

TOWN OF HIGHGATE

Selectboard Mtg.

November 5, 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 @ 7:02pm, 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 Administrator; Shelley Laroche – Town Treasurer

Public / Other – Andy King – Public Works Director; Vonnie Lamotte – ACO; Ben Lowell – Constable; Andre & Linda Gagne – VAST; Dick & Merry Souza – HVFD; Ty Choiniere – Parks & Rec. Committee; Ed Adrian – Town Council (via conference call during executive session)

B. Public Comment

None

C. ACO Update – Vonnie Lamotte

We have 850+ dogs licensed in the town of Highgate as of today, and three more are due to come in tomorrow. If they do not follow through, they will be ticketed. Vonnie expressed concern about a dog, Max, that was picked up for roaming and taken care of by Kristy until the owners could pay the fines and go pick him up. The dog was infested with fleas and the owners signed an agreement to have him treated within a month. Kristy followed up earlier this week and the owners did not follow through with seeking treatment for Max. Kristy has documented this and sent everything to Wendi for their file. Heidi noted that if they do not follow through as agreed, we will be going to court on another issue and this issue can be lumped in with that. Vonnie stated that Franklin County Animal Rescue will not take animals in if they are impounded, only if they are a stray or lost. We need to have a plan in place for 2016 if we are in a position to pick up a dog(s). Jeff suggested Kristy's facility or Top of the Hill Kennels. Kristy can do short term, but not long term stays. If we had a heated garage with kennels to keep dogs over night that would be helpful, so Vonnie does not need to bring strays to St. Albans and leave them in the lock box overnight. The shelter in St. Albans is closed Sundays and Mondays. The board will discuss this in more detail. Vonnie also noted she has brought two dogs and one cat with kittens to St. Albans in the last week.

D. Fire Department Update

1. Election results

Dick & Merry Souza were present with an update on the roster as well as results and meeting minutes from their November 2nd meeting / elections. Chris Yates read aloud the nominations as follows, and noted that the terms are staggered as per the new bylaws, noting that going forward only two officers will be elected in November. These nominations, if approved by the Selectboard, will become effective January 1, 2016.

• Chief	Joe Depatie	3 year term	expires 12/31/2018
• Asst. Chief	Gary Greenough	remainder of 3 year term	expires 12/31/2017
• Captain	Tammy Rouse	remainder of 3 year term	expires 12/31/2016
• 1 st Lieutenant	Chris Uzell	2 year term	expires 12/31/2017
• 2 nd Lieutenant	John Gale	remainder of 2 year term	expires 12/31/2016

There were 15 voting members present and 2 new members not yet accepted as full time members, so it was a good turnout. These nominations are being put

before the Selectboard to accept or reject. The board thanked Dick Souza for his service to the HVFD. Dick noted that he supports the nominations as presented. Joe Depatie has stepped in during Dick's absence and the communication has been very good. The pagers and radios are all set, there is only one radio needed for the utility truck. Paulette asked if all the members nominated were present on November 2nd – yes, they were. The board again thanked the Souza's for all they have done.

E. VAST update – Andre & Linda Gagne

Andre & Linda Gagne were present seeking permission for VAST to use town land in three locations; along the gas line on Frontage Road, over the interstate on Carter Hill Road, and Durkee Road. The dates for use are 12/15/2015 to 3/31/2016. Heidi asked about grooming practices, noting that Highgate is looking to create more opportunities for pedestrian use of the rail trail is a reasonable option to consider. Paulette asked Andre if he personally maintains all the trails – no, but Andre does maintain Highgate, Sheldon, towards the Dairy Center and back towards St. Albans. Paulette enjoys cross country skiing and she is able to jump on the trail right by her home. Chris asked if there was a small tow behind that could be towed with a snowmobile. That could be used to groom the recreation path here in Highgate by the school / arena. A regular groomer would be far too large for this purpose, but a tow behind would work well. Liza will also want to groom Carter Hill for the Duct Tape Derby in February. Andre groomed the hill for the derby and also for the HVFD sliding party and he would be happy to do it again. Motion by Chris Yates to sign the land owner permission form with VAST. The motion was seconded by Diana O'Hara – **APPROVED.**

F. Lister Department Update

There was no one present from the lister's office, but they did send a report on two lister errors. It is legal for the Selectboard to approve the correction of these errors, rather than go through the abatement process. Below is the letter submitted to the Selectboard from the Highgate Town Listers, dated November 5, 2015;



November 05, 2015

Selectboard,

The Listers are requesting an abatement for a portion of the property taxes for two properties, which are due to lister errors.

