Town of Panton Chartered 1761

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Selectboard Meeting Minutes
Monday, December 11, 2023

In attendance: Selectboard Chair Howard Hall, Selectboard Member Zach Weaver, Emergency Management Coordinator Bob Groff, Road Foreman Rick Cloutier, Town Clerk & Treasurer Maggie McCormick, Tree Warden Diana Raphael, VARS Operations Coordinator Justin Soter and VARS Treasurer Brian Goodyear

Via Zoom: Selectboard Vice-Chair Teresa Boucher, Addison County Regional Planning Commission Emergency Management Planner Andrew L'Roe.

1. Howard called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m.

2. Additions/deletions to agenda: None.

3. Approval of the minutes of the November 27, 2023 Selectboard Meeting

Howard moved to approve the minutes as written. Zach seconded. All in favor; the motion passed.

4. Road Foreman's Report
   a. He and Jeff have cleared road culverts following the storm
   b. Sign inventory begun
   c. Mud plow
      i. Rick found one to purchase for $600 and will need to spend another $600 to make it fully functional.

Zach moved to approve the purchase of the mud plow. Howard seconded. All in favor; the motion passed.

   d. West Road Culvert
      i. Estimate received for $60,000, including the culvert
      ii. Rick has requested a revised estimate that accounts for use of town equipment and personnel as the match for state funds
   e. Jeff Stone has started as road crew
   f. He will take a welding class to increase his skill when one is offered at Haun in Burlington.
   g. Maggie relayed a message from Robert Rudd that the culvert on the west end of Spaulding Road is clogged.

5. Tree Warden—Emerald Ash Borer
    a. Emerald Ash Borer is here or close. Diana is writing a grant for Communities Caring for Canopies.
    b. Diana suggests embodying a tree committee to determine if there are trees the community wants to save and to select species and locations for planting "replacement" trees.
    c. Infected trees can become unstable which prevents climbing to remove.
    d. Even if an ash is infected, it can be inoculated and "saved." Once they are infected, do they have to be cut? No. They can be inoculated.
    e. The grant request will be for $20,000 and requires a 100% Town match. While grant money cannot be used to inoculate trees, inoculation costs can be used as match. The Hoppers have already spent approximately $10,000 inoculating trees in the right of way adjacent to their property and that can be applied toward the Town's required match.
    f. Vaillancourt Tree & Landscape has quoted $1800/day for ash tree removal.
    g. It was noted that several ash trees on private property along Pease Road were healthy a few years ago and are now dead.
    h. Town equipment and personnel time can be used to meet the Town match requirements. Highway department time will be budgeted for this project.
    i. Teresa suggested inviting residents to participate in a tree planting day.
    j. Newly planted trees will need care—primarily regular watering until they are established.

Zach moved that Diana apply for a $20,000 Communities Caring for Canopies grant on the Town's behalf. Howard seconded. All in favor; the motion passed.

6. Emergency Management Coordinator's Report
    a. Addison County Regional Planning Commission (ACRPC) has submitted the draft Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) to the Town.
        i. Bob has reviewed it and sent edits back to ACRPC.
        ii. ACRPC will determine if airstrips at Shadow Glen and on Staton Drive should be incorporated.
    b. Bob responded to a questionnaire about the Emergency Management Coordinator position and network in Vermont
    c. Updating LEMP
        i. Andrew L'Roe has received Bob's comments on the draft, including the airstrip question, and will incorporate them.
        ii. Andrew invited comments from the Selectboard.
        iii. Andrew asked about civic groups in the area that might have input on local hazards. He was directed to the Community Baptist Church and the Lakeshore Private Water Association.
        iv. Vergennes Fire Department has provided input.
        v. This meeting serves as the start of the 30-day review period for the LHMP. The draft will be posted on the Town website and on the bulletin board on Hopkins Road and sent to neighboring towns via email for their review/input.

vi. Andrew will draft a provisional adoption statement for the Selectboard for the January 8, 2023 Selectboard meeting.

