

TOWN OF HIGHGATE

Selectboard Mtg.

February 18, 2016 @ 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 (was participating via speaker phone for the entire meeting); *absent were Paulette Tatro and Randy Connelly*

Highgate Office Staff – Wendi Dusablon - Town Clerk; Heidi Britch-Valenta – Town Administrator;

Public / Other – Andy King – Public Works Director; Shirley Fecteau, Peter St. Germain, Aimee Reynolds – Listers; Vonnie Lamotte – ACO; John Ferland, Clarence Miller, Evangeline LaRocque – Trustees; Sarah & Eric Chevalier; Joshua LaRocque

B. Public Comment

There was no public comment. Jeff noted for the record that they do have a quorum for this meeting, as Diana O'Hara is participating telephonically and that Jeff and Chris are present physically.

C. Public Works Department – Andy King

1. AOT right of way request

Andy presented some information regarding a right of way request from AOT with regard to the area of Route 78 and Carter Hill Road. They are requesting a temporary easement to accomplish construction and a permanent easement for any emergency maintenance that would need to happen. A fee has been brought forth by AOT to purchase the right of ways, \$2,600.00 total for both the permanent and temporary easements. VTrans is working with private land owners regarding private property. They will bore under the road so it will not adversely affect traffic. Motion by Chris Yates to sign off on the Vermont Agency of Transportation option for the rights both temporary and permanent on the town property at the corner of Carter Hill Road and Route 78. The motion was seconded by Diana O'Hara – **APPROVED**. Andy further clarified that the work will be done this summer.

2. Misc. updates

- The culvert replacement hydraulic study has been received for the Tarte Road culverts. Another culvert has been identified on the Durkee Road and a study has been requested for that location today.
- Gore Road crosswalk – we can't do anything on this until warmer weather.
- Andy is also working on several documents including the traffic ordinance, street light ordinance, town road audit and an intersection management audit.
- BBR and AOT grants are coming up. He will be looking for guidance from the Selectboard on the Class II Structures grant.
- There was a main hydraulic pump fail on the Western Star during a recent storm. No one had the pump in stock, but Andy eventually found one at HP Fairfield in Morrisville. It was changed out in house and is back in operation. Chris asked if the pump runs as much as the truck runs – yes it does. He also asked Andy if that is the way to order a truck if we do that again – no, Andy said it is not.
- Repairs to the backhoe will start tomorrow.
- VTrans certificate of highway mileage was signed at the last meeting.
- Andy is working with Chris on the Jedware road agreement. A culvert was replaced last year on Monument Road / Tanglewood Drive and the

homeowners association paid half. It has been inquired about if this was an appropriate agreement, they will continue to look for clarity.

- Andy will meet with Jim Cota and John Wilkins before submitting the emergency grant paperwork associated with the Morey Road culvert for reimbursement.
- All is going well with plowing, we have had a lot of small accumulations of nuisance snow which makes it tricky. The crew is doing a great job. We had some fairly significant ice accumulation this past Tuesday that they kept up with.
- Andy will be looking for drainage documents for the Lamkin Street area past the church where the water ponds. Andy took photos the other day.
- There is another drainage issue to be addressed on Charles Circle. It could be a possible water line leak causing the issue.
- Heidi added that she has received the draft of the safety audit from AOT regarding the intersection of Route 78 and Machia Road by the bridge. Many of the issues will be addressed with the new bridge alignment.

