make a mistake, tear, or deface the ballot, return it to an election official and obtain another ballot. **DO NOT ERASE.**

**ARTICLES**

**ARTICLE I**

Shall the voters of the Missisquoi Valley School District approve the School Directors to expend \$48,909,437 which is the amount the School Directors have determined to be necessary for the ensuing fiscal year?

YES

NO

**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 V.S.A. 562(9)?

YES

NO

**HIGHGATE VOTERS:  
VOTE 7AM - 7PM @  
HIGHGATE SPORTS ARENA - JUNE 18**

**ABSENTEE BALLOTS ARE  
AVAILABLE - CONTACT THE TOWN  
CLERK TO GET YOURS**

**MVSD BUDGET PROPOSAL 3:**

**\$50,779,437**

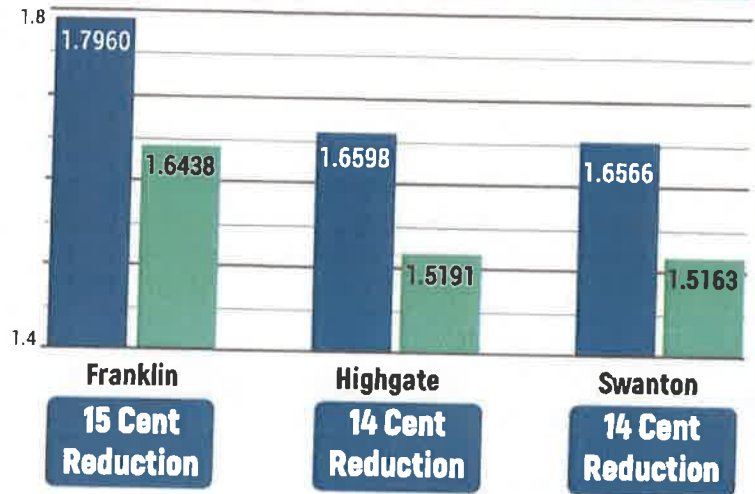
**– \$1,035,000**

**\$49,744,437**

**– \$835,000**

**\$48,909,437**

**TAX RATE SAVINGS**



\*Proposal 1 estimates based on previous projected yield

**Decreased Line Items:**

Principals Office  
-Salary & Benefits

Special Ed Clerical  
-1 Swanton Vacancy

District/Business Office  
-Part Time HR/Finance  
-Interest Expense  
-Benefits

Student Management  
-1 MVU Admin

Plant Operations  
-1 Custodian Vacancy

General Instruction  
-1 Teacher Vacancy

Capital Projects  
-MVU Parking Lot  
-Highgate Roof

As one of the lowest spending districts in the state, further cuts to our budget can only save pennies on the tax rate at the expense of student outcomes. Local tax increases are almost entirely decided at the state level and by high spending in other districts that have already approved their budgets.

**Total Reductions:**

**\$1,870,000**

**Follow the QR Code Link for more details:**



**VOTE BY MAIL OR IN PERSON ON JUNE 18<sup>TH</sup>**

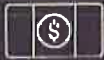
Missisquoi Valley School District  
100 Robin Hood Dr, Suite 2  
Swanton, VT 05488

Local Postal Customer

PRSR STD  
ECRWSS  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
EDDM RETAIL

In addition to the information provided here, we encourage everyone to attend our **Informational Meeting at MVU on Monday, June 10th at 7:00 PM**. A zoom link and more information about the budget can be found on our website at [mvdschools.org](https://mvdschools.org)

### **Q: Why Are We Voting on School Borrowing?**



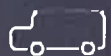
New school year funding is distributed by the state in December, but prior school year budgets run out in June. That's why **all** school districts in Vermont have to borrow money **every** year. Voting yes does not allow schools to borrow unbudgeted or excess funds and **does not affect taxes**. It is necessary to school operation, and it will be voted on until it passes.

