

Town of Panton Annual Meeting
Town Meeting Minutes
Monday, March 2, 2020

ARTICLE 1: To elect a Moderator for the 2020 Annual Town Meeting.

At 6:36pm, Town Moderator Eric Carter called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. Eric asked the residents in attendance to please stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. The Rules of Order were shared with the attendants and Eric requested that any remarks from the voters be addressed to the moderator after firstly stating their name clearly. Eric explained to the voters that all articles are voted on by Australian ballot, cannot be amended, and only discussed during the Annual Meeting. Only those registered to vote can discuss articles. Eric asked for a moment of silence for those Panton residents who had passed away in 2019. Nathan Barcomb joined as a new resident to Panton.

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

Sean Willerford moved to hear the reports, Julie Rheame seconded. No one opposed. The article carried.

The Selectboard introduced themselves and announced that the Town Report is dedicated to Paul Sokal and Louise Giovanella this year, who have been tireless volunteers to the Town for decades.

The Board shared a powerpoint presentation highlighting improvements to the Town. The new cupola was placed on the Town Hall and the Town Beach will be receiving a new boat ramp at no cost to the Town. All the permits are in place for the boat ramp and permission has been received from the Selectboard. Some additional highlights include the Town being on the record for the Vergennes Economic Corridor (VEC) with concerns about the impact on Panton residents, two special meetings were held last summer regarding the VEC and another for manure runoff. In addition, volunteers handled 1.5 tons of garbage and 34 tires on Green Up Day. Due to unfixable damage caused during a windstorm, the Town's salt shed needs replacing. The equipment is now vulnerable to the weather and sitting outside. The Board is looking at different designs like the Addison and Ferrisburgh town sheds. Jersey Street was paved to the southern town line, the grant funded retention wall was completed at the Town beach, Turkey Lane and Adams Ferry Road were re-ditched and culverts were installed, and in a trial program with VT Agency of Transportation, ground asphalt shingles were used to reduce the use of gravel with a possible savings to the Town of 25%.

The Board shared their projection on a new salt/equipment shed and stated that the current salt shed is from 1930 and no longer safe for employees. The Board explained that it is a 50' x 60' building used to hold highway sand and salt. The advantage of having the salt shed allows the Town to purchase all salt at one time for the winter obtaining a lower rate on salt and sand delivery. The equipment shed would measure up as a 32' x 68' poll barn allowing storage for Town equipment. The equipment shed is essential in order to keep equipment protected from the elements and minimizing damaged over the winter and summer months. The Board advised the combined cost for both the salt and equipment shed would total \$257,000. The cost was included in the proposed budget but will need a special vote in late March or early April for voters to approve the finances. The Board does not believe it will affect the tax rate much, but it is something that must be done. Gordon Turpin wondered how the project would be going out to bid. The Board stated that they are looking into different manufacturers and zero financing, as well as the same people that have done Ferrisburgh, Addison, and New Haven salt sheds. Howard Hall thanked Gordon for his work cleaning up the cemetery. David Raphael asked about warning an article for the salt shed to be voted on. Teresa Smith reiterated that the money has already been included in the proposed budget but will need to have it voted on by the voters. The footprint of the salt shed and locating it where the sandpile currently is was discussed. The fate of the schoolhouse was also discussed. The Board confirmed that there is no plan or purpose for the schoolhouse at this time, but noted that it

cannot be used as storage, it does not have power or water. The Board advised that at one point the schoolhouse was offered to the Vergennes Fire Department but since it is full of lead paint, it will need to be moved. Gordon Turpin wondered if the Board would consider putting a tin roof on the schoolhouse. The Board expressed interest in sending out a postcard to voters encouraging them to come out and vote on borrowing the money to replace the salt/equipment shed.

Howard Hall noted that Road Foreman Rick Cloutier has done a nice job at remodeling the Town beach. Pantons residents have come up with a plan for installing a new boat dock this spring. The project will not be funded out of Pantons tax revenue.

At this time, Moderator Eric Carter gave the floor to Representative Diane Lanpher, Representative Matt Birong, and Senator Ruth Hardy.

Diane Lanpher spoke about the Vergennes Economic Corridor and appreciates how Pantons concerns were crafted in a letter. Diane added that because of support from the surrounding towns, there will be money in the budget to proceed with the next step. Diane spoke about Bill H775 which enables youth to communicate with their government. She stated that Vergennes youth participated by testifying in support of Bill H775 and knocked it out of the park. Diana Raphael thanked Diane for her service.

