

TOWN OF HIGHGATE

Selectboard Mtg.

October 1, 2015 @ 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 Jeff Towle, Chair @ 7:00pm, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Highgate Selectboard Members- Jeff Towle, Chair; Chris Yates, Vice-Chair; Diana O'Hara; Randy Connelly; Paulette Tatro

Highgate Office Staff – Wendi Dusablon - Town Clerk; Heidi Britch-Valenta – Town Admin; Shelley Laroche – Town Treasurer

Public / Other – Andy King – Public Works Director; Woody Rouse – Highgate Planning Commission; Kirt Mayland – Reservoir Road Holdings, LLC; Tyler Stanislas; Stephen Bushey; Claude & Barb Chevalier; Amanda Holland – NRPC; Molly & Hank Lambert; Ben Lowell – Constable; Liza Comiskey & Karen Fortin – Highgate Public Library

B. Public Comments

Claude & Barbara Chevalier were present on behalf of Chevalier Drilling Company, Inc. Chris Yates read aloud from a letter presented to the Chevalier's thanking them for their generous donation of supplying the Highgate Sports Arena facility with a new drilled well. Steve Bushey & Chris Yates were included in a photo with the Chevalier's that will be used as a press release in connection with the ongoing Highgate Sports Arena Renovation project. In response, Claude spoke stating that it is their pleasure to give back to this community and to the facility that is loved and utilized by so many. Highgate is very fortunate to have received this generous donation, which is valued at \$9,200.00.



Steve Bushey, Barbara Chevalier, Claude Chevalier and Chris Yates

C. Town Treasurer – Shelley Laroche

1. Pay bills

Paulette had some questions on salaries and if they are being charged to the individual departments – yes, they are, the reporting just does not reflect this. Paulette also asked about the Morey Road project and if there was any overtime for the highway crew. Shelley believes there was very little, but will know more next week when time cards are submitted. The project finished ahead of schedule. The GIS contract on the warrant is a one-time \$1,050.00 for online support. The previous contract was for tax map maintenance. Paulette asked about the \$625.00 under the highway department for Lucky Trailer Sales, that is for a strobe light on the F550.

2. Misc.

- Shelley attended a training session yesterday in Montpelier. There was a lot of information crammed into one session.
- Shelley continues to work with Jordan from the auditing firm via phone and email. We do not have a time frame yet as far as feedback, and she will keep the board informed.

D. Sidewalk Committee Update

We are fortunate to be joined tonight by Hank & Molly Lambert. Highgate is facing some issues with pedestrian safety, one of which is the day care in town, Amazing Spaces, is no longer allowed to transport the children around the village on foot, because it is deemed unsafe due to no crosswalks. Heidi has talked with NRPC and AOT as well as the Safe Routes to Schools program. They are trying to arrange for a road safety audit to identify needs and allow some way to cross the Gore Road and at least access the school safely on foot. This is something we would like to see happen immediately, and not wait for the next grant cycle. VHB is working on coming up with our final design that we agreed on for the Route 78 project. Once we have that in hand we can apply for the next round of funding. The goal right now is to find the best spot to cross Gore Road. For years, the day care children have cut through backyards to get to Gore Road. The challenge with this is that any crosswalk leading to private property would be opening it up for everyone, not just the day care children and staff. We became aware of this issue because a parent called our office. Hank & Molly Lambert are here to highlight an upcoming visit to our community by Mark Fenton. Mark is a nationally known leader in health, planning and transportation and we are lucky to have him coming here on October 8th and 9th (next week). On Oct. 8th he will be visiting the communities of St. Albans, Swanton and Highgate to look around and see some of these spots we are struggling with in terms of pedestrian safety, bicycling and traffic. Friday is an open meeting from 7:30am – noon in Swanton with breakfast being served. Following the presentation it will be opened up for discussion with representatives from each community. Mr. Fenton is very dynamic, exciting and really knows his stuff! Molly noted that the Swanton Enhancement Project is a very grass roots effort that is an example of the kind of things that are coming our way as a result of having had a community visit from the VT Council on Rural Development. There are five task forces operating in our community, taking a holistic approach to building an economically viable and culturally healthy community. Areas of concern are; outdoor recreation, economic development, the arts, reduction of substance abuse and expanding the downtown areas walking ability and biking ability. Molly believes this is an opportunity as well as a responsibility to take advantage of Mr. Fenton's visit to our area. Heidi noted the bus ride is on Oct. 8th and Liza Comiskey has agreed to be on the bus with Heidi and represent Highgate. Highgate will be their last stop on the bus, where they will have lunch here in the community room. At 3pm they will return to St. Albans to compile information to be presented the next morning. Rise VT is paying for Mark Fenton to be here. Friday, October 9th Heidi will be attending the session in Swanton with Connie Beyor, Andy King, Barb Chevalier and Paulette Tatro. Heidi also noted that Rise VT recently gave the Town of Highgate two grants. One for bike racks at the park and ride and the other to cover the cost of a water fountain at the arena for players to have a bottle filling station. Chris Yates asked Heidi about the VHB plans and if there would be one or two crosswalks at Gore Road and Route 78. One crosswalk is planned by McCuins, and one by the park and ride at the other end of Route 78. Will there be a crosswalk by the Historical Society over to the walking path? Heidi isn't sure if the VHB study will include Route 78 or just Gore Road. Barb asked if the day care could transport children by van. Heidi isn't sure of the requirements or liability associated with that either. Our goal as a town is to allow them to walk, as well as everyone else.

