

TOWN OF HIGHGATE SELECTBOARD MEETING

Thursday, September 7, 2017

Executive Session @ 6:30pm

Regular Meeting @ 7:00pm

Approved Minutes

NOTE: All actions taken are unanimous unless otherwise stated.

6:30pm – Executive Session: Present were – Sharon Bousquet, Josh LaRocque, Randy Connelly, Heidi Britch-Valenta. Motion by Sharon Bousquet to call the executive session to order @ 6:33pm. The motion was seconded by Josh LaRocque – **APPROVED**. Steve LaFar joined the executive session @ 6:50pm. Heidi exited the executive session @ 7:02pm. Bruce Butler joined the executive session @ 7:03pm. Motion by Josh LaRocque to adjourn the executive session @ 7:07pm. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED**.

A. Call To Order & Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting was called to order by Sharon Bousquet, Chair @ 7:09pm followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Highgate Selectboard Members – Sharon Bousquet, Chair; Josh LaRocque, Vice-Chair; Randy Connelly; Steve LaFar; Bruce Butler

Highgate Office Staff – Wendi Dusablon, Town Clerk/Public Meetings Clerk; Shelley Laroche, Town Treasurer/Delinquent Tax Collector; Heidi Britch-Valenta, Town Administrator/Zoning Administrator

Public / Other – Richard Wilkens; Alice S. Cota; Jean Chevalier; George Greenwood; Woody Rouse; Richard J. Noel; John Leddy – NWSWD; Patrick Loyer

B. Public Comment(s)

- Jean Chevalier thanked Bruce for bringing up the email about dispatching. She would like to see the town follow through on this and put it out to bid when the time comes and possibly save the town money. As far as her referring to the board as “delinquent”, Jean said Mr. Wilkens is correct and we need to attend to the issues at the municipal complex. Every Selectboard since the ADA law was passed should have been attending to the issues.
- Sue Cota has been approached about speeding issues in town, specifically on Gore Road. She reminded the board and those present of a terrible accident in March 1980 in the area of the arena where a young pedestrian died. More patrols are needed especially with hockey season approaching again. Speed bumps are not recommended for that area, but flashing lights could also help.

C. Northwest Solid Waste District Update – John Leddy

NWSWD manages waste for Franklin and Grand Isle Counties as well as provide a variety of other services for its member communities. They go beyond the minimum standards and received favorable reviews in their 2016 report by the State of Vermont. NWSWD reaches out to schools and businesses to help them reduce waste with programs such as composting. Highgate became a member of the NWSWD a few years ago, and therefore are entitled to the benefits they offer. A big benefit is access to rid of hazardous waste at their Georgia VT facility five days per week, all year long. All you need to do is call ahead for an appointment, 524-5986 and they are located close to exit 18 at 158 Morse Drive. All info can be found on their website www.nswsd.org. They also hold satellite hazardous waste events throughout the area, and one was held in May at the sand shed location. There was discussion on how to get rid of computers and other electronics, as well as car batteries. Paints, electronics and computers can be dropped off for free. Some other items have a small fee. Heidi asked about tire recycling, as dumping of tires is a big problem here and everywhere. Randy asked about grant programs for low income folks who may want to clean up their property, but can't afford to. There are grant programs available in some instances and on Green Up Day there are a number of free disposal sites

available. ACT148 (recycling law) is pushing for changes on how waste is managed, so outreach events have increased. Barry Domina will continue to work with towns and be an increased presence to help towns and residents find cost effective and convenient ways to get rid of their waste. In 2020 state law says that food scraps will be banned from the landfill. NWSWD will work to further educate people about backyard composting and drop off sites will be available also. Currently, bins are available and food scraps can be brought to Hudak Farm in Swanton. Bins can be purchased for \$23.00 each if you attend a composting seminar (normal price \$100.00 per bin). There was discussion on how residents can identify themselves as a Highgate resident and member of the district. In the counties of Franklin and Grand Isle, only one town is NOT a member of the district, the other 19 towns are. George Greenwood had some questions about fees charged to haulers. The board thanked John for coming and for the updates and information he provided.

