

TOWN OF HIGHGATE

Selectboard Meeting

Thursday, October 18, 2018 @ 7pm

Approved Minutes

NOTE: All actions taken are unanimous unless otherwise stated

6:30pm – Village Core Master Plan (VCMP) conference call

A. Call To Order & Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting was called to order by Sharon Bousquet, Chair @ 7:03pm, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Highgate Selectboard Members – Sharon Bousquet, Chair; Josh LaRocque, Vice-Chair (arrived @ 7:20pm); Bruce Butler; Randy Connelly; Steve LaFar

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

Public / Other – Linda Collins; Charen Fegard; Woody Rouse; Vonnie Lamotte; Merry Souza; Sue (Alice) Cota; Lynn Billado; Josh Ramsdell; Ray Laroche; Keith Ploof; Richard Flint; Ty Choiniere

B. Public Comment

- Sharon Bousquet brought some snacks for this evenings meeting for all to enjoy.
- Sue Cota asked about the municipal roof and when it would be done. The contractor got held up at the school but is scheduled to start here on Monday, Oct. 22nd.
- Linda Collins was present and is running for State Rep. for Franklin-5. She is a resident of Richford and is also the Chair of the Richford Selectboard.
- Charen Fegard was present and is also running for State Rep. for Franklin-5, which is a two seat district. She is a resident of Berkshire.

C. Animal Control Officer Update – Vonnie Lamotte

Vonnie updated the board and the public on what she has been up to as our ACO. Dog licensing technically ended on April 1, however, we still have two dog owners (total of three dogs) unlicensed before we can close the books for 2018. They have been ticketed to the max allowable in the ordinance, and the next step is to pick up the animals and impound them. She will work with Wendi in the coming weeks to resolve any ongoing issues. Initially we ticketed 30+ dog owners, so the system works, and residents have properly vaccinated and licensed their dogs. We have 870+ licensed dogs on the books for this year. Expenses so far have been down, which is a good thing. She has had to rehome one dog and fifteen kittens. Our shelter site is doing well and works for us. Vonnie also has back up from Kristy Brow, which is an asset to the town. The board asked Vonnie if she needed anything further to do her job effectively. She would like a microchip reader, and they are less than \$200.00. Motion by Randy Connelly for Vonnie to purchase an animal microchip reader. The motion was seconded by Bruce Butler – **APPROVED**. Vonnie noted she gets many calls for animal issues in other towns. She doesn't mind helping out, but doesn't want this to be or become the norm. Most, if not all, towns have their own ACO, and some towns share resources. The board thanked Vonnie for the great work she does for us and for the animals in our town.

D. Health Officer Update – Merry Souza

Merry became our HO back in May. She apologized for recent work conflicts and schedule challenges. She reported that she has responded and dealt with several issues in town including; 4 dog bites; cyanobacteria blooms; needles on properties; illegal dumping on town roads and vacant properties; 1 rental complaint. She is also working closely with Anna Roberts, Zoning Administrator, on various property issues in town on Mill Hill, Lamkin Street, Luke Street, and VT Route 78. She forwards postings to be shared with the public to Wendi. She feels she has what she needs to do her job effectively. The town is still looking for a Deputy Health Officer to help Merry or cover for her when she has schedule conflicts. Merry noted that going in pairs on site visits has been helpful and she has enjoyed working with Anna and feels it has been successful. The board agreed, going in pairs on site visits is better for safety reasons as well. The board appreciates all Vonnie and Merry do and keep up the great work!

