

TOWN OF HIGHGATE
Selectboard Meeting
Thursday, January 22, 2026 @ 6:30pm
Approved Minutes

NOTE: All actions taken are unanimous unless otherwise stated

ZOOM LINK: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89508507204>

Note: This was a joint meeting of the Selectboard + Planning Commission

A. Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting was called to order by Merry Souza, Chair @ 6:32pm, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. **This meeting was a hybrid of in-person and Zoom video.** Participants were in-person unless otherwise noted.

Highgate Selectboard Members – Merry Souza, Chair; Vern Brosky III, Vice-Chair; Richard Flint *absent* – Chad Carr

Highgate Office Staff – Wendi Dusablon, Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk; Fredi Hayes, Town Administrator *absent* – Shelley Laroche, Treasurer + DTC

Planning Commission Members – Luc Dupuis, Chair; Scott Bessette, Vice-Chair; Jack Pelkey; Tom Conley *absent* – Ty Choiniere

Public – Alice (Sue) Cota; Gary Greenough, HVFD; Ralph Comiskey, HVFD; Luke Choiniere, PWD; Henry Rainville; Robert Clark, Otter Creek; Greta Brunswick, NRPC; Ryan Bates (via Zoom)

B. Public Comments

- Sue Cota wanted the board and public to be aware that the path connecting the school and arena is very icy and dangerous. It is heavily used during hockey season and needs to be kept clear and treated. Richard Flint stated he talked to Luke in Public Works and also to the custodians at the school. The school only maintains their lot. Luke has been over to treat the path, but a bus parks there during the day so it's hard to get to. We cannot use salt on the arena lot because it is bad for the ice and the Zamboni will track it in. Luke is aware and will do his best to keep up with keeping it clear and sanded.

Wendi asked that the PC also open their meeting, as this is a joint meeting and the PC meeting for January. Motion by Scott Bessette to open the Planning Commission meeting @ 6:35pm. The motion was seconded by Jack Pelkey – **APPROVED.**

C. Town Clerk – Wendi Dusablon

- Motion by Richard Flint to approve the Selectboard minutes from January 8, 2026, as written. The motion was seconded by Merry Souza – **APPROVED.**
- Motion by Jack Pelkey to approve the Planning Commission minutes from November 18, 2025, as written. The motion was seconded by Tom Conley – **APPROVED.**
- Town Meeting Day Updates – Polls will be open 7am – 7pm on Tuesday, March 3, 2026 at the arena. The informational meeting will be part of the regular Selectboard meeting on February 19, 2026 @ 6:30pm. The Town Meeting Day warning is published, today is day 40 before TMD and the earliest it could be posted. It is also part of the Town Report. Petitions and consent of candidate forms for your name to appear on the ballot are due Monday, January 26, 2026 by 5pm. Ballots will be ordered immediately following that deadline, so we should have ballots by early February for absentee voting. Request yours by calling / emailing / stopping by / using the My Voter Page / or message through our social media pages or website. Town Reports are in process – Wendi and Shelley reviewed the draft and approved it yesterday, so we could have books as early at next week! They will be at the

Town Office / Library / Arena / Desorcies / McCuins / Martins / a pdf will be on the website in February / or contact Wendi to have one mailed to you. A list of appointed positions is posted, and letters of interest are due to Wendi by February 26, 2026 at 4pm. Appointments will begin after TMD.

- Dog licensing is going well – deadline for on-time licensing is April 1st by 4pm. Prices increase after that. So far we have licensed 88 dogs in 2026. We have a long way to go, but this is a great start! The rabies clinic will be March 28, 2026 from 9am – noon at the arena. All info is included on the back cover of the Town Report.
- Motion by Richard Flint to exit the regular meeting and enter into the Liquor Control Board. The motion was seconded by Vern Brosky III – **APPROVED**. Motion by Richard Flint to approve the following licenses that have been received to date: The Tyler Place – First Class Hotel License and Outside Consumption Permit; Desorcies Market – Second Class License and Tobacco License; The Highgate Manor – First Class Restaurant/Bar License and Third Class Restaurant/Bar License. The motion was seconded by Vern Brosky III – **APPROVED**. Motion by Vern Brosky III to exit the Liquor Control Board and enter back into the regular Selectboard meeting. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED**.

D. Town Treasurer – Shelley Laroche

Shelley was absent but had prepared some materials for review and approval.

- Motion by Richard Flint to approve and sign the check warrants. The motion was seconded by Vern Brosky III – **APPROVED**.
- Merry read aloud from the Tax Map Maintenance Proposal from CAI Technologies for processing data recorded 4/1/26 – 3/31/27. Cost for map / GIS maintenance services is \$4,400.00 and \$20.00 per building footprint for buildings added or changed. Motion by Richard Flint to approve the CAI Technologies Tax Map Maintenance Proposal as presented. The motion was seconded by Vern Brosky III – **APPROVED**.