D. Public Works Department Updates – Patrick Loyer

- The 2014 Western Star has an exhaust issue. The truck is under warranty through J&B. We had previous issues with J&B back in 2014 with Butch's truck. Sharon spoke with the owner of J&B, Brian, who said they would treat Highgate right. Pat does not want to be without a truck for months, like the last time. Richard Noel pointed out that those problems with J&B were with a Clark's truck. Pat will look into towing fees to get the truck down there. Bruce's neighbor, Gary, has a low boy and might be a good option and give a good price.
- The rest of the sand was put in the shed, about 400-500 ton.
- Salt has been ordered.
- With regard to Sue Cota's request for additional lighting at Monument Road and Tanglewood Drive, Duane from Swanton Village said there are no transformers in that vicinity. He will measure how much wire is needed to determine how costly it would be.
- Sue would also like to see a sign on Monument Road "Danger – Slow – Corner" or something similar to get people to slow down. Trees could be cut to also improve that area. That is state land, but may be in the right of way of our road. Pat will look at it.
- The second cut of road side mowing still needs to be done. The weather has not been cooperating lately. Carter Hill is done, the rest is left to do.
- Ditching has been done on Boucher Road by the Bessette farm. It still needs to be seeded, but due to the steep embankment it may need to be done with a hydro seeder. Swanton has one, maybe we can use it. The stone lining has to be completed also.
- Ditching has been done on Rollo Road by the Kenz farm. The corner was widened with land owner permission. There is ledge up there to attend to in the near future. This area was seeded and mulched, except for the widened portion.
- On Ballard Road, by Mr. Benoit's house, heavy rains have washed that area out. Ditching will be required there as well.
- Trees have been cut back at the intersection of Frontage Road and Carter Hill Road. A letter was sent to the homeowners, Mr. & Mrs. Chatfield, and Pat also spoke to them. A chipper was borrowed from Swanton and the ditch was also cleaned. The PWD has been very busy!
- The culverts on Gore Road have not been checked yet, but a spotlight was ordered and has been received, so that will happen next week.
- The metal fencing at the Machia property on St. Armand Road has started to be removed and taken off site. Hodgdon's will be picking up the rest of it for us with their picker.
- There is a high shoulder near the Machia property on St. Armand Road that catches the wing and needs to be dug out. Pat will call Dig Safe first.
- US Route 7 in Highgate Springs has seen an increase with illegal dumping at the pull off area. The latest incident was a large amount of bagged seeds in burlap bags. Heidi will send pictures to John Leddy to see how they can help dispose of them if the state has not already done so. US Route 7 is a state road.
- There is blacktop work to do on Campagna Road by the culvert that was recently replaced. Weather permitting that will happen next week also.
- The Rice Hill / Spooner Hill project has not started yet but we have grant funding to be used there. We will need to rent an excavator.

- Pat looked at the old culverts and DI in front of the white house by the Machia Road bridge. The state is asking the town to sign off so they can have access for a drainage easement with regard to the B25 replacement project. This issue needs to be cleared up prior to bridge construction. Motion by Josh LaRocque to sign the easement for storm water run-off for the B25 project. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED.**
- A letter has been prepared to send to a landowner on Hanna Road. There is a problem with pigs there that is undermining the road. The animals are rutting and the fence needs to be moved back. Motion by Steve LaFar to have Josh LaRocque sign this letter as the road commissioner. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED.**
- Pat will visit the Machia Road slide area and also check on B25 first thing next week. The drainage on Machia Road is working. George Greenwood asked about the bump in the road by Dennis Nolan's property on St. Armand Road. Pat will be checking culverts in that area. Some are too short, which is why that section has not been paved yet.
- The Durkee Road culvert project is complete. Pat has some paperwork to complete for Heidi for the grant.
- Sharon asked if we have a key to the Frontage Road property that was donated to the town. Pat does not have one, but was informed where there is one. The sand pile at the property will be of great value to the town and can be used for road sand. Sharon and Pat believe there is enough there for a few winter seasons. There is a request from MVU to utilize the property and the airport is interested as well to square off their boundary lines. The developer of the solar project there has offered to do training with HVFD.
- Randy asked for an update on the Christolini development drainage issues. There are no more water issues there on that corner. A hydraulic study request has been submitted for the proposed new development in that area.

