

Town of Panton
Special Meeting/Hearing
January 14, 2014 6:30P.M.
Minutes

In Attendance:

Select board:	Administration:	Guests:	
John Viskup, Chair	Diane Merrill, Treasurer	Joan Burt	Ralph Burt
Beth Tarallo	Jean Miller, Clerk	Barbara Fleming	Marjorie Huff
Wendy Knight		Cheryl McEwan	Ken McEwan
		Chris Morris	

John called the meeting to order at 6:30.

John made a motion to appoint Beth Tarallo as moderator of the Special Charter Amendment Meeting/Hearing. Wendy 2nd. All approved.

Beth started the meeting by giving some background on what a Municipal Charter is and what the process is in general. Panton is governed by Vermont Statues. Municipal Charters allow Towns to deviate from the Statues so they fit the needs of each individual Town. It is believed that Panton does not have a Municipal Charter. Panton does have a Land Charter which gives the geographic boundaries.

The Municipal Charter that is being proposed is very specific. It establishes a Municipal Charter and addresses three positions in the Town, Town Clerk, Treasurer and Delinquent Tax Collector. These positions are currently elected at Town Meeting by the voters. The Charter would change this process and allow the Select Board to make appointments to the positions. The Select Board feels that this would give them a bigger pool of qualified applicants, allow them to appoint a nonresident. Further, appointed persons in these positions would be treated as employees, subject to reviews, personnel policies and subject to federal employment and other laws (e.g. Fair Labor).

There was question of whether Panton has a Municipal Charter. Some discussion ensued on the Road Foreman position has been changed from an elected position to appointed. The process of adopting a Charter starts at the Town level with the voters approving the change. If approved by Panton voters, the Charter will end up going in front of the Legislature to be approved. After being approved it is then recorded at the State level. The State has no listing of a Municipal Charter for Panton in their records. A representative of the State did say that this does not necessarily mean Panton does not have a Municipal Charter; just that it was not recorded in the State records. Ken McEwan asked if there would be more financial responsibility for the Town. Beth Tarallo reported that the board anticipates an insignificant cost increases (roughly \$100 annually for unemployment insurance and an anticipated low/not common situation of potential overtime hours for hourly persons who may go over 40 hours per week, as employees are protected by Fair labor laws).

Beth reviewed each section of the Charter to be sure everyone understands it/to hear /receive comments by section. All the language in the Charter is brand new. Jim Barlow, Attorney for VLCT has reviewed the Charter and given his recommendations. The results are the Charter that is being reviewed now.

Public Comments:

- A resident noted that using the words "Amendment" as in Charter Amendment is confusing. Amendment would suggest that a change is being made to an existing document/charter. Select Board will follow up on this language/nuance.
- Cheryl McEwan asked what the difference was between elected and appointed officers. The appointed officers would be subject to all personnel and employment rules, regulations and policies of the Town.
- The appointed officers would report to the Select Board. If a problem existed with an officer it would be the responsibility of the Select Board to address it.
- Discussion on a clause on "Separability", if something is voided in the Charter it does not void the rest of the Charter.

- In the section Transitional Provision, Diane Merrill suggested that it be changed to July 1, 2014 from July 15, 2014 so that it would coincide with the fiscal year.
- A resident asked questions about the voting process for the charter, and why it would be done by Australian ballot. Select Board reported by Vermont statues a Charter amendment has to be voted on at an annual meeting by Australian ballot.
- Marjorie Huff asked for the difference between “appointed” and “hired”. Select Board will follow up with VLCT about the difference and why the current language includes “appointed” instead of hired.

There will be another meeting on January 28, 2014 at 6:30 P.M. addressing the Charter.

Beth adjourned the meeting at 7:24 P.M.

Respectfully

Jean Miller, Clerk