E. Town Administrator – Fredi Hayes

- HVFD update: Gary and Ralph were present for this update and have some items for the board to think about. Old Engine 2 needs a new home. The department has no use for it and it needs to leave Scott Bessette's property by spring. The Selectboard needs to find a home for it or get rid of it. It is also time to think about putting the tanker out to bid. The new-to-us pumper / tanker will be here in a few weeks. At the park and ride location of the dry hydrant, folks are parking way too close to the hydrant and HVFD will need extra spaces with the new pumper / tanker to get the nose of the truck in there. Gary is requesting at least three more spaces to accommodate their needs. The Selectboard agrees with this and signage may be needed, even though people don't read it. The old Engine 2 at Scott's shop will not start. The board would like to advertise both vehicles and put them out to bid.
- Public Works update: Luke Choiniere was present for this update. We have a new crew member that started this week, Logan Riley. It is working out quite well and Luke is pleased with the energy within the department. We haven't had a major snowfall event, and things are going pretty well. He is grateful for a full crew finally after several months. He provided an update on sand and salt. The department is not looking for any new projects. They have work to do maintaining the vehicles and keeping them clean, as well as cutting many trees, there is plenty to do. The grader is done we just need to make arrangements for it to be picked up. Luke mentioned we may need to find a place for the John Deere and the mower if demo is happening at town properties. Richard thanked Scott Bessette for his help earlier this season with all the ice and busted chains on the truck(s). Thank you, Scott! And thank you to Luke for stepping up as our new director and being a one-man crew for a bit. Thank you, Luke!
- Recreation update: Jes was not able to be here but did submit a written update which Fredi read aloud from. This update included programming numbers, recapping fall sports, the

upcoming Summer Sounds 2026 concert, public skating numbers, pro shop update, and staffing updates. Greg Machia joined us and is doing a great job with buildings and grounds. Jes is enjoying her new office space which was part of the Phase 1 arena project (new entry way / roof / office for Jes). Rec is currently working on a plan for what Phase 2 will look like, as well as prioritizing a new Zamboni purchase.

- HLCC update – Betsy will provide an update on HLCC at a future meeting.

F. Selectboard Items

- Village Waste Water Project - Robert Clark from Otter Creek Engineering, as well as Greta Brunswick from NRPC were present for updates on the wastewater project, Village Core cleanup process, and water feasibility report. The wastewater project is at the point of submitting final plans and permit applications, at about 90% design complete. The project is for a 20,000 gallon in-ground disposal system on the former Wright property on Lamkin Street, now owned by the town. This is all in-ground, at grade, no mound. Fredi and Greta have been working with the Planning Commission on the wastewater ordinance and reaching out to possible customers about connection. There will be another final round of outreach also. Robert explained the contracts of the ww system as contracts 1 – 2 - and 3. Early connection will have costs covered as part of the project. If residents or businesses wait to hook up to the ww system it could cost \$15,000.00 - \$20,000.00 out of their own pockets. Robert recapped how the town got to this point in the process. He would also like the Selectboard to consider adding back in the pre-treatment aspect of the project. Funding is available. The plan now is to finish the design and submit permits to then transition into the bid portion and possibly start construction around Labor Day 2026. Adding the pre-treatment now would eliminate the need to add it in the future and given the interest we have seen we could quickly approach the 20,000 gallons per day capacity. He thinks it makes sense to add it now. Fredi added that the push to add this is due to MVSD now being interested in hooking the school onto the ww system. This represents a huge capacity allotment. The project is carrying about \$1.5 million dollars in contingency, which is set aside as part of the funding stack. We can include the design with a separate item for the pre-treatment part of the system in the bid in the first contract. The \$750,000.00 allocation through Becca Balint's office is awaiting signature to pass and become accessible to us. Robert feels that the funding to add pre-treatment is already there and shared his experience with these systems and what happens on day one and over time. Pre-treatment would allow for more gallons per day, as much as 50,000 gallons per day. Richard Flint had questions about what hooking on to the ww system will cost the residents. Robert replied that 1-2% of income is considered reasonable by the state. This project is heavily subsidized. In VT most systems are paid for by the users of the system. If this is fully funded, the operational costs and maintenance costs would need to be covered by the users. We will need a licensed ww operator on staff or we could hire an outside licensed firm / person. Having hook-up fees covered for those that join early on is very uncommon. Robert feels the system will be sustainable on its own and he is confident people will continue to connect. Each hook-up location will have its own pump and tank. Septic tanks need to be pumped out. All the infrastructure has a life span of approximately 50-60 years. The disposal field comes down to cleaning and maintenance, with a life span of about 40 years. Replacement of the disposal field would involve a dig out and stone. Because of the size of it ours will be under mild pressure, otherwise it is the same as a leach field at your home. It needs to be flushed and inspected annually. Treatment involves using biology to break things down more. The lines are 6". Richard Flint had questions about the village designation area and wanted to make it clear what that area consisted of. Henry Rainville asked if this ww system was being sized for the future. Scott Bessette asked about expanding up Lamkin Street and what that would entail, which Robert explained. Henry had questions about the maintenance of the ww system. Robert noted that with a simple system like this, contracting out the maintenance makes sense, or interested town employees could become licensed. Repairs would mostly be on a case-by-case basis, to work with the contractor on fixes. Cost of repairs and

