

TOWN OF HIGHGATE
Planning Commission Mtg.
March 17, 2020 @ 6pm

Approved Minutes

NOTE: All actions taken are unanimous unless otherwise stated.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Luc Dupuis opened up the meeting @ 6:06pm.

Planning Commission Board Members; Luc Dupuis; Richard Noel;
Ken Thompson; Bruce Ryan

Town of Highgate Staff: Heidi Britch-Valenta – Town Administrator &
Planner; Wendi Dusablon – Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk

Public / Other: None

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Richard Noel to approve the minutes from *February 13, 2020* (joint meeting DRB + PC) as corrected. The motion was seconded by Bruce Ryan – **APPROVED.**

III. REORGANIZATION OF OFFICERS

Tom Conley's term on the PC has expired and we have received two letters of interest for the seat – Tom Conley and Scott Bessette. There was discussion on what the Planning Commission wants to put before the Selectboard as a recommendation. Tom has been a good member of this board and is interested in another term. Scott is a younger member of our community and Richard would like to see more young people get involved, whether it be on this board or any other board or committee we have. Motion by Richard Noel to recommend Tom Conley to the Selectboard for the Planning Commission seat, good through March 2023, because he is an active member of this board and wishes to remain on this board. Richard added to his motion that he would like to see if Scott Bessette is willing to accept a position on another board or committee. If push comes to shove, Richard Noel is willing to resign from this board for younger people, like Scott Bessette, to be able to participate. The motion was seconded by Bruce Ryan – **APPROVED.** Luc Dupuis will reach out to Scott Bessette to see if he is interested in any other boards / committees such as the Village Core Master Plan. Heidi will look into seeing if alternate members are allowed. Heidi will put this recommendation before the Selectboard on Thursday. There will be a Selectboard meeting at 6pm on March 19th. The public will be allowed to call in to participate, and of course the video is always available afterwards, as well as the minutes. With the COVID-19 concerns we are taking precautions to stay healthy. The PC will wait until their April meeting to make official appointments of Chair and Vice-Chair.

IV. TOWN MEETING RECAP

Town Meeting 2020 was recapped. All warned articles passed from the floor, including the voters approving the tax stabilization plan. Richard and Luc did a great job explaining it and why it's a good plan for Highgate.

V. **PROJECT UPDATES**

- We received a grant for \$1,500.00 for the VCMP community celebration.
- We are applying for two rural development business development grants. One is for economic development planning to work with a consultant on creating an ordinance for impact fees and/or a TIF district and other funding strategies for our infrastructure investments. The other is with regard to planning for the VCMP property to take us through the next phase of where we want to go.
- Richard was present at the airport presentation at the Selectboard meeting on March 5th. It is estimated that in five years we could see 1,200 jobs if water and sewer are extended to the airport! Richard wonders if Swanton Village would consider running water lines all the way to Highgate.
- The presentation regarding the Machia Road slope stabilization plan has been cancelled for March 19th. We should have this back from environmental review in 6-8 months before it goes to permitting.
- We are still waiting to hear about FEMA funds to stabilize the Transfer Station. Casella is putting numbers together and will be attending a meeting in Highgate in the future. Richard asked if the Selectboard has asked Casella to take over the whole thing. Things are kind of in limbo for a while as far as meeting up with people due to the COVID-19 corona virus.
- Richard asked if RL Vallee purchased the building next door to the gas station. Yes, they did close on that property. Wendi received the documents for recording but had to return them because things were missing.
- Motion by Richard Noel for Luc Dupuis to sign the letter of support for the Economic Development Planning Grant from Rural Development. The motion was seconded by Bruce Ryan – **APPROVED.**

VI. **VCRD – COMMUNITY VISIT**

Vermont Council on Rural Development recently visited Swanton and assisted them in identifying their vision for the future. They come to towns and invite folks to dinners and such. Events are free and they help you organize the events, much like the charrettes we did with VCMP in the very early stages. VCRD thinks it is a good time to come to Highgate and show their support. They also were going to be at the meeting on March 19th, but that presentation has been cancelled. This would not start until 2021 because they are booked with a few other towns. The PC will put this on their list of things to tackle. VCRD will start with the Selectboard. Working with VCRD could help us come to some decisions about the Village Core Master Plan property and how to move forward with that. Bruce asked what had been accomplished at the VCMP property to date and Heidi gave him a recap of what has been done and where everything currently stands. This community visit may be the way to get people focused and determine a vision. We could put it for sale, but then what? We would have to set some parameters.

VII. **OLD BUSINESS**

- Luc asked for an update on the ADA modifications and if any funds were left over. We used every penny and put in some extra as well. We spent a lot

on testing, but the grant gave us an extra \$17,000 for testing. We received \$92,000.00 total. There was discussion about the testing that was required to be done, the insulation work, work in the public works department office/bathroom and the bollards installed to protect the building on the public works side. The railing on the ramp out front has already been hit once.

- New information on TIF districts is in the packet. The state will be making it easier for small towns to obtain TIF districts, Montgomery and Westford were given as other examples. We need to understand this better and review for the next meeting.
- The VCMP meeting on March 24th with the wastewater study presentation has been cancelled. Over 100 surveys were sent out and 21 have responded.

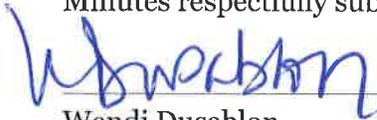
VIII. OTHER BUSINESS & UPDATES

- Heidi shared a list of VLCT trainings coming up.
- There was discussion on updating the zoning bylaws. Warned hearings and noticing neighboring towns are part of the process. The PC has already made observations and recommendations when they met with the DRB last month. Richard noted a few very evident problems that need to be addressed. The DRB has a list of changes they would like to see implemented also.
- The rabies clinic has been moved to May 16th. Late fees will not be assessed on dog licenses until after June 1st for this year only.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Bruce Ryan to adjourn the meeting @ 7:07pm. The motion was seconded by Richard Noel – **APPROVED.**

Minutes respectfully submitted by:



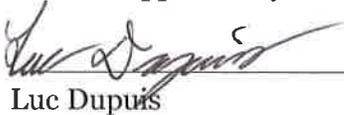
Wendi Dusablon

Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk



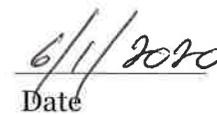
Date

Minutes approved by:



Luc Dupuis

Planning Commission



Date