TOWN OF HIGHGATE
SELECTBOARD MEETING

Thursday, November 16, 2017 @ 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 @ 7:04pm followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

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

Public / Other –Jean Chevalier; Elaine Ezerins, St. Albans Messenger; Robert Dufresne; Henry Rainville; David Rouse; Alice (Sue) Cota; Evangeline LaRocque; Woody Rouse; Ralph Comiskey; Chris Uzell; Rich Wilkens

B. Public Comment(s)

- Sharon put on her blinking antlers and gave an update on the Polar Express event, hosted by HLCC. This year's event will take place on Dec. 2nd, Dec. 3rd and Dec. 9th. This is an awesome event and usually sells out, so get your tickets now by contacting the library. Tickets are on sale now.
- Robert Dufresne was present to ask the town about the process of selling the property behind his on Route 78. The property behind him is owned by the town and known as the Dalcourt property. Taxpayers voted in March to sell that property and he is interested. He needs to somehow gain more acreage because he is .15 acres short of converting his front lot into a residential property. There are options, like a swap with land he already owns there. The board is interested in working with him or anyone else interested. It would need to be an open and fair bidding process. Sharon will set something up with Mr. Dufresne. He will stop by the office for Sharon's contact information.
- David Rouse had some questions and concerns about the end of Lamkin Street by the library where the sidewalk was installed. Mill Hill on that side is now a one-way street and signage was installed just today. David questions whether that end of Lamkin St. should be one-way also, because it is narrower than it was and could be an issue for large trucks coming from Wrights. Sharon has received a complaint about Cross Street and truck damage done there when lower Lamkin St. was shut down during sidewalk construction. David also had questions about Gore Road and a local business that is parking on town property when other businesses are not receiving the same benefit as a result of that intersection restructure a number of years ago. Sharon said it was not that businesses choice to reconfigure the road, it was the Selectboard's choice at that time to allow funding to go through for that curbing project. The benefit to any business is a result of a former board's decision. Sharon sees no need to be difficult if we don't have to be. David does bring up some good points though, and those thoughts should be conveyed to the Planning Commission. There are lots of businesses in the center of town that have limited parking. David also feels the sidewalk will eliminate parking that people usually use on Memorial Day. This is only one day a year, so people will have to park at the municipal complex, school or park and ride location for Memorial Day events in town. They should not be parking in the park on top of the sidewalk.

C. Town Treasurer Updates – Shelley Laroche

1. **Check warrants**

   There were no questions on the check warrants.

2. **Misc. updates**

- The Finance Committee met on Nov. 13th and went through the draft audit and Shelley's response to it. The final report should be back soon. We received no feedback to the RFQ for fixed assets during the initial ad, so a

direct mailing was done to fifteen different accounting firms around the state of Vermont. Bids are due back December 8th and will be opened on December 11th. They also added a component to complete the fraud risk assessment, which was part of the audit as well.

- The investment policy has been in the drop box for a few months. It is pretty well taken straight from VLCT. We don't have any investments but this could be used in the future and the auditors asked to see it on the books. Motion by Randy Connelly to accept the investment policy. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED.**
- Several people have been in to pay their delinquent taxes in full since the due date. People still have the option to use a debit or credit card with a 2.65% convenience fee applied. Payment plans are also available to get you caught up or you can pay in advance to stay ahead. If you are on a payment plan and sticking to it, it keeps you off the tax sale list.
- Budgeting has started. Shelley met with the library today and will meet with public works and the fire department soon. Ty will also be coming in for Parks & Rec. A budgeting meeting has been scheduled with the Selectboard on Dec. 13th @ 6pm.

D. Town Clerk Updates – Wendi Dusablon

1. **Minutes**
   Motion by Randy Connelly to accept the minutes from *November 2, 2017*, as written. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED.**
2. **Recap of Nov. 7th votes**

- *MVU Capital Reserve Fund Vote* – this was on the ballot and polls were open 7am – 7pm on Tuesday, Nov. 7th at Highgate Elementary School. Highgate sent 175 ballots down to Swanton to be intermingled and hand counted with the other towns. A total of 568 ballots were counted: 417 YES / 151 NO.
- *Advisory vote on ACT46* – this was a floor discussion and vote at 7pm on Tuesday, Nov. 7th at Highgate Elementary School. Following the discussion, the vote went to a paper ballot. 104 ballots were cast total: 103 YES to maintain our current structure / 1 NO to merge. The school board was very happy to see such a great turn out for this discussion and vote. It will be submitted to the state as part of their report in January.

