

**Town of Panton Annual Meeting Minutes**  
**Monday, February 28, 2022**

In attendance: Selectboard Chair Howard Hall, Selectboard Vice Chair Teresa Smith, Selectboard Member Zach Weaver, Moderator Jason Fearon, Technical Assistant Dave Sullivan, Clerk-Treasurer Maggie McCormick, Assistant Clerk Suzanne Snyder.

Howard called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

Teresa Smith moved to nominate Jason Fearon as Town Moderator for 2022. Zach Weaver seconded. All in favor; the motion passed.

Jason asked Teresa Smith to lead the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Jason instructed people how to be recognized to talk via Zoom and asked participants to identify themselves when they speak. He also reminded participants that Articles will be voted by Australian ballot tomorrow and there will be no motions during this meeting, except for the hearing of Town Officers' reports.

- Jason informed participants that Representative Matt Birong would join the meeting as his schedule with other Town Meetings allowed.
- Jason recognized the Town Report dedication to Kirsten De La Cruz and voiced appreciation for her many contributions to Panton.
  - Kirsten De La Cruz thanked the Town for the dedication.
- Jason acknowledged the passing of David Raphael and directed participants to page 35 of the Town Report and requested a moment of silence for all Panton community members lost this year.

Jason asked new residents to introduced themselves.  
Martha DeGraaf has moved back to Panton.

Jason directed participants to Page 11 of the Town Report to discuss the Articles.

ARTICLE 1: To elect a Moderator for the 2023 Annual Town Meeting. Jason noted this will be voted by Australian ballot tomorrow. There was no discussion.

ARTICLE 2: To hear the reports of the Town Officers.

- Paula Moore moved to accept the reports of the Town Officers. Martha DeGraaf seconded. Eric asked for discussion. There was none. All participants were unmuted: All in favor; the motion passed.

Howard Hall recounted some highlights from the year:

1. Construction of the salt shed and pole barn
2. Purchase of an excavator
3. Some minor improvements to town buildings
4. Accepted \$211,340.70 of American Recovery Plan Act (APRA funds) for ARPA
  - a. \$50,000 awarded to Maple Broadband
5. Protected Town borders and rights of way
6. New bulletin board on Hopkins Road
7. Construction and installation of Little Free Library at Town Hall
8. Hired new assistant clerk, Suzanne Snyder

Howard acknowledged the substantial volunteer contributions made to the Town by Bob Groff, Dave Sullivan, Sandy Fogg, the Vorsteveld family for Town Park, and everyone who donated time and money to the ongoing improvements of Arnold Bay Beach.

Howard thanked Town staff: Clerk/Treasurer Maggie McCormick as the glue that holds the Town together; Road Foreman Rick Cloutier and Chris Dion for their great work on the Town roads.

Howard acknowledged all the gardeners who make the Town Hall garden look amazing and Dave Chase for mowing the grounds around Town Hall.

Howard also thanked Teresa and Zach, acknowledging that selectboard member is a tough job and thanked them for their work on the Selectboard.

Zach acknowledge that Howard puts in a lot of time and does a lot of heavy lifting for the Town. He also stated that there are a lot of opportunities to help and that anyone interested should contact Maggie to volunteer for the Town.

Jason asked for questions or discussion and directed participants to page 24-25 for a list of the points Howard discussed. There was no discussion.

Jason announced Articles 3 – 25 as for discussion only Monday night and noted that votes would be taken by Australian ballot on Tuesday , March 1, 2002 between 8:00 a.m. and 7:00 pm.

1. Maggie noted that the time in the Town Report was incorrectly listed as 8:00 a.m. to 7: 00 p.m. and that the polls would open at 7:00 a.m.
2. Gretchen Bailey asked if poll workers needed to show up at 7:00 a.m. and Maggie thanked her and said that was unnecessary.
3. There was no further discussion.

**ARTICLE 3: Elimination of elected auditor**

Shall the town authorize the elimination of the office of Town Auditor, with future audits to be provided by a public accountant licensed in this State in accordance with 17 V.S.A. § 2651b(a)?

1. Howard explained that accounting for municipalities is different than other accounting systems. The Town engages a professional auditor to navigate the complexity of government accounting.
2. Town Auditor Bob Groff added that auditor is a complex position and he has been the sole auditor for several years, which means there is no quorum, which prevents him from action.
3. There was no further discussion.