Parcel #0002039210, property owner Anne Duffy, has been overcharged for a Material Shed of 80 sq. ft. The value of the shed was assessed for \$800.00, at the time of reappraisal. When entered into the NEMRC system the value was incorrectly calculated as \$48,000.00, a difference of \$47,200.00. After calculating what has been overcharged on the 2015-2016 tax bill, Anne Duffy is due a refund of \$755.06 (\$47,200.00 x \$1.5997= \$755.06).

Parcel # 0002700340, property owner Fernand & Patricia Gagne, has been overcharged for the acreage of land owned. 27.9 acres that the property owner transferred to the State of Vermont, Department of Fish and Wildlife, dated October 1997, was never removed from the total acreage owned. The property was incorrectly overcharged by \$20,600.00. After calculating what has been overcharged on the 2015-2016 tax bill, Fernand & Patricia Gagne are due a refund of \$304.10 (\$20,600.00 x \$1.4762= \$304.10).

Shirley Peeteau
Peter St. Germain
Aimee Reynolds
Highgate Town Listers

Motion by Jeff Towle to approve the request by the listers regarding the properties owned by Anne Duffy 0002039210 and Fernand Gagne 0002700340. The motion was seconded by Chris Yates – **APPROVED.** Paulette asked to confirm that the error for Fernand Gagne goes back to 1997 – yes, and it was just caught.

G. Town Treasurer – Shelley Laroche

1. Pay bills

MVU Substance Free Celebration request for the class of 2016 is the same amount as the past several years, \$250.00. Paulette asked about Swanton Village \$491.77, which is with regard to delinquent electricity bills at the property owned by Mr. Tremblay on Park Street. A lien was put on the property and the task is given to the town to collect the funds. Swanton Village will not accept payment directly from the tenant. A check was presented to the town from Mr. Tremblay and Shelley cut a check back to Swanton Village. There are no other properties at this time to deal with like this one. Paulette asked about the mileage reimbursement rate, which is .575 currently. Chris had questions about VT Electric Co-Op and if the street lights in East Highgate are getting changed over also, as they were not on the original listing. He will follow up with VEC. The bill from OC McCuin is for two culverts; one for the Tanglewood neighborhood replacement and the other is just a driveway culvert on the Morey Road. The home owner's association president (Tanglewood Drive / Jedware Circle) knows what the bill was for the culvert and their portion should be coming through. Scott Goodhue is still working on the final bill for the Morey Road culvert project, the jersey barriers will be coming off the bill. Paulette had some questions on headings for categories associated with the arena and arena expenses for buildings and grounds. We need to have an ongoing category for typical issues outside of the renovation projects that will be going on from year to year. Shelley and Paulette will get together to set this up.

2. Finance Committee

Paulette has done the research regarding the formation of a finance sub-committee. The town of Huntington is a year ahead of Highgate with regard to their CIP and finance committee. Paulette elaborated on the purpose of the finance committee and what their areas of focus would be. The group would ideally be made up of; 1 community member (possibly Ron Nye), 1 Selectboard member (Paulette), 1 Planning Commission member (possibly Larry Simmons), the town treasurer (Shelley), and the town administrator (Heidi). The group will be working closely with Amanda at NRPC and their focus for now will be the CIP and associated policies getting put into place. Their first meeting will likely be Monday, November 16 @ 7pm, and perhaps once monthly from then on. Motion by Jeff Towle to establish a finance sub-committee for the town of Highgate. The motion was seconded by Chris Yates – **APPROVED**. Chris asked if the board needs to appoint the members, and how long the terms would be. Paulette will reach out to Ron Nye and follow up.

