

TOWN OF HIGHGATE
Planning Commission
March 21, 2023 @ 6pm
APPROVED MINUTES

NOTE: All actions taken are unanimous unless otherwise stated.

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85863827855>

I. CALL TO ORDER

Luc Dupuis called the meeting to order @ 6:00pm. This meeting was a hybrid of in-person and Zoom.

Planning Commission Board Members: Luc Dupuis – Chair; Ken Thompson – Vice Chair; Tom Conley; Scott Bessette (arrived @ 6:09pm) (ALL WERE IN-PERSON)

Town of Highgate Staff: Heidi Britch-Valenta – Town Administrator; Wendi Dusablon – Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk (BOTH WERE IN-PERSON)

Public / Other: In-person: Robyn Klein; Travis Belisle; Kevin Many
Via Zoom: Jamie Smith – GMT

II. ZONING DISTRICT CHANGE REQUEST – HIGHGATE AIRPORT IND. PARK, LLC.

Travis Belisle and Kevin Many were present in-person for this discussion. Travis recently acquired the old brick plant property and 172 acres behind it. Kelly Brook runs down the middle of it and west of Kelly Brook is zoned Agricultural and east of Kelly Brook is zoned Industrial / Commercial. Their goal is to provide Highgate with an industrial park on that property. They understand that Highgate voters approved a bond up to \$500,000.00 to extend water / sewer infrastructure from MVU up to the airport district. They hope it will be further extended in the future more east upwards on Route 78 to this property. They have hired an engineer and the plan is for the parcel to be broken up into approximately 15 lots. There is substantial money invested and they want to make sure they are headed down the right path with the town. They are here for support and guidance. Kevin shared maps, both current and older back to 1995, of the property. Their engineer agrees that they should pursue having the property re-zoned. Travis feels confident that the west side is zoned differently because of the brook and because that was considered to be a good stopping point. The access point for this property is between the Roach property and the LeBeau property, near Therrien Road and Dubois Drive, on Route 78 and they have been granted state permits for that access point and to cross the rail trail. This is a former class four old town road. The future amount of lots will be determined by further testing, so it could be more or less. Biologists have been on site. Of the 172 acre property, approximately 100 +/- acres are considered to be workable land, at this point. Luc Dupuis asked for confirmation that their request is to have everything on the west side of Kelly Brook to be re-zoned as Industrial / Commercial – yes. This process will involve a recommendation to the Selectboard, as well as a PC public hearing and two Selectboard public hearings for public comment. Each needs to be warned for 30-days. Travis and Kevin stated that the value to the town is growing the grand list and generating more tax revenue. Travis spoke to the fact that he is a developer, and he understands that housing costs generate tax revenue but they don't offset the total tax burden. Commercial buildings generate tax revenue, substantially more than housing, compared to the resources needed and used with residential housing. It will take years to get these buildings up and running, so they want to lean in as much as they can and get the process going. Scott Bessette asked for confirmation – all commercial buildings – yes. There was discussion on extending water / sewer infrastructure in the future. Travis spoke to conversations with Tim Smith at FCIDC and how Highgate is

continually mentioned as a town with lots of potential and possibilities for new growth in the coming years. Travis confirmed that phase three power and natural gas are already there. Scott expressed concern with Swanton Village having the capacity to extend to this new commercial park. Travis stated that honestly he doesn't know if they can afford to get water / sewer to that location and that the only way it would be 100% pursued is if a company coming in had requested it. Arrowhead in Georgia doesn't have public water / sewer, and depending on what businesses are coming in, private wells and septic systems can work just fine. The soils there are very sandy. There are a few wells and springs on the brick plant property already. Scott also asked if they would be expecting the town to take over the road. There was lengthy discussion on this topic. Travis stated the road would be A76 standards and they plan to pave in more than 300'. The state has approved the curb cut already. Stormwater ponds and retainer walls were discussed. Scott wanted them to know going in that the town (Selectboard) has the final say on taking over new roads, and recently a housing development road was denied. Scott asked about the actual brick factory structure and what has been happening inside. It is virtually empty, other than one last mezzanine and a steam boiler. Kevin said that ANR will be back on site for an archeological study. If the PC sees value in proceeding and scheduling a public hearing, we can get things rolling and advertise it to the public. Heidi provided information in the packet for the board on the process and she will also send it to Travis and Kevin. It was noted that the next PC meeting is April 18th so we would not make the 30-day notice requirement for that meeting.

