

TOWN OF HIGHGATE

Approved Town Meeting Minutes

March 5, 2019

A. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:00am by Kyle Lothian, Town Moderator.

Highgate Selectboard Members: Sharon Bousquet; Joshua LaRocque; Randall Connelly; Bruce Butler; Steven LaFar

Highgate School Board Members: Chris Shepard; Lisa Wells; Steve Scott; David Roddy; Richard Flint

Highgate Staff: Heidi Britch-Valenta - Town Administrator; Shelley Laroche - Town Treasurer; Wendi Dusablon - Town Clerk; Kyle Lothian - Moderator

B. Pledge of Allegiance & Moment of Silence

Kyle Lothian asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. This was followed by a moment of silence for our fellow residents we have lost and all those that have sacrificed for us.

C. Miscellaneous Information from the Moderator

- Lunch is available to purchase for \$10.00 per person. Thank you to the Highgate Vol. Fire Department for preparing lunch for us today – spaghetti, salad, roll, dessert and a drink! Support HVFD and enjoy a great meal at the same time!
- There will be three questions, per person, per article allowed today, unless amended from the floor.
- If you are NOT a Highgate registered voter, same day voter registration is available at the check in table. Please make sure you are a registered voter prior to any paper ballots being called for. There will NOT be any voter registrations taking place in the middle of a paper ballot vote.
- Please treat each other well today and respect each everyone's opinions.
- Please wait for the microphone before speaking. Also, please state your name for the record. Direct all your questions or comments to the moderator.
- No campaigning of any kind if allowed inside the polling place. This includes any campaign materials or articles of clothing.
- 2018 Town Report Dedication – Sharon Bousquet read aloud from the plaque and presented it to Clarence & Debbie Miller. A copy of the dedication can be seen on page 2 of these minutes.

2018
Town Report Dedication
Clarence & Debbie Miller

Debbie (Bushey) Miller and Clarence "CJ" Miller were raised as part of large families, Debbie in Highgate VT and CJ in Mooers NY. CJ joined the US Army after graduation and was stationed in Germany. He continued to serve afterwards by joining the National Guard. Debbie and CJ met on a blind date back in 1968. They were married on May 9, 1970 and made their home in Highgate. The happy couple purchased their first home on Gore Road and raised their two children, Michelle and Scott within walking distance to school, church and sports. Debbie worked for Union Carbide and then became a stay at home mom to raise their children. She operated her own day care for 10 years then began a new career at Highgate Elementary School. Debbie retired in 2013 after 28 years of service at HES. CJ worked construction and advanced his career at Agway and then Feed Commodities, prior to "retiring" in 1999. He remains busy today working part time at O.C. McQuin and Sons.



Around town and in our community, Debbie & CJ have kept very busy volunteering with no signs of slowing down! CJ has been active with Missisquoi Amateur Hockey, The Vermont Hockey Board, Highgate Little League, and St. Louis Church. Within town government he has served as a Lister, Justice of the Peace, Trustee of Trust Funds, and on the Village Core Master Plan Committee. You will also find him lending a hand at Town Meeting or at the polls for elections. Aside from her many contributions at Highgate Elementary School, Debbie has always been ready and willing to prepare casseroles or desserts for families in our area or for various church dinners. She has worked at the arena snack bar, organized food donations for those in need and arranged the senior holiday meals at HES. Debbie has also been a welcoming and smiling face working at the check-in table at elections.



The Miller family has grown over the years to include a daughter-in-law, Jenn, a son-in-law, Luke and three grandchildren - Kyle, 20; Isaac, 19; and Olivia, 13. They enjoy spending time with their family, attending various sporting events, going on weekend trips and growing their retirement fund by improving their probability awareness at area casinos.

CONGRATULATIONS
 & THANK YOU

D. Legislative Updates

Charen Fegard and Lisa Hango were both present. Charen was elected in November and Lisa was recently appointed. Both are residents of Berkshire and represent FRA-5 which includes the towns of Richford, Berkshire, Franklin and Highgate. Motion by Chris Yates, seconded by Scott Martin to give them both permission to speak, as they are not Highgate residents. By voice vote - **PASSED**. Charen gave an update on topics her committee has been working on as well as other topics, including: Farm to School; Farm to Plate; On Farm Slaughter; Salisbury Fish Hatchery; Water Quality Initiatives: Pollinator Protection; Fish & Wildlife; Eco-Services & Regenerative Farming; and Forced School Mergers. She has a newsletter available on the table by the entrance for