E. Town Administrator – Heidi Britch-Valenta

1. **ADA study grant amendment & building plans**
   This is an amendment to extend the period of time. Motion by Randy Connelly to have Heidi sign the extension on the ADA grant. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED.**
2. **FEMA mapping project update**
   Richard Noel attended this on behalf of the town. They are taking input on the new maps being created. This is a slow process which will create new FEMA flood maps which haven't been done since the 1960's.
3. **December 1st sidewalk celebration**
   The school is coordinating a *"walk to school day"* on Dec. 1st. Buses will be dropping students off at St. Louis Catholic Church on Lamkin Street and students will walk with staff down the new sidewalks, using the new crosswalk across Route 78 and then use the walking path over to the school. This will start at 7:30-7:45am and all are invited to participate. RiseVT will put out chalk paint footprints and some signage for the route.
4. **BBR grant application – Tarte Road**
   There are two projects on Tarte Road – one at the intersection of Tarte Road & Parent Road, and the other at the bridge over Rock River. This involves undersized culverts at the intersection and creating ditching and splash pools by the bridge to alleviate everything going into the brook. This grant is due tomorrow. Motion by Steve LaFar to sign the application for the Better Back Roads grant. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED.**
5. **Misc.**
   There are two meetings happening on November 20th regarding water quality. Friends of Northern Lake Champlain (FNLC) will be hosting a meeting for advocates on November 20th @ 6:30pm at the Swanton Village Complex. Also on November 20th, The Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) will be hosting a presentation in Franklin on Lake Carmi.

F. Selectboard Items

1. Dehumidifier RFP

We don't have this yet, but are making progress. Josh LaRocque has found a consultant to work with us and sent some info today. We hope to have this ready for the next Selectboard meeting on Dec. 7th.

2. Misc. updates

- The PWD did a fabulous job on the Spooner Road project. Our consulting engineer was pleased. It was a big job for them and our three guys did a great job – THANK YOU!
- Sharon updated everyone on HVFD and the First Responder Program. The line officers met with Sharon last night and are asking the Selectboard to cease and decist the First Responder Program at this time. HVFD was not able to get the program up and running successfully. There have been delays and difficulty getting people tested. At this time, the fire department has other issues to deal with. Liability and safety need to be the focus and priority. They are asking for support while they regroup. Their hope is to keep this option open for the future. Sharon opened the floor to comments and questions. Randy asked for clarification that the fire department is controlled by the Selectboard – yes, they are. He does not recall having a vote to create the First Responder Program. Sharon pointed out that when it comes to issues of liability and safety, the Selectboard has a fiduciary responsibility to deal with it. The First Responder Program is endorsed by the town and need to be affiliated with an agency of the town, such as the fire department. The Chief has taken his name off the license as well as two members, which leaves only one First Response member, which is not safe for our town or residents at this time. Kudos to those that went through the training. At this time, the First Responder Program is not appropriate for the Town of Highgate. Chris Uzell, Ralph Comiskey and David Rouse – all HVFD members – were present. There was nothing further added to the conversation. The board appreciates all that HVFD does and they are supported whole heartedly by their community. All HVFD members are important and valued, and we thank them.
- Sharon again put on her blinking antlers and reminded everyone about the Polar Express event happening Dec. 2nd, Dec. 3rd and Dec. 9th.

G. Upcoming Events

Nov. 21	6pm	Planning Comm. Mtg.
Nov. 23 & 24		Town Offices are CLOSED – Thanksgiving Holiday
Dec. 1	7:30am	Walk to School Day – Sidewalk Celebration
Dec. 7	7pm	Selectboard Mtg. – Town Plan Amendment Hearing
Dec. 13	6pm	Selectboard Exec. Session – Budgeting Mtg.
Dec. 21	7pm	Selectboard Mtg. – Town Plan Amendment Hearing

Motion by Sharon Bousquet to close the regular meeting @ 7:44pm. The motion was seconded by Steve LaFar – **APPROVED.**

H. Executive Session

Motion by Sharon Bousquet to enter into executive session @ 7:45pm with the Town Administrator and Town Clerk to discuss personnel, legal and contracts, where premature general public knowledge would place the town or individuals involved at a substantial disadvantage. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED.**

Town Clerk, Wendi Dusablon, exited the executive session @ 8:15pm.

Motion by Randy Connelly to exit executive session @ 8:59pm. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED.**

I. Adjournment

Motion by Steve LaFar to adjourn the meeting @ 9:00pm. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED.**

Respectfully submitted by,

WDusablon Wendi Dusablon, Highgate Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk

Minutes approved by,

Sharon L. Bousquet Sharon Bousquet - Chair, Highgate Selectboard