Town of Panton Chartered 1761

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Selectboard Budget Meeting Minutes

Saturday, December 21, 2024

In attendance: Selectboard Chair Howard Hall, Selectboard Member Teresa Boucher, Selectboard Member Zack Weaver, Town Clerk-Treasurer Kyle Rowe, Jeanne Jackson, Richard Jackson, Charles Kennett, Janice Moulton, Bob Moulton, Mary Rudd, Steve Weber, Sharon Ashcraft, Kevin Cooke, James Dayton, Diane Merrill

Via Zoom: M'lissa Dayton

NOTE: Zoom crashed several minutes into the meeting, and the video broke into 2 parts. Both parts are uploaded to youtube.com as Part 1 and Part 2.

1. Teresa Boucher called the meeting to order at 9:03am.
2. Additions/deletions to the agenda-**NONE**
3. Discussion and review of draft FY26 budget
    a. C/T began discussion of budget changes as of 12/19/24 by stating that all FY25 Actuals have been updated, and that the % of Budget column was changed to reflect numerical percentages. C/T also noted that loan service, as yet unpaid, was added to FY25 Actual amounts to provide greater context of upcoming expenses.
    b. C/T noted that Line 14-COTTS Fee was changed to reflect a more accurate amount.
    c. C/T noted that Line 21-State Reappraisal Payment was moved to correct allocation line.
    d. C/T noted that Line 25 was added in anticipation of expected grant revenue from the Better Roads Vermont Grant, and amount was expensed from Line 211-Summer Materials.
    e. C/T noted that Line 29-Interest Income was increased, based on new banking arrangements. Kevin Cooke noted that we would have to keep a certain

amount in the account to reach that line, C/T confirmed, and said he would adjust it slightly lower to reflect the changing nature of funds available.

f. C/T noted that Line 31-Misc Highway Reimbursement was changed to reflect actual arrangements and contracts with the Town of Waltham, and projected future increases. He also noted that we should consider "in kind" payment, perhaps siding the salt shed and repairing it.
g. C/T noted that COLAs were broken out of Office salaries to provide greater context.
h. C/T asked the SB about Line 47-SB Discretionary, and whether it should remain. Teresa noted that we should leave it, just leave it unfunded.
i. C/T noted that Lines 48-57, 157-166-Benefits amounts have been updated as to rates.
j. C/T noted that he hasn't decided on exact banking structure, that a Zero Balance Account would cost more in banking fees, but would require less maintenance from the town staff, but they would most likely wait to see how it worked out for the first few months.
k. C/T noted that at this time, due to tax payment timing and school funding requirements, we don't anticipate needing a TAN, but will prepare the docs should the need arise.
l. C/T noted that the Bixby Library rates have remained static since 2020, and remains at $22 per capita.
m. C/T noted that he removed the "Newsletter" component of the website expense, but will continue to try to utilize the website to provide updates.
n. C/T noted that he removed Line 138-Digital Land Records Funding, and will fund the land record digitization and future digitization needs through the Digitization Fund.
o. C/T populated the Dump Truck loan line items 178 and 179. The C/T noted that there were 2 loans the Town used to finance the purchase of the truck, one through the Municipal Equipment Loan Fund, and one through Community Bank, both at good interest rates. Kevin Cooke asked if the amounts were correct, and if the loans had been refinanced, the C/T promised to double check that figure and make sure to have appropriate information available at future meetings.
p. C/T noted that he deleted Line 183, reflecting the sale of the truck.
q. C/T noted he updated Line 184 to Road Crew Meetings and updated the funding to reflect its intended use as an expense for costs associated with those meetings.
r. C/T then noted the budget totals, reflecting an approximately 11% decrease in the budget from the previous year, and includes the anticipated grant

revenue. The C/T then reviewed the total fund balances, and noted that the only fund he would increase would be the emergency fund to bring it to the 7% of Total Budget. Teresa added we should continue to fund the reappraisal fund to keep up with the anticipated expense.