**ARTICLE 4: To elect the following officers by Australian Ballot:**

- One (1) Moderator to moderate 2023 Town Meeting
- One (1) Selectboard Member for 3-year term
- One (1) Lister for 3-year term
- One (1) Lister for 3-year term
- One (1) Auditor for 3-year term
- One (1) Auditor for 3-year term
- One (1) Constable for 1-year term
- One (1) Dog Warden for 1-year term
- One (1) Water Commissioner for 3-year term

Job descriptions: Jason read the job descriptions for Moderator, Auditor, Constable, Dog Warden, and Water Commissioner.

Selectboard Member Howard Hall was acknowledged as candidate for another 3-year term. Howard told participants he has been on the board for six years. He stated that he, Teresa, and Zach have developed a solid working relationship and are a strong team that leverages each of their individual strengths. He asked Pantown residents for their vote.

Lister: No discussion.

Auditor: No discussion.

Constable: No discussion.

Dog Warden: No discussion.

Water Commissioner: 3-year term with Chris Cook seeking reelection. No discussion.

**ARTICLE 5: Shall the voters appropriate the following sums, which shall be raised by taxes, to be placed in the Town Reserve Fund accounts as noted:**

| <u>Fund</u>                    | <u>Amount</u>    |
|--------------------------------|------------------|
| Digitization/IT Fund           | \$ 2,000         |
| Highway Capital Equipment Fund | \$ 20,000        |
| Highway Capital Project Fund   | \$ 20,000        |
| Reappraisal Fund               | \$ 2,000         |
| Tire Fund                      | \$ 2,000         |
| Town Building Maintenance Fund | \$ 15,000        |
| Rainy Day Reserve Fund         | \$ 4,500         |
| <b>TOTAL RESERVE FUNDS</b>     | <b>\$ 65,500</b> |

Discussion: Howard emphasized the importance of the reserve funds and that the Rainy Day Fund is the Emergency Reserve Fund to be used for large unplanned required expenditures versus buying things like town hats and umbrellas. He noted that the amounts allocated to these funds each year have not been increased since the funds were established. Teresa pointed out that the Town Building Reserve Fund was moved from a budget line item to a reserve fund.

Robin Herbick asked what the funds are for:

Howard answered:

1. Digitization Fund is to make land records available digitally online.
2. Capital Equipment fund is for the purchase of equipment such as loaders and excavator.
3. Capital Project Fund is for road maintenance materials and the rental of large equipment as needed.
4. Reappraisal Fund is to pay for the periodic town-wide reappraisal of property values
5. Tire Fund is to purchase tires for town equipment. Excavator tires cost approximately \$2000 each.
6. Town Building Maintenance is used to provide non-routine maintenance like roofing repair, painting, and repair of heating systems.
7. Emergency Fund: for large disasters.

There was no further discussion.

ARTICLE 6: Shall the voters adopt the proposed Fiscal Year 2023 (July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023) General Fund Operating Budget of \$759,301, \$648,823 to be raised by taxes and \$110,478 to be supported by non-tax revenue?

1. Teresa Smith stated that the board, road foreman, and treasurer worked very hard on this budget. Despite the soaring costs of materials, the board is proud to present a proposed increase of a mere 2.5%. She noted that every line was put under scrutiny and the budget as kept very lean. She stated that the projected new tax rate would increase taxes only \$10.50/month on a house valued at \$300,000.
2. Howard Hall noted that surrounding communities have higher increases equal to 4.0 % to 5.5 %. This was the hardest budget yet for the current board who has been together about 5 years and feel this is an excellent budget.
3. Bob Groff spoke to say he attended most budget meetings and saw the team worked through all the lines and commended the group for their efforts.

There was no further discussion.

Jason introduced Articles 7 through 25 and asked that any discussion be held until after he read all the articles.

ARTICLE 7: Shall the voters appropriate \$210 to Addison County Restorative Justice Services, Inc. from the Town funds?

ARTICLE 8: Shall the voters appropriate \$800 to Addison County Home Health and Hospice from Town funds?

ARTICLE 9. Shall the voters appropriate \$800 to Addison County Parent Child Center from Town funds?

ARTICLE 10: Shall the voters appropriate \$691 to Tri-Valley Transit Resources (formerly Addison County Transit Resources - ACTR & Stagecoach) from Town funds?

ARTICLE 11: Shall the voters appropriate \$1,000 to Boys & Girls Club of Greater Vergennes from Town funds?

ARTICLE 12: Shall the voters appropriate \$650 to Age Well (formerly Champlain Valley Agency on Aging – CVAA) from Town funds?