E. Capital Budget Hearing – Amanda Holland – NRPC

Amanda provided hand-outs associated with the proposed capital budget and also gave an overview of the efforts that the Planning Commission and Selectboard have been working on since November 2014. Amanda went over how the plan is laid out, for the benefit of those seeing it for the first time. This document covers a six year period 2017-2022. She noted there have been no major changes to the plan since the joint Planning Commission & Selectboard meeting on Sept. 15th. Chris noted that the plan is updated yearly. In terms of next steps for this document, we need to start working the payment amounts into our budget process. Amanda encourages a conversation with VLCT on how we want to have this work for us. The policies we need to start working on are; 1) Capital Improvement Program & Budget Policy and 2) Fund Balance Policy. Decisions need to be made on how this will be presented to the voters. Chris and Paulette had questions about reserves and money being raised for certain purposes and how to deal with issues that arise. How will we handle the situation if a need arises to use funds for another purpose other than what they were raised for? Shelley noted that at the training she just attended they did discuss reserves, and it must be voted on at

town meeting or a special town meeting, and be properly warned. It also must be held at the same location as the original annual meeting or special meeting. Amanda said we will want to release this draft document to the public. Amanda has sent Wendi the link to post on the town's website www.highgatevt.org. We will then want to set up a timeline and work this plan into the budgeting process. Amanda will have a 15 minute presentation for the public at our Oct. 15th Selectboard meeting. Jeff agrees, that is a great idea. This could be a hard sell, so we need to educate the public prior to town meeting in March. It is a very impressive document, and we should have a good audience at the Oct. 15th meeting, which will be held at the Highgate Elementary School library at 7pm.

F. Reservoir Road Holdings – Kirt Mayland

Kirt Mayland apologized for missing the last meeting and thanked the board for having him. Tyler Stanislas is the property owner of the sand pit located on Frontage Road that Kirt is looking at. Kirt's background is in environmental law and he has developed a career by turning industrial properties into solar projects. Most of his projects have been in Massachusetts involving old gravel pits and sand pits. He was drawn to Vermont originally when he did a 2.2mw project in Clarendon a few years ago. There is a lot of solar activity right now, with the tax credit set to expire in December 2016. This proposed parcel on Frontage road has no neighbors on three sides, and is bordered by Carroll Concrete's property to the south. It is a 57 acre flat and open parcel, not visible from the road. The far west portion of the property still has sand activity. The proposed solar project here would be a 5mw project. Kirt had handouts that described his former projects and his background as well as photos and maps of the proposed Highgate project. Chris asked about the difference in setbacks, to which Kirt explained that is for shading purposes. The facility itself will be panels east to west facing south at approximately a 30 degree angle with plenty of space between the rows. There are usually no storm water issues, but an analysis will be run. The power is a simple process, it comes into the panels and at the end of each row is a box which sends the power into an underground trench with conduit, and is then sent to the transformers on Frontage Road. Swanton Electric has indicated they will be rebuilding the poles along Frontage Road. Kirt is anticipating the first study to be back any day now. This project involves ACT248 and is a Public Service Board project. The PSB has the final word and this will be a 6-9 month process. The aesthetic study should be fairly simple as well as any environmental studies. Kirt is not a fan of using farm land or ripping down trees to make these projects a reality. He was originally interested in the Carroll Concrete property and as he continued to walk north, he found this parcel. He was impressed with the excavation work, they did a great job. There will be benefits to the town, but he was not ready to comment on the specifics yet, he would like to make himself more familiar with the Vermont process first. Based on the state model, property taxes for this property will increase a lot, perhaps 10-20 times more than we receive now. Kirt will forward more information as it becomes available to him, but \$4,000.00 per megawatt is a good initial starting point. Chris asked about the active ACT250 permit on this property. Tyler said there is still one phase left. Kirt explained that environmental issues are important to him. He has done a dozen or so projects in Massachusetts and has never had any issues with neighbors, and that is the goal. It makes sense to find a good site and make it work. He noted that the inverters and transformers hum during the day. The panels don't glare, they absorb, and they don't burn because they are tempered glass. There will be an access road for maintenance and they will work with emergency agencies also. The fence line is generally a 6' chain link fence, but they will work with an electrical inspector on it because that can vary. Paulette asked him to elaborate a little more on his background. His educational background includes Dartmouth College, University of CT Law School and Vermont Law School. He has worked in environmental law with Penn Energy Renewables and Soltas Energy Corporation prior to starting Reservoir Road Holdings, LLC three years ago. His projects are both ground-mounted solar arrays and roof-top solar arrays. He has had a very busy couple of years, and noted that the tax credit is a credit, not a deduction, which is a huge incentive. Swanton Electric has been a pleasure for him to deal with, noting that some other companies are not thrilled about solar in general. Jeff asked about other projects in VT he is working on. Kirt is looking at one tomorrow in Stamford. Chris asked Tyler about the front of his property. Tyler expects to sell sand out of there for another 5-10 years. Kirt noted the access road will be gravel, and overall there will be a lot of construction, but it will go fast. This solar project will not create local jobs, but does create