- maintenance would be out of the fund balance, and shouldn't need to be dependent on anything other than setting aside reserves by the users of the ww system. Scott had questions about 20-years down the road and how much we should have in reserves. Robert would need to further think about that answer.
- Village Core Cleanup + Water Feasibility - The Village Core cleanup and water feasibility project are other big projects / prospects in town. We have a water feasibility study that is complete with two options – extend water from Swanton Village / airport region, or a new community well water source. Extending from the airport is estimated at \$15 - \$18 million, the community water source is much less expensive, but still expensive. We have permission from MVSD to perform testing at the Cassidy lot owned by the school district. This has been identified as a possible location for a community well / water source to serve the VCMP property. Cathedral Square can not locate here without a water source, as discussed at the last meeting. We would need, at a minimum, an easement from MVSD if this location were viable, and continue conversations with MVSD. We don't know what the testing will cost us yet. Fredi will be putting out an RFQ for a better idea on costs and if there are grants available. The RFQ will give us a timeline and dollar amount, more to follow. Merry added that we are waiting on final testing at 28 Mill Hill Road before that can be demolished. There is some set up equipment there, but we can't start yet. Greta was present from NRPC to discuss the corrective action plan at the VCMP property. It is completed and we are waiting on the letter from the state which should be soon. The corrective action plan (CAP) includes building materials abatement in addition to soil remediation at the VCMP property – 14 St Armand Road and 3111 VT Route 78. We applied with NRPC for clean up funding and were awarded \$136,000.00 with a 0% interest loan for matching funds, which we have set aside to pay off right away. We are also waiting on a sign off from historic preservation. Things are moving ahead. There is an RFQ out now for oversight of the abatement work. Phase 2 will be the soils. Scott had questions about the timeline for water. ASAP per Fredi, and that includes figuring out if a community water source and a location are feasible for us. Vern noted that the board received an email from a resident about Cathedral Square and money being spent that we don't have. Vern added that most of what we have used was grant funding and that the last time we voted on borrowing or bonding was for the airport project, which was not ever used. We have great partners to work with through the process and all our large projects are about 15% taxpayer funded, per Fredi. Robert added in response to Scott's question, that the community well and process with the state is very complicated and time consuming. It has to meet a lot of criteria. He mentioned a recent project and well in Franklin that they worked with Chevalier Drilling on. He recommends talking with the drillers sooner than later. The board thanked Robert and Greta for being here and for sharing all the information and answering our questions.
 - Machia Rd - We have the GeoDesign study on the Machia Road and the report is in the Selectboard packet. This will also be posted on the website. The final water feasibility study will be shared there also. The GeoDesign report is not an action item. It will come back at a future meeting after an RFP is posted for the active well monitoring system and to clarify budget concerns with this project. Fredi recapped the grant that we pulled out of and the steps happening now. She is working with ANR / NRPC / VT Emergency Management on the best way to move ahead and use the funds we have. There is some shifting and instability at the site. They gave us some options to consider, the study came in as we expected. The weather plays a huge factor here, with drought, followed by heavy rain, etc., this is all part of the report and can be seen in the data points.
 - Dog Ordinance Re-Write – The final version of the dog control ordinance is in the packets and Merry read it aloud in its entirety into the record. Vern pointed out the biggest changes, which are to the fine schedule and section 11. Motion by Vern Brosky III to approve and adopt the dog control ordinance as presented and read through tonight. The motion was seconded by Richard Flint – **APPROVED**. It was noted that from here it needs to also be posted in five locations around town and in the St. Albans Messenger, within 14 days of

adoption (Feb. 4th). If no petition against the ordinance adoption is received within 44 days of adoption (March 7th) then it will automatically become effective on March 23, 2026.

G. Other Business

- Those present discussed impact fees and building a home in town to live in vs. building houses in town to flip / sell / make money (developers). It would be a long process to implement impact fees. The town explored this several years ago also. Questions came up about what impact fees could be used for. Scott would like Fredi to explore this more and bring info back to the Planning Commission for more discussion down the road. Scott noted that we are taxing our elderly residents out of their homes. We have another 15-lot subdivision coming before the DRB in February, this is another example of what Scott is concerned about. Fredi won't be at the PC meeting on Feb. 17th but in March the plan is to get back into the wastewater ordinance. It is estimated that \$50-\$70 per month would be the fee for hooking up to the ww ordinance, but we just don't know yet, we will have to wait and see.

