



Town of Panton Chartered 1761

3176 Jersey Street • Panton, VT 05491-9331

Ph: 802.475.2333 • Fax: 802.475.2785

Town of Panton Annual Meeting Minutes Monday, March 1, 2021

Attendance via Zoom: Selectboard Chair Howard Hall, Selectboard Vice-Chair Teresa Smith, Selectboard Member Zachary Weaver, Moderator Eric Carter, Technology Moderator David Sullivan, Emergency Management Coordinator Bob Groff, ANWSD School Board Interim Representative Kirsten De La Cruz, State Representative Diane Lanpher, State Representative Matthew Birong Jr., Town Clerk-Treasurer Maggie McCormick

Howard Hall called the meeting to order at 6:36 and gave the floor to the Moderator, Eric Carter.

Eric welcomed all participants and acknowledged the challenges Covid-19 has created over the past year.

Eric led participants in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Eric informed attendees that the Town Articles and the Town Report would be used as the agenda and that the meeting would follow Robert's Rules of Order. He went over how to be recognized to speak via Zoom and asked that all introduce themselves and speak clearly when given the floor. Eric reminded everyone that all articles would be voted by Australian Ballot on Tuesday, so that the meeting would be discussion only and no motions or amendments would be made.

Eric recognized State Representative Diane Lanpher: Rep. Lanpher thanked the Town for the opportunity to participate in Panton's Town Meeting and her re-election in November 2020. She discussed Vermont's rapid early response to Covid-19 and stated the legislature continues to work remotely to address the health and economic consequences of the pandemic. Vermont's state budget is healthy due to federal support. As head of the Transportation Committee, she is working with the committee to support town Class 2 highways and structures. Communication fostered through VLCT has given the committee good information on which towns need help and how. Rep Lanpher also relayed that the US Senate is working on additional Covid relief.

Eric recognized State Representative Matthew Birong: Rep. Birong shared a link to the Link to VT Legislature Town Report. He shared his varied and broad experience with the Housing, Military and General Committee. This year, he is working on the federal aid component of the CARES Act with emphasis on emergency housing initiatives for homeless. In response to Covid-19, Vermont established its Everyone Eats program was established last spring, area restaurants and their existing infrastructure to feed people facing food insecurity. Bar Antidote in Vergennes was among the first hubs in Vermont. Vermont Eats has many partnerships with state agencies and over 60,000 meals have been served. The program requires that at least 10% of ingredients from local makers. Vermont's success has led neighboring states to ask for guidance to put similar programs in

place. Work is beginning with Vermont's hospitality industry to simply regulations for liquor service, consumption, and licensing.

Eric recognized State Senator Christopher Bray: Senator Bray stated the legislators left the State House on March 15, 2020 to work remotely and expects to finish this year remotely as well. He looks forward to being in the same room with his colleagues and constituents again. Senator Bray conveyed Senator Claire Ayer's regrets that she could not attend Pantons town meeting. In his role on the Government Operations Committee, he has been working to ensure that state and municipal business is conducted according to the law while operating remotely; meetings, voting, document signatures. Senator Bray also discussed concerns over clean water and PCB safety in Vermont schools. Senator Bray is Chair of the Committee of Natural Resources and Energy. He recognized that Efficiency Vermont has been operational for 20 years and has realized \$2.4B in energy savings. The Committee has an effort underway to set up an efficiency program for heating. He closed by thanking the town residents and wishing everyone stay well.

Questions: None.

Eric thanked Representative Lanpher, Representative Birong, and Senator Bray.

Eric asked attendees to open the Town Report, acknowledged the dedication to David Raphael, and thanked him for all he has done and continues to do for Pantons. David Raphael thanked the Town for the honor and recognized all who make Pantons a great place to live.

Eric directed participants to Page 29 of the Town Report and called for moment of silence for those Pantons residents who passed in the last year.

Eric asked any new Pantons residents to identify themselves. Eric acknowledged and welcomed Juliana Saehring and Catharine Hays and told them Pantons is "ready to put them to work" on Town committees.

Eric explained he would read each Article and ask for discussion.