folks to pick up and familiarize themselves with these issues. She is available to speak with or contact via email charenfegard@gmail.com, cfegard@leg.state.vt.us, www.charenfegard.com, or on FaceBook [CharenforHouse](#). By phone – 1-802-828-2228 (State House), 1-800-322-5616 (toll free) or 802-848-7303 (home). She is honored and grateful to have the opportunity to serve our district. Lisa Hango also gave an update. Her committee is the General Housing and Military Affairs Committee. She is still getting up to speed on protocols and procedures and thanked Charen and the rest of the delegation for making her feel at home in Montpelier. Her committee deals with issues such as: Alcohol Licensing; Affordable Housing; Landlord and Tenant Rights; Protecting Tenants; Sober Housing; Native American Affairs; VT Veterans Home; Weatherization and more. Lisa is also available to speak with or contact via email lhango@leg.state.vt.us or by phone 1-802-828-2228 (State House) or 1-800-322-5616 (toll free). There are surveys at the front table, and with the permission of the Town Clerk (permission granted by Wendi), please take a few moments to complete one if you wish. Lisa, too, is honored to be serving our district.

The Legally qualified voters of the Town of Highgate, Vermont are hereby warned and notified to meet at the Highgate Elementary School Gymnasium on Tuesday, March 5, 2019 @ 10am to transact the following business:

E. Review of Articles

Article #1 – To elect from the legal voters of said Town the following Officers.

1) One Moderator for the ensuing year:

Motion by Chris Yates, seconded by Scott Martin.

Motion by Chris Yates to nominate Kyle Lothian as School Moderator for the ensuing year. The motion was seconded by Scott Martin. There were no other nominations.

Article #1 by voice vote - **PASSED**.

Article #2 – To act upon the report of the School Directors.

Motion by Scott Martin, seconded by Allen Fortin.

Richard Wilkens asked about the school bond proposal and how that works with the unification coming up. Chris Shepard spoke to the issues with the building and grounds. An engineer was hired to do an assessment and provide a breakdown of what our needs are. The board then went through the list and picked out major ADA compliance issues and building issues, as well as addressing the problems with the parking lot. The proposal on Australian ballot today that is being put before the voters is what the board feels needs to be addressed. As far as consolidation, now this is a Highgate issue, we are voting on this as a town. If it passes, it will be the responsibility of our town unless a merger happens. The debt would be transferred to the new district. Phil Ladue expressed concern if other towns in our district do the same, our new district will have a bunch of debt. No other school in our district is proposing a bond vote this year, at this point. Samantha Laroche wanted to make sure people were clear that once we consolidate, if we are all smart, no other town will want another town's debt. She believes Swanton and Franklin are not going to want to pay for our debt. Chris Shepard stated that is not entirely correct. Articles of Agreement have been put together stating it will be shared. Lynn Calderwood noted if we don't pass the bond this time and the merger happens, we do not have a chance to do this again. She is not for raising taxes, but if we merge we won't have another opportunity to get the repairs done. If the bond fails, and a merger happens on schedule it would be a vote from all

towns voting on work at our school. She feels approving it today would be wise before we unify. Our town can decide what we want done to our own building. Maurice Parah feels this discussion is too late if it's already on the ballot. Bond votes, by statute, have to be voted on by Australian ballot. An info session was held last night in the library. Chris Shepard reiterated that as of now, we have Articles of Agreement that any debt would transfer to the new district. The pending lawsuit will determine more. Claude Chevalier asked how many quotes were received on the roof and parking lot issues to come up with the figures in the bond. Chris answered that no quotes were received. Due to a short timeline, the engineer's numbers were used. They aimed high because they won't be able to ask for more later on. Claude fears if contractors know how much money is available the bidding process could come in with high numbers. Chris feels that through the nature of competition, the bids will be kept down. Article #2 by voice vote – **PASSED**.

Article #3 – Shall the voters of the Highgate School District approve the transfer of approximately one-quarter (.25) acre of land, known as the Nadeau Property, for a sum of \$1.00 to an independent board of trustees comprised of three (3) Highgate community members, with the purchase being completed by June 30, 2019?

Motion by Ryan Maskell, seconded by Chris Yates.

Ty Choiniere asked who will decide who the three community members are and who do they answer to once appointed? Chris Shepard clarified the school board will appoint the members and once the Highgate School board is no longer (due to unification), the Selectboard would oversee it. Connie Beyor asked who will actually own the property, the trustees? It does not indicate in the article who we are giving the dollar and .25 acre property to. She assumes it will be the Town of Highgate. Connie also questions it belonging to a board of trustees because who will pay the insurance and taxes on it? Sharon Bousquet and Shelley Laroche confirmed, if an independent board owns it, it will have to be independently insured and taxes will have to be paid on it. Motion by Connie Beyor to amend the article to read: *Shall the voters of the Highgate Town School District approve the transfer of approximately one-quarter (.25) acre of land, known as the Nadeau Property, to the Town of Highgate, for the sum of \$1.00 to be overseen by an independent board of trustees comprised of three (3) Highgate community members, with the purchase to be completed by June 30, 2019?* The motion was seconded by Eric Chevalier. Bruce Butler asked about the intent of the board of trustees. The intent is to oversee the property, not for them to be granted the property. By voice vote the original motion as written and presented – **FAILED**.