H. Executive Session

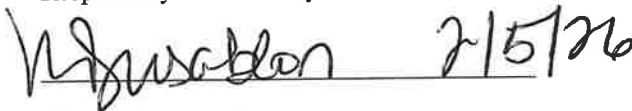
None

I. Adjournment

Motion by Richard Flint to adjourn the Selectboard Meeting @ 8:14pm. The motion was seconded by Vern Brosky III – **APPROVED.**

Motion by Jack Pelkey to adjourn the Planning Commission Meeting @ 8:14pm. The motion was seconded by Scott Bessette – **APPROVED.**

Respectfully submitted by:

 2/15/26

Wendi Dusablon
Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk

Minutes Approved by:



Highgate Selectboard

Highgate Planning Commission

Highgate VT

Town Meeting 2026

Consent of Candidate forms & Nominating Petitions are available for the following positions to be voted on by Australian Ballot on Town Meeting Day - March 3, 2026

Consent of Candidate forms & Nominating Petitions are due to Wendi Dusablon, Town Clerk, no later than Monday, January 26, 2026 @ 5:00pm in order for your name to appear on the ballot!

minimum signature requirement is 25 registered voter signatures on petitions

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| CEMETERY COMMISSIONER | 5-YEAR TERM |
| LIBRARY TRUSTEE | 4 YEARS REMAINING ON 5-YEAR TERM |
| LIBRARY TRUSTEE | 5-YEAR TERM |
| MODERATOR | FOR THE ENSUING YEAR |
| SELECTBOARD MEMBER | 2 YEARS REMAINING ON 3-YEAR TERM |
| SELECTBOARD MEMBER | 3-YEAR TERM |
| TOWN CLERK | 3-YEAR TERM |

Consent of Candidate forms & petitions will be available starting Tuesday, December 23, 2025, by visiting our website, stop by the office during regular business hours, or contact the office to have paperwork mailed or emailed to you:

- Town website www.highgatevt.org - look for the "TOWN MEETING DAY 2026" LINK
- Office Hours are Monday - Thursday 9am - 4pm (excluding holidays / holiday schedule)
- Call or email Wendi @ 802-868-5002 wdusablon@highgatevt.org
- Town drop-box (rear entrance) is also available for returning paperwork

TOWN OF HIGHGATE POSITIONS FOR APPOINTMENT BY THE HIGHGATE SELECTBOARD

Appointments will take place on Thursday, March 5, 2026 ~ after Town Meeting Day

SUBMIT LETTERS OF INTEREST TO HIGHGATE TOWN CLERK, WENDI DUSABLON BY 4PM ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2026.

| | | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Tree Warden | 1-year term | Development Rev. Board Member | 3-year term |
| Animal Control Officer | 1-year term | Development Rev. Board Member | 3-year term |
| NW Regional Planning Rep. | 1-year term | Planning Comm. Member | 2 years remaining on a 3-year term |
| NW Regional Planning Rep. | 1-year term | Planning Comm. Member | 3-year term |
| Transportation Advisory Rep. | 1-year term | Recreation Comm. Member | 2-year term |
| Delinquent Tax Collector | 1-year term | Recreation Comm. Member | 2-year term |
| NW Solid Waste Dist. Rep. | 3-year term | HART* Comm. Members (5) | 1-year terms |
| Road Commissioner | 1-year term | NW Rail Trail Council Rep. | 1-year term |
| Communications Union Dist. Rep. | 1-year term | Fire Commissioner | 1-year term |

- ~ Office hours are Monday – Thursday 9am – 4pm (closed to the public on Fridays)
- ~ By mail – Town of Highgate, PO Box 189, Highgate, VT 05459, Att: Wendi
- ~ Use our secure drop box located at the rear entrance of the Municipal Building
- ~ by email [wdusablom@highgatevt.org](mailto:wendusablom@highgatevt.org)

*HART = Highgate Arena Renovation Team

2026 Town Meeting Warning ~ Highgate Vermont

The legal voters of the Town of Highgate, Vermont, are hereby notified and warned to meet at the Highgate Sports Arena (243 Gore Road) in the Town of Highgate on Tuesday, March 3, 2026 between the hours of seven o'clock in the forenoon (7:00am), at which time the polls will open, and seven o'clock in the evening (7:00pm), at which time the polls will close, to vote by Australian ballot upon the following Articles of business:

ARTICLE #1: To elect the following town officers:

- a) One Cemetery Commissioner for a term of 5 years
- b) One Library Trustee for a term of 4 years remaining on a 5 year term
- c) One Library Trustee for a term of 5 years
- d) One Moderator for the ensuing year
- e) One Selectboard Member for a term of 2 years remaining on a 3 year term
- f) One Selectboard Member for a term of 3 years
- g) One Town Clerk for a term of 3 years

ARTICLE #2: Shall the voters of the Town of Highgate set the final date of payment for FY2026/2027 property taxes to be **Thursday, October 29, 2026** with payments to be received in the town office by 4:00pm?

ARTICLE #3: Shall the voters of the Town of Highgate vote to raise, appropriate, and expend the sum of **\$7,423** for the support of the **VNA & Hospice of the Southwest Region** to provide services to residents of the Town?

ARTICLE #4: Shall the voters of the Town of Highgate appropriate **\$731,500** to meet the expenses and liabilities of the **Capital Improvement Plan**, with an estimated **\$663,800** to be raised by taxes?

