

# TOWN OF HIGHGATE SELECTBOARD MEETING

Thursday, July 20, 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 @ 7:05pm followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

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

**Public / Other** – Alice (Sue) Cota; Woody Rouse; Rebecca Howrigan; David Rouse; Elaine Ezerins – St. Albans Messenger; David Desorcie; Kellie Uzell

### **B. Public Comment(s)**

- David Rouse asked why the overflow parking from Joey's Junction is parking at the park and ride. He is particularly concerned about any parking in front of the dry hydrant located there at Frog Pond. He further stated that residents attempted to park at Joey's on Memorial Day and were asked to move their vehicles. David is also frustrated with speeding on Lamkin Street. There are currently two speed carts in town, one in the village on Route 78, the other on St. Armand Road. VSP and FCSO were both at the last meeting and this was discussed. He would like to see a speed cart placed on Lamkin Street and said the hours of 10am – 3pm are the worst time right now. He would like law enforcement to step up patrols in this area.

### **C. Library Update – Rebecca Howrigan**

The library has been very busy this summer with lots of programming happening for people of all ages. Rebecca gave some examples such as; Gardening Program; Magic Tree House; Legos; Owls & Raptors were at the arena; Free Summer Meals and more! Rebecca also had an update on the roof repairs. This was put out to bid and we received three proposals. The Library Trustees met last week and decided to award the project to Menard Handy Man & Property Maintenance Services. This is a local business / Highgate resident whose family are also library patrons. The total bid was \$7,850.00. The amount budgeted was \$7,500.00. She is looking for approval from the Selectboard to move forward with a new shingled roof that will protect the town's investment. Motion by Bruce Butler to approve the selection of Menard Handy Man & Property Maintenance Services in the amount of \$7,850.00. The motion was seconded by Steve LaFar – **APPROVED**. Sharon noted that the library trustees work very hard together with Liza and the library staff on programming and outreach to those that might not have the same advantages and opportunities. The funds for this project were approved at town meeting as part of the library budget.

### **D. Town Treasurer Updates – Shelley Laroche**

- **Check warrants** – there were no questions from the board on this.
- **Misc. updates** – There are two policies (Purchasing Policy and Conflict of Interest Policy) in the drop box for review that have highlighted updates from the last Finance Committee meeting. The recommendation is for us to meet guidelines for accepting federal funds. For example, in our purchasing policy an employee is allowed to bid. If federal funds are involved, an employee is not allowed to bid. The town attorney is looking at the changes prior to asking the Selectboard for approval. There was further discussion and questions, including where the funds from zoning permits go. They are part of the general fund and have their own line item. The board would like legal fees with regard to the DRB to be shown separately.

#### **E. Town Clerk Updates – Wendi Dusablon**

- **Minutes** – Motion by Bruce Butler to approve the minutes from July 6, 2017, as written. The motion was seconded by Steve LaFar – **APPROVED**.
- **Dog registration update** – We have sent out another round (5) of municipal tickets to those that don't seem to want to license their dogs. That brings the total number of tickets this year to 7. We currently have 856 dogs licensed in town, and by the time we finish the process, that number should be upwards of **870** for the year.
- **Misc. events in town** – Wendi updated everyone on the summer concerts in the park, happening Sunday evenings at 7pm. The dates of the concerts are July 9, July 16, July 23, July 30 and August 13 & 20. These concerts are free! There is no concert in the park on Aug. 6 due to Franklin County Field Days. David Desorcie noted that there is still a concert that day, but it is held at field days, not in the town park. Pre-K – 4<sup>th</sup> grade soccer sign-ups are happening now, registration deadline is Aug. 11. Grades 1-6 Cross Country sign-ups are happening now also, registration deadline is Aug. 14.
- **Speed carts in town** – We continue to receive complaints and comments from residents with regard to speed issues. FCSO brought two speed carts for us, one is located on Route 78 in front of the town office, the other on St. Armand Road. St. Armand Road was recently paved and the bump at the rail crossing was lowered. Complaints in that area have increased. That speed cart records data, such as: time of day, number of vehicles, and speed. The cart was here for almost a full week and was picked up by FCSO to download the data. Unfortunately, in the process our data was lost, so the cart was returned and is back on St. Armand Road. Once the data is retrieved Wendi will share it with the board. David Rouse would like to see the cart that records data on Lamkin Street.