H. Recreation Committee Update

1. No smoking policy

Ty Choiniere was present on behalf of the Parks & Recreation Committee. He would like the Selectboard to adopt a no smoking policy for municipal properties, not just the parks. There will need to be signage as well, and Rise VT is willing to help with that. Motion by Chris Yates to amend the code of ordinances to include the smoking ban on all municipal properties. The motion was seconded by Jeff Towle – **APPROVED**. Paulette clarified that the change will pertain to all municipal properties, not just the parks – yes. Jeff asked about the definitions where the word 'vapor' is removed and now reads 'tobacco substitute'. Randy noted that definition #3 can be removed and asked if Ben Lowell (Constable) would be authorized to issue a ticket – yes. Being that this is an ordinance change, there is a 60-day appeal period in which the public can comment. This policy will be edited and warned for the next meeting on November 19th when it can be signed.

2. Misc.

- We have a letter from Rise VT stating they are interested in continuing to help us improve usage of the walking trail. Selectboard approval is needed for the signage. Betsy Fournier, Ty and Liza walked the trail and measured out the ½ mile and mile markers. They also want to install some inspirational quotes on signage from the Girls On The Run program, as well as a start or welcome sign. The library now has snowshoes, which will promote usage of the trail in the winter months. Heidi noted that today she and Andy King met with Pete from VTrans and Maren Hill from Safe Routes to School. They are working together to find quick fixes for

pedestrian travel from the day care to the school as well as maximizing usage of the walking path around the arena and school as another link in our master plan. The Planning Commission meeting on Nov. 17th @ 6pm will focus on our pedestrian improvement master plan. The PC along with Parks & Recreation, the Selectboard and Sidewalk Committee are all invited to attend. Jim Cota from AOT will have a presentation looking at the Route 78 area in the village and explain the advantages of looking at ownership of that area to give us flexibility in making modifications. The goal is to look at the village area and start thinking about the next logical steps in making a master plan. This will be a watershed moment in looking at the next application cycle. We will also be looking at the Route 78 study. This should be a good discussion on November 17th @ 6pm. Motion by Chris Yates to allow Rise VT to put up signage on the arena property and approve signage on the school property as long as the school is contacted. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED**. Paulette added that in addition to the school being contacted, they also need to agree to placement of the signs on school property. Chris noted that he included that in his motion because the Selectboard is ok with it, as long as the school board is also.

- The soccer program is all wrapped up, and over 90 kids participated. The committee has heard positive feedback. A jamboree was held for grades 2, 3 and 4 in Swanton on October 17th. The weather was miserable, but the kids had fun. Basketball signups will be available, hopefully tomorrow, for 3rd & 4th grade, please register by November 23rd. Grades 1 and 2 will start after the new year.
- The flag pole in Flat Iron Park (across from the library) has the solar light installed. If we like how it looks and works, we can purchase two more for the other town parks.
- New members are needed on the Parks & Rec. Committee. We currently have three and two more will hopefully confirm soon. That leaves room for two more to have a full board of seven. Their next meeting is December 1st @ 6pm at the Highgate Arena in the office.

I. Town Administrator – Heidi Britch-Valenta

1. Allocation request letters

Heidi wants the board to start percolating on the letters for the other towns regarding the arena. Chris noted that last year the town of Sheldon requested usage stats for Sheldon residents. Karen Fortin will be putting something together and at the next meeting we will put it all together. It is important to attend Selectboard meetings, not just send a letter. Paulette liked the draft letter for Swanton, it is important to highlight all the programs offered at the facility. Heidi would like to get usage numbers for programs offered outside the building like ball clinics or bike safety programs as another good selling point. The facility is available for other towns to host events also. Ty would like to see other towns use the facility as part of their physical education program, like Highgate already does. Jeff commented on the per capita amounts and it was decided to just do flat dollar amounts in the letters.

2. Route 78 pedestrian and bike scoping study draft report

This will be part of the discussion at the PC meeting on Nov. 17th @ 6pm.

3. Route 78 scoping study bill discussion

There is a request from the consultant on some overages. This is a contractual issue which can be discussed in executive session.

4. Planning Commission update – letter of resignation

Rick Trombley is not here tonight, but has submitted a letter of resignation as the PC Chair. He has been doing double duty on the DRB and PC as the Chair of both boards for almost a year, and it has become a bit much. We are actively pursuing new members for the PC. We have two openings and there is always the opportunity for more to come in. They meet once per month on the third Tuesday at 6pm.

