Town of Panton Chartered 1761

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Selectboard Meeting Minutes

Friday, January 31, 2025

In attendance: Selectboard Chair Howard Hall, Selectboard Member Teresa Boucher, Selectboard Member Zach Weaver, Town Clerk/Treasurer Kyle Rowe, Jeanne Jackson, Richard Jackson, Kathy Kennett, Charles Kennett, Liz Haenel, Bob Groff, Mary Rudd, David Rheume, Sharon Ashcraft

Via Zoom:, M'lissa Dayton, Lorraine Kayser, Terry Pelletier

1. Howard called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.
2. Additions/deletions to the agenda
    a. C/T asked to add the Invoice of the Town's Lawyer, Leslie Caldwell, be approved by the Selectboard for submission to the law firm handling the escrow payments for the town.
    b. Teresa made a motion to authorize the payment of Leslie Cadwell for the month of December Invoice. Howard seconded-**VOTE 2 In Favor, 0 opposed.**
3. The C/T began to discuss the budget, for submission to the Selectboard for approval.
    a. The addition fees associated with the audit services to be provided by RHR Smith was correctly allocated into Accounting Services.
    b. The C/T noted that we need an assessor to complete the appraisals and assessments on properties that have been built or renovated. The C/T has reached out to Alyth Hescock to contract for this work, which given the town's relatively low need, could be completed relatively quickly. Additionally, the Clerk's office will continue to perform the administrative duties of the Lister, and as much of the Assessor as was feasible.
    c. The C/T added a budgeted amount of $200 to the office expense to the Office Heating Fuel line item.
    d. The town's new truck was given its own line item of $3000 in the budget.

e. The C/T noted that the Culvert Line was reduced $65,000, after working with the SB to chart a path forward on that expense. The additional money necessary for that work would ideally come from the Hwy Project Reserve Fund.
    i. This change was noted as an administrative change by the SB between the previous draft of the budget, and this final draft submitted for approval.
f. The Emergency Fund amount was adjusted to reflect 7% of the budget to be raised by taxes.
g. Mary Rudd asked if all the grant and FEMA funds were granted to the town to cover these culvert expenses, would the town have to spend the $50,000 in taxpayer money on this project.
    i. Teresa said that the SB doesn't want to spend the money if they don't have to, but they need to make sure that project doesn't completely drain the reserve fund.
    ii. Howard noted that with is happening to grants on the federal level, we need to cover all the bases.
    iii. The C/T promised that the Treasurer's Office will do its absolute best to accurately document every dollar the town spends, and will make sure to explain and document overages, as well as find ways to return surpluses to the town.
    iv. Zach added that the best the SB and C/T could do was wait to see what the grant situation would be like, and then handle the issue as it arose.
h. The C/T reported that the Budget To Actual stands at approximately 72% for FY25, but that number includes all the loan payments that the Town has upcoming, which were included to give a better sense of what the actual expenses that are already paid/committed will be.
i. The C/T noted that in nearly every category of expense that the Town has, the Treasurer's office has reduced the expense. This budget reflects an overall reduction of 6% from FY25.
j. The C/T noted that he was concerned about overages in FY25, and will hopefully use a number of mechanisms to cover them; The Emergency Fund for some of the unanticipated, one time expenses, and the other funds if the overage was related to the purpose for which the fund was created.

4. Teresa motioned to approve the budget for FY26, Howard seconded it. **VOTE-3 In Favor, 0 Opposed**
5. The C/T began discussion on the Town Meeting Articles and Warning
    a. The C/T noted that the amounts to be voted on in the warning are correct, and reflect the totals of each individual item to be voted upon e.g. Budget, Reserve Funds, and Community Service Appropriations.

b. The C/T noted the language to increase the size of the SB has been updated to reflect the legal language allowable, which can't contain term dates and a provision on the part of the Town to not change it until a certain date.
c. Sharon Ashcraft asked why this doesn't include the fact this was submitted by petition.
    i. The C/T answered that the petition received by the Clerk's Office was a charter change, not an article for inclusion on the Town Meeting article, and added that some signatories of that proposed charter change have withdrawn their signatures when they learned that the SB is including this article on the ballot to be voted on by the Town.
d. Sharon Ashcraft added that she didn't think it was allowed by the town to propose a charter change and include it at the same special town meeting.

6. Zach made a motion to accept the Town Warning, Teresa seconded the motion-**VOTE-3 In Favor, 0 Opposed**
7. Kathy Kennett asked for additional explanation on how the additional SB positions would be filled.
    a. The C/T noted that upon passage of this article, there would have to be a special town meeting held to fill the vacant seats. The SB only has the ability to fill empty seats upon retirement, death, situations like that. After a special town meeting was held, there would either be 2 additional SB members, or the current SB could then appoint to fill the vacancies. The C/T added that the quorum requirements of the SB would also change upon passage of this article, making it 3 votes, not the current 2, to conduct Town business and have a SB meeting.
8. Bob Groff wanted to convey his thanks to the SB and the C/T for the work they are doing for the Town, stating it was appreciated by most people in the town.
9. Teresa motioned to adjourn the meeting at 6:02 p.m., Zach seconded-**VOTE 3 In Favor, 0 opposed.**