Town of Panton Chartered 1761

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Selectboard Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, November 12th, 2025

In attendance: Selectboard Chairperson Zach Weaver**,** Selectboard Vice Chair Teresa Boucher, Selectboard Member Robert T. DeGraaf, Selectboard Member Kirsten De La Cruz, Selectboard Member Reece Jaring, Town Clerk/Treasurer Kyle Rowe, Highway Crew Member Jeff Stone, Chuck Kennett, Richard Jackson, Sharon Ashcraft, Vergennes Mayor Chris Bearor, Vergennes Recreation Director Martha DeGraaf

Via Zoom: None

1. Zach called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.
2. There were no additions or deletions to the agenda at this time.
3. Public Comment;
    a. Sharon Ashcraft stated that she felt that the letter written by the Selectboard in support of Kirsten De La Cruz's husband was a violation of the Municipal Code of Ethics, and that it wasn't town business or proper to be voted on. She added that it was a conflict of interest. She added that the Municipal Ethics Training by the Selectboard members isn't listed on the Town's website, and that the Code of Ethics should be more prominently displayed, as well as a procedure for reporting complaints.
4. Jeff Stone gave the Highway Department Report;
    a. Rick has been working on updating the Town's culvert inventory.
    b. The plows are on the trucks, and have already been in use.
    c. They are hoping to get in one more round of grading for the dirt roads.
    d. Rick has shopped around for DEF fluid, and has found a cheaper source.
    e. The paving for the culvert project is still planned to happen, waiting for a break in the weather.
5. Chris Bearor and Martha DeGraaf were recognized by the SB to discuss the Vergennes Commodore Club;

a. The Boys and Girls Club of Vergennes shut down suddenly in the spring of 2025. The Town stepped in to what they thought would be a temporary program, but has exposed a real need in the community for a safe, welcoming space for the school age children of the ACNWSD.
b. Vergennes has been offered the purchase of the building for $1, and it's on the ballot in Vergennes for Town Meeting.
c. The planning, programming, and understanding of need has evolved over the past months, and the City of Vergennes has a good idea of how to proceed for now in assisting in making it work for the local communities children.
d. Chris Bearor and the Vergennes Recreation Department is investigating options on how to make the building pay for itself; renting out space, use as a multi town community hub have been discussed. The kids would have priority on usage, but the building is only open for after school programs and school vacations, with plenty of opportunities outside those times.
e. Donations have been flowing in from private sources, and the Recreation Department has been very successful at getting grants to offset costs.
f. Chris stated he is at the Panton SB meeting to ask the SB to continue to include the community service appropriation on the ballot for the voters, and for a board member to participate in the organization of this community resource, including meeting with others towns to help develop local government support for this project.
g. Martha added some more to the history of Vergennes's involvement, adding that while the schools have afterschool programs, there was a need to offer a non-school, safe location to the communities children.
h. She added they have the support of the United Way, the Boys and Girls Club, and a significant number of community members.
i. The program is currently seeing 24 children a day, going as high as 35. An average of 7 children are from Panton, and there are 12 "members" from Panton.
j. She added that even with limited staff and resources, she is considering the program a success, and is very glad to be able to provide it to local communities. She has added a teen food pantry to help offset some food insecurity, as well as provide tutors and study groups for some of the older students, and even behavioral intervention if needed.
k. Long Term, she sees more programmatic elements, including local natural resources, and outdoor recreational programs.
l. It was generally noted by the Panton SB that it was a great opportunity, and nice to think regionally about these kinds of issues.
m. The SB noted the upcoming meeting dates for their participation and thanked Chris and Martha for their presentation.

6. Approval of Minutes from 10/8, 10/23, 10/30 SB Meetings and Budget Meetings, and the 10/24 West Road Reclassification Hearing Minutes.
    a. It was noted that a date was wrong, and the title of the each of the minutes should be changed to reflect the specific type of meeting that it was.
    b. Teresa made a motion to approve all the minutes, as amended, Reece seconded-**VOTE-ALL IN FAVOR**
7. Clerk-Treasurer Updates
    a. The C/T gave a review of all the grants the Town was participating in;
        i. The Lake Champlain Basin Program Grant was proceeding, post application work completed.
        ii. The Ash Tree Removal Grant has been closed out and the money received.
        iii. The Structures Grant for the Panton Rd Culvert Replacements was waiting on the paving to be ready for submission.
        iv. Panton did not receive the AARP Grant for the upgrades to the Panton Town Hall.
        v. The Ben and Jerry's Grant is waiting on a discussion with the landowners of the Panton Memorial Park before the project goes forward.
    b. The first tax payment has gone well, approximately $50k outstanding for the first payment. Delinquent Taxes down significantly.
    c. Lots of great work is being done on the Town Records, and office organization, some items for the SB to consider will be discussed when we have the full facts of some of the issues the C/T is discovering.
    d. The new bank account for the reserves is going to be set up, the C/T demoed a product that may assist with the ease of accounting, working with CBNA on that.
    e. The C/T is investigating a move to a .gov domain. Grants available to help with any costs, but waiting on the state to provide more details.
8. T-Mobile Grant Application for the Town Hall Improvements.
    a. The C/T discussed a no match grant he wanted to apply for to continue to the search to fund the purchase and installation of acoustic panels in the Panton Town Hall. He stated that he would seek approximately $5k to help buy the panels and host a community event to paint them, and was working with the Panton Art Group.
    b. Teresa motioned to allow the C/T to approve the grant application, Robert seconded-**VOTE-ALL IN FAVOR**
9. Recreational Trails Program Grant Application for South Road Trail
    a. The C/T stated that he and the Town Tree Warden had both been approached the by State of Vermont/ANR/FPR about this grant, and that Panton in their eyes was an underserved community, and that they had noted that we had this trail we were looking to approve. The grant could be used for shovel ready projects and planning. After walking the trail, the C/T asked the SB to approve an application