D. Board of Listers – Shirley Fecteau, Peter St. Germain, Aimee Reynolds

All three listers were present for an update. They have been busy inspecting properties and have about 33 more to do prior to April 1st. They also will complete a road survey in town, driving around to make sure there is no new construction they have missed. They go by building permits, but do find some new structures without permits every now and then. They recently finished the current use project. Some people are opting out of the program and the state was backed up, which made the towns fall behind as well. The Highgate listers had filed for an extension, which the Selectboard approved. The grand list was finalized on January 25, 2016. Chris asked for the new grand list value, Shirley was not sure of the exact figure but it is in the vicinity of \$3,908,000.00. The listers have begun to download homestead declarations (HS-122) and it was noted that this year late filers will be assessed the penalty. The town will not be waiving that penalty for late filing of your homestead. It creates a great deal of work. Tomorrow, 2/19/16, the listers will be attending a class in Burlington on CAMA through the State of Vermont. To date, 30+ letters have been received by the listers from camp owners along the water, complaining about water quality along Lake Champlain in Highgate Springs. The listers will be working on something to help people out that are in this situation with their properties along the lake. This is not a short term project, but rather a very long one. Aimee has assembled a list of property owners along the shoreline that have actual lake frontage (not right of ways or lake access). Chris asked what other towns are doing. Shirley is only aware of the Town of Georgia, they gave a flat rate of \$50,000.00 reduction on assessed values of affected properties. Shirley doesn't know all the details, she needs to talk with the assessors more and see what other towns are also planning to do. Diana asked if the state is requiring this – no, they are not. Chris asked if all the properties on the list have a camp or year round home on them – yes. Very few on the list are year round homes. Jeff agrees, about 90% are seasonal, an example is Camp Randolph that is an association and has 386' of shoreline. Heidi asked about the process and if it's treated like a grievance. Pete added that back during the reappraisal, all the land grades were dropped which helped some. Shirley noted that the letters are accompanied by photos and other documentation. Only 12 of the letters are people that have water front with their land. The rest are camps located within Camp Randolph or someone else owns the land. Jeff believes that with regard to Camp Randolph the shoreline is part of the common land. Our district advisor was here last week to start the conversation with the listers on this. Jeff clarified the process currently in place is the grievance process. The first step is the listers, and it can then move to the BCA and even to the state level. The listers have a big project ahead of them, no doubt. Chris asked the listers to keep the board in the loop throughout the process. If there are changes to the grand list, that affects everyone, not just the shoreline. There are many variables for this situation. Jeff advised that they use the process that is in place, go slowly and use caution. Jeff has property that is included on the list Aimee came up with. He also reiterated that any changes affect every property owner in the town of Highgate. Water quality has suffered but help is on the way, although a little too late. The load of phosphorus in the bay is such that we have to see an 85% improvement, which is the task of the EPA and ANR. Lowering property values is not going to solve the problem in the lake, but people are being affected by not being able to use their property. They pay more for taxes just for living along the lake frontage. A blanket fix won't be the answer so Chris would like the listers to

create a process that works so it's fair to everyone across the board. The board asked the listers if they need any info regarding solar projects as far as setting those up in the grand list. Roger (district advisor) will be able to help when the time comes. He knows the framework which is set by the state. We have a total of 5 projects proposed in Highgate, 2 applications have been filed so far, and none have been approved yet. Heidi noted that the Rutland Town Solar Resolution was presented to the board some time ago. The board asked for feedback from the Planning Commission before proceeding. The PC met on Feb. 16th and agree it is in the best interest of our town to sign it. The resolution is asking the legislature for more of a voice at the town level regarding renewable energy projects. Currently, town zoning regulations have no value in the decision by the PSB. Motion by Chris Yates to sign the Rutland Town Solar Resolution. The motion was seconded by Jeff Towle – **APPROVED**. Shirley added that they will miss Jeff and Diana on the Selectboard since neither of them are running again for another term. The board thanked the listers for being here and for the update.

E. ACO update – Vonnie Lamotte

Vonnie has one open complaint up on Spooner Road yet to address regarding dogs running loose and out chasing traffic. She is having a difficult time reaching the owner at home. A letter was sent and Vonnie has been up there, he is never home and she has not seen the dogs. A certified letter will be sent regarding this. Things with Kristy Brow are working very well, the communication has been great! We had a few dog bites in January, which Vonnie followed up on. Chris asked her to please fill out the dog bite report paperwork at the conclusion of these incidents and keep a copy on file at the office also. She purchased seat covers for her car recently and has looked at purchasing a large kennel. She has a small and medium dog kennel and two cat carriers. FCAR is not open on Sundays or Mondays, and in the event we pick up a large dog and Kristy does not have room to take it, we will need a large kennel.

F. Trustees update – John Ferland, Clarence Miller, Evangeline LaRocque

The trustees put information in the town report every year. They don't meet much during the year, maybe just two or three times. They manage the trust funds from each individual cemetery, the library and the historical society. Once disbursements are figured out, they cut the checks. In the past, Tom has met with the trustees informally to see how things were going. They pop in periodically to check their mailbox at the office and open bank statements. Everything is broken down by percentages, and there is not much business throughout the year, other than if cemetery lots are sold. They work a small amount with the town treasurer to get checks to the correct people. John noted that the only big issue they have ever experienced was a few years ago the diocese asked that they return funds from the St. Louis Cemetery to the parish. At the end of 2014 they had to cash out some cd's and bonds to come up with the \$47,000.00 to pay them off and give them their share of what they had invested in the town. Diana asked if the town takes care of anything at the St. Louis Catholic Cemetery. No, they take care of all their own maintenance. Maurice Parah told John that folks aren't purchasing lots the way they used to, so even that cemetery is finding itself to be short on funds. Clarence's term is up in March, he is unopposed on the ballot. Evangeline's role is doing the deposits and recorded them in the checkbook. The board thanked them for being here and for the update.