### **Q: Why Has the Highgate Roof Project Been Cut?**

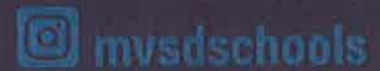
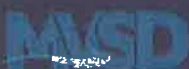


Without an approved budget as of May 1st, a contractor could not be secured to begin this project within the 2025 fiscal year. This **necessary** project will continue to be a **priority in next year's budget**.

### **Q: What Happens If the Budget Doesn't Pass This Time?**



If there is no budget on July 1st, **votes will need to continue until a budget is passed**. Statute allows our district to borrow up to 87% of last year's budget, but this can only cover essential operations. This means supplemental programs like **athletics** and **field trips** will have to be **put on hold** until a new budget is approved. These funds will not be enough for the schools to remain open all year, and an official, community approved budget will still be necessary.





# MISSISQUOI VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT WARNING

## TUESDAY, JUNE 18, 2024

### POLLS OPEN FOR HIGHGATE VOTERS @ HIGHGATE SPORTS ARENA 7AM -7PM

ABSENTEE BALLOTS CAN BE REQUESTED:

802-868-5002 / WDUSABLON@HIGHGATEVT.ORG / STOP BY THE OFFICE / USE THE MY VOTER PAGE

#### WARNING SPECIAL MEETING MISSISQUOI VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT

The legal voters of the Missisquoi Valley School District, consisting of the Towns of Franklin, Highgate, and Swanton, are hereby notified, and warned to meet to transact the following business by Australian ballot in their respective polling places hereinafter named for each of the above referenced towns on June 18th, 2024 at the polling places and times hereinafter listed.

ARTICLE I Shall the voters of the Missisquoi Valley School District approve the School Directors to expend \$48,909,437 which is the amount the School Directors have determined to be necessary for the ensuing fiscal year?

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 V.S.A. 562(9)?

Said persons and voters warned are further notified that voter qualification, registration, absentee voting, and voter procedures shall be in accordance with Chapters 43 and 51 of Title 17 V.S.A.

The legal voters of the School District are further notified that an Informational Meeting will be held in person at Missisquoi Valley Union High School Library and electronically via Zoom on June 10th at 7:00 p.m. for the purpose of explaining the budget items to the voters. The link to access this virtual meeting will be posted on the MVSD Website, mvsdschools.org and MVSD social media prior to the meeting.

#### POLLING PLACES AND TIMES

FRANKLIN- Franklin Town Hall, 5336 Main Street, Franklin; from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.  
HIGHGATE- Highgate Sports Arena, 243 Gore Rd, Highgate Center, from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.  
SWANTON- Swanton Village Municipal Complex, First & Elm Streets, Swanton; from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Dated this:

5/15/2024

Board of Directors:

Jim Chuvaus  
Peter Magnan  
Jeane Johnston  
Priscilla Boachard  
Marion Lolly

Donald Collins  
Erin Carter  
Bob Hall  
Alphany Stines

Received and recorded this

5/15/2024

District Clerk:

Nola Libart

## Highgate 2024 Grievance Hearings

Appointments for the 2024 Grievance Hearings for Highgate will be available on Wednesday June 26, 2024 from 10AM to 4PM at the Highgate Town Office. Please contact Wendi Dusablon at 802-868-5002 or [wdusablon@highgatevt.org](mailto:wdusablon@highgatevt.org) for an appointment. If you can't make the Grievance Hearings on June 26th you can submit your written grievance to me at:

Spencer Potter, Assessor  
Town of Highgate  
2996 VT Rte 78  
P.O. Box 189  
Highgate Center, VT 05459

Or [vtassessor@gmail.com](mailto:vtassessor@gmail.com)

Please identify the property that you are grieving and the reasons for your grievance. Once the Grievance Hearings are closed I will review all of the information submitted and I will issue a Result of Grievance ruling that will be mailed to the property owner of record.