

Town of Panton  
Selectboard Meeting  
Tuesday, October 14, 2008

Board:

Rejean Lafleche – Chair  
John Viskup

Administration:

Rick Cloutier  
Sue Torrey

Guests:

Chris Cook  
Barbara Fleming  
Joe Kuhn

Lynn Donnelly - absent

Call to Order: Chair Lafleche called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

Approval of Minutes: Motion by J. Viskup to approve the minutes as presented, seconded by R. Lafleche. So voted.

Public Comment: J. Kuhn expressed his concern about the communication between the Addison Sheriff and Panton with regard to rubbish. He asked the ACSWD coordinator to look into this and she put him in contact with Dick Debonis who said he would investigate litter problems. It was explained that the highway department picks up the trash and that names found within the trash were forwarded to the State Police and Sheriff Department with no results/interest. Chair Lafleche commented that it's sometimes difficult to determine who the perpetrators are but perhaps the voters should determine if more police patrol is needed. Chair Lafleche said he empathized with Mr. Kuhn but it's a difficult situation. It was mentioned again that many of the signs "No Littering" have been stolen from Slang Road.

New Business:

Culvert reimbursement - Clerk Torrey recommended that town residents purchasing culverts through the highway department pay for them before they are ordered. She added that the highway department has been purchasing the culverts and then charging the citizen which not only impacts cash flow but is also becoming difficult to get payment from the resident. The Board agreed the individual should pay up front and if the town isn't getting reimbursed a lien will be placed on the resident's property. Discussion of modifying the existing culvert policy.

Tax collection dates – Clerk Torrey inquired about changing the collection dates for property tax from bi-annual to quarterly. It is hoped that this will result in more predictable cash flow for the town. The Board agreed to add this as an article for Town Meeting.

J. Viskup commented that Panton should pay Vergennes what is owed for underpayment of the fire protection contract. It was mentioned that it was incredible Waltham didn't notice the increase in their bill until Vergennes brought it to their attention. Discussion on the fact that Panton signed a contract with the City of Vergennes in good faith and at which time they believed to be accurate. Chair Lafleche commented that after the town-wide reappraisal in 2004 Panton was incorrectly assessed more than it should have been by the City of Vergennes. Ann Sullivan, Selectboard Chair at that time, met with Vergennes City Manager Renny Perry, who told her that it was erroneous but it was too complicated to recalculate and fix. (Refer to Selectboard Minutes of 9/13/04, Discussion Item D). Chair Lafleche also mentioned that we have a sked for better identification of the fire calls as we are being billed for calls that are not for Panton residents, such as vehicle accidents, etc. Panton wants to recoup the cost when this happens but in the last two bills received the information was incorrect and therefore Panton footed the bill. This problem was also discussed between Ann Sullivan and Renny Perry. J. Viskup commented that if the information is incorrect then the city won't get paid.

Re-appraisal – Clerk Torrey advised that according to our Assessor and Listers, the town is in need of a re-appraisal soon. This will even out the tax base and help to reduce property tax. The town is currently at 80% of appraisal property value. Discussion of employing another assessor firm as there has been negative feedback about the current assessor.

Old Business: Booska – Clerk Torrey advised that Booska's check for dog registration was returned for non-sufficient funds and they also had not paid any of the fines assessed. J. Viskup recommended putting a lien on their property and Chair Lafleche added that the dog warden needs to get more involved. Chair Lafleche directed Clerk Torrey to contact the Sheriff's Department to serve papers on the Booska's to recover the check, plus fees and fines.

Chair Lafleche advised that he attended the Ferrisburgh Selectboard meeting and that they duly noted the request for the area Boards to attend school budget meetings. It was discussed that Waltham was not interested. Clerk Torrey mentioned that the Pantown School Board will be dissolving and they are on the November Selectboard Agenda. Discussion on school budgets being difficult to change due to teacher union contracts. J. Kuhn added that changes need to be made at the State level. J. Viskup commented that the school budgets are growing each year and that the little town of Pantown has to scrimp to put a culvert in.

Road Foreman Report: The Road Foreman advised the salt shed has been; sand is in and covered; tires are on the grader which required cutting off the old tires. Adam's Ferry Road is almost complete but having a problem with ledge in the ditch. J. Viskup mentioned trying for a grant for a bike path; discussion of having bikes registered as a way to pay for bike paths; dangerous areas where bikers are riding and traffic is heavy. Road Foreman advised that he has two more culverts to install but will be delayed due to a recall on the tandem. Chair Lafleche advised that a committee was formed to work on a proposal for a replacement for the older truck. Clark's will provide a bid and Chair Lafleche said that emissions in 2010 will be extremely stringent; discussion on the mechanics of the emission requirements; lease vs. buy and price comparison between tandem and single axle (\$20,000.00 difference in price).

Chris Cook, just arriving at the meeting, asked the Board to reconsider not paying the fire contract. The Board explained their opinion on the subject (refer to New Business, paragraph 3). C. Cook expressed his concern that Pantown won't get the coverage they need from Vergennes. It was discussed that the firemen are volunteer and surely wouldn't let a house burn because of this. Chair Lafleche expressed his concern with the tax increase which would result from paying the fire contract and that people already are complaining their taxes are too high. C. Cook replied that he understands the situation better. Clerk Torrey commented that Pantown is already at 90% of its budget for man-hours half of which could have been recovered if the information was correct. Chair Lafleche speculated that this underpayment wouldn't have been noticed if the City Manager wasn't leaving office. C. Cook expressed his appreciation for the Board's enlightenment.

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Financial Reports:

Correspondence was reviewed and warrants signed. Chair Lafleche asked that R. Cloutier's review be put on the November agenda.

J. Kuhn presented the Board with a graphic description of the financials indicating cash flow. S. Torrey mentioned that this information could be included in the Town Report.

Chair Lafleche expressed concern that people are getting the wrong opinion of Panton due to the disagreement with Vergennes. He added that Panton works very well with all the area towns and has helped them many times as they have us. It was agreed that it read poorly in the newspaper.

J. Kuhn commented that he believes Panton should have a Town Manager and also stated that he didn't believe Panton really needed a second person on the highway crew. Discussion on ramifications of having only one person on the highway crew. Chair Lafleche said that the town is already taxed enough without the addition of a Town Manager.

Chair Lafleche adjourned the meeting at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully,

Susan Torrey, Clerk