Town of Panton Chartered 1761

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Selectboard Meeting Minutes

Monday, December 9, 2024

In attendance: Selectboard Chair Howard Hall, Town Clerk-Treasurer Kyle Rowe, Assistant Town Clerk Donna Oliver, Kathy Kennett, Charles Kennett, Sharon Ashcraft, Jamie Dayton, Richard Jackson, Jeanne Jackson, Robert Moulton, Janice Moulton, Mary Rudd

Via Zoom: Selectboard Member Zachary Weaver, Steve Weber

Note: We were experiencing problems with the Zoom computer so the meeting was recorded on an iPhone.

1. Howard called the meeting to order at 5:36 p.m.
2. Additions/deletions to the agenda. None.
3. Approval of minutes of November 18, 26 and December 2, 2024 meetings. Howard made a motion to accept the minutes of the December 2 minutes as written, Zach seconded. Approved. Kathy Kennett stated that although his name was in the list of attendees, Zach was actually not in attendance at the November 18 meeting. Howard said he was tabling approval of other minutes to a future meeting.
4. Howard introduced the new town clerk, Kyle Rowe. Kyle introduced himself and said that he wanted to be the best town clerk he can be. Howard made a motion to set Kyle's annual salary at $70,000. Zach seconded the motion. Approved.
5. Review and approval of warrants for payroll and accounts payable. Howard said these could not be approved since two people must review them. We will have to have a special meeting to approve them.
6. Emergency Management Coordinator's report. Bob Groff was not able to attend the meeting.
7. Public Comment. Mary Rudd said there are municipal planning grants available for updating the town plan, however we need to do something more to qualify. Renegotiation of the border with Vergennes would trigger qualification. What is the status? Howard said it is at a standstill; we are waiting for Vergennes to finalize their

part. They are still in the mapping phase. Howard will talk with Chris Bearor, Vergennes mayor, this week.

Kathy Kennett read a portion of the Vergennes City Council minutes from November 26 regarding the situation with VARS saying that their report was more informative than the last report made by the Panton Selectboard. The report stated that VARS is going to reorganize their board, including one member from the towns. Recently they have had no out-of-service hours, and that costs have gone up as a result. VARS says that per capita cost is $15 right now but could go up to $25. This is worst case scenario. They are looking at options for moving forward. Howard said we have increased the annual amount to $10K in the budget.

There are three dates possible for the next budget meeting: Saturday, Dec. 14 at 9:00 a.m., Tuesday, Dec. 17 at 5:30 p.m. or Thursday, Dec. 19 at 5:30 p.m. We will warn all three dates on the website and the usual three locations. Concerns were raised that we are complying with the open meeting law for this meeting. The meeting was being recorded on a cell phone. Howard said we will get the Zoom laptop working.

Kathy Kennett asked when the board will be making a statement on the vote about the solar project. Howard said Leslie Cadwell will be at our next board meeting to discuss next steps in executive session. Viridis/Freepoint is not budging on their original offer of $450K. Steve Weber asked why the discussion with Leslie will be in executive session. These discussions should be during regular meeting time. Howard explained that any legal negotiations involving the town should be private. The final resolution will be presented to the public. Howard said he would speak with counsel to confirm this. Sharon Ashcraft said that the original question had not been answered. When will the Selectboard make a statement about the vote we held on the solar field. Howard was quoted twice in the Addison Independent saying that the board would make a statement. Howard also said he wasn't sure when the board will make a statement.

Jeanne Jackson wondered who pays maintenance on the tractor/articulating mower that Panton owns with Addison. Howard said that Rick Cloutier and Addison have an agreement but he is not sure what that is. It's possible they alternate every other year. He will check. Can we have a list of all pieces of equipment owned by the town?

Sharon asked if we are privy to the lease agreements of the landowners who may allow the solar field on their land? Howard said no. Sharon is concerned that if the original landowner sells, it may cancel the lease with the solar company. There was also concern that the attorney we are using is being paid by Viridis/Freedom. Is this a conflict of interest? We should be able to trust that she is investigating on our

behalf. What are the terms of the escrow agreement? There was discussion about having a lawyer paid by the town.

Kathy asked that the contract with VARS and the information on e-Volve be available at the next budget meeting.

Zach made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Howard seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 6:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Oliver
Asst. Town Clerk