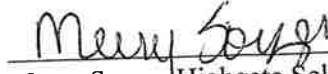
ARTICLE #5: Shall the voters of the Town of Highgate appropriate **\$1,333,807** to meet the expenses and liabilities of the **Highway Fund**, with an estimated **\$975,357** to be raised by taxes?

ARTICLE #6: Shall the voters of the Town of Highgate appropriate **\$1,638,955** to meet the expenses and liabilities of the **General Fund**, with an estimated **\$737,139** to be raised by taxes?

2026 Town Meeting Warning ~ Highgate Vermont

Dated at Highgate Vermont this 8th of January, 2026:


Attest: Wendi Dusablon, Highgate Town Clerk


Merry Souza, Highgate Selectboard Chair


Richard Flint, Highgate Selectboard Member


Chad Carr, Highgate Selectboard Member

Vernon Brosky III, Highgate Selectboard Vice-Chair

- **NOTE: The Town of Highgate no longer holds a floor meeting, as voted on in March 2024. Voting is fully Australian ballot between 7am – 7pm on Tuesday, March 3, 2026 @ Highgate Sports Arena, located @ 243 Gore Road.**
- Register to vote by contacting the Town Clerk 802-868-5002 or wdusablon@highgatevt.org, or visit the My Voter Page at <https://mvp.vermont.gov/>. Same day voter registration is also available at the polls.
- Absentee ballots are available upon request – contact the Town Clerk directly, stop by, or request yours through the My Voter Page (info above).
- Return ballots at the polls on March 3rd, by mail, during our public office hours 9am – 4pm Monday – Thursday, or by using our secure drop box at the rear entrance of the Municipal Bldg. Ballots must be received by the Town Clerk by 7pm on March 3, 2026, in order to be counted.
- The Town Meeting Informational Meeting will be held on Thursday, February 19, 2026 @ 6:30pm, as part of the regularly scheduled Selectboard meeting. Attend in-person or participate remotely via Zoom with the following link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88920887436>.

Highgate Staff Report: Update to the Village Core, Wastewater, & Water Projects

Disclaimer that this staff report is only to update on where the projects currently stand and any timelines, are best estimates. This staff report was last edited on Jan 22nd 2026 and circumstances may have changed since finalization of this document.

Definitions, Common Acronyms:

- A&E = Aldrich & Elliot, an engineering firm that was hired to do the water feasibility study and also the one contracted to do the Airport Infrastructure project
- Hydrogeology or hydrology = type of testing to see if the ground water is appropriate for use, a specialist in this field is needed to do the testing on any identified land
- OCE = Otter Creek Engineering, the contracted engineering firm for the WW system
- Robert = The OCE Vice President and long term engineer for the WW project
- WW = shorthand for wastewater, often referring to the broad project
- W = shorthand for water, often referring to the broad project
- Waiting for approval = some permits or permissions must go through the state or feds, so when waiting is referenced the specific time period to wait is unclear and unique
- The state = shorthand for referencing a state department or agency, or multiple
- The feds = shorthand for referencing a federal department or agency, or multiple
- MVSD = Missisquoi Valley School District, or short hand referring to the district staff
- NRPC = Northwest Regional Planning Commission or shorthand for a staff member

TLDR, where we are, next steps:

- *Water:* The Town is beginning to explore the hydrogeologic testing required to determine system viability and meet permitting requirements, while also actively pursuing additional grant funding for planning and engineering. The next step is to issue a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to retain an engineer to guide and oversee the required testing process.
- *Village Core:* The project is currently awaiting multiple regulatory approvals while the final funding stack is being secured. In parallel, staff are coordinating with subcontractors to develop preliminary scheduling scenarios. Once approvals are received, the next step will be to finalize both the project schedule and funding commitments with subcontractors and proceed into implementation.
- *Wastewater:* The wastewater project is pending final state approvals needed to advance to completed engineering plans. In the interim, the Town is collecting letters of interest, initiating the easement process with individual property owners, and finalizing the remaining elements of the funding stack. Upon receipt of final approvals, the next step will be to complete the engineering plans and move into construction bidding for the initial contract phase.

Water Utility

Overview:

The Cathedral Square project initially proposed using the Arena Well as its water source. However, due to State of Vermont and federal regulations governing public water systems, as well as permitting requirements specific to the Cathedral Square development, the Arena Well was determined to be unsuitable. The well's proximity to existing structures and the associated risk of contamination prevent it from being permitted as a compliant public water source.

To evaluate whether an alternative public water source could be developed to serve both the Cathedral Square project and the broader Village Core, a feasibility study was initiated at the request of Interim Town Administrator Carrie Johnson. That study has recently been completed and identified two potential water sources that could meet regulatory standards. To advance the analysis and determine whether a public water system can meet the next level of technical and regulatory requirements, on-site testing of the identified locations is now required.

What have we done so far?:

The Town evaluated existing wells as potential sources to meet the water needs of the Cathedral Square project and other anticipated demands within the Village Core. None of the existing wells were found to be viable due to factors including location, existing or potential contamination, permitting limitations, land ownership constraints, or a combination thereof.