E. MVR Update & Dispatching Info – Josh Ramsdell

Josh Ramsdell and Lynn Billado from Missisquoi Valley Rescue were both present. They are here to answer any questions and work towards a smooth transition back to MVR effective 7/1/19. They made the switch to Middlebury Dispatch on 6/30/17. The Town of Highgate has already reached out to Middlebury with some questions and also to Tim Girard at Swanton Fire Department. Sharon's understanding is that we don't need to change. Our fire department can stay with St. Albans Dispatch and calls for MVR would come through Middlebury and billed directly to the Town of Highgate. Josh confirmed that is correct. The Town of Highgate would like to see call sheets to be sure that we are being billed correctly. Many Highgate residents have addresses (mailing) that are not Highgate. Josh explained that there are six PSAPs (Public Safety Answering Point) in the State of Vermont. This area is primarily St. Albans Dispatch, but each PSAP will transfer the call to the correct agency. We would need to make St. Albans aware of any change, as well as the E911 Board. There were concerns about the equipment being internet based and if the internet were to go down. There is an IP link switch over to a cell link if the internet goes down, which will still transmit the signal. Randy asked what happens if MVRs internet goes out. They have the same set up. There have been a few instances with a brief blip of about 30 seconds. There are redundancies built into the system to notify them as a backup. Highgate won't have to change out any equipment. Current pricing with Middlebury is \$20.00 per call. Shelley will work with MVR and Mr. Masterson on the billing as the time frame gets closer. There are concerns about Middlebury not having local knowledge of Franklin County, and "the horn" was used as an example. No matter what dispatch service is used, the information would be transmitted as it is received. Lynn Billado added that there have been no issues at all. Ray Laroche asked if he calls 911 but wants MVR instead of AmCare, can he request that? 911 will follow what they are trained to do and follow the system in place. You can call MVR direct, Josh and Lynn said they discourage that from happening. If all MVRs ambulances are out, Middlebury would call for our backup, which would be AmCare. Sharon reminded everyone that AmCare is our current provider and as of 7/1/19 we will enter into a three year contract with MVR, based on the floor vote at Town Meeting. We are happy to have both services taking care of our community now and expect that will not change. Shelley asked Josh who is paying for those calls where a Highgate resident is calling MVR directly and they are responding to a call in our town presently. Josh will have to check on that. The board thanked MVR for coming. Josh asked about the contract not being signed yet – we still have plenty of time.

F. Town Treasurer Updates – Shelley Laroche

1. Check Warrants

There is one big change to the check warrant – the Highgate School needs some money. We have collected tax money and if we pay the school next week they won't need to draw on funds and pay interest. Sharon noted for the public's information, that amount will be \$2,641,497.58 from the Highgate taxpayers to Highgate Elementary School. MVU will wait for their funds until we are done collecting.

2. Misc.

RePro is who we work with on our town reports. They are offering us a cheaper price than in 2016 if we sign a two year contract with them. They are adding in extra spiral bound copies, for a total of ten. In 2016 we paid \$1,969.00 and they are offering us a price of \$1,890.00 per year for the next two years for our spiral bound copies and 500 copies for the public, as well as a digital copy. Motion by Josh LaRocque to sign this two year contract with RePro. The motion was seconded by Steve LaFar – **APPROVED**. Taxes have been coming in steady with two weeks to go. Shelley would like to make the deadline at regular close of business 4:30pm next year instead of 5:00pm. That will be voted on in March. Contact Shelley to work out a payment plan if you can't pay your taxes by Nov. 1st. Josh also asked about the VT Gas bill at the rink, he was impressed with the amount.

G. Town Clerk Updates – Wendi Dusablon

1. Minutes

Motion by Josh LaRocque to approve the minutes from October 4, 2018, as written. The motion was seconded by Steve LaFar – **APPROVED**.

2. General Election – Nov. 6

The Highgate School Board and Administration have decided to CANCEL school for students on November 6th, which is a very good decision. Adults will still be in the building on that day. Voting will be in the gym from 7am – 7pm and we will have 1,000+ people vote on that day. Absentees have been very busy, with 150+ being mailed out and 80+ being returned to date. Contact Wendi (wusablon@highgatevt.org, 868-5002, or stop by) if you want to vote absentee, otherwise don't forget to vote on Nov. 6th. Same day voter registration is available.

H. Administrator Items – Heidi Britch-Valenta

1. Hydro-Seeder Grant Close-Out Documents

Motion by Josh LaRocque to sign these documents. The motion was seconded by Steve LaFar – **APPROVED**.

2. Electric Vehicle Charging Station Grant Budget

A very draft concept is in the drop box. There is a site visit tomorrow morning at the park and ride location (Frog Pond) with the Public Works Department. We are looking at a \$2,600.00 match but we are able to use our equipment and labor. Part of the reason we are pursuing this is included in our energy plan that we adopted. We are required to try to move the Governor's energy plan forward. This charging station will help us reach our town goals. The station comes with all the software and be configured in many ways. Josh feels it's a great idea and this will be linked to a statewide list for people to stop in Highgate and charge their vehicles. It will bring people here and help boost our economy. This grant application is due at the end of November.