J. Town Clerk – Wendi Dusablon

1. Minutes

Motion by Chris Yates to approve the minutes from October 15, 2015 as amended. The motion was seconded by Paulette Tatro – **APPROVED**. Paulette wished to make a correction on a previous update she had given. She misspoke when she noted the company that donated the water filler at the arena. The generous donation was made by VT Mechanical. The bottle

filler has been installed and is up and running. Paulette apologized for this error. Ty added that the counter on the filler was up over 600 already.

2. Dog update ~ close 2015 and pricing for 2016

Wendi will be closing out the year tomorrow after the last dog owner comes in. After those three dogs are licensed, we will be at 857 licensed dogs for the year 2015. This is 50+ on the books over last year's numbers. That being said, more than 300 of those 857 were registered late (after April 1st) and a great deal of time, energy and money is spent getting those people to comply. Wendi has supplied the board with figures based on this year's numbers, expenses etc. for the board to consider pricing for 2016. The board would like to have the before April 1st pricing stay the same, and the after April 1st pricing will go up by \$2.00. This will help to offset the extra \$1.00 per dog that will need to go to the State of VT. We currently send \$4.00 of each dog licensed to the State of VT and that is now going up to \$5.00 per dog. Motion by Chris Yates to set the pricing for dog licensing in 2016 as follows; *on or before April 1st \$12.00 neutered / \$16.00 not neutered and after April 1st \$20.00 neutered / \$24.00 not neutered.* The motion was seconded by Paulette Tatro – **APPROVED.**

3. Misc.

- Wendi hosted the Franklin County Clerks meeting here yesterday, Nov. 4th. There was a great turn out for lunch and a working session with the VT Secretary of State's Office on the new Vermont Election Management System that was just launched in October. Lori and Lelani from the SOS office were here as well 17 clerks and assistant clerks from our county. Lunch was served, which was a challenge, as we do not have a full sized fridge here to store anything. Motion by Jeff Towle to have Andy King pick up a full size fridge / freezer combo for the community room kitchen. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED.**
- Kraft Hockeyville – this contest starts again on January 1st, and many have communicated to Wendi they would like to give it another shot. Stay tuned for more details on Kraft Hockeyville 2016!
- Greenlight A Vet – Ty thinks this is a great idea and encourages everyone to replace one bulb with a green light to show their support for veterans. We have done this at the town office building already. Chris Yates encouraged people to visit www.greenlightavet.com for more details.

K. Public Works Department – Andy King

1. Misc. updates

- Paving is complete and came in under budget. Andy will look at the numbers and evaluate whether or not us trucking the hot mix is a feasible situation. If we opt not to haul hot mix in the future that would allow us to follow along behind the paving project and provide tie-ins to driveways more quickly.
- The culvert on Tanglewood Drive / Monument Road is complete. It is too late in the season to replace the pavement there, but we will in the spring.
- The sand shed roof repair is complete with the help of Henry Rainville. It was a huge amount of work, they basically uninstalled and reinstalled the roof and sealed all the seams and joints.
- Dead trees have been taken down over by the school.
- Truck updates – looking to add a tool box to the F550 on the passenger side. More storage would be helpful. The plows are all painted and ready to go. There is scheduled maintenance to be done on the tandem trucks. Plow routes have been put together and will be tweaked as needed to be as efficient as possible.
- Street lights have been added at the intersection of Lamkin Street and Quail Drive, as well as on Quail Drive. Andy will continue to work with Swanton Village to replace all the heads with LEDs.
- Andy will be creating a presentation on several class 3 roads that are in question for reclassifying. He hopes to have something ready by the next Selectboard meeting. Most of the roads in town are class 3 roads. Others fall into class 2 state aid roads and class 4 roads we don't maintain in the winter time.
- The Public Works Dept. attended a training session in Milton that focused on winter roads.
- Meadow Lane – we took over this road last year and the street signs have been mysteriously taken down and the flow of traffic reversed. It is one-way traffic on the cul-de-sac portion of Meadow Lane, as it is not wide