III. GREEN MOUNTAIN TRANSIT – JAMIE SMITH

Jamie Smith, GMT Director of Marketing and Planning, participated via Zoom. She shared a presentation, which is attached to the end of these minutes. Topics covered were: WHO WE ARE; WHERE WE OPERATE; SERVICES PROVIDED; MEDICAID; ELDERLY & PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES PROGRAM; RECOVERY & JOB ACCESS; HIGHGATE SERVICES; HOW DO WE SERVE MORE RIDERS; QUESTIONS & CONTACT INFO. There was discussion about a flyer to circulate information about opportunities with GMT. Jamie will put together a flyer or flyers to show there are transportation options and include contact info for GMT. Jamie will also share information on the St. Albans feasibility study for micro-transit when it is available. The PC thanked Jamie for the presentation and information shared.

IV. ZONING BYLAW MODERNIZATION – GRETA BRUNSWICK, NRPC

This topic was cancelled for tonight and will (hopefully) be back on the agenda for April. We are on a tight schedule to complete this by the end of 2023.

V. OTHER BUSINESS

- The first hearing for the Town Plan update will be April 18th. It will then go on to two public hearings at the Selectboard meetings in June and July. We are on schedule to adopt our new Town Plan before our current one expires in July.
- Greta should be back on the agenda for the Bylaw Modernization in April.
- Town Meeting was March 7th. All articles passed from the floor, except Article #4 that was tabled.
- Ken Thompson has submitted his resignation letter. His last meeting with the PC will be in May. Robyn Klein is here and she is interested in filling a PC seat that is currently open – vacated by Bruce Ryan. The Selectboard will be filling a few more board / committee / commission seats, by appointment, on April 6th. Letters of interest are being accepted until April 5th.
- The PC will reorganize at the April meeting.
- The Selectboard recently denied the request for Quarry Lane to become a town road. The landowners have put together a packet and have requested to come before the Selectboard for reconsideration. The conversation continued about the

town taking over new roads, which was also discussed earlier with Mr. Belisle and Mr. Many. Scott asked about the legality of making a recommendation to the Selectboard regarding the Belisle project and the town not taking over that road. The PC would be providing a recommendation, but the decision to take over or not take over a road or roads is always in the hands of the Selectboard. A standard policy was brought up as an option but specifically putting a policy in place for one applicant would not be ethical. Scott would like more information to be pursued on this topic. He also would like to make sure the town takes care of the roads we have before they take on any more roads. Posted roads in town were discussed as limiting property owners access, to a point, for 60-days each year. Scott would also like to see impact fees brought back up and get that discussion going again. He would like to see them directed at the developers that are building for resale and profit. Travis earlier spoke about the tax burden to towns with residential vs. commercial properties. Affordable housing options were brought up again and have been heavily discussed over the last several months. Scott feels we, as a town, get a lot of outside pressure on these issues. He also had questions about the village core water / sewer project and asked if it was legal to offer water / sewer to some and not all, based on where they live. There was discussion on the topic, and it was compared to buying a house on a private road vs. town road, where residents all pay the same tax rate but don't necessarily receive the same services for their tax dollars. There were questions on the VCMP water / sewer project and if that question to voters would be from the floor or on the ballot. Heidi believes it would be a ballot question because it involves funding, which will be offset by grants.

VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Scott Bessette to approve the minutes from February 21, 2023, as written. The motion was seconded by Ken Thompson – **APPROVED.**

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Scott Bessette to adjourn the meeting @ 7:27pm. The motion was seconded by Tom Conley – **APPROVED.**

Minutes respectfully submitted by:



Wendi Dusablon, Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk

4-18-23
Date

Minutes approved by:



Luc Dupuis, Planning Commission Chair

04/18/2023
Date



APPROXIMATE AREA OF FUTURE INVESTIGATION FOR EXTRACTION AND/OR COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL USE (SHOWN SHADED). THIS AREA IS SHOWN FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY. THE SCOPE OF FUTURE EXTRACTION AND/OR COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL USE WILL BE DEPENDENT UPON FURTHER INVESTIGATION.

LOT	SQUARE FEET	ACRES
1	284,018	6.5
2	297,418	6.8
3	320,549	7.3
4	258,643	5.9
5	390,009	8.9
6	425,753	9.7
7	455,899	10.5
8	303,280	7.0
9	225,514	5.2
10	139,544	3.2
11	130,063	3.0
12	245,905	5.6
13	408,448	9.4
14	108,120	2.5

PROJECT INFORMATION:

- 1. OWNER OR RECORD: HIGHGATE AIRPORT INDUSTRIAL PARK, LLC
- 2. TAX PARCEL OR: 201-201-500K
- 3. PARCEL CRE: 17-28 ACRES
- 4. DEED REF: BK 174870 286

PURPOSE OF PROJECT:

THE PURPOSE OF THIS PROJECT IS TO CONSTRUCT A 150-ACRE INDUSTRIAL PARK WITH 15 LOTS. THE PROJECT WILL BE USED FOR INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL PURPOSES. THE PROJECT WILL BE USED FOR INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL PURPOSES. THE PROJECT WILL BE USED FOR INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL PURPOSES.

