

TOWN OF HIGHGATE
Planning Commission
October 17, 2023 @ 6pm
APPROVED MINUTES

NOTE: All actions taken are unanimous unless otherwise stated.

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84357485519>

I. CALL TO ORDER

Luc Dupuis called the meeting to order @ 6:00pm. This meeting was a hybrid of in-person and Zoom. Those participating were in-person, unless otherwise noted.

Planning Commission Board Members: Luc Dupuis, Chair; Tom Conley; Jack Pelkey; Robyn Klein *absent – Scott Bessette, Vice-Chair*

Town of Highgate Staff: Sharon Bousquet, Town Administrator

Absent – Wendi Dusablon, Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk

Public / Other: Ty Choiniere

II. ZONING BYLAW CHANGES / GRETA BRUNSWICK, NRPC

Greta was not able to join us this evening. Sharon explained that anything discussed at the meetings and public hearings has been added to the document. She has not added the NRPC items, but a copy with all the changes has been sent to NRPC for review. Hopefully, with all the edits and changes we have been reviewing, NRPC, the State of VT, and the Development Review Board will all be happy.

III. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

Ty Choiniere from the Recreation Commission was present for this discussion of the CIP for 2024-2025 fiscal year. The departments covered tonight were: Town Office; Recreation; Highgate Library and Community Center; and Town Projects. Within those categories, the group discussed: town office painting project \$2,500.00; arena zamboni \$10,000.00; arena parking lot \$10,000.00; arena roof \$25,000.00; recreation zero-turn mower \$5,000.00; recreation department vehicle (truck) \$15,000.00; library relocation effort \$50,000.00; transfer station slope stabilization phase II \$25,000.00; Machia Rd. slide \$5,000.00; and Village Core Master Plan grant match funds \$30,000.00. Motion by Tom Conley to accept the CIP as presented so far. The motion was seconded by Jack Pelkey – **APPROVED**. This discussion will continue at the November meeting for HVFD and Public Works and ultimately will be finalized by the Selectboard.

IV. MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

- The Selectboard is and has been discussing the process and possibilities of taking on more private roads. At the last Selectboard meeting, the board has changed their stance and are looking at this topic more in depth. Some board members are interested in what other towns are doing, but this is our town, what do we want to do to best serve all our residents. Sharon provided data: we have 90+/- miles of road in Highgate broken down as follows – 64 miles paved; 19 miles gravel; 4 miles dirt; 2 miles primitive; 2 miles untraveled. Of that, 102 are private roads; 80 are public roads; 13 are trails; 5 are state highways. Per the CIP we have approximately \$1.825 million worth of public works equipment and a public works budget of \$1 million. Doing the math, if you take the 80 public roads we maintain, minus the state roads, it takes roughly \$42,400.00 per mile for upkeep of those roads and associated projects. Roads are classified as follows: state roads 15.93 miles; interstate 6.76 miles; Class 3 roads 42.54 miles; Class 2 roads 21 miles. We have more private roads than public roads, so taking them all over would make our

budget as well as our equipment costs skyrocket. We are a rapidly growing town, as is Franklin County in general. Further points of discussion included: culvert size requirements; road width; steep grades; being fair to our residents but not overtaxing; school budget increases and our MVSD union; expressing ideas and concerns to the Selectboard before any decisions are made; A76 standards for roads and promises made to homebuyers from developers about public vs. private roads; emergency services and proper turn around space. Sharon pointed out that of the 102 private roads in town, only 17 are fully paved, and 3 are partially paved. The group discussed the list of private roads in depth and number of homes on each as of now. Developer responsibilities, homeowner's associations, drainage and stormwater issues were all discussed and need to be looked at more. School buses and school bus driver's concerns were brought up. Currently on private roads the students come to the end of the road. Sharon asked the PC to think about this topic and send any questions / concerns / comments to the Selectboard as part of the overall discussion and eventual decision.

- As part of the above discussion, and directly tied to it, the Selectboard is also considering the possibility of hiring a 4th public works department crew member. We just filled the 3rd spot that was open and he will be starting with us on Oct. 23rd. The 4th person is being considered to take on cemetery mowing (which we currently pay over \$30,000.00 per year for with a contracted person); water testing at arena; three members plowing in large trucks and one in the ton truck for smaller jobs and smaller development roads, sidewalks, and possibly new roads. Salary and benefits were discussed, and the possibility of having a 4th crew member also assist the recreation department with duties, such as driving the zamboni.
- Our contract with SAPD ends 6/30/24 so the town has to figure out how to fill that void for law enforcement coverage. Other agencies are not able to take us on either, due to staffing issues.
- Impact fees were discussed as a way to offset costs associated with possibly taking on new roads or additional employees. Also mentioned was that properties are not assessed differently for being on private / public roads, and that could be something to look at as far as assessments and amounts people are taxed based on those assessed values.
- Sharon will share the comments from all the above discussions with the Selectboard on Thursday. Any and all are welcome to join this meeting or any Selectboard meeting – this week's is Thursday, October 19, 2023 @ 6:30pm.

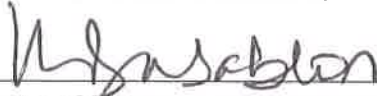
V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Robyn Klein to approve the minutes from September 19, 2023, as written. The motion was seconded by Tom Conley – **APPROVED**.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Jack Pelkey to adjourn the meeting @ 7:21pm. The motion was seconded by Robyn Klein – **APPROVED**.

Minutes respectfully submitted by:



Wendi Dusablon, Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk

(minutes transcribed from the Zoom recording, as I was not physically present at the meeting)

11-21-23

Date

Minutes approved by:



Luc Dupuis, Planning Commission Chair

11/21/2023

Date