power. It won't increase traffic in that area, as everything is monitored remotely. The biggest maintenance to this project will be mowing, there is a lot of hand mowing and trimming. The startup costs for this project will be approximately \$15 million. Prices have come down some, and not taking into account any soft costs, the cost of the project will be about \$2 million per megawatt. The PSB must be getting hundreds of applications, it's a gold rush. Chris asked about being so close to the Franklin County State Airport. Kirt noted they may need an FAA letter, he doesn't anticipate any problems. Kirt will notify the town when he submits his 45 day notice, which should be in the next 2-4 weeks.

G. Town Administrator – Heidi Britch-Valenta

1. Updates

- We need a town representative at the NWSWD meetings. They meet every other month and no special knowledge is needed.
- On Oct. 16th representatives from the state geology office will be here to look at the transfer station site for our FEMA application.
- On Oct. 19th @ 3pm there will be a site visit at the airport regarding long range planning.
- No Smoking Policy – Heidi has been waiting for comment from the recreation committee. She is not sure if the policy will be for just town parks or all town property. Liza Comiskey was present and feels it would be great to include all municipal properties, such as the library and arena. She has signs up but can't enforce it because there is no policy to back it up. This would be a huge benefit to us working towards a healthier community. The school is already a non-smoking area. Heidi will include the documents in the drop box for the next meeting. Paulette noted that at the arena, no one smokes inside, but in between hockey periods you will find many just outside the doors smoking in the parking lot. Outside the arena might be a hard sell. Jeff feels that most smokers would go to their cars and smoke. We would need to educate folks that we don't want them smoking on municipal property, or we could designate a spot for them that they can.
- There is a municipal recycling inventory update in the Selectboard packets. There are funds anticipated to support towns and other businesses that recycle to get up to speed on upcoming mandates.

H. Town Clerk – Wendi Dusablon

1. Minutes

Motion by Chris Yates to approve the minutes from September 17, 2015, with one amendment. The motion was seconded by Paulette Tatro – **APPROVED**.

I. Library Update – Karen Fortin & Liza Comiskey

- The summer meal program was successful. Roughly 300 meals were served over a six week period (two days per week). Liza is considering doing three days per week next year.
- Tractor Day in the park is Oct. 10th.
- Polar Express dates will be Dec. 4th, 5th & 12th. Last year 164 tickets were sold within four hours. Stay tuned for when tickets will be available. Highgate residents only will have access to tickets on the first day. This year they are shooting to get 225 people through, and trips will be every 15 minutes with 10 children per trip. It all flows pretty well.
- Duct Tape Derby – will be held in February. Liza will work with the school to encourage participation at each grade level and incorporate the event with their winter carnival.
- Oct. 17th Liza would like to do a Halloween story telling event with Mr. K and Ms. Virginia in the town park. She would like to have a fire pit as well and will speak to David Desorcie for a permit. Liza is working with the fire department to secure a tarp in case of rain. She would like to use the back portion of the park, behind the monument for this event.
- The Cross Country season just wrapped up with 24 kids participating over a 4 week period. Each child will be receiving their "Richard Flint Spirit Award" on Friday.
- Liza will be calling McCuins to clean and service the furnace at the library. Chris will check on when it was last done, but it should be completed annually prior to each heating season. The septic is shared with RL Vallee and that should be fine and all pumped.

J. Upcoming Events

- Oct. 14 6pm DRB Mtg.
- Oct. 15 7pm Selectboard Mtg. w/ public hearings
1) Capital Budget 2) Ranger Solar
@ HIGHGATE ELEM SCHOOL LIBRARY
- Oct. 20 6pm Planning Commission Mtg.
- Oct. 27 by 5pm Property Taxes are due

K. Other business

1. Misc.

Chris had an update on the cell tower. The chain link fence was installed today and the T-Mobile antennas will be installed tomorrow. There will be a shelter installed for a repeater, which will improve emergency communications locally on the municipal level. T-Mobile customers should see an improvement in their service within the next month.

L. Executive session

Motion by Jeff Towle to enter into executive session @ 8:47pm to discuss a criminal matter and an opportunity surrounding real estate where premature public disclosure could put the town at a disadvantage. The motion was seconded by Chris Yates – **APPROVED**. Motion by Chris Yates to exit executive session @ 10:00pm. The motion was seconded by Paulette Tatro – **APPROVED**.

M. Adjournment

Motion by Jeff Towle to adjourn the meeting @ 10:05pm. The motion was seconded by Chris Yates – **APPROVED**.

Respectfully submitted by,

Wendi Dusablon, Highgate Town Clerk

Minutes approved by,

Jeff Towle, Chair – Highgate Selectboard