

Town of Highgate

Selectboard Meeting

Thursday, June 20, 2024 @ 6pm

MINUTES

Note: All actions taken are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

A. Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting was called to order by Vern Brosky, Chair, at 6:02pm, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. **This meeting was a hybrid of in-person and zoom video.** Participants were in-person unless noted.

Highgate Selectboard Members: Vern Brosky III, Chair; Merry Souza, Vice Chair; Ben Lowell

Highgate Staff Members: Shelley Laroche, Treasurer; Sharon Bousquet, Town Administrator

Public: Alice (Sue) Cota, Ty Choiniere, Woody Rouse, Paulette Unwin, Keith Ploof, Brian Benoit – VASA, Darleen Yartz (Tremblay) {via Zoom Link}, (Executive Session – Ed Adrian, Town Attorney; Greta Brunswick, Northwest Regional Planning; and Sara Bartlett, Vermont Dept. of Environmental Conservation {via Zoom link}

B. Public Comments

Sue Cota thanked Highgate Rec and its director, Jes Bombard for opening up the Arena for the MVU Game on June 15th. She also wanted to express all of the positive comments that she had received about the Father/Daughter Dance on June 8th at the Arena. Ty Choiniere congratulated the MVU girls on their Championship win and Sharon Bousquet echoed that for all of the Franklin County Wins. Sue Cota thanked the Highgate Fire Dept for being involved in the MVU Girls send off parade and their Homecoming Win Parade.

C. Discussion of Opening All Highgate Roads to ATVs

Vern Brosky began by stating that he was not against ATVs, but the Town needed to do more enforcement of the “bad apples” and wanted to wait to open up roads until the Selectboard could determine what type of enforcement the Franklin County Sherrif Dept would provide, starting in a couple of weeks. Paulette Unwin interrupted to express her anger and was asked to let the Selectboard speak first. Merry Souza agreed with Vern that ATV illegal traffic had increased, and that the Town needed to wait before opening any more roads. Paulette Unwin interrupted again to say she was angry to think that VASA could use Highgate Roads and she could not. She felt that was very unfair and both she and her brother Woody Rouse

complained that the police do not enforce any ATV violations, so what was the point of waiting. Vern Brosky cited that when St. Albans City Police first started in Highgate there were ATV seizures and more tickets and that he hoped the Town could get the same enforcement with Franklin County Sherrif Dept. Ben Lowell agreed with the other Selectboard members and suggested that waiting to open the roads would be the best option at this time. Paulette Unwin asked when was the "right time"? When would this be revisited? Vern suggested the Fall would be the likely time and Paulette left the meeting. Keith Ploof chimed in that being legal with your ATV was expensive; Sharon Bousquet suggested that was why she did not own one. Ty Choiniere suggested to Brian Benoit (VASA) that there needed to be more signage on the approved VASA trail through Highgate; Brian will check on options. Vern pointed out that VASA was working with the Sherrif Dept and Fish & Wildlife to help patrol their trails and members.

D. Town Treasurer, Shelley Laroche

+ Check warrant – Motion made by Merry Souza, Second by Ben Lowell to sign the check warrant APPROVED

+ Delinquent Taxes amount = \$59,526.71

+ Tax sale properties = 8 properties, Attorney working on Date of Sale

+Shelley asked the Selectboard to sign the Internal Checklists Documents for the upcoming Audit – Motion by Merry Souza, Second by Ben Lowell APPROVED

+ Shelley asked the Selectboard to sign the Auditor Contract for Sullivan & Powers – Motion made by Ben Lowell and Seconded by Merry Souza APPROVED

+ Shelley informed the Selectboard that the Town has received a letter from the State to inform us that we are required to do a town-wide reappraisal. Shelley explained that the Town's Reappraisal Fund has a balance of \$238,000 that will pay for the appraisal; but that the appraisal will need to go out for a Request for Bids and then may be several years before it is finished due to the enormous number of towns and cities being asked to reappraise in VT.

