Town of Panton Chartered 1761

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Selectboard Budget Meeting Minutes

Thursday, October 23rd, 2025

In attendance: Selectboard Vice Chair Teresa Boucher, Selectboard Member Robert T. DeGraaf, Selectboard Member Kirsten De La Cruz, Town Clerk/Treasurer Kyle Rowe, Kathy Kennett, Chuck Kennett, Steve Weber, Mary Rudd Jamie Dayton, M'Lissa Dayton, VARS Director Jenna Lindman.

Via Zoom: None

1. Teresa called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m
2. Two Items were added to the Agenda
    a. Jenna Lindmann from VARS was added to the agenda
    b. Executive Session to discuss Contracts was added to the end of the agenda.
3. Public Comment
    a. Kathy Kennett thanked the Town for putting the draft budget online prior to the meeting.
    b. Teresa noted that she will go over the workings of the meeting after the VARS discussion.
4. Jenna from VARS presented to the Selectboard
    a. VARS is 60 calls ahead of this time last year, but Out of Service has seen a significant decrease
    b. She hopes to continue to solidify staffing and scheduling to further reduce reliance on mutual aid and OOS
    c. In terms of Calls Per Town, Panton is on par with the prior year
    d. The closing of Valley Vista and the opening of the Vergennes Grand has shifted and increased calls somewhat
    e. VARS is averaging 98% In Service time
    f. VARS is requesting the same funding from FY26, $25 per capita. They are also continuing to over their subscription service at $75 per household. The

subscription plan covers excess costs not covered by insurance. Out of the 6k or 7k service area, only 1k subscribers.

g. The Selectboard thanks Jenna for her service and the information.

5. Discussion of FY27 Draft Budget
    a. Teresa began by describing the process to allow the meeting to run smoothly; the SB would review a number of line items, and after 25 minutes, pause to address questions.
    b. The C/T began reviewing the draft budget;
        i. Highlights of the budget review include the noting of reduced expenses in the Administration budget, with several notable exceptions, including legal services and election materials.
        ii. Salaries and Benefits were discussed. The C/T mentioned that this draft budget contains a 5% pay increase, and a significant change to the way health insurance was offered by the Town. Currently the Town covers 100% of the premiums of the Platinum Plan by Blue Cross, Blue Shield. The C/T proposed that the down drop down several levels of plan, but fund a Health Reimbursement Account to cover the increased deductible and out of pocket expenses associated with this lower premium plan. This would allow the Town to still over good health coverage and the opportunity to save money should the HRA remain underutilized. The C/T noted that this plan nets even under the worse case scenario, but allows the Town to take advantage of the best case scenario to save money.
        iii. A number of other budget line items were reviewed, with the majority showing only slight increases or decreases.
        iv. Several questions were asked after this initial period, relating to salaries, benefits, and stipends. It was noted that the SB stipend was still $800, payable once per year after Town Meeting. Several residents discussed moving the Town to a cafeteria plan in order to save additional money on health insurance.
        v. After further review of budget line items, several additional questions were raised, centered around other costs centers; The GMP eVolve program, and the electricity bill in the Office and Highway Budget. It was noted that the eVolve program will end in 2027, and that the solar credits from the pole barn solar panel installation was moderately helpful at offsetting electricity costs, but rates continue to increase and the available credits aren't enough to offset.
        vi. The SB discussed the Sherriff contract, and whether the Town was benefitting from the amount of coverage the ACSD offered, and whether expanding that coverage would be helpful. It was noted that the SB was grateful for their service, they just wished it was less expensive.

vii. The discussion on budget line items continued onto the Highway Department, with the C/T noting that the budget had been generated by the Road Foreman, and represented several areas of change, including an increase to the paving line item, and a change to other expenses that slightly reduced them.
viii. Questions were raised on the benefits question again, as well as the uniform allowance line item. It was noted by resident's that the SB should consider changing the hours of operation during the winter time to reduce overtime, from 4 10 hour days to 5 8 hour days.
ix. It was noted that some of the residents in the Town would like the opportunity to vote on the community service appropriations separately, instead of a bloc.
x. General budget item discussion continued, with other highlights being the situation with State payments for highways, State Highway Grant availability, and the fact that many overweight vehicles aren't really paying their fair share towards town roads.
xi. The SB thanked the C/T for the draft, and will continue draft discussions about revenue and reserve funding at the budget meeting on October 30th.

6. Teresa motioned to make a finding that premature general knowledge regarding contracts would place the Town at a disadvantage, Kirsten seconded-**ALL IN FAVOR**
    a. Having made that finding, Teresa motioned to enter Executive Session, inviting C/T Kyle at 7:35 p.m., Kirsten seconded-**ALL IN FAVOR**
    b. Teresa motioned to come out of Executive Session at 8:08 p.m., Kirsten seconded-**ALL IN FAVOR.**
    c. It was noted that no actions were taken/decisions were made in Executive Session.
7. Teresa motioned to adjourn at 8:08 p.m., Robert seconded-**ALL IN FAVOR**