Motion by Ryan Maskell to approve the amendment of the motion as presented. The motion was seconded by Eric Chevalier. Chris Yates asked why we need an independent board to oversee the property, why not just sell it to the Town for the Selectboard to manage as they do all town owned properties? Chris Yates also asked why the Cassidy property is not included in this article. Chris Shepard answered that there is already a memorandum in place to continue to use the Cassidy property as it is being used now. This agreement was signed by the School Board Chair in Highgate as well as the School Board Chair at MVU and the Cassidy family. The Flint family supplies water to the property. That agreement has to stay in place, regardless of whether or not we unify. This document is recorded in the town records. All three parties would have to agree to change it. The Nadeau land was gifted to the school and the school board feels it is more appropriate to put in the hands of a board of trustees. Lynn Calderwood had questions about the purpose of the transfer. The Nadeau property consists of the line of maple trees between M&R Guns & Ammo and Paws For Thought Veterinarian's Office. It also

borders the former Machia property. Because of ACT46 we are wishing to transfer this land now. Kyle Lothian re-read the article as amended: Shall the voters of the Highgate Town School District approve the transfer of approximately one-quarter (.25) acre of land, known as the Nadeau Property, to the Town of Highgate, for the sum of \$1.00 to be overseen by an independent board of trustees comprised of three (3) Highgate community members, with the purchase to be completed by June 30, 2019? Article #3, as amended, by voice vote – **PASSED.**

Article #4 – To transact any other business legally authorized to be transacted, considered appropriate and necessary when met.

Motion by Henry Rainville, seconded by Ryan Maskell.

Henry Rainville asked what will happen to the school portion of Town Meeting day if consolidation happens? We have a very important organization meeting on Thursday, March 21st @ 7pm @ MVU in the theater. A great deal will be determined at this meeting, including how we vote our school budgets and school board members as a district, from the floor or on the ballot. Later in this meeting there is an article to start Town Meeting earlier. Either way, there won't be any voting on school budgets or school board members at our Town Meeting. There will be informational meetings held, but there are still many details to figure out. Chris Yates inquired about terms for school board members that would end today. What do we need to do to continue our board members terms until a merger? Chris Shepard answered that because the individual school boards will be "going away" at the end of June, current board members whose terms are expiring will have to be extended and appointed for the last three months. If there is a delay in the merger, a separate meeting and vote will be needed. There were no further questions or comments. Article #4 by voice vote – **PASSED.**

Motion by Scott Martin to recess the Town School District Meeting and enter into Town Meeting. The motion was seconded by Eric Chevalier. By voice vote – **PASSED.**

The legal voters of the Town of Highgate, Vermont are hereby notified and warned to meet at the Highgate Elementary School in the Town of Highgate on Tuesday, March 5, 2019 between the hours of 7am, at which time the polls will open, and 7pm, at which time the polls will close, to vote by Australian ballot upon the following articles of business:

Article #1 – To elect the following town officers: (on Australian ballot)

- 1) A Moderator for the ensuing year;
- 2) One Town Clerk for a term of three (3) years;
- 3) One Town Treasurer for a term of three (3) years;
- 4) One Selectboard Member for a term of two (2) years;
- 5) One Selectboard Member for a term of three (3) years;
- 6) One Lister for the term of one (1) year remaining on a three (3) year term;
- 7) One Lister for the term of two (2) years remaining on a three (3) year term;
- 8) One Lister for the term of three (3) years;
- 9) One Trustee of Trust Funds for the term of three (3) years;
- 10) One Library Trustee for the term of five (5) years;
- 11) One Cemetery Commissioner for the term of five (5) years;

Motion by Chris Yates, seconded by Sharon Bousquet.

There were no questions or comments. Article #1 by voice vote – **PASSED.**

The legally qualified voters of the Town of Highgate, Vermont are hereby warned and notified to meet at the Highgate Elementary School Gymnasium on Tuesday, March 5, 2019 @ 10am to transact the following business:

Article #2 – To receive and act upon the reports of the town officers for the past year.

Motion by Richard Wilkens, seconded by Henry Rainville.

There were no questions or comments. Article #2 by voice vote – **PASSED**.

Article #3 – Shall the voters of the Town of Highgate set the final date of payment for FY2019/2020 property taxes to be Friday, November 1, 2019 with payments to be received in the town office by 4:30pm?