Matt Birong spoke about general housing and military affairs in addition to labor and liquor laws. Act 250 was discussed, and Sean Willerford wondered how it will affect Vergennes and economic development in the downtown.

Ruth Hardy spoke about her involvement with the Agriculture Committee and how it relates to pesticides, composting, local foods, the regulation of hemp seeds, the dairy economy and what improvements can be made. Discussion ensued regarding education and the current declining enrollments adding pressure to increasing property taxes. The agricultural practice of maintaining water quality along the lake and providing farmers with needed support and technical assistance was also discussed.

ANWSD Board Representative Bradley Dewey applauded Diana Raphael for her work and commitment to the School Board. Brad was appointed by the Selectboard in March 2019 to fill the remainder of Diana's 3-year term and thanked the Board for letting him speak. Brad spoke about the proposed FY2021 school budget and touched on key points to include:

- \$21,843,000 budget representing four schools in the District and a reduction of 1.34%
- Repurposing the Addison Central School for alternative education needs
- Reducing staff
- Employee health care costs
- Declining enrollment & approaching \$20,000 per student in spending
- Collective Bargaining/Unions
- Act 46/School Consolidation

Moderator Eric Carter reminded attendants that if they are not a resident and voter of Pantons, it is ok to speak if they raise their hand and if there is no objection at the will of the people.

Articles 3 – 22 are for discussion only Monday night. VOTE TO BE TAKEN BY AUSTRALIAN BALLOT ON TUESDAY, MARCH 3, 2020 BETWEEN 9AM AND 7PM AT PANTON TOWN HALL.

ARTICLE 3: To elect the following officers by Australian Ballot:

Moderator, 1 year (2020-2021)
Selectboard Member, 3 year
Lister, 3 year

Lister 3 year, to fill remaining 1 year of 3-year term
Auditor, 3 year
Auditor, 1 year
Constable, 1 year
Dog Warden, 1 year
Town Grand Juror, 1 year
Town Agent, 1 year
Water Commissioner, 3 year
ANWSD Board Representative, 3 year

Zachary Weaver noted that he was seeking his 2nd term on the Selectboard if elected. Town Clerk/Treasurer Pam Correia advised that Constable Nathan Barcomb, Water Commissioner Meddie Perry, and ANWSD Board Representative Brad Dewey were also on the ballot seeking re-election. Beth Tarallo expressed her support for Meddie Perry in stating that the Water Commissioner position was right up his alley. Sean Willerford showed his support for Meddie as well and stated that he is a great Chair.

ARTICLE 4: 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>Reserve Fund</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Highway Capital Equipment Fund	\$20,000
Highway Capital Project Fund	\$20,000
Tire Fund	\$2,000
Town Hall Restoration Fund	\$15,000
Reappraisal Fund	\$2,000
Technology Fund	<u>\$2,000</u>
Total	\$61,000

This article is voted on by Australian ballot.

Howard Hall noted that the reserve fund figures have not changed. The Selectboard has not asked for an increase as they are trying to keep the tax rate as low as they possibly can. He added that the Technology Fund is used for computer equipment and the digitization of records which is an expensive process. Kirsten De LaCruz wondered what is still needed in the Town Hall Restoration Fund. Teresa Smith pointed out that Article 6, if approved by the voters, will grant permission to rename the Town Hall Restoration Fund to the Town Building Maintenance Reserve Fund. Howard Hall stated that the Town Hall Restoration Fund is used specifically for necessary building maintenance such as painting the outside of the building and sanding the floors.

No further discussion.

ARTICLE 5: Shall the voters adopt the proposed 2020-2021 fiscal year General Fund Operating Budget in the amount of \$763,647 of which \$590,838 shall be raised by taxes and \$172,809 by non-tax revenue?

This article is voted on by Australian ballot.