Following this determination, the Town pursued a feasibility study to confirm that existing wells could not be used and to identify whether alternative sources might be viable. The study was funded through two grants, with a small local match provided by the Town. The final feasibility report prepared by A&E is nearing completion and is currently undergoing minor comment final revisions by Town staff. The study's findings identified two potential water source options, which are summarized in the document titled "*Water Feas Staff Report*".

Concurrent with completion of the feasibility study, Town staff contacted the Missisquoi Valley School District (MVSD) to request permission to conduct potential testing on a property identified in the report as a viable source. This outreach occurred prior to final study completion and prior to Selectboard approval to pursue testing, as landowner permission is a prerequisite to any field work. That permission has been secured.

What is next?:

To provide the Selectboard and the public with sufficient information regarding the feasibility of a municipal water utility system, further testing must be conducted. At a minimum, this testing would include a groundwater availability study and test well drilling, though additional analyses may be required. The purpose of this work is to determine whether the identified site can reliably produce sufficient water to meet projected demand.

This information is critical before advancing any further decisions. If testing indicates the site cannot produce adequate supply, the alternative water option identified in the feasibility study—an extension from the airport system—would need to be considered as the sole remaining option. If testing results are favorable, staff would be able to present clear, data-driven information to the Selectboard and the public regarding project scope, anticipated costs, and

timeline. This week, Town Administrator Fredi Hayes will issue a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for the required testing. The Selectboard should also consider whether engaging the same engineering firm currently working on the wastewater project would provide efficiencies or other advantages.

Village Core

Overview:

The "Village Core Project" encompasses a series of closely interconnected projects occurring on the same property, collectively referred to as the Village Core. These efforts include, but are not limited to, the abatement and demolition of 14 St. Armand, remediation of all parcels within the Village Core, the land purchase option agreement with Cathedral Square, and the proposed Cathedral Square senior housing development. The overarching objective of this initiative is to eliminate environmental contaminants and public health hazards, clear the property for future use, and ultimately redevelop the site in a manner that serves the long-term interests of the community. At this time, the project is in a holding phase as the Town awaits final state and federal approvals and secures the remaining elements of the funding stack, specifically related to the abatement and remediation of 14 St. Armand and the adjacent parcels.

What have we done so far?:

Initial plans considered renovation of the existing structures at 14 St. Armand; however, this option was determined to be infeasible due to the presence of significant contaminants and the associated costs. Abating those contaminants would further compromise the structural integrity of the buildings and drive renovation costs to an unsustainable level. In addition, required soil remediation across the site would further deteriorate building conditions.

Once preservation of the buildings was ruled out, additional environmental testing was conducted to fully define the scope of abatement and remediation necessary to allow for comprehensive redevelopment of the property. The Town has worked closely with the NRPC Brownfields Program to evaluate viable cleanup strategies, secure funding, and manage the project. Town staff, in coordination with NRPC, continue to advance the required approvals for abatement and remediation. Because the property is historically designated, additional regulatory reviews and approvals have been required.

The project currently has a defined budget, work plan, timeline, and identified subcontractors; however, final authorizations are required before work can commence. Project costs fall into two primary categories: demolition and matching funds. Demolition costs are the sole responsibility of the Town, as no grant funding is available for demolition under this program. The required matching funds will be provided through a no-interest loan that has been approved by the Selectboard. This loan does not require voter approval, as it is for a term of less than one calendar year and carries no interest. The Town has also applied for additional funding through the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (VTDEC) and is currently awaiting a determination.

What is next?:

Upon receipt of all required approvals and finalization of the funding stack, the project will move directly into implementation. Work will proceed in phases, beginning with abatement, followed by demolition, and concluding with soil remediation. Completion of this work will satisfy the conditions of the Boundary Line Adjustment (BLA) approved by the DRB, at which point the option for the property to Cathedral Square may advance into the zoning & permitting process.

Wastewater Utility

Overview:

The wastewater project has evolved through several iterations since its inception. The current plan calls for construction of a system at the former Wright Farm property, with collection lines extending along portions of Lampkin Road, St. Armand Road, Gore Road, and VT Route 78. The project's funding stack is nearly finalized, and the Town is awaiting final state approvals and permitting prior to proceeding with construction. In parallel, staff will continue working with the Planning Commission to finalize the Wastewater Ordinance and advance it through the formal adoption process.

What have we done so far?:

All required testing, documentation, and land acquisitions have been completed, allowing the project to reach the 90 percent engineering milestone. Since May 2025, the funding landscape has shifted significantly. The project has been awarded a \$1 million grant from the Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC), received an additional \$500,000 in state grant funding, and recently secured \$750,000 in congressionally directed spending through Representative Balint's office, which has passed Congress and is currently awaiting presidential signature.

In addition, ongoing discussions with the Missisquoi Valley School District (MVSD) regarding wastewater and water services have resulted in a letter of intent. MVSD represents a large-capacity user that could play an important role in the long-term viability and sustainability of the system. The Town is also evaluating options for system operations, including contracting with a licensed operator or developing in-house capacity through staff training.