Motion by Scott Martin, seconded by Richard Noel.

Richard Wilkens asked about pre-payments and installment payments. Absolutely – payments can be brought in at any time throughout the year. Sue Cota thanked Shelley for working with residents and getting them on payments plans. Currently the amount of delinquent taxes is just under \$100,000.00 and it has not been this low in a very long time. Article #3 by voice vote – **PASSED**.

Article #4 – Shall the voters of the Town of Highgate appropriate \$7,424 for home health services provided by Franklin County Home Health Agency, Inc.?

Motion by Chris Yates, seconded by Henry Rainville.

Courtney Bates, Community Relations Coordinator from FCHH, was present. She is not a Highgate resident. Motion by Ty Choiniere to give permission for Courtney to speak. The motion was seconded by Scott Martin. By voice vote – **PASSED**. This was a petitioned article and they turned in the required number of signatures (minimum 110) by the due date. They are asking for the same amount as in prior years. She thanked us for our support in the past. In 2018 FCHH assisted 81 Highgate residents with 2,546 home visits. Maurice Parah asked for clarification on what the money goes for and asked where they receive their other funding from. FCHH relies on Medicare, fundraising and town allocations. Mr. Parah also had questions about where the \$7,424 from last year went. Heather Cota commented that FCHH did wonderful things for their family member when it was needed. Article #4 by voice vote – **PASSED**.

Article #5 – Shall the voters of the Town of Highgate amend the start time for Town Meeting beginning in March, 2020 to 9:00am?

Motion by Scott Martin, seconded by Brandi Maskell.

Motion by Henry Rainville to postpone this article until next year when we know about ACT46 and how this will all work with the school side of things. The motion was seconded by Connie Beyor. Chris Yates feels this article makes complete sense no matter which way ACT46 goes. Starting earlier would allow to possibly get through the school side of things before lunch, which has been an issue in the past. Lynn Calderwood wants to know how this will affect farmers and their ability to attend town meeting. Mary Roy also noted that a later start time gives more time in the event of bad weather. Shelley Laroche asked for a show of hands of how many farmers were present – there were 4-5 hands raised, some active farmers, some retired farmers, and none wanted to comment about their ability to attend. Article #5 by voice vote to postpone until 2020 was inconclusive. Article #5 by show of hands to postpone until 2020: YES-54 NO-40. Article #5 by show of hands – **POSTPONED UNTIL 2020**.

based on the condition of what we have and expected life span. Steve LaFar stated our PWD equipment is aging and we have short changed that department the last several years in the CIP. Randy Connelly added that the CIP is a planned approach and there is really no fluff added to the proposal. Diana O'Hara would like to see Durkee Road paved and wants to know why it hasn't been a priority. The paving budget is not part of the CIP. Claudine Delandes also had comments about paving and budgeting appropriately to pave current dirt roads. Again, these comments are not for this particular article. Chris Yates gave a shout out to HVFD for showing fiscal restraint on purchasing a new truck. They are asking to replace their truck, which is 30+ years old now, with a similar truck just a new model year. Chris would like to see the taxpayers fully fund the truck for them this year, aside from grant money. He feels we owe it to HVFD to give them the full \$116,000.00 they need in the CIP instead of \$50,000.00. Every year we put it off we are looking at another 7% increase and the wait time once it's ordered is approximately 370 days (one full year). If we vote this through and fully fund what they need, HVFD could have a new truck in 2020. Motion by Chris Yates to amend the CIP up to \$516,000.00, changing the HVFD truck line item from \$50,000.00 to \$116,000.00. The motion was seconded by Ty Choiniere. There was continued discussion on this, brainstorming different ways to take away from other line items and give to HVFD without raising the overall CIP. There were questions on the Machia Road slide repair line item. We do not know the full extent of that project yet. Rebecca Howrigan asked if we need to raise the CIP that much if there is a grant out there we are feeling positive about. Sharon believes this motion is being made in case we don't receive the grant for \$50,000.00 from Rural Development. Lisa Wells thanked HVFD and PWD for all they do to keep us safe. She asked what the tax implications are if everything passes as presented. Shelley provided figures for the town side of taxes. On a property assessed at \$200,000.00, taxes would go up \$72.31 on the town side. At the new figure of \$516,000.00 a property assessed at \$200,000.00 would go up \$105.00 on the town side of taxes. We can't speak to the school side, there is so much going on with ACT46 and the forced merger. Phil Ladue asked if all our PWD trucks are back in service – yes they are, and thankfully no one was injured during the icy weather when the Western Star was damaged. Clarence Miller stressed the need to look at what we need to have vs. what is nice to have. Chief Joe Depatie, HVFD, was present and gave some background on the current truck and NFPA regulations. Fire trucks should be replaced every 20 years. Ours is 30+ and this affects our ISO insurance rating as well. If we are in line with NFPA standards we will get a better rate for insurance. We had our rating this year, and passed – barely – and they asked when we were looking to replace that particular truck. Keith Ploof asked for confirmation if this was an ISO rating or a truck rating – Joe confirmed we have an ISO rating. The truck is testing at full capacity. Ty commented that if this amendment passes, we still need to move forward with the grant funding opportunities. It would mean that the town is reimbursed if the grant does come through. The Selectboard proposed the voters considering to remove \$50,000.00 from the grader line and \$10,000.00 from the ADA modifications and place that \$60,000.00 into the fire truck. This is not a Selectboard decision, it is a voter decision, they are just putting it out there for discussion. Chris Clodgo asked about grant reimbursement and how that works. Josh LaRocque pointed out that any extra funds would need to be reallocated the following year by the voters. Henry pointed out that you can't go backwards on a grant. He questions if we can move forward with the Rural Development grant if we have already purchased a truck. There are two grants in progress, Rural Development and FEMA. Rural Development is our best chance, funds are available and there are fewer applicants. The government shut down slowed everything down. If Rural