E. Town Treasurer Updates – Shelley Laroche

1. Check warrants and misc. updates

- Randy asked about the down payment for Hungerford's for work at the park and ride. The work is set to start soon. The work needs to be completed by November. Sharon asked about stone from Shelburne Lime. We are stockpiling in the event that Swanton Lime is not always available to us.
- The audit was last week and they finished up this past Tuesday.
- Property tax bills will be mailed out on Friday, September 15th.
- The Finance Committee meets on September 11th to work on the final policy from last year's audit. This is the Banking and Investment Policy.
- Richard Noel let everyone know he would be attending the next TAC meeting on September 14th.

F. Town Clerk Updates – Wendi Dusablon

1. Minutes

- Motion by Josh LaRocque to approve the minutes from September 5, 2017, as written. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED.**
- Motion by Steve LaFar to approve the minutes from August 17, 2017, as written. The motion was seconded by Josh LaRocque – **APPROVED.**

2. Misc. updates on community events

There are some great events happening in town over the next several weekends:

- Saturday, September 9th 4:30pm White Tails Banquet @ Highgate Arena
- Saturday, September 16th 8:00am Kids Fun Run @ Highgate Arena
- Saturday, September 16th 11:00am MAHA Cornhole Tournament @ Highgate Arena
- Saturday, September 23rd 9:00am Community Playground "Build It Day" @ Highgate Arena – coffee, donuts, lunch served!

3. Further scanning & preservation of land records

In 2012 we began to digitize our land records, going back to August 1999. The fund for computerization and preservation has grown and Wendi is looking to further digitize the land records going backwards. Comfortably, we can go back as far as 1985 for now, but eventually Wendi would like to have a full 40 years digitally available. The system we use is ACS/Xerox, now known as Conduent. We recently digitized all our mylars (maps) also. Wendi will keep the board informed as the project moves forward, hopefully by early 2018.

G. Town Administrator Items – Heidi Britch-Valenta

1. VCDP ADA modification grant application hearing

This is a warned hearing for the ADA modification grant for accessibility at the municipal building. The Selectboard authorized the application so tonight will determine what the application should be. The vote at town meeting was to address the front entrance, back entrance, inner doors, signage and restrooms. We also have work that can be done to the public works office and restroom area. Heidi suggests a \$100,000.00 grant that will give us a \$75,000.00 grant application request and \$25,000.00 is what the town would put in, which can be in-kind. To make a grant case, we would need to show that we are burdened with other projects which are not eligible under this grant (HVFD floor, municipal roof). We would be putting in \$25,000.00 but this is not for what we said to the voters, which needs to be clarified. The \$75,000.00 that we can get from the grant could be used for the garage area work. The grant would be awarded in February. Sharon spoke to having a plan in place for different scenarios, depending whether we get the grant or we don't. If we do the \$100,000.00 worth of ADA work, we are asking for \$75,000.00 in help from the grant. Instead of \$80,000.00 on the voters, basically it would bring \$55,000.00 back to the voters to reallocate. If we don't get the grant, we already have the original \$80,000.00 to do the main work. Josh would like an RFP to go out ahead of time before we know about the grant, either way, so we will be ready to go. Sharon reiterated a plan needs to be in place and documented by the Selectboard so we are prudent with our money and address the issues in the building with regard to ADA compliance and accessibility. Saying no to saving money is not an option for us. Motion by Josh LaRocque to have Heidi pursue this grant option. The motion was seconded by Steve LaFar – **APPROVED.**