PROJECT IMPACT:

THE PROJECT WILL BE USED FOR INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL PURPOSES. THE PROJECT WILL BE USED FOR INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL PURPOSES. THE PROJECT WILL BE USED FOR INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL PURPOSES.

PRELIMINARY

Highgate Airport Industrial Park, LLC
Highgate, VT

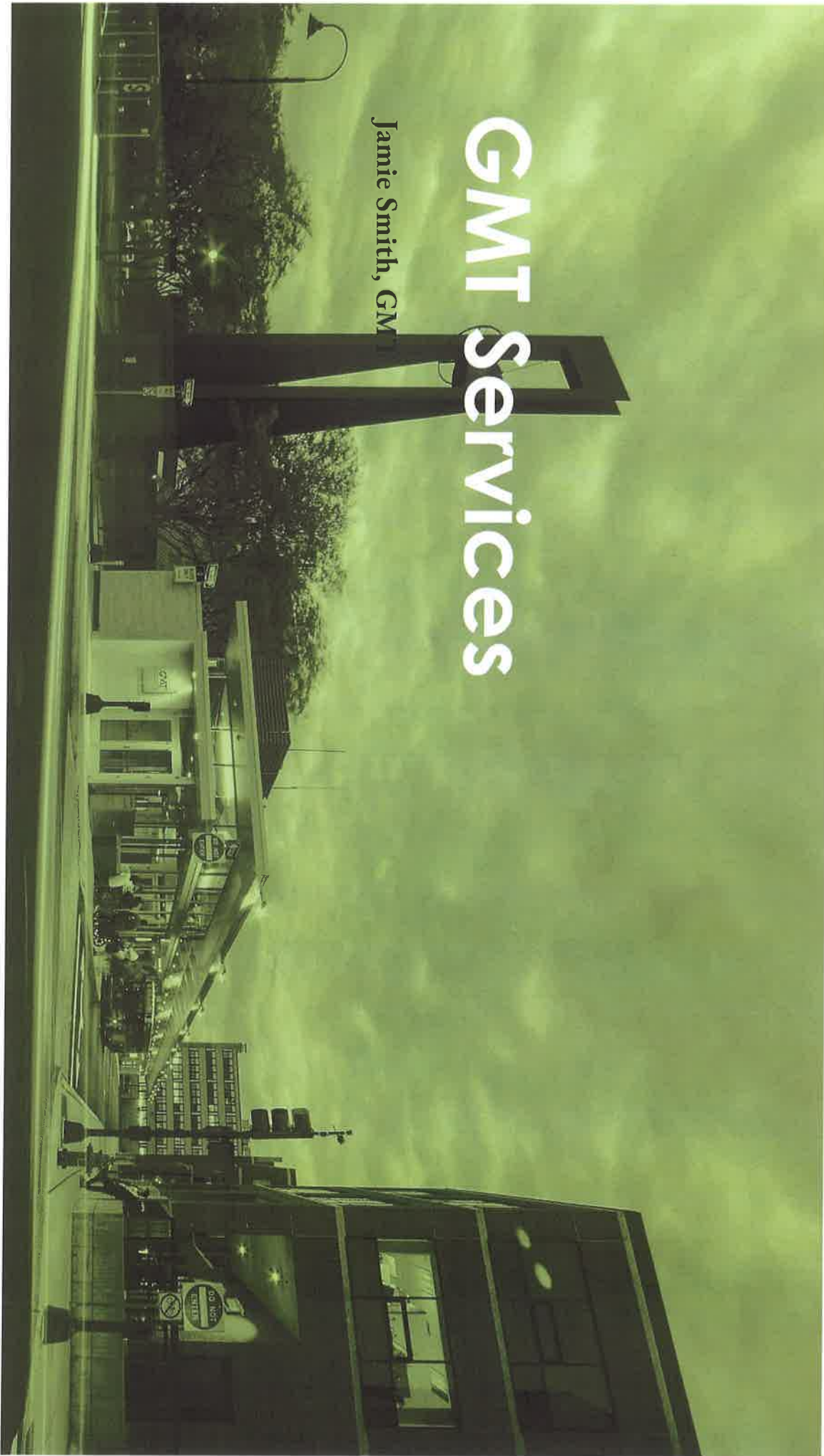
Overall Site Plan

Date:	10/12/2023
Scale:	AS SHOWN
Project Number:	23-01
Drawn By:	JK
Project Engineer:	JK
Approved By:	JK
Field Book:	