Development receives the funding, we have an excellent chance at \$50,000.00. Kyle Lothian's opinion is that delivery doesn't happen for at least a year, so if we purchase it, technically we haven't received or paid for anything yet. Mary Roy asked if we could reallocate \$60,000.00 in the event the grant doesn't come through. Motion by Ty Choiniere for Heidi Britch-Valenta, Town Administrator / Grant Writer, to speak, as she is not a Highgate resident. The motion was seconded by David Roddy – by voice vote - **PASSED**. Heidi stated that the Rural Development grant was applied for back in October but has been delayed because of the shutdown. A site visit was recently scheduled but was cancelled and is yet to be rescheduled. They are coming to our town to look around and we are in line for funding, so our chances are good that we will receive \$50,000.00 towards a new HVFD truck. One criteria is to show that we don't have the funds. So we may put ourselves in a bad spot if we allocate the money ahead of time. One document as part of the process is a demonstration of the need. Highgate has a good case, we have so many other expenses out of our normal operating expenses (example, slide repairs in different areas of town that other towns don't necessary deal with). We will be \$16,000.00 short with the grant. Cliff Poirier asked about replacement value. The old truck would be sold or traded and won't have much value, due to the year, not the mileage. Joe Depatie stated we might be able to get \$5,000.00 if we found someone who really wanted it. The truck is standard, and no departments are looking for that. Chris Yates commented that last year we were also in line for grant funding and that fell through. There was discussion on if this grant could be used towards our next purchase. The next oldest truck in the HVFD fleet is the Freight Line Tanker, model year 1998, which is also over 20 years old. Heidi replied that the grant is not transferrable to another truck. We can't get funds to put in the CIP and use at a later date – we would have to be willing to purchase a second vehicle or lose the funding. The time frame to use the grant funds is 12 months. Henry Rainville would like to keep the CIP as it was and asked the Selectboard to come up with the \$16,000.00 if that is what needs to happen. It was noted that all town equipment is important, but if the grader breaks down, nobody gets hurt and people aren't in danger. If a HVFD truck is down is has a very different effect on our community. Marc Bessette asked if the town has ever looked into used graders. Diana O'Hara asked how many dirt road miles we have in Highgate – this is a question for the next article. Richard Noel feels that looking at a good used grader when the time comes is very doable. He also stated we have been short changing the Public Works Department for years and that can't continue. There was discussion on the Casella fees and how they used to be used just to replace town equipment. It was also noted that if the roads are plowed, the fire trucks can't get there. Motion by Eric Chevalier to move the question on the amendment by Mr. Yates. The motion was seconded by Ryan Maskell – by voice vote - **PASSED**. Kyle re-read the article as amended: *Shall the voters of the Town of Highgate appropriate \$516,000.00 to meet the expenses and liabilities of the Capital Improvement Plan, with an estimated \$516,000.00 to be raised by taxes?* Kyle reminded everyone if we vote this forward we could lose the grant. Article #6 – as amended by voice vote – **FAILED**. We are now back to the original amount of \$450,000.00 and the article as original written – Motion by David Roddy, seconded by Scott Martin. There was further discussion and then a motion by Rebecca Howrigan to add \$50,000.00 to the CIP for the Highgate Library & Community Center building relocation effort, and if the Selectboard agrees, Rebecca would like to take this \$50,000.00 from the grader, as mentioned earlier. Sharon noted that this is not a Selectboard decision, this is a voter decision. Rebecca clarified her motion to add \$50,000.00 to the CIP for the library building relocation fund and take it from the grader line item, as was earlier suggested. The motion was seconded by George