+ Shelley spoke about the new payroll tax required to pay for universal childcare and whether the Town wished to pay for the entire increase or pass a small portion of that on to employees – the entire increase comes to a little over \$2,750.00. Motion made by Merry Souza and seconded by Ben Lowell to have the Town be responsible for the entire payroll tax increase. APPROVED

+ Vern Brosky asked Shelley about whether the Universal Meals Program was going to be a payroll tax and she had not received any information concerning that yet.

+ Shelley also updated the public that the School Budget and Authority to Borrow items were passed by the Voters; unfortunately, there was a poor voter turnout.

E. Town Clerk, Wendi Dusablon

Absent

F. Final Hearing on VT ACCD Frant#07110-PG-2021-Highgate-06

Sharon explained that the Town had completed the requirements of the grant and that it had been used for the purpose of designing a new library concept as part of the Village Core Master Plan; as well as surveying the three Village Core Properties. Sharon asked the Selectboard for a motion to close the Final Hearing – motion made by Merry Souza and seconded by Ben Lowell. APPROVED

G. Town Administrator, Sharon Bousquet

+ Sharon shared the appraisal of the John Deere Tractor damage - \$2,991.07 (Our Deductible is \$1,000.00)

+ Sharon shared that Senator Sanders' office has chosen the Highgate Village Wastewater as a possible appropriation for the next round of funding at \$500,000.

+ Sharon asked the Selectboard to make a motion to approve the Memorandum of Understanding between VTrans and the Town of Highgate in the amount of \$1 million dollars for the Highgate Airport Water and Sewer Project. Motion made by Ben Lowell and seconded by Merry Souza. APPROVED

+ Sharon explained the need for the Selectboard to concur with the decision of Aldrich & Elliot Engineering to accept the low bid and proposal from Engineers Construction Inc (ECI) for the Highgate Airport Water and Sewer Project. Motion was made for concurrence of bid by Ben Lowell and seconded by Merry Souza. APPROVED

+ Sharon told the Selectboard that the Swanton Missisquoi Valley Lions Club was donating an ADA-compliant Swing Assy to the Highgate Recreation Department and she was requesting a signature for the acceptance and thank you letter. Motion by Ben Lowell and seconded by Merry Souza. APPROVED

+ Sharon told the Selectboard that the Recreation Department had received a RTP Grant (Recreational Trails Program Grant) in the amount of \$49,880. To use for a new Lamoille Valley Rail Trail Pavilion. Ty expressed how particular the State was about anything to do with the Rail Trail.

+ There was discussion about the Child safety signs that Vern Brosky had requested for Route 7 around Tyler Place and Martin's Store. Sharon will check with the State and the Tylers about the logistics of placing some temporary signs there.

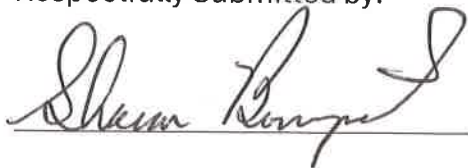
H. Selectboard

Adjourn regular meeting at 7:04pm to enter into Executive with Ed Arian, Town Attorney; Greta Brunswick, Northwest Regional Planning; Sara Bartlett, Vermont Department of Environmental; Shelley Laroche, Town Treasurer; and Sharon Bousquet, Town Administrator. Motion made by Vern Brosky and seconded by Merry Souza. APPROVED

I. Executive Session

To discuss legal and contractual matters, where premature general public knowledge would place the town and or individuals involved at a substantial disadvantage. Motion by Merry Souza to adjourn at 9:03pm, seconded by Ben Lowell. APPROVED

Respectfully Submitted by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sharon Bousquet", written over a horizontal line.

Sharon Bousquet
Town Administrator

Minutes Approved by:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Vern Brosky III", written over a horizontal line.

Vern Brosky III
Selectboard Chair