

Town of Panton
Selectboard Meeting
Monday, December 8, 2008

Board:

Lynn Donnelly
Rejean Lafleche – Chair
John Viskup

Administration:

Rick Cloutier
Sue Torrey

Guests:

Alroy Aunchman	Bev Biello
Marsha Chase	Dr. Luginbuhl
Vi Luginbuhl	Cheryl McEwan
Paul Sokal	Carlotta Tippet

Call to Order: Chair Lafleche called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

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

Public Comment: Lynn Donnelly explained to the Board that Paul Tippet asked for information, which Clerk Torrey provided, reporting expense and budget for the past five years as well as a division of how taxes are paid, who pays the most and then descending. Joe Kuhn then put the information in a graph format and a few people met to discuss the results. Mr. Tippet asked that things be looked at differently than in the past so Lynn asked for a committee to be formed to review the budget; M. Chase, V. Luginbuhl, B. Biello, P. Sokal, C. McEwan, P. Tippet & J. Kuhn. John Viskup agreed that this is a good idea. Lynn Donnelly commented that there is a huge burden on the tax payers along the Lake and she hoping that there may be other ways to do the work that needs to be done without raising taxes, i.e. grants. Lynn added that the report indicates that Panton tax has increased 45% in a three (3) year period. She would like to see that the contributions are limited as this is expense that could be utilized for our roads or a new truck. Lynn is hopeful that because of the Committee the voters at Town Meeting will have a better understanding of the budget. Clerk Torrey mentioned again of compiling a five -year plan. Motion by Lynn Donnelly to approve the formation of a Budget Committee to lend the Selectboard a hand with budget preparation. John Viskup seconded the motion. So voted. The Selectboard will meet to begin the budget review on Wednesday, December 10th and the Budget Committee will meet Monday, December 15th and Tuesday, December 16th at 6:00 p.m. Lynn Donnelly mentioned that she will be meeting with the Vergennes City Council Tuesday evening regarding the Vergennes Fire Contract. Cheryl McEwan inquired how the budget had been prepared in the past as each year it has increased and it can't continue. She agreed that the town needs road equipment. Chair LaFleche explained that price increases in highway material contributed to the increases, i.e. road topping and diesel. He added the for many years the budget was level funded which resulted in our equipment becoming obsolete and dirt roads being in need of extensive repair.. If the budget is not increased for these line items then Hopkins Road and Stove Pipe City Road will be not done. John Viskup commented that the biggest contributor to high taxes is education. Cheryl McEwan commented that someone should be attending School Board budget meetings. Chair LaFleche advised that he drove on Hopkins Road after the complaints from last month's meeting, and he didn't notice any problems. Paul Sokal commented that this was because it had been graded which improves the road considerably. John Viskup remarked that he appreciated everyone attending the meeting. Carlotta Tippet commented that the Welcome to Panton sign is missing on 22A. Rick Cloutier to call the State of Vermont to look into replacing. Cheryl McEwan mentioned about the excessive speed in town and also about the garage on the roadsides. Chair LaFleche stated that the town tried to combat this with the Sheriff's Department with poor results. Chair LaFleche admitted there is a problem with speed and the Addison County Regional Planning Commission will be performing a traffic study for Panton which will help, as the speed limits will be legally enforceable. Paul Sokal suggested having the Town Report available on the website and Clerk Torrey said this was already the case. Alroy Aunchman commented that he believes Hopkins Road is in the best shape it's ever been. Chair LaFleche remarked that at the last meeting Jim Kress gave the impression that Hopkins Road was in terrible shape yet when he traveled the road it appeared to be in good shape. It was again discussed that some of the homes on the hillside contribute to the problem due to poor driveway layout/drainage.

