TOWN OF PANTON ANNUAL MEETING

INFORMATIONAL MEETING MONDAY, MARCH 4, 2024

MINUTES

In attendance: Selectboard Chair Howard Hall, Selectboard Vice-Chair Teresa Boucher, Selectboard Member Zach Weaver, Moderator Martha DeGraaf, Justice of the Peace (JP) Eileen Brennan, JP Jamie Dayton, JP Paula Moore, JP Diana Raphael, Town Advisor Sandy Fogg, Emergency Management Coordinator Bob Groff, Delinquent Tax Collector Barbara Fleming, Ed Brennan, Chip Mather, Paulette Bogan, Joe Bogan, Bob Brigan

Via Zoom: Beth Tarallo, Paul Sokal, Sharon Ashcraft, Catharine Hays

Selectboard Chair Howard Hall called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and turned the proceedings over to moderator Martha DeGraaf.

Martha led the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Martha announced that poll hours are 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. and that results will be posted by Wednesday on bulletin board at Town Hall and the Town website.

Martha introduced the staff present, Town Clerk and Treasurer Maggie McCormick, Assistant Clerk Suzanne Snyder, Selectboard Chair Howard Hall, Selectboard Vice-Chair Teresa Boucher, and Selectboard Member Zach Weaver.

Martha acknowledged that the Town Report is dedicated to Bob Groff.

Martha asked participants to observe a moment of silence for Panton residents deceased in the year.

Martha asked that anyone wishing to speak please come to the microphone to speak, state your name and address.

Marth noted that Articles 2 – 5 are for discussion only.

Sandy Fogg moved the hear the reports of the Town officers. Paula Moore seconded. All in favor; the motion passed.

Howard Hall discussed the selectboard work in the past year:

- protecting Panton's interests with the potential Vergennes Bypass,
- addressing out of service time of the Vergennes Area Rescue Squad
- the fire protection contract with Vergennes Fire Department
- Town Hall improvements done with ARPA funds
- Solar panels and radiant heat installed at garage with ARPA funds
- Initiated Town-Wide Reappraisal

- Working with sheriff to show presence throughout town in addition to speed monitoring
- Grant to address emerald ash borer
- Selectboard meets twice a month
- Town is in great shape
- Noted new highway staff member, Jeff Stone.
- Both highway and administrative staff keeping good track of town needs

Joe Bogan asked if the state had any plans to conduct a state-wide assessment. Howard responded no and detailed that Panton hired a professional.

Martha asked if there were other reports.

Tree Warden Diana Raphael reported that Panton has 850 ash trees in town rights of way and award of $16,000 grant to remove and replant trees. Invited people to join the Tree Committee and be part of a planting party. Reach her at treewarden@pantonvt.us.

Emergency Management Coordinator Bob Groff directed everyone to his report on page 27 of the Town Report.

Martha read ARTICLE 2: To elect the following officers by Australian Ballot:

Moderator (1 year term)
Selectboard Member (3-year term)
Constable (1-year term)
Dog Warden (1-year term)
Vergennes-Panton Water District Representative (3-year term)

Martha opened the floor to candidates.

a. Teresa Boucher introduced herself as running unopposed for another term on the selectboard and stated that the current selectboard works well together.
b. Martha introduced herself as a write-in candidate for Moderator.

Martha read ARTICLE 3: Shall the voters appropriate the following sums which shall be raised by taxes, to be placed in the Town Reserve Fund accounts as noted:

Reserve Funds	Amount
Digitization/IT Fund	$2,000.00
Highway Equipment Fund	$30,000.00
Highway Project Fund	$20,000.00
Reappraisal Fund	$2,000.00
Tire Fund	$12,000.00
Town Building Maintenance Fund	$5,000.00
Emergency Fund	$4,500.00
Restoration and Preservation	$1,000.00
TOTAL	$76,500.00

Catharine Hays asked about the Highway budget and asked if the new employee was the cause of the increase in the budget.