enough for two lanes of traffic. It was previously discussed how inefficient the plowing was on Meadow Lane, but Jeff does not recall how the entire conversation went. Andy recalls that the way it was being traveled was because of plowing and the fixed angle plows can't plow a left hand turn. The flow has been changed so now you cut to the right and go around the loop to the left. How this got changed, we do not know. All the signs are gone and the mailboxes have been moved from the center of the cul-de-sac to the right hand side. Diana noted that the post office is supposed to service from the right hand side of the vehicle. Jeff would like a copy of the meeting minutes from when the Meadow Lane residents were here. Wendi will get those together and forward to the board and Andy. Andy noted if they plow Meadow Lane with the 550 it might work. Diana asked who put the signs up originally regarding the flow of traffic. The developer put up the signs, and now they are gone.

- Andy is looking at costs regarding uniforms. It came to his attention that our uniforms costs are high and the quality of the product and service are slightly questionable. G&K is our current vendor. Andy is looking at pricing with Foley and UniFirst and is also looking for something more comfortable and usable.

L. Selectboard Items

1. Machia Road bridge

We have not talked about this for a while, so this is a follow up. Paulette has questions and concerns about the building on the corner (the former store) and the fact that it will still be there when the new bridge opens up. Is it too late to revisit the safety issue of the old store building / now apartment building as well as the house on the other side? Paulette would like to revisit this issue because of safety concerns. Heidi does not think it is too late, there will be lots of right of way issues which will have to be dealt with. Anything that changes will likely add costs to the project and costs to our match. She is not clear where they are in the design phase, and it is not scheduled to go to construction until 2018. Ty commented that purchasing the property would offset the costs of having to construct a curved bridge. Mr. Machia has offered to sell the property before. Heidi will pass along these concerns.

2. NWSWD representative candidate – Ben Lowell

Motion by Jeff Towle to nominate Ben Lowell to be our representative on the NorthWest Solid Waste District board. The motion was seconded by Chris Yates – **APPROVED**. Ben is a good sport for coming forward. This board meets every-other-month. Ben noted the meeting last night was cancelled due to a lack of a quorum. The current position that Luke Choiniere held will expire in March, 2017 so Ben will be completing that term and if interested he would then be reappointed to a 3-year seat. It was noted that Ben (in his Constable role) recently dealt with some youths on Lamkin Street and foiled their plans to egg vehicles – thank you Ben!

M. Upcoming Events

Nov. 12	6pm	DRB Mtg.
Nov. 16	7pm	Finance Committee Mtg.
Nov. 17	6pm	Planning Commission Mtg. – Pedestrian Master Plan
Nov. 19	7pm	Selectboard Mtg.

N. Executive Session

Motion by Jeff Towle to enter executive session @ 8:40pm to discuss contracts, personnel and legal issues. Executive session is necessary as premature knowledge could put the town at a disadvantage. The motion was seconded by Chris Yates – **APPROVED**.

Motion by Chris Yates to exit executive session @10:20pm. The motion was seconded by Paulette Tatro – **APPROVED**.

Motion by Chris Yates to accept the HVFD election results for the new slate of officers as follows, to become effective 1/1/2016. The motion was seconded by Paulette Tatro – **APPROVED**.

•	Fire Chief	Joe Depatie	3 year term	expires 12/31/2018
•	Asst. Chief	Gary Greenough	remainder of 3 year term	expires 12/31/2017
•	Captain	Tammy Rouse	remainder of 3 year term	expires 12/31/2016
•	1st Lieutenant	Chris Uzell	2 year term	expires 12/31/2017
•	2nd Lieutenant	John Gale	remainder of 2 year term	expires 12/31/2016

Jeff brought up the issue of the loan request from MAHA for the new scoreboards at the arena. \$6,500.00 was requested by MAHA for this purchase. The board felt comfortable with this request based on past experience with their prompt repayment of loans for capital improvements and/or equipment upgrades. Motion by Jeff Towle to loan MAHA \$6,500.00 from the arena fundraising account for the purchase of new scoreboards to be repaid by February 1, 2016. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED.**

Chris Yates updated the board on the fire department floor repair, which should be completed within 2-3 weeks.

O. Adjournment

Motion by Jeff Towle to adjourn the meeting @ 10:35pm. 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