2. Sidewalk construction contract

GW Tatro was chosen by the state as the lowest qualified bidder for this project and the bid came in lower than expected at \$202,071.00. The taxpayers put aside \$62,500.00 for this project back in 2013. Motion by Randy Connelly to sign the contract with GW Tatro for completion of the sidewalk. The motion was seconded by Josh LaRocque – **APPROVED.** There is also a notice to proceed that needs to go to the state to get the wheels turning. The sidewalk project is set to be complete by Nov. 15th. The town will be responsible for maintenance. Motion by Josh LaRocque to sign the notice to proceed for GW Tatro to begin the work immediately. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED.** GW Tatro will begin the project at the municipal building end and close out that portion with the state and the 1111 permit. This project will break ground in about two weeks. The project at the Highgate dam will also be starting in September, as well as the replacement of the HVFD floor. GW Tatro is involved in the dam project also. Staging and parking will be at the old town garage property and the former Machia property, all of which are town owned. The brush depot site will also be used for temporary storage of materials during construction. Motion by Josh LaRocque to sign the offsite activity exemption records. The motion was seconded by Steve LaFar – **APPROVED.**

3. Sidewalk construction inspection contract

Ruggiano Engineering was chosen as the construction inspection firm to oversee the sidewalk project. Their bid amount was \$27,276.06. They will manage the details of the project including testing of materials, forms and verifying compliance in all areas. We are in good hands. Motion by Steve LaFar to sign the contract agreement with Ruggiano Engineering from St. Albans. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED.** There will be weekly meetings, held here on Thursday mornings @ 10am, to keep everyone connected and informed. This is also an opportunity for landowners to voice concerns.

4. Herbicide spray request

VELCO is requesting to spray herbicides in the area of Route 78 and the rail trail. We own property behind the VELCO substation which is why we were contacted. Steve asked for verification on the area to be sprayed, there is a copy of the map in the Selectboard packet.

5. Misc.

Sharon noted that there are still items available at the Machia property that can be viewed by appointment. She is hoping it will be gone by this weekend.

H. Selectboard Items

1. B25 update

We are moving ahead with the Machia Road bridge project. The town was successful in getting the project to move forward when it was stalled. Sharon has been asked about the \$10,000.00 that the town decided to spend. It will save us a lot of money based on legal expenses and inflated costs of the project if we keep putting it off. The landowner came down on the price of the property, and she is very happy to report that it was a good negotiation all the way around. We have enough in the bridge fund now, and the town will continue to push the state to get the bids documents out this month so we can have a new bridge in 2018. Once bids come back we will know if there is a need for another article to go before the voters, but without exact amounts we just don't know.

2. Platt Road parcel discussion

This is a small triangular piece of land in the crotch of the road that is a very tight area to plow. Typically there was a fence around it that we had to request be moved every year for plowing. Pat commented that with the town right of way it goes well into the property. He believes that if you measured in all directions, with the right of way, the town would be well onto her property all the way around. There is a part of this road that the town does not plow, the landowners take care of it with their own equipment. A site visit will be necessary and the Selectboard will need to decide on a date.

3. Misc.

- It was noted that the library trustees are going to politely decline a request to be added to the CIP. They would prefer to do something on their own, perhaps another warned article at town meeting in March.
- Sharon reminded everyone that school is back in session as well as harvest time is upon us so PLEASE DRIVE CAREFULLY!

