Town of Panton Chartered 1761

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Selectboard Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, May 28, 2025

In attendance: Selectboard Chairperson Zach Weaver, Selectboard Vice Chairperson Teresa Boucher, Selectboard Member Robert DeGraaf, Selectboard Member Kirsten De La Cruz, Town Clerk/Treasurer Kyle Rowe, Kathy Kennett, Charles Kennett, Debbie Brace, Sharon Ashcraft, M'Lissa Dayton

Via Zoom: Selectboard Member Reece Jaring**,** Lorraine Keyser, Steve Weber, Chris Wycoff

1. Zach called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m.
2. There were no additions or deletions to the agenda, the C/T did inform the SB that several items would appear for discussion under "Other Business"
3. The Selectboard began discussing SB Organization and Rules of Procedure;
    a. The C/T presented the current Rules of Procedure, and an updated draft for discussion. The C/T noted that only a few items had changed, mainly the days the SB met.
    b. Kathy Kennett asked that the current rules be more aligned with those used by the City of Vergennes, which allow Public Comment after each agenda item, and additionally that the Chairperson shouldn't be making motions.
    c. Teresa noted that Panton's rules are standard among towns, and that there are multiple ways to handle these issues.
    d. Sharon Ashcraft noted that there are items that the Public would like to comment on before votes. She further added that in her opinion Panton is in dubious compliance with Open Meeting Law, and that the Town's website is incomplete as to having the full text of the law on it.
    e. Kirsten asked what the current process was
        i. Teresa noted that the Public Comment is currently at the end of the meeting, and that the decisions during the meeting are ultimately made and owned by the Selectboard.

        ii. Zack further noted that every item isn't a voting item, and that long meetings aren't necessarily more efficient.
    f. Sharon Ashcraft read a quote regarding the Open Meeting Law, and how they should be open and accessible.
    g. Kathy Kennett stated that Town business means residents of the town should be involved, and that rushing isn't called for.
    h. Teresa noted that whatever the draft ends up as, it won't require a timeline on Public Comment.
        i. Kirsten added that if Public Comment were to occur after each item, then there could be a time limit placed.
    i. Robert stated that this should be tabled, edited, and discussed at the next meeting. This was generally agreed upon by the SB.
4. The SB began consideration of the minutes from the meeting on 5/14
    a. The C/T stated the minutes are always available on the website, and that the visual recording and written minutes are available within 2 days.
    b. Sharon Ashcraft asked if the SB cared about typos, it was agreed if they were caught. She then mentioned several typos. The C/T said anyone is welcome to alert the C/T of typos prior to the meeting to make sure they are as correct as possible.
    c. Kathy Kennett stated that the SB needs to read the previous minutes before the meeting starts.
    d. Teresa motioned to approve the minutes, Zach seconded-**VOTE-4 In Favor, 0 Opposed.**
5. The C/T provided the Clerk/Treasurer Updates;
    a. The Special Election turnout was approximately 17%, which was fairly high for a Special Election, and thanks to those who volunteered.
    b. The C/T and ZA met with Leslie Cadwell to discuss several pressing zoning issues.
    c. The FEMA Grant is now in the hands of the state, and the administration grant has also been submitted. Other towns have received their money, so Panton is still hopeful that we will receive our funding.
    d. The Charter Amendment passed in the election, and the C/T is preparing the packet for submission to the state.
    e. The DRB/PC are going to be considered on June 12th, and after passage by the DRB/PC, they will be brought before the SB for an informational hearing.
    f. The Town has confirmation of the Structures Grant from the AoT, the project is scheduled for July 8th, which is tight, but necessary considering the condition of the culvert.
    g. The C/T was going to provide a Budget update, however after working with M'Lissa Dayton, several additional issues were discovered and are being handled.

A full budget discussion will occur at one of the June SB meetings. The C/T did note that the budget to actual spending is nearly 100%, with several large payments having been made, as well as obligations to the reserve funds. It was further noted that the delinquent taxes are being collected, and are down to approximately $30k.

   h. Teresa noted that the SB used to get Budget information once a month
      i. The C/T stated it will be a regular part of the process going forward.

6. The SB began discussion on the DRB and other appointments;
   a. The C/T noted that Dennis Mueller has volunteered to serve on the DRB as the last member. Teresa made a motion to approve Dennis Mueller to serve on the DRB, Zach seconded-**VOTE-5 In Favor, 0 Opposed**
   b. The C/T noted that the C/T has received no responses for the TAC and the Maple Broadband. The C/T volunteered to serve on the TAC in the interim. Zach motioned to appoint Kyle Rowe, the Clerk-Treasurer as the Interim Representative to the TAC, Teresa seconded-**VOTE-4 In Favor, 0 Opposed**
   c. Another posting will be made for the Maple Broadband Committee
7. The SB began discussion of the town's legal discussion;
   a. The C/T reiterated the need for new legal counsel for Panton, noting the various factors and went through the quotes from Caroll, Boe, and Kite, and LCA (Leslie Cadwell)
   b. Teresa noted that this item can be tabled if the new Selectboard members needed more time, and noted that there are definitely pros and cons to both.
   c. A general discussion ensued on the merits of both legal counselors. Specific mention was made related to the solar project, accessibility, communication style, and costs.
   d. It was noted the new SB members felt comfortable voting.
   e. Sharon Ashcraft raised her concerns with LCA, including cost, and experience in the municipal field, and conflict of interests with the solar company.
   f. Kathy Kennett noted similar concerns.
   g. Teresa motioned to hire Leslie Cadwell (LCA) as Panton's legal counsel, Reece seconded-**VOTE-5 In Favor, 0 Opposed**
8. The Selectboard began discussion on the Arnold Bay reserve fund spending;
   a. The C/T noted that 2 picnic tables were purchased for Arnold Bay, and wanted to allocate that spending to the reserve fund. It would total $343.47.
   b. The C/T further noted that future plans for that fund would include repairs to the docks and a new gangplank out to the dock, but the price on the dock repairs is prohibitively expensive at the moment.
   c. It was noted that more research should be done on the docks, and several vendors should be contacted to try and get quotes for repairing.