What is next?:

The project is entering the final approval and bidding phase for construction. Design plans and alignments will be finalized, and connection easements will move toward completion with clearly defined deadlines for all required documentation. The Wastewater Ordinance must be completed, finalized, and formally adopted. Additionally, longer-term strategic planning for the wastewater system should begin at the Planning Commission and Selectboard level to ensure that future operational, maintenance, and capital needs are anticipated and addressed proactively, avoiding the deferred maintenance challenges currently faces in other Town infrastructure.



Town of Highgate Dog [and Wolf Hybrid] Control Ordinance

SECTION 1. AUTHORITY.

This ordinance is adopted by the Selectboard of the Town of Highgate under authority of 20 V.S.A. §§ 3546, 3549, 24 V.S.A. §§ 2291 (10) and 2291 (14 & 15), and 24 V.S.A. Chapter 59.

SECTION 2. PURPOSE.

The purpose of this ordinance is to regulate the keeping of dogs [and Wolf Hybrids], to protect public health and safety, and to protect the residents' quiet enjoyment of their properties. This Ordinance supersedes all previous versions of dog and animal control ordinances AND policies in the Town of Highgate.

SECTION 3. DEFINITIONS.

For the purposes of this ordinance, the following words and/or phrases shall apply:

1. "Dog" means any member of the canine species;
2. "Wolf Hybrid" means:
 - 2.1. An animal that is the progeny of a dog and a wolf (*Canis lupus* OR *Canus rufus*);
 - 2.2. An animal that is advertised or otherwise described OR represented to be a wolf hybrid; or
 - 2.3. An animal that exhibits primary physical and/or behavioral wolf characteristics.
3. "Owner" means any person who has actual or constructive possession of a dog [or wolf hybrid]. The term also includes those persons who provide food, water, and/or shelter to a dog [or wolf hybrid].
4. "Running at large" means that a dog [or wolf hybrid] is not:
 - 4.1. On a leash, cord, chain, command or otherwise;
 - 4.2. In a vehicle;
 - 4.3. On the owner's property;
 - 4.4. On the property of another person with that person's permission;
 - 4.5. Clearly under the verbal or non-verbal control of the owner; or
 - 4.6. Hunting with the owner.
5. "Vicious dog [or wolf hybrid]" means a dog [or wolf hybrid] that attacks any person OR causes any person to reasonably fear attack or bodily injury from such an animal, unless the person is trespassing on the property of the owner of the animal. The term shall also mean any animal that, while running at large, attacks another domestic pet or domestic animal as defined in 20 V.S.A § 3541.

6. "Nuisance" means a dog [or wolf hybrid] that enters public OR private property other than the owners, where the animal performs acts that disturbs the quiet enjoyment of the individuals who own the property. These acts include but are not limited to: defecation, rummaging in personal property OR garbage, unwanted presence, or causes damage.

SECTION 4. DISTURBANCES AND NUISANCES.

1. No dog [or wolf hybrid] that creates a nuisance shall run at large in the town.
2. No dog [or wolf hybrid] shall harass or attack other animals OR people unless such animals or people are trespassing on the private property of the owner of the dog [or wolf hybrid].
3. A female dog [or wolf hybrid] in heat shall be confined to a building or other secured enclosure, except while under the direct control of the owner.
4. No person shall own, keep, or harbor a dog [or wolf hybrid] that disturbs the quiet, comfort, and repose of others by frequent, habitual, or persistent barking or howling.
5. An Enforcement Officer, upon receipt of a written or electronic complaint of a person or persons disturbed, will investigate the complaint. If the complaint is deemed valid, the enforcement officer will issue a written warning to the owner of the Nuisance or Disturbance dog/s [or wolf hybrid/s]. The Enforcement Officer investigating the complaint will document their findings, take photographs, and place it on file with the Highgate Town Administrator. Upon receiving a second written or electronic complaint within one year, the dog [or wolf hybrid] will be ordered chained, confined, or impounded.

SECTION 5. WASTE REMOVAL.

The person in control of a dog [or wolf hybrid] that defecates in any public area or on the private property of another person shall immediately remove the fecal material AND dispose of it in a sanitary manner.

SECTION 6. COLLAR AND LICENSE.

1. Each dog [or wolf hybrid] shall be licensed according to the laws of this state and shall wear a collar or harness with the current license attached. AN animal that is visiting from out of state must wear a collar or harness with a current license from its home state attached.
2. A dog [or wolf hybrid] that is found without a collar or harness, and license shall be immediately impounded under authority of 20 V.S.A. (sect symbol) 3806 and shall be managed under the provisions of that statute.
3. License fees will be established annually by the Town of Highgate Selectboard and Town Clerk.

SECTION 7. HUMANE CARE OF DOGS [AND WOLF HYBRIDS].