1. Teresa Boucher pointed out that the new highway staff is not a new position, but a new hire to fill an existing vacant position.
2. Maggie McCormick explained that the highway budget
   - includes $90,000 for payments against the new dump truck that voters approved up to $270,000 in expense in 2023.
   - Includes $60,000 for a new pickup truck
   - Both trucks are beyond their depreciation replacement date
   - $300,000 is budgeted for paving but the Town expects $200,000 in state grants and if that money is not received, paving will be scaled back to $100,000 to be raised by taxes.
3. Howard Hall added that the Town is replacing culverts, and that sand, gravel, and fuel are very expensive.
4. Teresa Boucher added that it is not just equipment but materials. If the Town needed to replace a full set of tires, that $12,000 would cover it.
5. Maggie McCormick added that the equipment fund is used for things like downpayment on the dump truck, meaning that the fund will be depleted by that downpayment and replacing funds $10,000 at a time is too slow.

Sharon asked if the $10,000 jump in the equipment fund had a specific use.

1. Howard added that the reserve fund amounts have not been increased in at least nine years.
2. Teresa clarified that the Reserve Funds have not had detailed expenditure plans.

Bob Brigan announced that Reece Jaring is a write-in candidate for dog warden.

Martha read ARTICLE 4: Shall the voters adopt the proposed Fiscal Year 2025 (July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025) General Fund Operating Budget in the amount of $1,219,693 of which $1,039,943 shall be raised by taxes and $179,750 by non-tax revenue?

Sharon Ashcraft asked why the budget did not include staff salaries.

1. Maggie McCormick responded that the staff salaries were totaled at the bottom to give some privacy to the individual town employees.
2. Howard also stated that the individual information will be provided to anyone who asks.

Martha read ARTICLE 5: Shall the voters appropriate $13,401 of Town Funds to the following organizations in the amounts listed?

Organization	Amount
Adams-Kent Cemetery Association	$2,500.00
Addison County Court Diversion	$210.00
Addison County Home Health Hospice	$800.00
Addison County Parent Child Center	$800.00
Addison County Readers	$250.00
Agewell (CV Agency on Aging)	$650.00
Boys & Girls Club of Vergennes	$1,000.00
Charter House	$1,000.00
Counseling Service of Addison	$500.00
Elderly Services	$850.00
Homeward Bound	$500.00
HOPE	$500.00
John Graham Shelter	$450.00
Open Door Clinic	$500.00
RSVP	$350.00
Tri-Valley Transit	$691.00
Turning Point Center	$1,000.00
Vermont Family Network	$250.00
WomenSafe	$600.00
TOTAL	$13,401.00

Martha noted that social services appropriations were combined into a single vote last year and remained a lump-sum vote this year. She invited anyone wishing to speak on behalf of any of the social services to do so.

Lorraine Kayser asked how the amounts were determined. The amounts are requested by the organization.

Beth Tarallo thanked voters for the support of Counseling Services of Addison County (CSAC), asked voters to approve Article 5 again. noting that CSAC provided over 9,100 service hours to Panton residents last year.

Paulette Bogan asked about the Adams-Kent Cemetery Association (AKCA) request. Her understanding was that that Town is responsible for cemeteries and asked if that amount should be a budget line item rather than an award to a private organization.

1. Howard responded that the Town has no responsibility for the cemeteries and no say.
2. Maggie responded that the Selectboard had several warned meetings to determine cemetery responsibility and the outcome is that if a private association exists, that association is responsible. AKCA wanted to retain their lawful control and therefore operates separately from the Town.
3. Diana Raphael asked what the $1200 in the general fund is used for. Maggie answered that it covers mowing at Hawley.

ARTICLE 6: To transact any other non-binding business.

Martha asked if Maggie was going to talk about town-wide appraisal. Maggie stated that the timeline for the change of assessment notices has been pushed back to May to provide time for homestead declarations to be received before lodging the grand list. Change of assessment notification will include the overall grand list, so property owners can review comparable

properties and assessed values for possible disparities as well as instructions on how to appeal the assessment.

Martha asked if there was any further business.

Howard thanked his fellow selectboard members for their work. He thanked the staff for keeping up with everything, the road crew for doing a great job. The Town works well.

Maggie announced the solar eclipse on April 8, 2024 and offered solar eclipse glasses.

Martha announced poll hours 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Noted that fictitious names are not counted as votes.

Howard noted people could come to watch the counting once the polls close.

Paula Moore moved to adjourn. Sandy Fogg seconded. All in favor; the meeting was adjourned at 7:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Maggie McCormick
Town Clerk and Treasurer

Attest: _____ March 11, 2024

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