of $20k to pay for the costs of planning. This is an 80/20 match grant, meaning the Town's portion would be $4k.

b. The SB noted that $4k was a lot to invest in a planning grant, and that without even the idea of the a community plan prior, it would be difficult.
c. Sharon Ashcraft stated that community involvement in this project is very important, and suggested that a Trails Committee be formed to discuss a plan for this location prior to any grant. She added that there was a lot of work and a lot of components to making South Road Trail a success.
d. It was noted by the SB that past improvements to Town owned property have resulted in increased usage, and that it could be thought of as an investment in the Town.
e. Martha noted that Vergennes has a Trails Committee, and they work hard to link trails together, and lots of local participation is important to making it a success.
f. The SB decided to table the issue, and not apply for the grant at this time.

10. FY27 Budget
    a. The C/T discussed some of the updates to the FY27 Budget;
        i. It was noted that Current Use payments are a lagging formula, and now reflect the re-appraised value of the farmland in Panton, resulting in a significantly higher payment to the Town by the State for FY27.
        ii. A few other costs differences were noted, including the Assessor services, and the fact we don't have good estimates on contracted services or tires for the highway department.
        iii. A general discussion was had over keeping the budget relatively stable from FY26, and that this budget is doing that thus far.
        iv. A budget meeting was set for December 9th, at 5:30 p.m.
11. Reserve Fund Definitions for inclusion on the ballot
    a. The C/T discussed the changes to the reserve and special revenue funds definitions that the Reserve Fund Planning Committee had suggested to the SB. Each definition was discussed, and it was noted that the C/T was generally favorable of them all.
    b. The SB discussed the need for specificity to prevent over expenditure of the funds. They also noted that spending for future projects is often difficult, and a little bit of leeway is often important.
    c. It was noted that the SB could make alternations to the definitions if they so choose, for inclusion on the ballot.
    d. Teresa made a motion to approve all the new Reserve Fund and Special Revenue Fund definitions for inclusion on the ballot, except the Highway Capital Project Fund and the Emergency Fund, Reece seconded-**VOTE-ALL IN FAVOR**
    e. It was noted that the SB will bring ideas on possible changes to those definitions to the next meeting to discuss, review, and hopefully approve.

f. Zach made a motion to include the additional ballot item asking to reallocate $90k from the Town Building Maintenance Fund to the Highway Capital Equipment Fund, Teresa seconded-**VOTE-ALL IN FAVOR**

12. FY26 Financial Review.
    a. The C/T discussed FY26 as of October, the last reconciled month. He reviewed the balance sheet for the general fund, as well as the reserve funds, detailed the revenue and expenditure reporting for grants, which has been updated from previous years, and discussed areas of overages in both revenue and expense. He noted generally that things are proceeding normally, and that cash position of the Town was healthy. The Education Payment would be made November 20th, and until then, the money was earning interest for the Town in the money market. He also noted that control of expenditures was showing great results in keeping costs down.
    b. The SB discussed overtime pay, and it was noted that the winter is predicted to be long this year, and it was an area to watch closely.
13. Reece made a motion to add the review and approval of the AP/Payroll Warrants to the Agenda as Item 13, and to move Executive Session to Item 14, Teresa seconded the motion-**VOTE-ALL IN FAVOR**
14. AP/Payroll Warrants
    a. The SB reviewed the AP/Payroll warrants.
    b. It was noted that Teresa's name was spelled incorrectly. The C/T will correct it.
    c. General social discussion was held during the review.
    d. Reece motioned to approve the AP/Payroll Warrants, Robert seconded-**VOTE-ALL IN FAVOR**
15. Zach motioned to make a specific finding that premature general public knowledge of the substance of discussion would place the public at a disadvantage, Teresa seconded-**VOTE-ALL IN FAVOR**
    a. Sharon Ashcraft stated she thought that the reasoning behind executive session needs to be more specific in the agenda.
    b. Having made such a finding, Teresa motioned to go into executive session, inviting the C/T for a portion of it at 7:20 p.m.-Reece seconded-**VOTE-ALL IN FAVOR**
    c. Zach made a motion to exit Executive Session at 7:45 p.m., Reece seconded-**VOTE-ALL IN FAVOR**
    d. No actions were taken or decisions were made.
16. Robert made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:45 p.m., Reece seconded-**VOTE-ALL IN FAVOR**