Town of Panton Chartered 1761

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Selectboard Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 14th, 2026

In attendance: Selectboard Chairperson Zach Weaver**,** Selectboard Vice Chair Teresa Boucher, Selectboard Member Robert T. DeGraaf, Selectboard Member Reece Jaring, Town Clerk/Treasurer Kyle Rowe, Road Foreman Rick Cloutier, Highway Crew Member Jeff Stone, Chuck Kennett, Kathy Kennett, Kevin Sullivan, Sharon Ashcraft, Martha DeGraaf, Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife Manager Amy Alfieri, Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife Land Acquisition Coordinator Jennifer Krebs.

Via Zoom: Kathy Rossier, Lorraine (last name unknown)

1. Zach called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m.
2. Additions and Deletions to the Agenda;
    a. Item 13-FY27 Budget discussion and approval was tabled, as preparations were not complete. The Selectboard decided to hold a special meeting on Tuesday, January 20th, at 5:30pm to finalize the budget for the warning and ballot.
    b. Employee End of Year Compensation was added to the agenda as Item 13.
3. Public Comment;
    a. Kathy Kennett asked the Selectboard to speak directly into the microphones.
    b. Sharon Ashcraft asked who on the Selectboard was running for re-election?
        i. Zach stated he hadn't decided, but that anyone who wants to run for Selectboard is more than welcome to run.
4. Road Foreman's Report;
    a. The 1 Ton was returned slightly earlier than expected after some warranty maintenance.
    b. Icing has been a serious issue this year, the Highway Crew are trying hard to stay on top of it.
    c. Some towns are having issues getting salt this year, but Panton is not one of them, thanks to the departments relationship to our longstanding contractor.
    d. The Chloride Trailer is going to be re-plumbed soon, will be done in-house.

e. The Foreman has been shopping around for quotes for a new truck, to replace the Mack in 1.5-2 years. He will continue to seek out the best price.
f. Several culverts need replacing, along Jersey St and Lake Rd. The ACRPC culvert inventory is not adequate, and the Highway Department has been conducting their own to verify the status of Town culverts.
    i. The C/T added that a new interactive map of the town highway system as well as culverts is available on the website, and will be continually updated as changes to the inventory are made.
g. The Selectboard thanked the Highway Department for their hard work thus far this winter.

5. The Selectboard recognized Jennifer Krebs from the Department of Fish and Wildlife;
    a. Jennifer thanked the Selectboard for the opportunity to speak, and asked for their support in of a land acquisition along Dead Creek.
    b. Fish and Wildlife is pursuing a 77 acre parcel of privately owned land along Dead Creek, and West Road for wildlife habitat, wetlands rehabilitation, and passive recreation.
    c. The parcel would be restored to original hydrological conditions, to allow for sediment retention and nutrient uptake, improving water quality for Dead Creek and ultimately Lake Champlain.
    d. The acquisition is a sub-division, as the landowner would retain a part of the parcel, as well as Right of Ways.
    e. The current landowner wants the land conserved and is supportive of the Fish and Wildlife plan, and the Trustee has entered into an agreement with Fish and Wildlife.
    f. The Town would receive a Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) that represents the current year tax assessment, given that the land is in Current Use and undeveloped, the PILOT would result in no immediate change to the overall property tax.
    g. It was noted that this was part of a general expansion of the Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area, which extends from Bridport to Panton.
    h. Jenniefer asked for any questions;
        i. Sharon Ashcraft asked if there were stipulations that no solar development would be allowed on the conserved parcel.
            1. Jennifer stated that Fish and Wildlife was seeking durable protections and that there would be a single easement holder of the conserved land, with those type of protections in place.
        ii. Kathy Rossier stated she was concerned the land could become another dumping ground for illegal refuse disposal.
            1. Amy Alfieri from Fish and Wildlife noted that there are problem at 3rd Bridge, the adjacent Fish and Wildlife parcel. A new Game

Warden should be starting in the next 6 months, and will be able to help enforce anti-dumping laws. She also stated a corrections crew had been used in the past to clean up the area. She asked for any and all suggestions from the community to assist in protecting and maintain the resource, and that Fish and Wildlife officials will do their best to make more frequent visits.

a. Teresa noted that involving the Green Up Day Committee may be useful.
b. The C/T added that the Selectboard could authorize the Town Constable to issue tickets to enforce the law in that area to handle dumping and refuse.