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Greenwood. Rich Wilkins asked Rebecca if the library had been looking for grant funding. Rebecca replied that they are nowhere near close enough in the process to look at grant funding, and that a new library facility is at least five years away. Henry asked why HLCC has not participated in the CIP over the last few years. Rebecca answered the first year they tried and were denied. The next two years they went the route of a warned article on the town meeting warning. This year, the ball got dropped and they did not have near enough signatures on their petition for a warned article by the deadline. Steve LaFar doesn't feel \$50,000.00 should be taken from Public Works for HLCC at this time. It was suggested earlier to take it from the grader only because of the importance of upgrading the fire truck as soon as possible. Lynn Calderwood asked if we can leave the budget as is and give the Selectboard verbal permission to juggle things around. Shelley chimed in – no juggling, absolutely not. The funds have to be allocated to specific places by the voters today. Heather Cota said, nothing against the library, but we need a fire truck more right now. Kyle re-read the proposed amendment which has been motioned and seconded. The amendment to add \$50,000.00 to HLCC and take it from the grader – by voice vote – **FAILED**. Eric Chevalier had questions about future years and funding the Machia Road slide issue. We are still waiting on engineers for more answers. Last week we had a conference call on this project and at this point the solution includes concrete rods placed under the road to stabilize the entire bank. The erosion problem is a different project. We will wait to see how the spring thaw affects that bank. There is not enough information at this point to come up with an actual cost. Dianne Laroche asked about the former Machia property and what is happening there. \$20,000.00 is in this CIP for this year. The Steinhour Café recently came down and Steve LaFar gave a quick update on the next phases of the plan and the continued clean-up effort. Motion by Richard Noel to move the question and vote on the original article. The motion was seconded by Claude Chevalier – by voice vote to move the question and vote on the original article – **PASSED**. Kyle then re-read the article aloud as it was originally presented, as all amendments have been voted on and failed: Shall the voters of the Town of Highgate appropriate \$450,000.00 to meet the expenses and liabilities of the Capital Improvement Plan, with an estimated \$450,000.00 to be raised by taxes? Kyle explained that a yes vote will finish this article and a no vote will continue discussion. Article #6 by voice vote – **PASSED**.

Motion by Chris Yates, seconded by Scott Martin to recess for lunch @ 12:04pm. We will reconvene at 12:45pm.

Kyle Lothian, moderator, called the meeting back to order @ 1:04pm. He recapped what happened with article #6 before we broke for lunch.

Article #7 – Shall the voters of the Town of Highgate appropriate \$751,344 to meet the expenses and liabilities of the Highway Fund, with an estimated \$600,644 to be raised by taxes?

Motion by Chris Yates, seconded by Ty Choiniere.

Maurice Parah asked if the estimate given on our taxes included this article – Yes. Henry Rainville questioned how much of the highway budget is for paving and maintenance - \$256,000.00. We also have last year's paving list to complete as well. Diana O'Hara asked how many miles of dirt road are in Highgate – approximately 30 miles. Claudine Deslandes wonders why we can't do one mile per year until it is all caught up. It was noted we have to also maintain what we already have. To pave one mile of road is approximately \$100,000.00, and even more for a complete transition from dirt to paved. Diana expressed frustration with the dust on her road and other

