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TOWN OF PANTON ANNUAL MEETING

Informational Meeting
Monday, March 3, 2025

Present: Selectboard Chair Howard Hall, Selectboard Vice-Chair Teresa Boucher, Selectboard Member Zach Weaver, Clerk/Treasurer Kyle Rowe, Assistant Clerk Donna Oliver, Representative Matt Birong, Moderator Martha DeGraff, Justice of the Peace (JP) Eileen Brennan, JP Jamie Dayton, JP Paula Moore, JP Gretchen Bailey, Emergency Management Coordinator Bob Groff, Delinquent Tax Collector Barbara Fleming, Ed Brennan, Robert Bailey, Amy Masback, Skip Masback, Maggie Catillaz, Michael Catillaz, Krista Diego, Chris Diego, Reece Jaring, Debbie Brace, Kathy Kennett, Charles Kennett, Sharon Ashcraft, Roger Kayser, Lorraine Kayser, Sandy Nolan, Bob Brigan, Kevin Cooke, Nick Jackson, Carolyn McGrory, Ric Plaisance, Kristen De La Cruz, Derek Vorsteveld, David Rheaume, Colin Doris, Monique Bogue, Annie Hopper, Paulette Bogan, Joe Bogan

Via Zoom: M'lissa Dayton, Kathy Rossier, Genevieve Smyth

1. Selectboard Chair Howard Hall called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and turned the proceedings over to moderator Martha DeGraaf. Martha led the attendees in the pledge of allegiance.
2. Representative Matt Birong was invited to say a few words. He reported on the work of the House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs, which he chairs. Among the issues the committee has addressed was a ballot error in southern Vermont in November. In accepting questions, several raised concerns about the quality of our water and a lack of response from the Vergennes Panton Water District when questions arise. Matt promised to look into it.
3. Martha introduced and recognized our new town clerk Kyle Rowe, assistant town clerk Donna Oliver, road foreman Rick Cloutier, road crew Jeff Stone, delinquent tax collector Barbara Fleming, and zoning administrator David Martini.
4. Martha then passed the meeting to Teresa Boucher who read a report for the Selectboard.
5. Kyle then reported on the status of various issues facing the town.
    a. These issues include the solar field, the status of our contract with Vergennes Area Rescue Squad (VARS), stabilization of the grand list, funding of the operating

budget, and the education tax rate. He also explained the status of the situation with the audit report. We have hired RHR Smith of Maine to perform audits on FY24 and FY25 books. Work will be done by the end of the fiscal year.

b. He also reported on changes that have been made with the help of volunteers in the office. It's nice to see the town's people become engaged.
c. Kyle explained how difficult it can be to predict budgetary needs prior to the year when weather and other externalities can affect financial needs of the town. The highway department is working on a paving plan and policy and will apply for a VT AoT structures grant to pay for culverts on Panton Rd. We are also waiting for a response to our FEMA application for recent flood repairs, although we are concerned with recent federal actions. We need to begin considering our road network as an asset. We need a road inventory and to develop metrics for grading our roads.
d. He reviewed our goals for the current year and next year, including use of the well-funded reserve funds. We are applying for a grant to update our town plan. Should the town vote to expand the size of the selectboard, we will hold a special town meeting later in the spring or summer to elect the new members.

No comments were made following the presentation. Kyle said he would make the presentation available on our website.