2. It was generally noted that more land acquired shouldn't translate to more trash, and it was further noted that Fish and Wildlife will work as hard as they can to prevent that.

iii. Chuck Kennett asked a series of questions regarding the current usage of the land, and what will happen to it?

1. Jennifer noted that the land was current used for agriculture, and that upon acquisition, farming will cease on that parcel and the hydrology will be restored.
2. It was noted that Fish and Wildlife have agricultural leases on may of their parcels, but this particular parcel can provide a valuable service in improving wildlife and water quality.
3. It was also noted by Jennifer and Amy that Dead Creek Fish and Wildlife are supportive of agriculture, and seek to find balance between the local environment and agriculture.
4. It was noted that the PILOT payments would adjust over the course of years, but would diverge from potential assessed value/Grand List calculations.

i. The Selectboard had a brief discussion about where they were at in their thinking;

i. Zach made a motion for the Selectboard to give approval for the land acquisition by Fish and Wildlife, Teresa seconded-**VOTE-3 In Favor, 1 Opposed**
ii. Jennifer and Amy thanked the Selectboard for their consideration.

6. The Selectboard considered the minutes from the 12-10-2025 Budget Meeting.
    a. Teresa made a motion to approve the minutes from the 12-10 Budget meeting, Robert seconded-**VOTE-All in Favor**
7. Clerk/Treasurer Updates;
    a. The C/T has officially closed out the ARPA reporting.
    b. The C/T participated in a "monitor" of our FEMA projects, and overall, we did well. Several corrections will be necessary, related to the Purchasing Policy of the

Town, and the account naming structure of interal accounts that handle federal funds. The C/T is working to make these corrections, and will have an updated Purchasing Policy for the SB's approval at a future meeting.

c. The survey of West Road is nearly finished, and more will be discussed during a subsequent agenda item.
d. Election prep continues, and the timeline is posted on the Town website. There are no citizen petitions or charter amendments this year, and the deadline for candidates for open offices is January 26th.
e. The Planning Commission had a kickoff meeting for updating the Town Plan, this will be a two year process, working closely with ACRPC, and the current Town Plan as well as 2016 survey are posted on the website. Any additional questions that residents or the SB want to have on the survey should be sent to the C/T and/or Jamie Dayton.
f. Vermont statute has changed regarding the use of Undesignated Fund Balance. Fund Balance is the surplus, or deficit, left after liabilities are subtracted from assets. The legislature, in an effort to allow more flexibility for municipalities during inter tax periods and other tight cash flow periods, has amended state law to allow legislative bodies to utilize undesignated fund balance as they would any other revenue source, without specific voter approval. Both the Town Attorney and VLCT have weighed in, confirming that this is the intent and the fact of the law. The C/T will be presenting a new Fund Policy for the Selectboard after Town Meeting that will include language specific to this change.

8. The Selectboard began discussion on the Town Report;
    a. The C/T asked the SB for guidance on several Town Report questions that had arose. The C/T thanked Suzanne Snyder for her great work on the Town Report last year, and said that we are now in a great position to complete it in house. Donna has been working hard on it, and we know it will come out great.
        i. The Selectboard decided to include the total amount of Delinquent Taxes owed, but not specific names.
        ii. The Selectboard decided to include the total births, deaths, and marriages, but not specific information.
        iii. The Selectboard will consider to whom to dedicate the Town Report at their meeting on Tuesday, January 20th, as well as information for the Selectboard Report.
        iv. The Selectboard decided not to mail to everyone in town, but have copies available at the Town Offices, and on the Town website.
9. The Selectboard began discussing the Town Investment Policy;
    a. The C/T noted that he had removed the section allowing the treasurer to invest without prior approval, and that the policy as it stands is basically the VLCT boilerplate language, with "Town of Panton" added into the identifier information.

