Town of Panton Chartered 1761

3176 Jersey Street • Panton, VT 05491-9331
Ph: 802.475.2333 • Fax: 802.475.2785

www.pantonvt.us

Selectboard Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, July 9th, 2025

In attendance: Selectboard Chairperson Zach Weaver, Selectboard Vice Chairperson Teresa Boucher, Selectboard Member Reece Jaring, Selectboard Member Robert T. DeGraaf, Selectboard Member Kirsten De La Cruz, Town Clerk/Treasurer Kyle Rowe, Kathy Kennett, Chuck Kennett, Mary Rudd, Debbie Brace

Via Zoom: Steve Weber

1. Zach called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.
2. A Liquor License request for approval was added to the agenda, after Item 8.
3. Public Comment
    a. Chuck Kennett asked why the culvert project on Panton Rd was delayed.
        i. The C/T noted that the Town had yet to receive the Grant Agreement from the State, and that any work done before that agreement was signed wouldn't be eligible for reimbursement. The Town had expected that contract in early July, and had scheduled accordingly. While is was difficult to re-schedule, the importance of that grant was deemed to high to ignore, and so the project will await the signed agreement.
        ii. Mary Rudd asked the SB if they will hold to their agreement to not spend the budgeted amount designated for culverts.
            1. The SB responded that they will do everything they can to stay in budget this FY and will ideally put the funds into surplus/undesignated fund as we get closer to the end of the FY.
        iii. Mary Rudd also asked about financial reporting to the board.
            1. The C/T responded that the SB will be receiving a Budget to Actual Report every month, which will generally be reflective of the previous, reconciled month of revenue and expenditures. A summation was provided to the SB at the last meeting of FY 25 in June.

DRAFT

iv. Mary Rudd additionally commented on paving, and paving expenditures;
    1. She questioned how that decision was made, and what the rational was. She asked for additional documentation to provide a great analysis of expenditure requests.
        a. The C/T responded that he and the Road Foreman developed a paving plan in early spring, based on the Road Foreman's extensive knowledge of the Town highways and where other towns are going. The Road Foreman requested an additional amount from the Reserve Fund this year to take advantage of a lower price, as he knew a 12% price increase was in the works for FY26. It was additionally noted that acting quickly took advantage of the fact that the paving company was locally located, and that they would not necessarily return at the same price later into the FY.
        b. Criticism of the lack of documentation was noted
            i. The C/T stated the Town is working hard on that, and a Road Network Inventory Map is in process, as well as Asset Depreciation, and this information is being tracked.
v. Kathy Kennett noted that a salary issue is on the agenda, and that the SB should stick to what was in the budget.
vi. Steve Weber noted that the SB had received his email, and that he felt a betrayal of trust on the part of the SB from the original budget discussions. Budget said one thing, town did another. He stated that it seems like too much pavement. He added he was frustrated by the process.
vii. Debbie Brace noted that Lake St should have been paved, not Jersey St.
viii. Zach responded that the SB trusts the staff they've hired to do the job, and while they do want to here more directly from the Road Foreman, they trust the town employees to act in the best interests of the Town. He added that the SB isn't just trying to spend money to appease any one individual, they are spending funds to fulfil projects and goals laid out by employees.
ix. It was generally noted again that the SB authorized additional funds to get a better value now than in future repaving. Zach added that betrayal was a strong word for a small town.
x. Teresa added that they will examine the paving expense for the budget in FY27, and make adjustments accordingly. She added that the SB has the best intentions, as do the employees of the town, who made a decision based on their knowledge and experience, and brought that request to the SB.

xi. It was generally noted that paving will continue to get more expensive, and that paving is a long term investment, spending now for benefit later.
xii. It was noted that the Reserve Funds should have more clear definitions.
xiii. Steve Weber noted that the SB should be more involved in the planning process in this, and that the Reserve Fund Planning Committee needs the SB's buy in to make it work.