roads being paved before hers (Durkee Road). Ryan Maskell reiterated that \$100,000.00 per mile is just to resurface, not start from scratch. Ty Choiniere asked if there are any current requests for the town to take over any roads in town. Sharon replied we currently have one that was rejected because it did not meet the specs and that Boone Drive has been added to the towns list of roads, but no others are pending at the moment. Ty recommends not taking over any new roads because we have all we can do to maintain what we have. Richard Noel spoke to the costs associated with paving roads that are currently dirt. Chris Yates commented that our lane miles on our plow routes are the highest town around. This is not an easy problem to fix. He also commented on sand / salt mixture vs. using straight salt on paved roads. Chris spoke to the advantages of running straight salt on our paved roads. These include, less overtime, no clean up, shoulders won't deteriorate by holding water and there is some debate on if it improves water quality as well. Chris sees advantages to both our paved and dirt roads by not putting so much salt in our sand that we use on dirt roads. Sharon commented that we did increase our stone and gravel budget considerably this year. Claude Chevalier asked for a page reference in the town report – pages 58-59. Henry Rainville would like to see time and money spent taking the shoulders off the roads in places where they are high. Often times the pavement is compromised in these areas. In his opinion, if we maintain the shoulders it will cost less to maintain that same section of road. Josh LaRocque agrees that has been neglected. This summer after the Mill Hill project, the shoulders and tree trimming are on the agenda. Michael Kravetz asked if the town has ever considered using brine instead of straight salt. No, but that is something to look into. Keith Ploof asked about sidewalk maintenance. That has been a collaboration between Parks & Rec. and Public Works. Keith pointed out that a portion of the sidewalk on Lamkin Street is often underwater. The town will have to get back with the contractor and engineers on that issue. Mary Roy asked about drainage work on Frontage Road and if that is shown in the budget. There is a grant for that project on the north end of Frontage Road. Chris Clodgo asked if the budget number is to keep up with what we have or actually make repairs. The answer is both, per Josh LaRocque. Money was added to the stone budget to improve situations in many areas, as well as funds for culverts. Philip (Butch) Brosseau, Public Works Director, spoke that he has been a town employee for over 15 years and has seen very extreme weather in more recent years. The weather is really beating on us, with personnel and on our equipment. Ty asked about our recent job posting for part time drivers at \$16.00 per hour. He doesn't think this is enough to recruit and retain help. Josh would not be opposed to raising that figure to help the crew out. Marc Bessette asked how much more was allocated to gravel vs. last year and still questions if it is enough. Diana O'Hara stated the gravel on her road ends up in the ditch or on the lawn. Josh clarified we have been adding more fines in with it to hold better and not roll as much. Richard Flint said 20 years ago we didn't have feed trucks / corn trucks / manure trucks and other large equipment running our roads every day. He is a farmer too but said these large trucks and equipment are a big part of the problem. They don't cover their loads either. He loves farming and farmers, but that is where a lot of the problem is. He knows they don't want to hear it, but it's the truth. Patty Rainville agreed, there are a lot of large trucks on the road, but farmers also put a lot back into the community. Patty asked for a round of applause to show our gratitude for the Public Works Department and all they do for us! Chris Yates asked if there was any talk about looking at our Class III inventory of roads that have very few houses and turning them into Class IV roads. Richard Flint doesn't think that is a good idea. We have plenty of dirt roads that the milk trucks need to travel down, and doing something like that would be wrong. HVFD also needs to get down these roads when necessary. Chris feels the PWD time could be

better spent elsewhere. Phil Ladue asked about weight limits on roads and why they aren't enforced. We do have weight limits on our roads and on the bridge in East Highgate. During the spring, a permit can be purchased to run extra weight on the roads. Enforcement would be through FCSO, whom we have a contract with. Motion by Ty Choiniere to amend article #7 to add \$7,000.00 for temporary help and to add \$15,000.00 for stone and gravel = a total increase of \$22,000.00 to the Highway Fund. The motion was seconded by Ryan Maskell. Ryan asked how much overtime is being put in. Last year OT was \$18,000.00+. Sharon stated there are factors, such as weather that we just can't plan for. Accidents also do happen, like hitting the building. Our crew is tired, they need rest and we need to take care of them. We have reached out to other towns to see if "sharing" temporary help is an option, neighbor helping neighbor. We have used one temporary employee over the winter who also works temporary for the Town of Franklin. Henry Rainville proposed looking at hiring drivers based on seasonal needs and sharing resources with other companies who may have greater demand during the summer months when we don't. Richard Noel added that you have to have a CDL "B" and be able to pass a physical and drug screening. Phil Ladue feels people just don't want to work and would rather have a hand out. Joyce LaFar added that some businesses pay for people to get their CDL as incentive. Kyle Lothian, moderator, recapped the article and where we are at. Currently we are voting on the amendment to add \$22,000.00 (\$7,000.00 in temporary help and \$15,000.00 in stone / gravel) amending article #7 to read: Shall the voters of the Town of Highgate appropriate \$773,344.00 to meet the expenses and liabilities of the Highway Fund, with an estimated \$622,644.00 to be raised by taxes? The amendment to article #7 – by voice vote – **PASSED**. Motion by Chris Yates to move the article. The motion was seconded by Connie Beyor – by voice vote motion to move the article – **PASSED**. Kyle re-read the article as amended (above) at the new amounts of \$773,344.00 with \$622,644.00 to be raised by taxes. Article #7 as amended by voice vote – **PASSED**.

Article #8 – Shall the voters of the Town of Highgate appropriate \$1,009,801 to meet the expenses and liabilities of the General Fund, with an estimated \$405,479 to be raised by taxes?

Motion by Chris Yates, seconded by Ryan Maskell.