d. It was noted that the minutes from 2012 and 2019 might be valuable to find that information.
e. Zach motioned to authorize the expense from the Arnold Bay Reserve Fund, Teresa seconded the motion-**VOTE-4 In Favor, 0 Opposed**

9. The Selectboard began discussion on the auditor contract;
    a. The C/T noted that the audit result was expected any day now, and that Panton received the engagement letter from RHR Smith for the 2025 audit. The fee has increased to $16,800, of which half would be due upon the agreement.
    b. Teresa noted that even with the price increase, RHR is reasonable.
    c. The C/T noted that Panton will take over the Asset Depreciation Schedule.
    d. Teresa motioned to sign the engagement agreement with RHR Smith, Zach seconded the motion-**VOTE-4 In Favor, 0 Opposed**
10. The Selectboard began discussion of Other Business:
    a. The C/T noted that Grey Fearon has achieved Eagle Scout, and read a letter for the SB's approval;
        i. "Dear Grey, The Panton Selectboard would like to offer you sincere congratulations on your attainment of Eagle Scout. This achievement is no small feat, and requires dedication, effort, and years of commitment. Your community service project, purchasing an audio book collection for the Bixby Library, is a noble act, and one that will be source of pride for you and the greater community. We are already familiar with your exemplary work representing your fellow students, the town, and the district on the State Board of Education, and so appreciate your presentations and knowledgeable discussion at our annual Town Meeting. We wish you the best of luck with your future endeavors, both in our community, and at Vassar, and trust you will bring the same commitment, intelligence, and persistence to every task before you. Congratulations to you again on your achievement, and you have our thanks for all you have done to make Panton a better community."
        ii. The letter was signed by the Panton SB
    b. The C/T discussed the contract from Homeward Bound to hold any stray dogs in the town. It was $500 for an unlimited amount of dogs. Panton had not utilized this service in the last year.
        i. A general discussion was held as to the advantages, what the cost per dog would be if the contract wasn't signed, and the general need for more information. Reece, acting as Dog Warden, agreed to look into it.
    c. Diddle and Zen is holding an event on June 28th, and needs approval for a catering permit. Teresa motioned to approve the permit, Robert seconded-**VOTE-4 In Favor, 0 Opposed**

d. The C/T discussed a proposal that would be presented to the SB at a future date regarding a replacement to the 2019 Mack Tandem Truck. 7 Years is the general lifespan of these vehicles, based on trade in value, and there is a 2 year wait on tandem salt truck bodies, meaning this decision will need to be discussed soon. The total cost for a contract now is approximately $128k for the body alone.
    i. A general discussion was had on the issue, with Steve Weber noting that he is happy to assist with asset management. The C/T invited him to contact the office to discuss it. Debbie Brace also noted there are local vendors that might be available.

11. Public Comment
    a. Sharon Ashcraft stated that the Addison Independent articles were incorrect and incomplete, and that she wasn't contacted in this process. It was noted that she should contact the person who wrote the article.
    b. She further discussed that Kirsten De La Cruz may have a conflict of interest on issues related to the Vorsteveld Farm.
    c. She further added that she would be unable to fulfill her volunteer positions with the Town.
    d. Debbie Brace stated that mutual aid needs to be documented to track expenses.
    e. Kathy Kennett noted that the SB should receive an informational packet for each meeting that contains important information.
    f. Steve Weber noted that plans need to be made regarding reserve fund spending.
12. The Selectboard began a review of AP/Payroll Warrants
    a. During the review, a general discussion occurred on;
        i. The culvert project
        ii. The ash tree removal
        iii. The boundary issues between Vergennes and Panton
    b. Zach motioned to approve the AP/Payroll Warrants, Teresa seconded-**VOTE-4 In Favor, 0 Opposed**
13. Teresa made a motion to go into executive session at 6:55 p.m. to discuss probable legal issues to which the town may be a party, and asked the T/C to attend, Zach seconded-**VOTE-4 In Favor, 0 Opposed**
14. Zach motioned to return to open session at 7:06 p.m., Robert seconded-**VOTE-5 In Favor, 0 Opposed**
    a. **No action was taken during executive session.**
15. Zach motioned to adjourn, Teresa seconded-**VOTE 5 In Favor, 0 Opposed**
16. The SB adjourned at 7:06