3. Aviation Plan Comment Period

VTrans held a meeting here on Oct. 15 which was very well attended. They shared their statewide plan, which includes proposed changes to the airport in Highgate.

They are accepting comments on their plans until Nov. 16th and the forms are located here at the office or on our website www.highgatevt.org. Ty could not attend but wonders what impact any changes will have on HVFD. Heidi asked that question and there will be changes and additional knowledge and training needed for our fire department. They are willing to work with HVFD but gave no concrete information. A link was sent to Heidi after the meeting that she will share with HVFD. This is the State of Vermont, so nothing will be happening any time soon.

4. Misc.

A series of meetings are coming up with regard to Public Transportation in Vermont. Our county meeting will be Oct. 24th @ 9am at NCSS in St. Albans. Heidi will be applying for two fire truck grants for HVFD, one through FEMA and one through Rural Development. The FEMA grant is due prior to our next Selectboard meeting. Motion by Josh LaRocque for Heidi to apply for this grant. The motion was seconded by Steve LaFar – **APPROVED**. Charen Fegard asked about resale value on our 1987 truck and if we planned to sell it or use as backup. We would sell it because we don't have the space to keep it and our trucks need to be updated in accordance with state and federal regulations.

I. Selectboard Items

Sharon welcomed Michelle (Hope) Beaulieu as our new Library Director at HLCC. They have some programs coming up, including Halloween Town on Oct. 28th and Tractor Day on Oct. 27th. Visit the library or their website www.hlccvt.org. They also have updated hours of operation. The ice is in at Highgate Sports Arena and skating season is underway here in Highgate! The new lighting project is installed and looks beautiful – we are getting a lot of compliments. The parking lot is also much more lit and much safer. We are applying for a grant to put up some murals at the arena. Our arena is looking very spiffy and we should be proud of the facility. There is one seat open on the Recreation Commission. The Planning Commission also has a vacancy. We are looking for a Deputy Health Officer and there will be lister positions on the ballot in March. We have lots of great volunteers in Highgate, but can always use more. If the weather turns sloppy, please bear with us. We have made an offer to a gentleman for the vacancy on the Public Works Department crew and hope to have him on board soon. Be patient with Butch and Nick as they work through this transition and head into colder weather. Sue Cota asked if a snow fence would be going up on Monument Road where the state has removed the trees. She has concerns about the wind. Josh does not want to set precedence, as there are lots of drifty spots in town. Sue understands the town's position. Ray Laroche circled back to the aviation plan at the airport. He stated that the plan is much more than people might realize. If they expand the runway and bring the airport up to a category III, it will allow small jets and will affect a lot of people.

J. Upcoming Events

Nov. 1	7pm	Selectboard Mtg.
Nov. 1		PROPERTY TAXES ARE DUE BY 5PM – POSTMARKS ARE NOT ACCEPTED
Nov. 5	5:30pm	Recreation Commission Mtg. @ arena
Nov. 6	7am-7pm	General Election @ Highgate Elementary School – Town Offices are CLOSED
Nov. 7	6:30pm	Library Trustee Mtg. @ library
Nov. 8	6pm	DRB Mtg.
Nov. 12		Veterans Day – Town Offices are CLOSED
Nov. 15	7pm	Selectboard Mtg.
Nov. 20	6pm	Planning Comm. Mtg.
Nov. 22 +23		Thanksgiving Holiday – Town Offices are CLOSED

Motion by Sharon Bousuquet to exit the regular meeting @ 7:58pm. The motion was seconded by Steve LaFar – **APPROVED**.

K. Executive Session

Motion by Sharon Bousquet to enter into executive session @ 7:59pm with Heidi Britch-Valenta and Ty Choiniere to discuss personnel, contracts and legal where premature general public knowledge would place the town and/or individuals involved at a substantial disadvantage. The motion was seconded by Josh LaRocque – **APPROVED**. Motion by Josh LaRocque to exit executive session @ 8:37pm. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED**.

L. Adjournment

Motion by Josh LaRocque to adjourn the meeting @ 8:38pm. The motion was seconded by Steve LaFar – **APPROVED**.

Minutes respectfully submitted by:



Wendi Dusablon – Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk

Minutes approved by:



Sharon Bousquet – Chair, Highgate Selectboard