ARTICLE 13: Shall the voters appropriate \$500 to Counseling Service of Addison County from Town funds?

ARTICLE 14: Shall the voters appropriate \$850 to Elderly Services, Inc. from Town funds?

ARTICLE 15: Shall the voters appropriate \$500 to Homeward Bound Animal Welfare Center (Addison County Humane Society) from Town funds?

ARTICLE 16: Shall the voters appropriate \$500 to HOPE – Helping Overcome Poverty’s Effects (Addison County Community Action Group - ACCAG) from Town funds?

ARTICLE 17: Shall the voters appropriate \$450 to John Graham Shelter from Town funds?

ARTICLE 18: Shall the voters appropriate \$500 to Open Door Clinic (Community Health Services of Addison County) from Town funds?

ARTICLE 19: Shall the voters appropriate \$350 to RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Program) and Green Mountain Foster Grandparent Program from Town funds?

ARTICLE 20: Shall the voters appropriate \$600 to WomenSafe from Town funds?

ARTICLE 21: Shall the voters appropriate \$250 to Addison County Readers, Inc. from Town funds?

ARTICLE 22: Shall the voters appropriate \$100 to Vermont Association of Conservation Districts (VACD) Rural Fire Protection Program from Town funds?

ARTICLE 23: Shall the voters appropriate \$1000 to Charter House Coalition from Town funds?

ARTICLE 24: Shall the voters appropriate \$1000 to Turning Point Center of Addison County from Town funds?

ARTICLE 25: Shall the voters appropriate \$250 to Vermont Family Network from Town funds?

Jason opened the floor for discussion.

Annie Hopper spoke about Article 11 for the Boys and Girls Club. She thanked the Townspeople for their support over numerous previous years. She stated that the past year they enrolled 45 new club members for a total of 115 youth, 12 of whom are from Panton. The Club has provided 3000 free dinners and snacks this year and will once again sponsor free summer camp. She reported robust partnerships and programs with Homeward Bound and fishing programs.

ARTICLE 26: To transact any other non-binding business.

Robin Herbick asked about the three-member selectboard. She stated that the Development Review Board/Planning Commission (DRB/PC) had five members and asked why the selectboard isn’t a five-member board.

- Howard noted that a charter change would be required to change the makeup of the selectboard and that a petition is required to put a charter change on the ballot. He also pointed out that it is common for smaller communities to have only three Selectboard members. He further noted that there are seven members of the DRB/PC who are appointed, not elected.

There was no further discussion.

Jason recognized Andrew L’Roe from the Addison County Regional Planning Commission (ACRPC) Andrew introduced himself as the ACRPC Emergency Management Planner and has done some energy planning work including working with Panton on the enhanced energy plan.

Andrew talked about Panton’s solar energy production and referenced an article published in *TIME* magazine in July 2021. He discussed the work Panton and Green Mountain Power are doing to expand the solar grid Adams Ferry Road to the water treatment plant and additional residences. Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) grant was awarded which will be used to scope engineering possibilities. Andrew finished by acknowledging the loss of David Raphael and his large contribution to solar work in Panton.

Jason recognized that Rep. Matt Birong had joined the meeting remotely.

Rep. Birong let participants know that a digital copy of the Town Meeting Day Report he and Rep Lanpher created is available. He also enumerated the various committees on which he serves.

- Rep Birong spoke about how Covid has exacerbated housing demand and cost. A lot of ARPA/SLRF money is being used to upgrade rental units that need costly renovations in order to be rentable. The plan is to have 1,100 additional rental units available by 2023 and they are partnering with other organizations to create new builds.
- Howard asked about redistricting. Rep. Birong noted that a number of different maps have been created with the goal of creating one-seat districts versus the current two-seat. He recounted that local Boards of Civil Authority (BCA) were very vocal about remaining in

current municipal configurations. Pantón's district will stay mostly the same, with only an addition of part of New Haven.

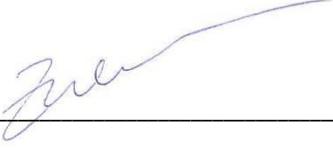
Paula Moore moved to adjourn. Bob Groff seconded. There was no discussion. Participants were unmuted. All in favor; the motion passed. The meeting was adjourned at 8:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Maggie McCormick  
Clerk-Treasurer

Attest:  \_\_\_\_\_

Date 3/14/2022

Attest:  \_\_\_\_\_

Date 3/14/2022