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

Tuesday, January 27th, 2026

In attendance: Selectboard Chairperson Zach Weaver**,** Selectboard Vice Chair Teresa Boucher, Selectboard Member Robert T. DeGraaf, Selectboard Member Reece Jaring, Selectboard Member Kirsten De La Cruz, Town Clerk/Treasurer Kyle Rowe, Chuck Kennett, Kathy Kennett, Gretchen Bailey, Armando Martinez, Corina Martinez

Via Zoom: Sharon Ashcraft, Ipad (name unknown)

1. Zach called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.
2. Additions and Deletions to the Agenda
    a. None
3. Public Comment:
    a. Chuck Kennett asked about Vergennes/Panton Boundary Updates;
        i. Zach stated still working and still waiting on Vergennes. As soon as the SB knows anything, it will be discussed and presented.
    b. Armando Martinez was recognized by Zach;
        i. Armando started by reviewing zoning matter he was involved in with the Town. He stated he felt it was abuse and misuse of resources against him and his family.
        ii. He presented a packet of information to the Selectboard, and stated he would be mailing of these to every household in Panton. The package contained communications, records, photos, and information about the current zoning issue and prior ones that he has faced, detailing what he claimed were oversteps of authority by the Town Zoning Administrator, David Martini.
        iii. He reviewed the history of the interactions with Town officials from 2021 till current day, reviewing correspondence, and what he stated were administrative failures during the appeal process.

DRAFT

iv. He stated that what unfolded was not faithful to the spirit of the zoning regulations, as he saw them.
v. He stated that he felt that David Martini should have recused himself from dealing with his (Armando's) property, based on how he interpreted prior communications from DRB members.
vi. He stated that felt his was a case of selective enforcement.
vii. He stated that he felt that the Town Attorney was also defending what he (Armando) thought was a rogue Zoning Administrator. He added that he felt the Panton Town Attorney had drafted her legal arguments in a way that was not based on the facts, as he saw them. He added that in his opinion she should not represent the Town, as she was compromised and biased.
viii. He stated that the spirit of the law was abandoned in favor of technicalities, and that he built the basketball court in question because it was his right to do so.
ix. He ended by asking the Selectboard to;
    1. Rescind the Notice of Violation
    2. Review the actions of the Zoning Administrator and overall staff and board behavior during this incident.

c. Zach stated that hearing residents concerns was important, and that the SB wants to be as fair as possible. He added that Armando had given the board a significant amount of information and would like to the opportunity to review it as a board in executive session.
d. Executive Session was added to the agenda as Item 9a-After making a finding that it would the detrimental to make knowledge public regarding pending civil litigation.

4. The Selectboard began to review the FY27 Budget;
    a. The C/T began at the beginning of the budget, documenting a general increase in non-tax revenue, mostly related to the increase in Current Use revenue. He then moved through into expenses, documenting multiple instances of reductions in the budget from FY26, and some increases that have changed since the last review-notably health insurance, and debt service.
    b. He also stated there will perhaps be an opportunity for further decrease to the overall tax rate should discussions with Vergennes prove out regarding additional allocations to the Fire Department Contract.
    c. This has put the Town in an excellent position to propose a budget that is approximately $7k down from last year, while still funding obligations to staff and infrastructure, and adding to the Highway Capital Equipment Reserve Fund.
    d. It was noted by the SB to include a note on the budget presented in the Town Report to explain the COLA issue and the payroll for FY26 and FY27.

e. Teresa made a motion to accept the FY27 Budget of $948,187.65, with overall expenditures (on other questions) of $1,120,912.46. Kirsten seconded-**VOTE-ALL IN FAVOR**

