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
July 8, 2024

In attendance: Selectboard Chair Howard Hall, Selectboard Vice-Chair Teresa Boucher, Selectboard Member Zach Weaver (5:46 p.m.), Emergency Management Coordinator Bob Groff, Town Clerk & Treasurer Maggie McCormick, Sharon Ashcraft, Jeanne Jackson, Chris Wyckoff, Kathy Kennett, Denise Strona, Chuck Strona

Via Zoom: Zoning Administrator David Martini, David Hazel (FreePoint/SunEast), Sean Sullivan

1. Howard called the meeting at 5:34 p.m.

2. Additions/deletions to the agenda

Howard moved to add the Emergency Management Coordinator's Report, the Scope of Work for the Vergennes Panton border study and a special Selectboard meeting solely about the proposed solar project to the agenda. Teresa seconded. All in favor; the motion passed.

3. Approval of the minutes of the May 28, 2024 and June 24, 2024 Selectboard meetings

Teresa moved to approve the June 24, 2024 Selectboard meeting minutes with a correction from Kathy Kennett. Howard seconded. All in favor; the motion passed.

Zach moved to approve the minutes of the May 28, 2024 Selectboard meeting minutes. Howard seconded. All in favor; the motion passed. This was done after Zach's arrival.

4. Zoning Violation Enforcement
    a. Maggie relayed that the Panton Zoning Regulations do not identify an enforcement officer.
    b. The Board can appoint an enforcement official, who would then need to be given "authority" from the county court to issue tickets/notices of violation.

c. Maggie suggested the Board consult with Town attorney, Benj Putnam on how to proceed to create an enforcement path.
d. Howard asked Zoning Administrator David Martini for his input. He suggested the town attorney should opine on how to legally create an enforcement path.
e. Howard asked David to contact neighboring towns to see how they enforce zoning regulations.

5. Reappraisal grievance status
    a. Maggie reported that the last day to file an appeal was July 5 and no appeals had been received.
    b. There is one grievance that was open for additional information and that result of grievance was mailed today, leaving the possibility that one appeal will have to be heard.
    c. The education tax rate cannot be set until the appeal period expires and the "final" grand list is lodged.

6. Emergency Management Coordinator's Report
    a. Bob thanked the Board and Clerk for their work on the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) and noted it was accepted by Vermont Emergency Management (VEM) and approved by FEMA on 7/1/2024. This plan is valid through 6/30/2029.
    b. Be prepared for hot weather. Info posted to Front Porch Forum and at www.pantonvt.us, the Town's website
    c. A large rain event is predicted this week, with potential flooding in areas hit hard last year at this time.
    d. Bob will attend the VEM conference on September 10 and 11 virtually.

7. Boundaries Scope of Work
    a. Tim Cowan will do survey and field work to determine the charter boundary between Panton and Vergennes at a cost not to exceed $10,000 to Panton, the grant amount awarded to Panton by ACRPC. Vergennes also has a $10,000 grant for the project for a total project cost of $20,000.

Howard moved to approve the scope of work. Teresa seconded. All in favor; the motion passed.

8. Town Hall Hours for July 9 – 12
    a. Maggie on vacation this week, so anyone needing notary services should check with neighboring municipal offices.

b. Town Hall open:
Tues, July 9: 9:00 - 1:00
Wed, July 10: Closed
Thurs, July 11: 9:00 - 1:00

9. Public comment (limited to 10 minutes total with no more than 2 minutes/speaker
    a. Howard asked that comments about the proposed solar field be only new information
    b. Teresa noted that the board has heard approximately three hours of public comment during the past three Selectboard meetings and that speakers would be timed and limited to two minutes each.
    c. Teresa also noted that the board would schedule a special meeting to review and discuss the solar proposal.
    d. Kathy Kennett
        i. She has been to the last several meetings and brought each Board member an enlarged copy of the map for the project so that they would have a copy.
        ii. She noted that, if this project is built, the power generated will be sold to Connecticut and Connecticut would receive the credit for renewable energy generation. Any credits should go to Vermont.
        iii. Kathy asked why the total amounts for the Accounts Payable Warrant and Payroll were no longer in the minutes.
            1. Maggie replied that it was just a human error, and she would add it back.
    e. Sharon Ashcraft:
        i. Stated that WCAX re-broadcast a story yesterday.
        ii. Asked if FreePoint will conduct an environmental study.
            1. Maggie stated that the Town has no visibility to what FreePoint might do and that question should be directed to them.
        iii. Asked if Panton will hire a company to conduct an impact statement.
            1. Teresa replied that an impact statement will be part of the discussion at the special meeting
    f. Chris Wyckoff
        i. Stated that the photos provided by FreePoint are misleading: area looks smaller than it is.
        ii. She hasn't heard that the owners of the property want the solar field built.
        iii. Teresa stated that the Town had received a letter from one of the property owners who supports the development.
    g. Jeanne Jackson

i. Asked if the letters received are public record.
    1. Maggie replied that all Selectboard correspondence is public record, and she would be happy to provide a copy.

h. Nina Morris
    i. Expressed concern about wildlife in the area
    ii. Asked what would happen with the panels once their useful lifespan had ended.
    iii. Howard replied that a decommissioning plan is typically part of the contract.
    iv. Nina said she had not met the Selectboard members.
        1. Teresa introduced herself, Zach, and Howard
    v. She asked why the Board would even consider the proposal.
        1. The Board does not have control over whether an application is submitted

i. Chuck Strona
    i. Reported that the largest solar company in Vermont has declared bankruptcy.
    ii. Noted that SunEast/FreePoint has a half-dozen lawsuits against them pending.

j. Denise Strona
    i. Expressed frustration that Town Zoning Regulations have prevented her from subdividing her land for 30 years, but this huge solar development may be permitted.
    ii. Stated that the PC/DRB has voted not to make changes to the Town Plan for this project.
    iii. She is concerned for her health and neighbors' health if this project is built.

k. Chuck Strona
    i. Asked why the Town had sent a letter [years ago] requiring him to remove a non-running car from his property, but the owners of the property for this development have been allowed to leave a decrepit building standing for 20 years.

l. Sharon Ashcraft
    i. Will the SB make recommendation to PUC?
    ii. WCAX reported that this is the first time an application not in compliance with Town Plan will be submitted to the PUC.

10. Communications
    a. The Selectboard received a letter from Betty Hutchins against the solar field
    b. VTrans has reviewed the Town's grant reporting for the grading of Spaulding Road and Adams Ferry Road and deemed the Town in compliance.
        i. The Selectboard will hold a special meeting solely to discuss the solar proposal on Thursday, July 18, 2024 at 9:15 a.m. at Panton Town Hall, second floor. The meeting will be duly warned no less than 48 hours in advance on the Town website and the three Town bulletin boards. Virtual participation through Zoom will be available.

11. Review/approval of accounts payable warrant, timesheets & payroll warrant
    a. Payroll warrant in the amount of $7199.16
    b. Accounts Payable warrant in the amount of $28,731. 84.

Teresa moved to approve the warrants and timesheets. Zach seconded. All in favor; the motion passed.

12. Executive session: Not needed.

13. Adjournment

Zach moved to adjourn. Teresa seconded. All in favor; the meeting was adjourned at 6:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Maggie McCormick
Town Clerk and Treasurer