b. Sharon Ashcraft asked the SB how the need for this policy came about;
    i. Zach stated that the Town was seeking to maximize their money, and that the policy would be put in place to outline the details of how, and to protect the Town.
c. Sharon Ashcraft stated that the inclusion of the previous language would have been unlawful, and that the Selectboard should have been more careful.
d. Reece stated that he would feel more comfortable if the Town Attorney reviewed the policy.
e. The C/T will do that, and stated that we have plenty of time, and the goal is to have the policy in place before the start of the fiscal year, to allow for investment.

10. The Selectboard began discussion on the Panton Mileage Certificate;
    a. The C/T noted that the West Road change was updated in the Certificate, and that the minutes of the hearing and the survey will be included in the submission.
    b. Teresa made a motion to approve the Panton Mileage Certificate, Reece seconded-**VOTE-All in Favor**
11. The Selectboard began discussing the AARP Community Challenge Grant Application;
    a. The C/T stated that this was another no-match grant, and was going to seek funding for the acoustic panels in the Town Hall, as well as providing paint and materials for the Panton Art League, and a professional artist to assist in the painting and planning of the panels. The max request was $15,000, and the Town would be seeking $11k or $12k.
    b. Zach made a motion to approve the C/T to apply for this grant, Teresa seconded-**VOTE-All in Favor**
12. The Selectboard began reviewing the FY26 Budget;
    a. The C/T noted that revenues were higher than anticipated, and the Town is in an excellent cash position, with the reserves fully capitalized, and the General Fund in a healthy cash position. He further noted that the liabilities were low, and the Town has no outstanding bills, beyond the upcoming debt service on the several loans we have.
    b. A review of expenses showed most expenses to be on par with the halfway point of the fiscal year, with several notable exceptions, including the salary for the delinquent tax collector (paid for with the penalty) and the legal services budget for the DRB/PC, which included the recent zoning hearings. Addison County Court dues were also noted as higher, as they calculate their dues based on lagging Grand Lists, and they had finally reached the Town wide reappraisal in 2024.
    c. The Balance Sheet from December Fiscal Year 2025 was also provided, to document much better position that the Town was in, in the current Fiscal Year. Specifically, the overall cash position and assets, as well as the reduced liabilities.
13. The Selectboard began discussion on the 2025 End of Year Employee Compensation;

a. The C/T noted that the he had mentioned that the budgeting error, handled by the SB several months prior had meant that no full time employee received a COLA. The C/T noted that the C/T's COLA had been correctly budgeted, and that there had been some discussion to split it equally between the Highway Crew as an end of the year bonus.
b. The SB decided to include discussion on this matter in Executive Session.\

14. The Selectboard Reviewed the AP/Payroll Warrants;
    a. General discussion was had during the review of AP/Payroll Warrants, including
        i. The Auditors report should be ready for the Town Report.
        ii. The healthcare premiums will be reflected in March's AP/Payroll, but are being correctly charged now.
    b. Teresa made a motion to approve the AP/Payroll Warrants, Zach seconded-**VOTE-All in Favor**
15. Teresa made a motion to enter Executive Session at 7:12 p.m. to discuss attorney client communications and contracts. The C/T was also present in Executive Session. Robert seconded**-VOTE-All in Favor**
    a. Teresa motioned to exit Executive Session at 8:10 p.m., Zach seconded-**VOTE-All in Favor**
    b. Zach made the following motion- To authorize Leslie Cadwell, the Town Attorney, to enter an appearance on behalf of the Town of Panton in the matter of MSFE, LLC, and additionally authorize the Town Attorney to file an enforcement action in regard to the same matter.
    c. The motion was seconded by Teresa**-VOTE-All in Favor**
    d. It was also decided to discuss and vote on 2025 End of Year Employee Compensation at the January 20th meeting.
16. Reece made a motion to adjourn at 8:01 pm, Zach seconded**-VOTE-All in Favor**