#### **D. Town Administrator Updates – Heidi Britch-Valenta**

- **Lamkin Street sidewalk update** – This project will also include a crosswalk. A 5' x 5' concrete pad has been approved on the north side. We now own the Machia property and that put us in a better spot. That pad will have to eventually connect with the walking path around the school and arena. There are grant funds available through Fish & Wildlife, we can apply next June to connect to the path. We hope to have the sidewalk documents back from VTrans next week. This will go out to bid this year for sure, but construction could get bumped to 2018 unless we have great fall weather and a contractor has the time. The latest plans are in the drop box and are available here at the office for the public.
- **Transfer station project update – GeoDesign estimates** - We have estimates in response to the FEMA application for stabilization at the transfer station property to save the capped landfill, sand shed property and the current transfer station operated by Casella. The offer on the table is pending acceptance of documents and FEMA would cover 75% of phase one. The town would be responsible for the 25% cash match. When we receive the plans, FEMA would decide and we would then move on and decide on phase two. We have roughly \$15,750.00 invested in designs. There is \$57,000.00 set aside in reserves towards this project. The bid for the entire project is much higher than anticipated. We submitted our application for \$250,000.00 as a rough estimate and it's far more than that. Heidi noted that GeoDesign was not allowed to put in any contingencies, so there is a safety net in the numbers. It could possibly be less, but could also be more. The amount for phase two is estimated at \$900,000.00. We can pick and choose what pieces we want to pursue or not to pursue. The town owns the property, which is leased to Casella. We do have ongoing negotiations with Casella, but the board cannot get into that publically at this point. Heidi pointed out that this is not just a study, it's testing, design, creation of slope stabilization and over all drainage, bid documents, permitting and assistance to the town with the FEMA review and creating a benefit cost analysis. David Desorcie commented that if he owns something, he fixes it and asked if Casella is willing to help in any way. Heidi pointed out that because federal funds are involved, we play by their rules with engineers and studies. Sharon understands that sometimes it may not be beneficial to go that route. David Desorcie stated that the board is voted in and they have a job to do, the public

is just giving their two cents. Although Mr. Desorcie does not understand or see why a study is needed for everything. The closed landfill is in very close proximity to one of the slide areas from the recent past. Kellie Uzell asked if the dam in Highgate Falls not operating now is hurting the situation. Heidi stated that each time they do a site visit to the transfer station they see something new. This has been a wet summer, which does not help either. Bruce had questions about the life span of the Casella facility and if we can afford to continue fixing this area for decades to come. There was further discussion on the current location and any possibilities of relocating it. Regardless, we would still need to maintain the closed landfill. By the town approving phase one, we will be investing just over \$15,000.00 and receive \$63,000.00 worth of design work. Motion by Bruce Butler to approve phase one, which includes the study, boring, design and permits if we go forward. The motion was seconded by Steve LaFar – **APPROVED**. Shelley asked if after phase one there would be a better understanding of what phase two may cost – yes, that is the case.

- **Village designation program renewal resolution** – We have received official village designation for the village center which is up for renewal (every five years) by November. This was discussed at the PC meeting on Tuesday. The program director, Richard Amore, will be at the next PC meeting and there will be site visits prior to the meeting on Aug. 15<sup>th</sup> at 5pm to Highgate Falls and Highgate Springs to see if they are eligible for village designations. The designation gives the town higher ranking on grant applications and there are no down sides to applying that we are aware of. The PC would like to reapply and it requires Selectboard approval. It also opens up tax credits for work to be done to buildings within the designated area(s), so it benefits the residents also, not just the town. Kellie asked if their guidelines need to be followed, Heidi said yes, there are usually guidelines to follow. David Desorcie asked about taxes in the village and if there will now be a village tax on top of the town tax. No, this is just a way for the town to gain favorable light on grant applications. It does not cost the town or the taxpayer anything. Mr. Desorcie did receive a letter from the state saying he was eligible for tax credits, but that doesn't work for him, that's not how he does business. Motion by Steve LaFar to support the application for renewal of the village designation. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED**.
- **Mill Hill Road request to lift weight limits** – Reg Beliveau from Swanton Village will be at the next Selectboard meeting on August 3<sup>rd</sup> to talk about the Highgate Falls dam. Their request for that project is to waive the weight limit restriction on Mill Hill temporarily for construction vehicles to access the dam to build the causeway for the bladder replacement project. This will start in mid-September. The new bladder bag will be delivered in October, that is the timeline as of now. Kellie asked if another motion is needed to reduce the weight limit back down afterwards. David Desorcie asked about revenue loss to the Town of Highgate as a result of the dam failure on June 14<sup>th</sup>. It won't affect us this year, but could affect us in future years, which we can plan for and budget for. Motion by Steve LaFar to increase the weight limit on Mill Hill Road for the contractors involved in the dam repairs only so they can get their job done. The motion was amended to include that Swanton Village or its contractors will be held liable for any damage created in the process. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED**. Coincidentally, the town has a Better Back Roads grant for work on Mill Hill that is going to be done this fall.
- **Stormwater mitigation grant options** – This is another grant opportunity for road projects that have a positive impact on water quality. The match is 20% and cannot be in-kind. Heidi has asked for input from Pat Loyer and he does not recommend Ballard Road for this grant. Steve and Pat have looked at a project on Pines Planes Road in East Highgate, which is a class four town road. There is a large hole just to the right at the edge of the road and the steel culvert is crushed and rotting. Material is being pushed into the river, which makes this a water quality issue. There is no other access in or out of that road for the one home located there. It is also important that emergency vehicles can get up there as needed. Sharon did not participate in this discussion at all, as the one home located on this road belongs to her father. Mr. Bousquet offered to fix it himself, but due to liability issues that isn't possible. Steve said this is a road maintenance issue that should be dealt with by the town. Heidi will pursue estimates and a

hydraulic study. Even with town funds, it is the law to get a hydraulic assessment. Bruce noted that not every grant is worth the expenditures to get the funds, but this issue is draining into the river. Sharon is not involved in this, and with only two other members present tonight, Heidi will bring more info on this to the next meeting.