4. The Selectboard began to discuss the minutes from the 6/25/25 Meeting.
    a. It was noted that the final action item, the acceptance of the new PTO policy and agreement on how to handle the rest of CY25 should have read-VOTE-4 In Favor, 0 Opposed, Reece Abstains. A motion was made by Teresa to accept the amended minutes, Robert seconded-**VOTE-5 In Favor, 0 Opposed.**
5. The C/T provided updates
    a. The Ash Tree removal grant reimbursement was submitted, and payment is expected soon.
    b. FY26 has officially begun, and while the process of some of the changes was a bit bumpy, it is already paying off.
    c. The C/T has implemented a new Chart of Accounts. The previous accounting system had a loose definition, the new CoA has a purpose and numbering convention, and will provide a high level of customizable reporting, as well as better fund and grant management.
    d. The Vergennes/Panton Boundary Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, July 17th, at 6:00 p.m., at the Panton Town Hall. It will be noted in the newspaper and on the website prior to.
    e. The C/T received multiple complaints about fireworks, and wanted to bring this issue before the SB to perhaps issue notices to repeat offenders, as unpermitted fireworks are illegal in Vermont.
        i. There was a general discussion on this issue, with it being noted that a "step" system of dealing with offenders should be considered, with notices sent as the first "step".
        ii. It was also noted that it difficult to manage this particular thing.
    f. There is a BCA meeting schedule for July 31st, for Voter List purges, and a Lister's Appeal.
    g. The PC is meeting on Thursday, and will be discussing the proposed ordinances and the Future Land Use.
6. The SB began discussion on the Salary Issues;
    a. The C/T started by explaining that an issue was discovered when attempting to update the salaries for the town staff. The budget numbers weren't checked carefully enough for the FY26 budget, and the amounts listed on the budget for FY25 were not inclusive of the 3.9% COLA that the Highway Department received in August of 2024. This means that the amounts budgeted for FY26 are

approximately $5,000 lower than what they should be, if a 3% COLA was to be put in place.

i. A number of solutions were discussed, and the discussion varied between various SB members. Reducing the COLA, selectively applying the COLA, and uniformly applying the COLA were mentioned. A vigorous and through airing of the situation was held, and respectful and thoughtful discussion ensued.
ii. It was generally noted that the Town has provided pay increases over the years, and covers 100% of the benefits in the town.
iii. It was also noted by the C/T that it's more important to stay on or close to the budget, and that it really isn't possible to alter the budget by relying on over revenue, or under expended line items.
iv. Teresa had made a motion during the initial discussions, with no second, and subsequent amended her motion to change the COLA to 0% for FY26 to rectify the budget imbalance, Robert seconded-**VOTE-4 In Favor, 0 Opposed, Reece Abstaining**

7. The SB began discussing the FY24 Audit Update
    a. The C/T informed that the SB that the MELF Loan had been misallocated in the wrong fiscal year, with the revenue and expense booked into separate years, and outside the audit window. The issues has been fixed, but slightly changes the audit, and has been booked as debt service by the auditor, and does not alter their un modified opinion.
8. The SB began to consider the Budget to Actual for FY 26
    a. The C/T noted that not much has obviously happened in the new FY. Some state money has been received, and a number of contracts have been paid. Some budget items are already showing as being over, as the updates weren't provided in a timely fashion during the budgeting process.
    b. Additional categories have been added to track debt service and capital expenditures/outlays for large purchases.
    c. Current Use revenue will increase by a large amount, offsetting the parcels entered into Current Use.
    d. Teresa noted that these reports are very valuable, and please to keep them coming.
9. The SB began discussion on approving the Liquor License
    a. The C/T noted that Agricola Farm is hosting another event, and is requesting a temporary Liquor License for a tasting event. This is a regular request, and conforms to all requirements from the State.
    b. Teresa motioned to approve the License, Reece seconded-**VOTE 5 In Favor, 0 Opposed**
10. The SB began to review AP/Payroll Warrants;

a. During the signing, questions were asked about holiday pay, and timelines for Kirsten to meet the Treasurer for signing the weekly warrants. A brief explanation of the Voter Challenging process was given as well.
b. Reece motioned to accept the AP/Payroll Warrants, Robert seconded-**VOTE-5 In Favor, 0 Opposed**

11. Zach motioned to adjourn at 7:06, Reece seconded-**VOTE-5 In Favor, 0 Opposed**