4. Fire department floor bids

We have received bids from Mike Messier, Doug Rollo and Dan's Concrete. The town reached out to Mike Gosselin as well, but did not hear back. Messier's bid came in at \$83,000.00 for the concrete work. Doug Rollo's bid came in at \$17,277.00 to tear out the concrete, bring the debris to the town property at Carter Hill & Route 78, remove all debris, put in 5' of sand and compact to the appropriate specs, and to be tested by our engineer. Dan's Concrete gave us some options. The board agreed on the following from Dan's Concrete at a cost of approximately \$20,945.00: garage slab 41' x 59' and the 7' x 6' hose tower room, mat #4 rebar @ 16' on center, 6" thickness, machine finish, saw cut expansion joints, 4000 PSI concrete, slope to drain, sealed with diamond coat cure and seal, the garage apron 5-6" thick, mat #4 rebar @ 18" on center, 4000 PSI concrete, setup, pour, broom finish, pumping is an additional \$400.00 per set as needed and sealed, 50 linear feet of drain, 12" deep max tapered to 8" deep at the shallowest, 3" x 3" lip with or without steel reinforcement lip, steel to be provided by the town or provided by Dan's Concrete at market price 17" wide. The cost difference for 8" thickness vs. 6" thickness is \$1,700.00. The board agreed 6" would suit our needs with the rebar it won't move. The only piece left is the concrete cutting, which is looking to be about \$4,500.00 but we have nothing in writing yet. There were questions on warrantied work and who covers it. Josh pointed out that concrete moves and hairline fractures are not uncommon. Our engineer will determine if it was compacted correctly and if the concrete meets specs. These are all local contractors and are not going anywhere. The timeframe will be in the next 3-4 weeks and the work is expected to go very quickly. Our purchasing policy states anything under \$5,000.00 does not require bids, with regard to the concrete cutting. Motion by Josh LaRocque to approve the bids from Dan's Concrete and Doug Rollo, contingent on our engineer approving the specs and for the concrete cutting we will get three bids to get the ball rolling. This will be for the larger slab 41' x 59', hose tower room 7' x 6', apron and drains (as stated above). The motion was seconded by Steve LaFar – **APPROVED**. The total for Rollo, Menard and the concrete cutting looks like it will come in well under the \$60,000.00 approved in March. There was some discussion on where HVFD will be storing their trucks and other items during construction. They will be utilizing the public works side of the building for much of it.

5. Letter to residents in tax bills

The Selectboard will have a letter to residents in with the tax bills being mailed on Friday, September 15th. It will highlight many projects going on in town over the next several months. Also included in the letter will note some internal staff shifts happening within the town. Earlier this evening in executive session the board made the decision to separate out the Zoning Administrator and Town Administrator positions. The Zoning Administrator will be advertised as a separate part-time position. Heidi Britch-Valenta will be stepping down as Zoning Administrator, as she has more than her share of work to do as Town Administrator and also administering grants on behalf of the town. Once the part-time position is posted and the process is completed, the Selectboard will be asking the Planning Commission to provide a recommendation to the Selectboard for appointment. There has been a lot of investigation and thought put into this decision and it is something that Heidi asked for and feels is in the best interest of the town. The board feels Heidi has done a great job and they will expect the same of the new person as well. This came into play only a few hours ago as a final decision.

I. Upcoming Events

- September 9 4:30pm White Tails Unlimited Banquet @ Arena
- September 11 3pm Finance Comm. Mtg.
- September 12 5pm Library Study Comm. Mtg. @ Library
- September 13 7pm Republic Caucus Mtg.
- September 14 6pm DRB Mtg.
- September 15 TAX BILLS MAILED – TOWN OFFICES CLOSED TO PUBLIC
- September 16 8am Kids Fun Run @ Arena
- September 16 11am MAHA Cornhole Tournament
- September 18 5:30pm Selectboard/Arena Committees – Exec. Session @ Arena
- September 19 6pm Planning Comm. Mtg.
- September 21 7pm Selectboard Mtg.
- September 23 9am PlayGround “Build It Day” @ Arena / Ballfields location
We will feed you ☺☺☺

J. Executive Session

Motion by Sharon Bousquet to enter into executive session @ 9:18pm with Patrick Loyer, Public Works Director, and Heidi Britch-Valenta, Town Administrator, to discuss personnel, contracts and legal, where premature general public knowledge would place the town and the individuals involved at a substantial disadvantage. The motion was seconded by Josh LaRocque – **APPROVED**. Patrick Loyer left the executive session @ 10:00pm. Motion by Josh LaRocque to exit executive session @ 10:30pm. The motion was seconded by Randy Connelly – **APPROVED**.

K. Adjournment

Motion by Josh LaRocque to adjourn the meeting @ 10:30pm. The motion was seconded by Sharon Bousquet – **APPROVED**.

Respectfully submitted by,

Wendi Dusablon, Highgate Town Clerk
& Public Meetings Clerk

Minutes approved by,

Sharon Bousquet - Chair, Highgate Selectboard