The general fund budget can be found on page 48 of the town report. Ryan Maskell asked about the cell tower revenue – it increases 2% each year. Chris Yates asked if there was anywhere we could make up the difference or add \$66,000.00 to know we are covered in case the grant for the HVFD truck falls through. The HVFD budget is shown on page 53. Chris asked where funds could be placed to know we could move forward with the HVFD truck purchase, regardless. Sharon stated it was within the authority of the voters to propose an amendment and add a line item. It was noted that we don't want to screw up any grant opportunity. Claude Chevalier asked about column totals in the town report and how they work together to come up with the requested amount. Shelley Laroche, treasurer, said the auditors will have a field day with her if money is put into general supplies and is spent on a fire truck. If a motion is made to amend it, she would like to see that added to the fire truck line item. Ryan asked if it will throw up any red flags with regard to the grant. There was discussion on wording it as to not include "to purchase". Maurice Parah wonders why we are discussing this again, it was already talked about at length in the CIP. HVFD has a budget within the general fund. Mary Roy asked Heidi if we were to do anything with the HVFD budget will that work against us with the grant. Heidi can't answer it as simply as that. To get the grant that is on the table right now, it looks favorable. To set aside money in the CIP it would work against the case she is making that we have a need for the funds. Right now we

are discussing the general fund and Heidi doesn't know if it will set off any red flags but it would set precedence. We also need to consider if it would require another town vote to move the funds when it is time to purchase a truck. Bruce Butler suggests if we are not successful with the HVFD grant, then we call a special town meeting to move or vote new funds to cover that circumstance. Henry Rainville noted that if it comes to that point, the Selectboard has the authority to borrow money if it comes down to a need. An emergency vehicle would fall into that category and the Selectboard has that authority. Sharon feels that isn't correct, but Shelley commented that for an emergency vehicle that they do have the authority. Some present disagreed with that. Henry asked, are we a rich town, poor town or middle of the road town? He feels we are somewhere in the middle and that putting all this money aside makes us look like a rich town and the line is being drawn too far to one side. Sharon wants everyone to be involved with school budgets as well. Richard Flint wants to move on, stating we have been "beating this dead horse all day" (referring to discussion on the HVFD truck). Melanie Thompson reminded everyone that the costs goes up 7% per year (average) the longer we put this HVFD truck purchase off. The time frame and wait time will also be extended. Ty asked about the HVFD auxiliary fund and how much is in that account and what the plans are for that money. Joe Depatie, HVFD Chief, prepared to answer when a point of order was called. The HVFD auxiliary account is not part of the general fund budget and the question was not allowed. Brian Rowell commented that tariffs are already in place and it will be a year before we could get the truck anyway, so the cost would likely go down before we are ready to purchase. Motion by Richard Noel to move the question. The motion was seconded by David Roddy – by voice vote – **PASSED.** Kyle re-read the article as were ready to vote. He noted that the amounts have not changed and article #8 remains as presented \$1,009,801.00 with \$405,479 to be raised by taxes. Article #8 by voice vote – **PASSED.**

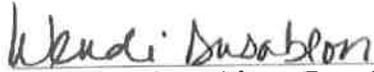
Article #9 – To transact any other business legally authorized to be transacted, considered proper and necessary when met.

Motion by Henry Rainville, seconded by Richard Noel.

Sharon wanted to recognize a few people. Liza Comiskey with HVFD has been recognized by NFPA as a National Rising Star for 2019 for her outstanding work with fire and life safety education. This is a great honor for our department and our community, as well as the Comiskey family. We are very proud of you, Liza. Please visit the HVFD table here today. Free smoke detectors are available. Also, Steve LaFar is ending his term on the Selectboard. We thank him for his two years of service and would be happy to have him back any time. Evangeline LaRocque wanted to take a few moments while she had a captive audience. She gave some history on the former Machia property, now owned by the Town of Highgate and recalled how beautiful the property was years ago. It has suffered from years of neglect and is slated for possible demolition. She finds this very disturbing and feels it should have a similar effect on the people of Highgate. She is asking for Highgaters to wake up and not let this happen. There were no other comments or questions. Kyle re-read the article aloud. Article #9 by voice vote – **PASSED.**

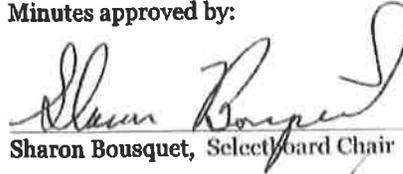
Motion by Henry Rainville to adjourn Town Meeting 2019 @ 2:00pm. The motion was seconded by Claude Chevalier – by voice vote – **PASSED.**

Respectfully submitted by:



Wendi Dusablon, Highgate Town Clerk

Minutes approved by:



Sharon Bousquet, Selectboard Chair



Chris Shepard, School Board Chair



Kyle Lothian, Town & School Moderator