

TOWN OF HIGHGATE
Planning Commission Mtg.
June 18, 2019 @ 6pm

Approved Minutes

NOTE: All actions taken are unanimous unless otherwise stated.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Luc Dupuis, Chair, opened up the meeting @ 6:04pm.

Present for this meeting were:

Planning Commission Board Members; Luc Dupuis – Chair; Tom Conley – Vice Chair; Ken Thompson; Richard Noel *absent – Bruce Ryan*

Town of Highgate Staff: Heidi Britch-Valenta – Town Administrator & Planner; Wendi Dusablon – Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk (left @ 7:05pm)

Public / Other: Richard Trombley

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Richard Noel to approve the minutes from May 21, 2019, as written. The motion was seconded by Tom Conley – **APPROVED.**

III. TAX STABILIZATION

This was discussed at length at the 5/21/19 meeting and two other policies (Newport and Enosburg) were used as models. Heidi had typed up a draft policy for this meeting and the board compared the policies, going through each section to find a good fit for Highgate. One policy begins with a "Purpose and Preamble" whereas the other begins with a "Statement of Purpose". Ken liked the idea of a side by side comparison and using criteria from both policies as we see fit, and he also likes the criteria ranking. Heidi has printed out a few property cards from local businesses for the board to use as examples. Richard Noel pointed out that there will not be a flood of applications, at least right away, and any policy can always be tweaked as we move forward. There was discussion on the ability to rank businesses based on the diversity of the business. Heidi will look into amending this policy and what it would entail. This policy will need to be approved by the voters at Town Meeting or a Special Town Meeting. Rick Trombley had questions about the ranking system. The system will put each applicant on a level playing field and there is a baseline for decisions to be made. There was further discussion on agriculture and forest land businesses not being eligible. Richard Noel pointed out that farmers, for example, already have a tax stabilization plan in place, which is the current use program. It was noted at the last meeting, but mentioned again that this policy is only for the MUNICIPAL side of taxes. This will be clearly stated in any policy we adopt. Luc looks at this as an incentive for businesses to want to come here. With the airport expansion and other things happening in that area this policy will likely be utilized in the coming years. The PC would like the listers and treasurer to be involved with the process prior to it going to the Selectboard for approval. Heidi will check on the procedure to see if the application can even come to the PC first. The PC won't be making any decisions, it will strictly be for review purposes, but the Selectboard can decide how they want the flow to be. Agreements will also need to be drawn up between the applicant and the town. Heidi had example documents to share with the group as well. By statute, a tax stabilization policy can go out as far as ten years, but we are looking at five year terms. The documents will be edited based on the discussion and Heidi will invite the listers and treasurer to attend the next PC meeting on July 16th.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS & UPDATES

- **Bylaw Review** – Rick Trombley, Chair of the Development Review Board, was present for this discussion. There is a list already started of potential edits and changes for the next bylaw revision. This list is primarily things that have been jotted down over the years, as well as notes added by Anna Roberts (former ZA) and Samantha Derosia (current ZA). Rick has some notes to add as well. Heidi prefaced the discussion by noting that bylaw revisions require public hearings and public input, particularly if the town is considering looking at lot size requirements. Currently the acreage requirements are the same in all districts – one acre, town wide. There was an attempt to change the acreage requirements in the forest reserve