7. Vergennes Area Rescue Squad (VARS)--Justin Soter and Brian Goodyear
   a. Non-profit volunteer rescue squad serving the City of Vergennes, Ferrisburgh, Panton, Addison, Waltham, and parts of Monkton and New Haven.
   b. VARS currently has two full-time employees, 12 per diem employees, and a roster of 11 volunteers
   c. Volunteer hours have declined from 6600/year to 2840/year, resulting in out-of-service time and the need for more per diem members making payroll the driving force of budget increases.
   d. Patient billing is the primary source of funding for VARS.
   e. Call volume has increased steadily and significantly since 2019. VARS believes public perception of EMS has shifted from "only in worst case" to ambulance is an extension of the medical system is a large part of the increased volume.
   f. Increased volume strains volunteers who are largely leaving "day" jobs to respond to VARS calls.
   g. VARS is recruiting a third full-time employee and will add a fourth if a candidate can be found.
   h. VARS will purchase a new ambulance, but delivery dates are out three years.
   i. VARS will contract with supported towns on a per capita rate of $15. In towns with higher call volume, then will assess a utilization premium.
      i. Clerk noted that Panton's draft FY25 budget includes $9900.00 for VARS, representing 660 residents at the $15/resident rate.
   j. The Selectboard expressed support for excellent EMS service.

8. Public comment: None.

9. Communications

a. The Panton art group would like to have a picture rail installed in the meeting space.
   i. The Selectboard is in favor of the picture rail pending review of materials and installation plan.
b. Yoga instructor, Nancy Spencer, who uses the meeting space for yoga classes twice a week, has volunteered to clean the space, including vacuuming and mopping.
   i. Selectboard welcomes that for the upstairs space and will maintain paid cleaner for the office space downstairs.
c. Should the Town acquire more tables to accommodate increased public use of the meeting space?
   i. No storage space available for spare tables.
d. A resident on Lake Road reported mailbox knocked down during most recent storm and submitted a receipt for repairs for reimbursement to the Town. Town Winter Operations Policy states:

   "The road crew is instructed to be very cautious near mailboxes. In most cases, a properly installed mailbox will permit the plow and snow to clear the box. Mailboxes

are seldom hit directly by the plow, but may be damaged by heavy snow hitting the box. Damage to mailboxes during snow removal is the responsibility of the property owner."

   i. The board decided to adhere to policy. Maggie will let the resident know.

e. Telling & Hillman have completed their on-site audit work. Maggie expects to receive draft financial statements in the next few weeks. Auditors stated this year's process was smoothest yet.
f. Maggie asked about making it Town policy that Town Hall is closed if schools are closed.
   i. The board determined that a policy is unnecessary. If schools are closed and the staff decides it is unsafe to travel to Town Hall, residents can anticipate that Town Hall may be closed.
g. Maggie reported that the Addison County Sheriff patrol had issued the following speeding tickets:
   i. November 14, Lake Street, 59 mph
   ii. November 14, Panton Road, 62 mph
   iii. November 16, Panton Road, 60 mph
   iv. November 22, Jersey Street, 57 mph

10. Review/approval of accounts payable warrant, timesheets & payroll warrant

Howard moved to approve the timesheets and payroll and accounts payable warrants. Zach seconded. All in favor; the motion passed.

11. Executive session to discuss employee compensation and benefits

Howard moved to enter executive session. Zach seconded. All in favor; the board entered executive session at 7:18 p.m.

Zach moved to exit executive session. Howard seconded. All in favor; the board returned to open session at 7:30 p.m.

Howard moved to provide the four regular staff members with a $100 holiday gift certificate to a local restaurant. Zach seconded. All in favor; the motion passed.

The Selectboard scheduled a special meeting on Monday, December 18, 2023 at 5:00 p.m. to work on the FY25 budget.

12. Adjournment

Zach moved to adjourn. Howard seconded. All in favor; the meeting was adjourned at 7:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Maggie McCormick
Town Clerk & Treasurer