C2-01

GMT Services

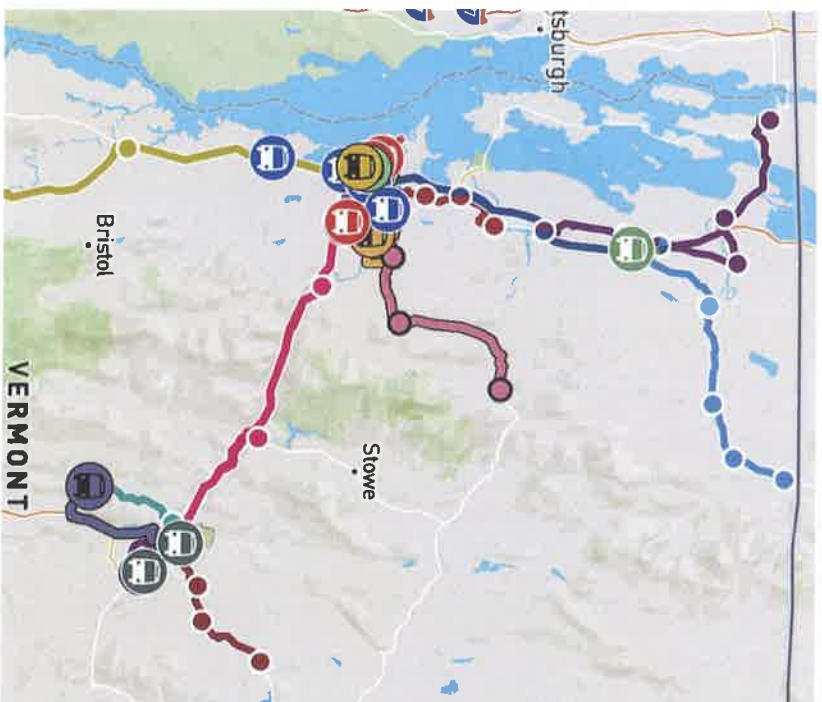
Jamie Smith, GM



Who We Are

- 1973: Chittenden County Transportation Authority (CCTA) was created as the state's first and only transit authority.
- 2016: CCTA and Green Mountain Transit Agency (GMTA) combined and were renamed the Green Mountain Transit Authority (GMT)
- GMT provides service in six counties: Chittenden, Washington, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille, and Orange
- Directed by a fourteen-member Board of Commissioners

— Where we operate



Service Provided

- GMT provides multiple types of service:
 - **Deviated fixed route (City bus):** Transit service that operates along a fixed alignment or path at generally fixed times but may deviate from the route alignment to collect or drop off passengers who have requested a deviation
 - **Commuter (LINKS)**
 - **Seasonal mountain service**
 - **Demand response:** Any non-fixed route system of transporting individuals that requires advanced scheduling by the customer.
 - Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
 - Elders & Disabled Program (E&D)
 - Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT)
 - **Weekly grocery shopping trips**
 - **Microtransit (Montpelier)**

— Medicaid (NEMT)

- Medicaid is an assistance program enacted to provide health care services to individuals who are low income, aged, blind or disabled and families with children.
 - Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) is a covered service for members enrolled in Medicaid and Dr. Dynasaur programs.
- NEMT is a statewide service for providing transports for eligible people to and from necessary, non-emergency medical services.
- NEMT services are provided through a Personal Services Contract between the State of Vermont, Department of Vermont Health Access (DVHA) and the Vermont Public Transportation Association (VPTA), which is comprised of a regional network of public transit providers.

Elders & Persons with Disabilities Program (E&D)

- Grant funded service that uses Federal Funds to provide enhanced mobility to seniors and individuals with a disability.
- 80% Federal funds and 20% local match provided by local partners.
 - Care Partners, United Way, and Age Well.
 - C.I.D.E.R (Grand Isle)
- The program aims to improve mobility for seniors and individuals with disabilities.

Recovery and Job Access

GMT provides service to those struggling with substance use disorders through a grant provided by the Vermont Department of Transportation (VTrans). Service to the following is available to eligible passengers:

- Group Meetings and Therapy sessions
- Access to Recovery Centers
- Access to Drug Testing sites
- Medical Appointments
- Job Access (training, interviews, and initial commutes)

— Highgate Services

GMT serves Highgate Park and Ride, by request, on the Alburgh/Georgia Commuter.

In FY22, 1,392 E&D trips were provided to Highgate residents
Annual contribution for service: \$950.00

How do we serve more riders?

- One way is to consider “Microtransit”
- An on-demand transit service that provides curb-to-curb transit to passengers using a technology-based reservation system.
- GMT is operating the first pilot microtransit system in Montpelier.
 - Barre feasibility study (completed)
 - St. Albans feasibility study (in progress)

The goal of GMT is to consider future transit options utilizing this innovative service model.



— Questions and Contact

Jamie Smith, Director of Marketing and
Planning

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