district and that did not go over well at that time. Luc asked about interim bylaws and if they are an option. Heidi believes this would just require Selectboard approval (interim), without doing a complete rewrite. If there is a pressing issue, interim bylaws would have a sunset date. It is designed to get you through to your next complete bylaw rewrite. Rick elaborated some on some edits and changes the DRB would like to see considered. The issue of paving a road after so many lots are developed was one of them. Heidi pointed out that the final decision letter is a time to clarify that. Richard Noel asked why we would mandate paving if the developer and / or the residents of that road are not looking to have the town take it over. Rick gave an example of a development that is not up to standards, the culverts are not the right size, the road is not to A76 standards, etc. Heidi feels the work needs to start with the DRB by coming up with a list of changes / edits they would like to see. There is a list started, but more detail and content is needed. The DRB (and Zoning Admin.) are the primary users of the bylaws. They need to come to the PC with their recommendations and suggestions. More detail is needed in the sections on junkyards, pedestrian access and ADA parking compliance, to name just a few. "Smart Growth Principals" were discussed. The town has a large planning grant to look at economic impact to extend infrastructure from MVU to the airport and the surrounding area for industrial / commercial development. We applied to VT Community Development and were given the funds to do this. The criteria requires "Smart Development" so that we are clustering accesses (shared drives) and the principals need to be outlined in our bylaws. We will have to look at this for the grant, so when businesses start to come in, it is done in an orderly fashion with thought behind it. Heidi noted that George Coy has been pushing the state because of a backlog of people wanting to put up hangars. A bill from Community Development and VTrans was introduced to have the state manage the permitting process for those hangars, and that was just signed. This will have a very positive impact on development at our airport and additional tax revenue for the town. Past bylaw rewrites have involved NRPC and a municipal planning grant. These grants will be opening soon. We have already discussed with NRPC to use these grant funds to come up with the town's economic development plan. Heidi has an appointment next week to meet with NRPC and begin the process. We will need to find another way to tackle the bylaw changes / edits. NRPC will also be looking at our bylaws to make sure they are working with the regional plan and our town plan. The DRB will need to come to the PC with the changes / edits they desire. Rick asked about any other grant opportunities. NRPC may be able to do it without a grant, we can see. Most of the changes being discussed currently are minor. Anna Roberts (former ZA) had made a note about future utilities being all underground. It looks nicer and is a safer situation. The municipal planning grant opens in August. It had been discussed to use those funds for an overall economic development plan. We had explored having a separate economic development board and the PC decided to take on a project to see how it goes (tax stabilization), which is currently being worked on. The PC could also look at impact fees in the future as another project. Highgate does not have staff to do inspections or to do certification. There was more discussion on paved roads vs. dirt roads. The town would never consider taking over a road that is not paved and up to A76 standards. The DRB has been requesting paved roads in decision letters quite regularly. History has shown that a developer doesn't stay with a project long and if it isn't paved early on in the process it likely won't get paved. Rick will have a discussion with the DRB on this topic. Richard Noel brought up the issue of demolishing a property or structures on a property and properly notifying the listers office. He does not feel a permit should be necessary or at least not be charged for a demo permit to properly document this. It should be mentioned in our bylaws that there are state regulations with regard to demolishing a property properly and safely. The state inspector lives right here in Highgate and the fines are steep for failure to follow proper protocol. Rick has been in touch with David Murrish at ANR about an issue on Route 78 that has possible violations. ANR has been in touch with the landowner, Gilbert Tremblay, and this is being looked into.

- **Community Celebration Update** – A lot of work has been done to clean up and spruce up the site and we did receive a \$1,500.00 grant for the celebration on Aug. 17th. The next meeting for the Village Core Master Plan

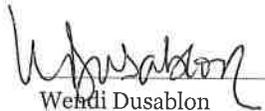
is on June 25th @ 6pm. Richard asked when the Selectboard will be visiting the property to give the ok to proceed with the celebration. Heidi did ask them to visit the property on June 20th but they have employee evaluations prior to the Selectboard Mtg. already.

- **Misc. Updates** - The Selectboard is holding a hearing on July 18th for a potential reclassification of the Hanna Road. The statute requires the PC to be notified and invited to participate. Basically it puts us in a different category for grant funding (class II vs. class III road). The road runs through Highgate and Franklin, so the Franklin Selectboard is participating as well. Heidi let the PC know about a leadership conference happening Aug. 12th in Randolph. Mark Fenton was in our area recently and visited several towns to discuss walkability and pedestrian friendly infrastructure. He gave good comments on the VCMP property and he also looked at the school parking lot. The bond has been passed to repave it, which will happen next year. If pedestrian routes are incorporated it will connect to the walking path. He suggested in front of the cars that park facing the street that jersey barriers be installed and a striped crosswalk. Further discussion needs to happen with the school board to make this happen. There was discussion on the drainage issues at the school and rain gardens proposed for the site. Heidi provided a grant update. We did receive the \$50,000.00 rural development grant for the fire truck. It will need to go back out to bid, but we have time. The Machia Road bridge (B25) will be open at the latest by Oct. 1st. We have received a paving grant for Gore Rd. to Tarte Rd. and another grant for a concrete box culvert on Frontage Road. The electric vehicle charging station is installed at the park and ride and is operational. Swanton will be revising their bylaws and they are required to notice adjoining towns. Their rewrite will include changing definitions and sign regulations. The Airport Infrastructure Study Group will be interviewing consultants for their planning grant, tomorrow June 19th.

V. **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Richard Noel to adjourn the meeting @ 7:57pm. The motion was seconded by Tom Conley - **APPROVED**.

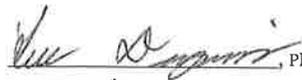
Minutes respectfully submitted by:

 Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk
Wendi Dusablon

7-16-19
Date

(left meeting @ 7:05pm - the remainder of these minutes were transcribed from the audio recording)

Minutes approved by:

 Planning Commission - Chair
Luc Dupuis

7-16-19
Date