#### E. Selectboard Items

- **Machia property update** – We had a site visit on July 6<sup>th</sup> and a lot of people have provided input. Because we entered into a contract with NRPC and they are paying for the phase one and phase two studies, we can't disturb the property, other than take down the rest of the fence. Our public works department will be removing the fence on their schedule and do some mowing to clean up the property and make it look more presentable. Steve LaFar will be donating his bush hog because it's rough in there, you can't just mow. Woody Rouse asked when the committee will be getting started. Any interested persons should give their name to Wendi so they can be noticed when a meeting is scheduled. Kellie Uzell, Woody Rouse, Sue Cota and Evangeline LaRocque have already expressed interest. We agreed to let the town vote on what happens at that space, which would happen at town meeting. There will be a lively discussion on the floor. There was discussion on why this can't be voted on by Australian ballot. We have tried TWICE to move to ballot voting, once we tried to move public questions and budgets, and most recently we tried to move public questions to the ballot. Both times the article was tabled instantly. People at town meeting don't seem to want to discuss it and in many ways it is hurting our town. There are boulders on the property that should not be there. The rest of the fence coming down will make a huge difference. Some think the fence is keeping people off the property and out of the buildings. The outbuildings there are wide open already. David Desorcie expressed concern that the voters authorized the funds to purchase the property, but we have no funding to do anything more. Mr. Desorcie said he was relaying some concerns from Joe Rainville. There was more discussion on if the town would be willing to sell the property or lease the property. All of this the voters will be deciding. Sharon apologized to Woody Rouse and David Rouse that the photos of items left at the property had not been posted yet. The public works department has been very busy with large projects. Kellie asked if the Machia family will still be able to get the tree they wanted from the property – yes, after phase two testing is complete.
- **Ballard Road** – This culvert is located in front of the Menard house on Ballard Road. It is damaged and needs replacement. Heidi is working on the grant now. A temporary fix is holding.
- **Misc.** – Sharon and Josh met with Pat Loyer to go over a list of things and continue to make things go more smoothly in the public works department. They have a lot on their plate. Kellie asked about the benches in the Municipal Park. Stone is needed so they don't sink into the ground. Ty and Brian from Parks & Rec. are looking into the issues with the benches. The fountain is now operational and new trash cans have been placed in the parks.
- **Project list** – Sharon read off a list of projects ongoing or completed, which include: Charles Circle project; ADA compliance at Municipal Offices; municipal roof; fire department floor; Machia property development; library feasibility study; village designation application; sensitive slopes overlay maps; energy update; cell tower lease; municipal parcel review / sale; grant management; capital budget project; Machia Road bridge; Durkee Road culvert; Machia Road slope failure; Mill Hill slope failure; Ballard Road culvert; park & ride grant; paving; transfer station stabilization; arena bleachers; arena dehumidifier; Lamkin Street sidewalk project; East Highgate dam removal; Swanton dam repair; Frontage Road solar land donation; Elwood property foreclosure process.
- **Efficiency VT** – We received a letter back in May regarding an energy audit to help us improve our energy bills. There is no cost to the town for the study and it will tell us how we make things less expensive. We have already upgraded the streetlights in the Swanton Village territory and have saved quite a lot of money.
- **Energy chapter from town plan** – The draft of this plan was not in the Selectboard drop box, but the Selectboard is interested in moving forward.

Heidi will add it to the drop box for their review and we can further discuss on August 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**F. Upcoming Events**

August 1	6pm	Parks & Rec. mtg. @ arena
August 2	6:30pm	Library Trustee mtg. @ library
August 3	7pm	Selectboard Mtg.
August 3-6		Franklin County Field Days

**\*\*NOTE\*\* 2017 tax bills will be mailed in mid-September – with a due date of November 1<sup>st</sup> by 5pm.**

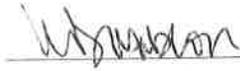
**G. Executive Session**

Motion by Sharon Bousquet for the Selectboard and Town Administrator to enter into executive session @ 8:48pm to discuss legal, contracts and personnel where premature general public knowledge would place the town and individuals involved at a substantial disadvantage. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED**. Motion by Bruce Butler to exit executive session @ 10:10pm. The motion was seconded by Steve LaFar – **APPROVED**.

**H. Adjournment**

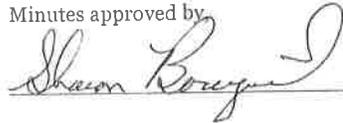
Motion by Bruce Butler to adjourn the meeting @ 10:10pm. The motion was seconded by Steve LaFar – **APPROVED**.

Respectfully submitted by,



Wendi Dusablon, Highgate Town Clerk  
& Public Meetings Clerk

Minutes approved by



Sharon Bousquet - Chair, Highgate Selectboard