Howard Hall expressed that the Board has tried to keep budgets lean for the last few years and the only cost going up is the \$20,000 for the salt and equipment shed which is appropriated in the budget. As a cost-saving measure, the garbage at the Town Office is co-mingled with the Town Garage instead of having it picked up. Beth Tarallo asked about keeping 7% in the Reserve Fund Account which is listed under the dues and assessments section of the budget. Teresa Smith explained that 7% of the budget is kept in the Reserve Fund and used only for emergencies. Kirsten De LaCruz wondered about the cameras located in the Town Office. The Board explained that a Wyze camera was donated to the Town due to issues with doors being left open and lights being left on, so a camera was installed to maintain the

security of the building. The Board added that it is to protect the employees that work at the Town Office, it is on a 21-day rotation, has limited access, and the sound can be turned off. Gordon Turpin inquired about the cemetery association fees. The Board advised that the Town is responsible for four cemeteries within the community and allocates \$2,080 to the Cemetery Association. The Board has had discussions with the Cemetery Association and would like to see receipts for mowing. Teresa Smith stated that the Town would rather not hand over money without any accountability. The mowing will be going out to bid rather than staying with just one person. Discussion followed regarding the condition of the cemeteries in town. David Raphael inquired about the budget line item allocated for the Bixby Library. Paula Moore advised that the Bixby Library serves each of the five towns with a per capita assessment of \$22 per capita. She noted that Pantons assessment of \$14,000 is based on the 2010 census figure. David stated that the item should be voted on and if the voter is unhappy with the assessment it should be voted no to on the budget. Paula added that the Bixby Library is sensitive to the town's budgets and have not asked for an increase in three years although costs have gone up like the school budget. More people come to the library now more than ever and she believes it is a very valuable resource for each town.

No further discussion.

ARTICLE 6: Shall the voters rename the Town Hall Restoration Fund to the Town Building Maintenance Reserve Fund to be used for the purpose of maintaining any Town building?

This article is voted on by Australian ballot.

Teresa Smith advised that the appropriation to the Town Hall Restoration Fund has still been allocated but because the Town Hall is now restored, the voters should consider renaming it for maintenance purposes; otherwise, it cannot be used for anything other than restoration and renaming the fund gives the ability to better serve building maintenance needs. The Board clarified that renaming the fund to the Town Building Maintenance Reserve Fund allows the money to be used for any Town owned building. David Raphael acknowledged that it makes sense to make the name change and thanked the Board for giving the Town Hall attention to maintain the good condition it is in now.

No further discussion.

ARTICLE 7- 22: Voter Appropriations

These articles are voted on by Australian Ballot.

Diana Raphael expressed support for Article 9, Addison County Readers. She explained that Addison County Readers provides books to children aged 0-5. Diana added that it is funded by the Dolly Parton library. Last year, 21 children participated at a cost for the year of \$630 in postage. Diana expressed her support for the program and hoped the voters would also support it.

Sean Willerford expressed his support for the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Vergennes stating that it is an incredible organization that does great work. He added that it is a safe place for kids to go with hot meals and the organization should be supported as a town.

Lorraine Huizenga wondered how the funding appropriations are requested. The Board advised that specific dollar amounts are requested per capita.

No further discussion.

ARTICLE 23: To transact any other non-binding business.

Moderator Eric Carter reminded the attendants that the purpose of Article 23 is to allow townspeople to bring up items for public consumption and discuss them as non-binding business.

Beth Tarallo extended a thank you to all Town officers. She briefly spoke about the Bixby Library and noted her appreciation for the services, staff, and programming. Beth encouraged others to visit the Bixby and use their services.

David Raphael thanked Town Clerk/Treasurer Pam Correia and Assistant Town Clerk Linda Devino for all the work they do in the Town Clerk's Office and expressed his appreciation for a highly professionally run office.

The Board requested feedback about whether Panton residents were happy with the Annual Town Meeting being held on the Monday night before Town Meeting Day. Kirsten De LaCruz believes that Monday night works very well for working people, which most are and is happy with the turnout. Gordon Turpin thought that holding the meeting on the same day as Town Meeting drew more people, otherwise, it requires coming twice. Teresa Smith stated that a lot of the attendants were not residents when the Town Meeting was held at the garage and more residents are available on Monday nights. The Board noted that the 24 Panton registered voters in attendance should not be deciding for the entire town. Beth Tarallo thanked the Board for the childcare made available during Town Meeting.

There was no other non-binding business to discuss.

At 8:25pm, with no further discussion, Beth Tarallo moved to adjourn the meeting, Diana Raphael seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Pam Correia
Town Clerk/Treasurer