6. Martha asked if there were any town officers who would like to give a report prior to discussion of the articles. None were given.
7. Martha noted that articles 2-6 would be discussed.
    a. Martha read Article 2: To elect the following officers by Australian ballot:
        i. Moderator (1-year term)
        ii. Selectboard member (3-year term)
        iii. Constable (1-year term)
        iv. Dog Warden (1-year term)
        v. Vergennes-Panton Water District Representatives (1 3-year term and 1 2-year term)
    b. Martha opened the floor to candidates.
        i. Reese Jaring, candidate for Selectboard, introduced himself and said that had lived in town for 4 years.
        ii. Howard Hall gave a short speech and included his commitment to the town and the work that has been done on the buildings and equipment since he has served on the Board.
        iii. Kathy Kennett, who is on the ballot for Vergennes-Panton Water District 2-year term reviewed her qualifications to serve.
        iv. There were no other candidates who chose to speak.
    c. Martha read Article 3: Shall the voters adopt the proposed Fiscal Year 2026 (July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026) General Fund Operating Budget in the amount of

$1,119,954 of which $955,898 shall be raised by taxes and $164,056 by non-tax revenue.

A question was raised on the reported percentage decrease from last year's budget. Kyle answered that the decrease was in the amount to be raised by taxes, which was down 6%.

d. Martha read Article 4: Shall the voters appropriate the following sums which shall be raised by taxes, to be placed in the Town Research Fund accounts as noted: Emergency Fund $2,400 and Reappraisal Fund $2,000. There was no discussion.

e. Martha read Article 5: Shall the voters appropriate $13,451 of Town Funds to the following organizations in the amounts listed. If approved the amount will be added to the amount in Article 3.

i.	Adams-Kent Cemetery Association	$2,500.
ii.	Addison County Court Diversion	$210.
iii.	Addison County Home Health & Hospice	$800.
iv.	Addison County Parent Child Center	$800.
v.	Addison County Readers	$250.
vi.	Agewell [CV Agency on Aging]	$650.
vii.	Boys & Girls Club of Vergennes	$1,000.
viii.	Charter House	$1,000.
ix.	Counseling Service of Addison	$500.
x.	Elderly Services	$850
xi.	Green Up Vermont	$50.
xii.	Homeward Bound	$500.
xiii.	HOPE	$500.
xiv.	John Graham Shelter	$450.
xv.	Open Door Clinic	$500.
xvi.	RSVP	$350.
xvii.	Tri-Valley Transit	$691.
xviii.	Turning Point Center	$1,000.
xix.	Vermont Family Network	$250.
xx.	WomenSafe	$600.
	Total	$13,451.

Debbie Brace commented that we should consider breaking these down into separate votes. We shouldn't have all of the appropriations grouped together so we vote yes or no for all listed. They should be separate.

f. Martha read Article 6: Shall the Town of Panton, pursuant to 17 V.S.A. Section 2650(b) increase the Board of Selectpersons from three (3) to five (5) members with the terms of the new members to be two (2) years. Currently the quorum is two; should this pass, the quorum would increase to three. Kyle explained that if

this passes, we will have a special town meeting to elect two more members. If no one runs, the Selectboard can appoint two people.

There was some discussion of the benefits of having more members on the board, however it was noted that we already have difficulty filling positions. Martha stepped down from her role as moderator to make a comment on this topic. She explained what happened in Vergennes. Then she resumed her role as moderator. Debbie Brace commented that people don't step up, but often will agree if asked personally. Monique Bogue and others wondered where descriptions and job duties are available. Kyle said these will be added to our website.

8. Martha opened the floor for other business.
    a. A couple of errors were noticed in the town report. Kyle acknowledged these errors and will correct them on the website.
    b. A general discussion followed regarding the pickup that was recently purchased and that the town needs to control costs when making these purchases. Debbie Brace stated that we need to advertise for positions and not handpick people for open positions. This occurred in the case of the recent opening for road crew.
    c. There was also a general discussion regarding the cost of paying 100% of the insurance premiums for full-time employees. We should consider other options to reduce costs.
    d. Finally, Debbie Brace voiced concern about using the mower to cut brush along the side of the road. It looks awful and is dangerous. A chain saw should be used. Others agreed.
9. Martha thanked everyone for their work tonight. The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Oliver
Assistant Town Clerk

Howard Hall
Selectboard Chair

Teresa Boucher

Selectboard Vice-Chair

Zachary Weaver
Selectboard Member