5. The SB began consideration of the Town Meeting Warning and Ballot Articles;
    a. The C/T explained that the Community Bank loan on the 2024 International will be paid off in FY27, and it wouldn't be wise to rely solely on the ballot question to pay off the loan. This means that Article 16, which had included moving money from the Highway Capital Projects Reserve Fund to the Capital Equipment Reserve Fund could be changed to just move some funds, rather than pay off the loan. Additionally, because the interest rate of the MELF loan was lower than our savings account rate, it wouldn't make sense to pay that loan off early, as we could earn more money than we'd gain by paying of the loan early.
    b. Teresa made a motion to approve the amended article 16 for inclusion in the ballot, Kirsten seconded-**VOTE-ALL IN FAVOR**
    c. The C/T stated that besides Dog Warden, all the offices had candidates running, and that they were all incumbents.
    d. The C/T also stated that the BCA will be meeting at 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, February 11th, immediately prior to the SB meeting, and it should be brief, just a sign up for election work, and discussion of the voter rolls.
6. The SB began to discuss tax rates;
    a. The C/T noted that while it was too early to give a definite idea of the tax rate, based on a few conservative assumptions, our municipal tax rate should remain the same as FY26. Additionally, the Homestead rate from ACNWSD has been determined to be about $.07 higher than last year. If the Governor's plan to offset the tax rate increase passes the legislature, it is predicted that the rate for Panton will drop by about $.07, meaning an overall flat Homestead rate for FY27, but that won't be known until well after Town Meeting.
7. The SB began to discuss the request for funds from the Tire Reserve Fund;
    a. The C/T stated that the Road Foreman hadn't anticipated the Tire Fund going away, and had planned to request funds to purchase vehicle tires later in the FY. The FY27 budget includes a tire line item, but for FY26, the total requested is $8200, for the Mack Truck and John Deere Tractor.
    b. After a brief discussion, Teresa made a motion to approve the request from the Tire Fund for $8200, Robert seconded-**VOTE-ALL IN FAVOR**
8. The SB began discussing the request from the Planning Commission;
    a. The C/T stated that the Town's Enhanced Energy Plan was one of the key pieces which kept the Town protected from development, particularly in regards to solar installations. With the renewal of the Town Plan and the EEP this year, there is legitimate concern on behalf of many of the residents to keep the Town in that same strong position to guard against future development that exceeds what the

resident's themselves have chosen. The PC Chair, Jamie Dayton, is the asking the SB to allow the Town Attorney, Leslie Cadwell to give some time to the PC and the residents during the presentation of the draft EEP in February, to be able to answer questions and help guide the creation of a strong document. The total cost would be approximately $550, plus mileage, and there is some room in the Administrative budget to handle this expense.

   b. Teresa made a motion to approve the request from the PC, Reece seconded-**VOTE-ALL IN FAVOR**

9. The SB began to discuss the Town Report;
   a. Zach had prepared a draft of the SB report, and wanted input from the other members. It was decided to make sure the Clerk had a draft by Friday, and the SB would work on it over the next few days.
   b. In the matter of the dedication, it was decided to dedicate the Town Report to volunteers, new and old, that are so vital to helping the Town in maintaining its public spaces, helping with organization, and serving on boards and in positions.
10. Teresa motioned to make a finding that premature general public knowledge would be detrimental, in the matter of pending civil litigation, Reece seconded-**VOTE-ALL IN FAVOR**
11. Having made such a finding, Teresa made a motion to enter Executive Session at 7:00 p.m., inviting the Town Clerk/Treasurer. Zach seconded-**VOTE-ALL IN FAVOR**
12. Teresa made a motion to come out of Executive Session at 7:37 p.m., Reece seconded-**VOTE-ALL IN FAVOR**
    a. It was noted that nothing regarding the pending zoning matter was decided in Executive Session.
    b. It was also noted that while the following matter wasn't discussed in Executive Session, it was remembered, and would be acted on;
        i. Teresa made a motion to the divide the budgeted FY26 COLA for the Clerk/Treasurer equally between Rick and Jeff, Robert seconded-**VOTE 4 in Favor, 0 Opposed, Reece Abstaining**
13. Teresa made a motion to adjourn at 7:38 p.m., Reece seconded-**VOTE-ALL IN FAVOR**