s. The C/T noted that the Tire Fund should remain in place at current funding levels.
t. The C/T began to discuss paving, and estimated road costs. He noted that the paving grant is somewhat cyclical, and maintaining the quality of roads make the funding of that grant more tenable. Steve Weber asked for clarification, the C/T responded that the amount stated covers re-treatment of all paved roads in the town, not necessarily just repaving any particular section. This expense would not be a yearly expense, but semi-regularly based on the grant availability. Kevin Cooke asked for specific data on what was being repaved, and wanted to know before voting on the budget. He also wanted to know a paving plan, broken down into mileage and perhaps a map available to show mile by mile expenses. Steve Weber asked if there was documentation on the conditions of the roads, the C/T responded that he had a general conversation, but can drill down to specifics. Teresa noted that the we are doing what we can based on funding and grant availability. Kevin Cooke noted he wanted to see specific to Panton data regarding the roads.
u. Kevin Cooke asked if these funds would be continually be funded, and if there was a plan in place to use the funds before continually funding them. Teresa noted that we are only discussing increasing 2 funds this year. The C/T noted that the Town should make a better effort to charge things appropriately to the correct fund, instead of just funding through specific line items.
v. The C/T noted that we are meeting with FEMA and hopeful that the funding will come through to repair roads and culverts, and compensate for work already done.
w. Kevin Cooke noted the line for emergency funding was incorrect, the C/T agreed and said he would update those fund balances to reflect the fact they were increased for FY25.
x. The C/T noted that the Town uses several pieces of used equipment, and share equipment with other towns, and is developing a list of replacement costs and timing for the Town.
y. Steve Weber commented that developing that plan needs to consider what we afford, and whether we can buy used, generally get best value for the town.
z. The C/T noted that the Town maintains a list of that equipment in the Town Report.

aa. Sharon Ashcraft asked if there was a map available for road and paving needs, and it would be helpful for the town to generate one for availability. C/T noted we have some available, and will work on getting more. He further noted that there is a significant amount of data that isn't generally available or utilized by town members, that the town hires a professional to make the best decisions possible with the budget we give them, and trusts them to make documented, but independent decisions. He noted that we want transparency, but need to balance against being over involved in day to day operations.

bb. Kevin Cooke noted that we need to look at where we are for FY25, and that we've overspent the budget in a number of areas. He asked how we would fix this, and by borrowing against the funds, we were just borrowing from our own future. Teresa asked for a budget to actual report for Monday, and the C/T responded he will try to have one available. He also noted that the budget does contain percentages spent in FY25 so far in column G of the budget. He noted that in terms of the total budget, the % of the amount spent is 62%, but if you remove the loan service numbers, added for context to the discussion, we are closer to 50%, pretty much in line with our position in the fiscal year. Kevin Cooke noted that some of the line item percentages are incorrect, and noted that these decisions need to be made, so the Town won't be blindsided by upcoming events and expenses.

cc. The C/T discussed the current tax situation in the town, noting we are expecting approximately 1.3 million in taxes May 1, with an anticipated payment to the schools of approximately $850k by June 1. Kevin Cooke noted that he agreed we don't need a TAN, but that if we overspend, we are borrowing money from the reserve funds/the future.

dd. The C/T began to discuss the tax rate picture, noting that the town municipal rate is down approximately $.10 from last year, and the homestead and non-homestead rates are also down. The Town saw an increase in the Grand List of 56%. The C/T noted that the Common Level of Appraisal for Panton is 121%.

ee. Teresa noted that the budget after non-tax revenue is showing an approximately 11% decrease from last year. She also asked about setting the tax rate. The C/T noted that he will look into it, and also needs more information, perhaps from the Equalization Study the State of Vermont generates to get the CLA amount per town.

ff. Kevin Cooke stated that the municipal tax rate still increased the taxes of the towns people, and that was partly due to the towns budgeting. Teresa noted

that the town budget passed by a 2 to 1 margin. Kevin Cooke stated that's why people are sensitive to seeing a decrease this year.

gg. Sharon Ashcraft asked about the website, and the cost associated with it. The C/T asked if she could help streamline the website, that would be great. The C/T will keep in mind future changes to the website to reduce costs.

hh. Teresa noted that we'd like to have a revised budget for Monday's Selectboard meeting.

ii. Kevin Cooke reiterated that he would like to see data on the paving plan and any data associated with it.

jj. Seeing not public comment, Teresa moved to adjourn at 10:00 A.M.
    i. TB Motioned, HH Seconded, VOTE-3 in favor, None Opposed.

Respectfully submitted,

Kyle Rowe
Clerk/Treasurer