G. Town Clerk – Wendi Dusablon

1. Approval of minutes

Motion by Chris Yates to approve the minutes from *February 4, 2016* as presented. The motion was seconded by Diana O'Hara – **APPROVED**. *Chris noted that going forward they would like to get any grammatical corrections to Wendi ahead of time and any content changes should be addressed at the next Selectboard meeting.*

2. Hockeyville update

Nominate the arena through March 11th at www.krafthockeyville.com. We currently have approximately 450 nominations, which is great. We need to keep the momentum going to give us a shot at earning more money towards renovations.

3. Town Meeting updates

- Last day to register to vote is Wednesday, Feb. 24th by 5pm.
- Lunch at town meeting will be provided by the Highgate PTKO. \$7.00 per person for baked ziti, salad, desert and a drink.

- Free childcare will be provided at town meeting in the school library by volunteer high school students. Please call by Feb. 26th if you will need this service.
- Absentee ballots are available, contact Wendi for more details.

4. Dog licensing

License your dogs by April 1st to avoid late fees. Fines will also be assessed after May 1st. The annual rabies clinic will be held March 19th from 10am – noon @ HVFD.

H. Town Administrator – Heidi Britch-Valenta

- The equipment grant through PACIF is open and we can apply for 50% off purchases that will improve safety and reduce the likelihood of insurance claims. It is open to all departments. Chris asked if security cameras would qualify – yes, that is considered loss prevention. The challenge is supporting the case and making the grant application stronger.
- The ADA grant is moving forward. We have received 4 proposals to work with the town to assess the building and ADA compliance as well as the best way to utilize the second floor. Heidi has a committee forming that will participate in ranking the proposals – Larry and Barb from the PC, Andy, Wendi and Shelley. The listers may want to have a representative also to have their concerns heard. Heidi would like a rep from the Selectboard also, she will check with Randy. Once we get the rankings back from the committee we will schedule our first meeting in early March.

I. Selectboard items

1. Check warrants

Shelley is not present but did prepare the warrants for the board to review. Diana will stop in on Friday to sign the check warrants.

2. Misc.

- There is a 10 acre parcel between Monument Road and the Missisquoi River that is partially in Highgate. The town has been informed that it is being donated to Fish and Wildlife.
- Ray's Auto on Route 78 down by MVU had submitted an application to the Selectboard to sign off on their location. COAL – certificate of approved location. This is done every three years in conjunction with their licensure from the state. Heidi did a site visit and will be working with them towards compliance. They have time to resolve the issues, as their COAL is not due to the state until the end of May. They have been very cooperative. This issue is tabled for now.

J. Other Business

None

K. Upcoming events

Feb. 24	by 5pm	Last day to register to vote
Mar. 1	10am	Town Meeting Day @ Highgate Elem. Polls open 7-7
Mar. 3	7pm	Selectboard Mtg.
Mar. 7	6pm	Arena Construction Comm. Phase II @ arena
Mar. 10	6pm	DRB Mtg.
Mar. 15	6pm	PC Mtg.
Mar. 17	7pm	Selectboard Mtg.
Mar. 19	10am – noon	Rabies clinic @ HVFD
Apr. 1		Dog licenses due – late fees after Apr. 1 as well as fines after May 1
Mar. 5		New date for Duct Tape Derby – provided we have snow!

L. Executive Session

Motion by Jeff Towle to enter into executive session @ 8:05pm to discuss legal and personnel issues. Premature public knowledge would put the town at a severe disadvantage. The motion was seconded by Chris Yates – **APPROVED.**

Motion by Chris Yates to exit executive session @ 9:08pm The motion was seconded by Diana O'Hara – **APPROVED.**

M. Adjournment

Motion by Chris Yates to adjourn the meeting @ 9:10pm. The motion was seconded by Diana O'Hara - **APPROVED.**

Respectfully submitted by,

Wendi Dusablon, Highgate Town Clerk

Minutes approved by,

Jeff Towle, Chair – Highgate Selectboard