Road Foreman Report: Snow fence is almost done and hopefully will finish up Panton flats without sinking in the mud. Most winter equipment is ready; paving is complete on Adam's Ferry and Lake Road. Has the figures for Stovepipe City Road and waiting for figures on Hopkins Road. No paving prices available as yet. Commented that the State will probably not be giving out grants for resurfacing next year. John Viskup commented that with the lower gas prices the State should increase the gas tax and use to fund the highway budgets. Repaired the furnace as it was out in the morning. This is due to a line problem getting air and losing prime (tank is too far away from the furnace). This will be remedied in the immediate future. Lynn Donnelly again commented on the Lake people paying a great deal of tax and it was mentioned that the Lake homes are worth more than other homes in Panton. Lynn commented that they ask for very little and contribute a huge amount to the town budget. It was mentioned that everything is increasing in price so therefore the budget would increase as well. Rick Cloutier mentioned that since the Highway Helper was added there are two people using the equipment which increases fuel use. Chair LaFleche added that if the town didn't have a Highway Helper contracted services would be higher. Comment was made that if we neglect the highway as in past budgets then the town will end up in crisis mode. Clerk Torrey presented the Board with a graph of actual highway and office expense from 2000 to present and a discussion ensued on the reason for the variances; contracted services, mileage, overtime. It was mentioned that much of the work requires the use of an excavator versus a backhoe. Lynn Donnelly mentioned that they would like to talk about the Health Insurance choices (increased 19%). Clerk Torrey will provide the information on the choices. Rick Cloutier mentioned that John Bull, Ferrisburgh Road Foreman, will not be plowing a night. Chair LaFleche asked for Foreman Cloutier to have the budget information for Wednesday night.

New Business:

None

Old Business:

Discussion on the meeting with the Vergennes City Council regarding the Fire Contract. John Viskup asked if everyone was satisfied with City Manager Hawley's explanation. Clerk Torrey commented that the initial information sent was missing a critical worksheet which was emailed after speaking to Mr. Hawley. She added that there are still a few questions as she could not prove some of the figures on the worksheet. She also feels that it was made more complicated than it really is as all she really needs is an explanation for one column in Mr. Hawley's worksheet. John Viskup commented that the Addison Fire Department's budget is very transparent and he didn't have any problem getting the information. He added that Vergennes is not giving us a bad deal but it's too bad their budget isn't more transparent. It was mentioned that Vergennes Area Rescue Squad is also opposed to disclosing their budget when asked and although they perform a wonderful service they should be willing to disclose their budget when coming to the town to ask for money. Discussion on what to do about the underpayment for the fire contract. Comment was made that when Renny Perry met with Panton to discuss this underpayment he said we had fulfilled our contract and if it were him he wouldn't pay it. It was also mentioned that the City Manager's Office should have been more upfront with Panton but instead they buried the payment in the total contract price. Comment that Panton has fulfilled their contract and the contract is legally binding. Lynn Donnelly commented that Vergennes made it front page news that Panton isn't participating. Further comments about the paper not being very kind in light of Vergennes reneging on their contract. Discussing on billing back the resident for fire calls (manhours) and Clerk Torrey explained that the residents already pay for this via property tax and the only time a resident is billed is if there is an unpermitted fire such as brush, trash, etc. Clerk Torrey commented that if everything was calculated correctly in past contracts why did Renny Perry tell former Chair Ann Sullivan that it was too complicated to fix when she went to him about a possible overpayment.

Selectboard Meeting

12/08/08

Page 3

It was agreed that Panton will split the difference with Vergennes for the underpayment of the contract. The contract was edited and signed by the Panton Board. Lynn Donnelly will present the contract at the Vergennes City Council meeting tomorrow evening.

Financials:

Financials were reviewed, check warrants signed and correspondence was reviewed. Clerk Torrey advised the Board that based on a visit by the property appraiser for Vermont League of Cities and Towns, the office is in need of some rewiring. Clerk Torrey was directed to have the work done.

Executive Session:

Motion by Lynn Donnelly, seconded by John Viskup to go into Executive Session at 7:50 p.m. to discuss a personnel issue. So voted. Came out of Executive Session at 8:24 p.m. with the following action: effective immediately no overtime is to be worked by any employee without prior approval of the Selectboard.

Adjournment:

At 8:26 p.m., Chair LaFleche recessed the meeting until Wednesday, December 10th.

Respectfully submitted,
S. Torrey, Clerk