Town of Panton Chartered 1761

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Selectboard Meeting Minutes

Monday, February 10th, 2025

In attendance: Selectboard Chair Howard Hall, Selectboard Member Teresa Boucher, Selectboard Member Zach Weaver, Town Clerk/Treasurer Kyle Rowe, Paula Moore, Eileen Brennan, Jaime Dayton, M'Lissa Dayton, Charles Kennett, Kathy Kennett, Jeanne Jackson, Richard Jackson, Nick Jackson, Liz Haenel, Bob Groff, Sharon Ashcraft, Skip Masback, John Viskup, Grey Fearon, Martha DeGraaf

Via Zoom:, Diane Merrill, Mary Rudd

1. Howard called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.
2. Additions/deletions to the agenda
    a. C/T asked to add the AP and Payroll Warrant, Approval of the minutes from the January 27th and 31st Selectboard Meetings, and an Executive Session to discuss HR and Personnel/Employment Issues.
    b. Howard motioned to add those items to the agenda, Zach seconded-**VOTE-3 in Favor, 0 in Opposition**
3. Martha DeGraaf, the Addison County Northwest School District Representative was introduced and began her presentation. She was joined by Grey Fearon, the student school board representative.
    a. The presentation is linked here (https://www.anwsd.org/budget2/budget-presentations)
    b. It was noted that there is significant change planned in education funding from the governor and legislature, but that it won't effect the FY 26 budget.
    c. Demographics, vision, and priorities were discussed, noting that no positions or course offerings were reduced with this budget.
    d. Fiscal goals of the district include;
        i. Expenditure budget below the Cost of Living Adjustment
        ii. Stay below the excess spending threshold

iii. Apply the surplus to reduce taxes.

e. It was noted that salary and benefit increases drove the majority of the budget expenditures, and accounted for the majority of the 1.48% budget increase.
f. A discussion of the education tax occurred, and it was noted that Panton will see a school tax reduction of $.05.
    i. Eileen Brennan asked why other towns are seeing a more significant decrease in their school tax rate.
        1. It was noted that reappraisals had something to do with it, as well as the CLA and Statewide Adjustment. It was also noted that poverty and special needs students play into the equation.
g. John Viskup asked what the previous years budget increase was.
    i. The representative didn't have that specific figure
h. It was noted that the proposed education budget will reduce Panton's Homestead Rate by $50 per $100k assessed value.
i. The C/T discussed the Statewide Adjustment, and its implications on the tax rate, noting it was a complicated issue, and that further questions beyond the explanation offered during the presentation should be brought directly to the Clerk's office.
j. Skip Masback asked about the salary agreement and if the student teacher ratio had changed.
    i. Martha answered that the ratio hadn't changed significantly and ANWSD had the lowest salaries in Addison County, and was brought up to be in line with other districts. Specific salary information was negotiated by the union, and that information wasn't specifically available. It was further noted that this can allow for districts to play off each other. Additionally, these salaries reflect all the school employees, not just teachers.
k. It was noted that pupil enrollments remain a challenge, and that overall enrollments are in a slow decline.
l. A discussion of the two articles that will appear on the ballot ensued. The proposal for Article 6 included the budget amount of $27,653,000. The proposal for Article 7 would include funding the Capital Improvement Fund to the amount of $750,696.

4. The Selectboard reviewed the minutes from the January 27th and 31st meetings
    a. The C/T noted that Kathy Kennett helped find some errors in the minutes, but they didn't fundamentally change the nature of the discussion.
    b. Teresa made a motion to accept the minutes from January 31st, Howard seconded-**VOTE 2 In favor, 0 Opposed**

c. Teresa made a motion to accept the minutes from January 27th, Howard seconded-**VOTE 2 In Favor, 0 Opposed**

5. The Selectboard reviewed the AP/Payroll Warrants
   a. Teresa motioned to approve the AP/Payroll Warrants, Zach seconded-**VOTE-3 In Favor, 0 Opposed**
6. The C/T provided updates;
   a. The Clerk's Office continues to prepare for the elections. Volunteers for working stations at Election Day are welcome, please speak to the Town Clerk.
   b. The Town Report and Ballots are both expected during the current week.
   c. The Treasurer's report stated that the audit work is continuing, and that work should be done on the pre-audit work by Friday.
   d. The Town's cash on hand was noted, $447,020.49 in our interest bearing account, $31,949.20 in our checking account, $10,000 in our National Bank of Middlebury account to handle some outstanding issues still in that account. The NBM Money Market account was closed, and the NBM Checking account will be closed by March.
   e. The Budget to Actual is showing an appropriate amount for this stage, and the Town's Balance Sheet is showing no outrageous interest.
7. The C/T updated the SB on the Road Foreman's Meeting;
   a. It will be held on February 26th, 10am to 11:30 open to the public, informational only. This will provide a chance for questions regarding spending, costs, grants, and general highway issues to hopefully be answered.
8. It was noted that there would be a potluck prior to the Informational Town Meeting on Monday, March 3rd at 6:00pm, before the Meeting which will be held at 7:00pm.
9. There were no pertinent Selectboard Updates.
10. The SB opened the floor to Public Comment;
    a. It was asked why the Road Foreman wasn't here to make a report.
       i. The C/T noted that the road crew had been working a lot of overtime during the past week to handle the snow cleanup. Both plan on attending the Road Foreman Meeting on February 26th. Teresa asked to make sure that at least one of them was present during the next Selectboard Meeting. The C/T will make sure that is understood by the Road Crew.
    b. Sharon Ashcraft asked about the Town Clerk's Bond, and that is doesn't appear in the budget.
       i. Howard noted we do still do that, through PACIF. The C/T noted he was meeting with PACIF this week and will make sure to ask about it.
       ii. The C/T also noted that the Town Hall Use Agreement is going to be updated after that walkthrough with our insurance adjustor, and that

a few changes will be made to protect the Town from damages, and to ask for a suggested usage donation is lieu of a fee to use to the Town Hall. He noted that other towns have great success with that style of payment, and it will hopefully reflect a lower rate for Panton residents vs non-Panton residents.

c. It was noted the sound system still need work, and a general agreement that this issue should be solved before Town Meeting. The C/T said he would do his best to make upgrades as quickly as possible.

11. The Selectboard motioned to enter Executive Session at 6:40 p.m. to discuss a personnel and HR issue, and invited the C/T to join the session. Howard motioned, Teresa seconded-**VOTE-3 in Favor, 0 Opposed.**
12. The Selectboard came out of Executive Session at 6:59 p.m. Howard motioned to leave Executive Session, Zach seconded-**VOTE-3 In Favor, 0 Opposed**
    a. **It was noted that no issue was decided/no decisions were made during Executive Session.**
13. Howard made a motion to adjourn at 6:59 p.m., Teresa seconded the motion-**VOTE-3 In Favor, 0 Opposed.**