All dog/s [or wolf hybrid/s] shall be furnished with clean and safe facilities sufficient to protect the animal and the public health. Any dog [or wolf hybrid] determined by a town enforcement officer to be without such clean and safe facilities may be impounded. Animal cruelty is defined in Vermont State Statute.

SECTION 8. ENFORCEMENT.

This is a civil ordinance and shall be enforced by a town enforcement officer appointed by the Selectboard to enforce or execute the provisions of this ordinance in the Vermont Judicial Bureau in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §§ 1974a et seq.

SECTION 9. IMPOUNDMENT.

1. Any dog [or wolf hybrid] that is determined by a town enforcement officer appointed by the Selectboard to be a vicious dog [or wolf hybrid] which presents an imminent danger to people or other animals shall immediately be impounded.
2. Any dog [or wolf hybrid] that is apprehended for a third, or subsequent nuisance violation of any provision of this ordinance shall be impounded.

SECTION 10. NOTICE OF IMPOUNDMENT AND RELEASE FROM IMPOUNDMENT.

1. The officer who impounds a dog [or wolf hybrid] shall, within 24 hours, give notice to the owner thereof, either in person, phone call, electronic message, or by written notice at the owner's dwelling. Such notice shall inform the owner of the nature of the violation/s, the location of the animal, and the steps that are necessary to have the animal returned to the owner.
2. If an impounded dog [or wolf hybrid] has no license or other identification; the person who impounds it shall proceed under the provisions of 20 V.S.A. § 3806.
3. Impounded animals shall be released to the owner only after payment of all penalties, impoundment fees, and after remedial action by the owner. A receipt from the Highgate Town Clerk must be presented to the impounding agency to show proof of payment of all penalties and fees. Remedial action shall include but is not limited to such actions as providing a collar and current license, and providing a plan for compliance with the provisions of this ordinance and with state law.
4. Impounded dog/s [or wolf hybrid/s] will be held for a maximum of five days before they are rehomed or are humanely destroyed.

SECTION 11. INVESTIGATION OF VICIOUS DOGS [OR WOLF HYBRIDS].

When a dog [or wolf hybrid] has bitten or attacked a person or animal [therefore referred to as *the victim*] while the dog [or wolf hybrid] is off the premises of the owner or keeper, and the victim bitten or attacked requires medical attention for the attack, such person or owner of attacked animal may file a written complaint with the legislative body of the municipality. The complaint shall contain the time, date, and place where the attack occurred, the name and

address of the victim/s, and any other facts that may assist the legislative body in conducting its investigation.

1. The legislative body, within seven days from receipt of the complaint, shall investigate the charges and hold a hearing on the matter. If the owner of the dog [or wolf hybrid] that is the subject of the complaint can be ascertained with due diligence, said owner shall be provided with a written or confirmed electronic notice of the time, date, and place of the hearing and the facts of the complaint.
2. If the dog [or wolf hybrid] is found to have bitten or attacked the victim without provocation, the municipal officials shall make such order for the protection of persons as the facts and circumstances of the case may require, including without limitation, that the dog [or wolf hybrid] is disposed of in a humane way, muzzled, chained, confined, or removed from the town entirely. The order shall be sent by certified mail, return receipt requested. Any such order shall provide the owner of the dog [or wolf hybrid] with their right to appeal the order and the procedure for filing an appeal. A person who, after receiving notice, fails to comply with the terms of the order shall be subject to the penalties provided in 20 V.S.A. § 3550.
3. The procedures provided in this section shall only apply if the dog [or wolf hybrid] is not a rabies suspect. If a member of the legislative body or a municipal official designated by the legislative body determines that the animal is a rabies suspect, the provisions of Subchapter 5 of Title 20 Chapter 193 and the rules of the department of health shall apply.

SECTION 12. PENALTIES AND COSTS FOR ANIMAL OWNERS.

| Offense Number | Impoundment Fees & Costs | Full Penalty Addition |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| First Offense | *As set annually or billed by agency | Plus \$100 |
| Second Offense | *As set annually or billed by agency | Plus \$175 |
| Third Offense | *As set annually or billed by agency | Plus \$350 |
| Subsequent Offenses | *As set annually or billed by agency | Plus \$750 |

- ★ If impoundment is at the residence of the animal control officer, the Selectboard shall set the impoundment rates annually to be billed to the owner. Otherwise, impoundment costs will be billed by the impounding agency.
- ★ The owner of the dog [or wolf hybrid] will be responsible for reimbursing all legal fees incurred by the town.

SECTION 13. OTHER LAWS.

This ordinance is in addition to all other Ordinances of the Town of Highgate and all applicable laws of the State of Vermont.

SECTION 14. SEVERABILITY.

If any section of this ordinance is held by a court of competent jurisdiction to be invalid, such finding shall not invalidate any other part of this ordinance.

SECTION 15. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This ordinance shall become effective 60 days after its adoption by the Town of Highgate Selectboard. If a petition is filed under 24 V.S.A. § 1973, that statute shall govern the taking effect of this ordinance.

Approved and recorded in the Highgate Town Records on this day ____ of _____, in the year 2026.