ARTICLE 1: To elect a Moderator for the 2022 Annual Town Meeting: No discussion.

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

Eric noted that this is the one article that needs a motion and a vote, and would be done as well as possible over Zoom, listening for Ayes and Nays.

To hear the reports of the Town Officers: Paula Moore moved to hear the reports of the Town Officers. Sharon Ashcraft seconded. Eric asked if there was any discussion and hearing none, asked all to be unmuted: All in favor, the motion carried.

Eric let attendees know that Town Officer reports would begin with the Selectboard report, which is on page 18 of the Town report. Eric acknowledged Teresa Smith

Teresa: None of us could have imagined a year like 2020. The Selectboard and staff worked together to conduct the August primary and the November elections at the Town Garage while keeping everyone protected and safe. Teresa recounted Selectboard accomplishments over the past year as documented on pages 18 and 19 in the 2020 Town Report. Teresa concluded by thanking the many Pantons residents who volunteer their time to the Town and the Town's employees.

Eric thanked Teresa and opened the floor to questions. There were none.

Eric gave the floor to Howard Hall who reported on Green Mountain Power's solar microgrid "islanding" project which will provide electricity if the standard electric grid is down. The project will initially encompass the Town Hall and Town Garage, as well as approximately 50 residences in the area around those two buildings, with expansion expected.

Eric thanked Howard.

Eric recognized Tom and Irena Morgan: Tom was appreciative of the work on grid.

Eric recognized Diana and David Raphael: David informed the meeting that GMP will augment and improve the landscaping around the solar field starting this spring.

Eric asked for additional questions or comments for the Selectboard or on anything in the Town Report. There were none.

Eric stated Articles 3 through 23 are for discussion only tonight. VOTE TO BE TAKEN BY AUSTRALIAN BALLOT ON TUESDAY, MARCH 2, 2021 BETWEEN 10:00 A.M. AND 7:00 P.M. AT PANTON TOWN HALL, SECOND FLOOR:

Eric explained that election laws allow candidates to speak at the Panton Town Meeting because it is not the same day as the election and after reading each office to be elected, he would give any candidate who wished to speak a few minutes to do so.

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

Moderator, 1 year (2021-2022): No discussion.

Selectboard Member, 3 year:

Eric gave incumbent Teresa Smith the floor.

Teresa stated that while she was excited to have another candidate running for Selectboard, she wants to keep the job. She detailed her enthusiasm for living in Panton, along with qualifications that she brings to the position, especially budget development due to her math background, experience with how government works, knowledge of learning and teaching, and a collaborative mindset. She stated she wants to make sure all Panton voices are heard, and that she, Howard, and Zach reviewed the budget line by line resulting in a 2.2% budget reduction this year. She added that the current Selectboard members work well together and complement each other.

Eric thanked Teresa and gave the floor to candidate Megan Vorsteveld.

Megan detailed her background growing up in Panton on a family dairy farm raising cows where she currently works full time. She is also a part time student pursuing business and veterinarian degrees. She decided to run for Selectboard because she wants to become more involved with her town and create a larger community voice. In her experience as dog warden, she learned that some residents do not feel fully heard and wants to ensure residents' thoughts and ideas are heard. She acknowledged she has a lot to learn and cited her strong work ethic, organization skills, and ability to listen and learn as strengths she would bring to the job. She also thanked the current Selectboard for their work.

Eric thanked Megan and asked for questions or comments on the Selectboard position. There were none.

Lister, 3 year: No discussion.

Auditor, 3 year: Eric recognized incumbent Auditor Bob Groff. Bob said that auditing is actually fun and the state provides great training and checklists. He encouraged anyone with interest to step forward.

Auditor, 3 year, to fill remaining 2 years of 3-year term: No discussion.

Auditor, 3 year, to fill remaining 1 year of 3-year term: No discussion.

Constable, 1 year: No discussion.

Dog Warden, 1 year: Eric recognized incumbent Megan Vorsteveld who said she really enjoyed her past year working with the Townspeople and their animals and would like to continue as Dog Warden.

Water Commissioner, 3 year: No discussion.

ANWSD Board Representative, 3 year, to fill remaining 2 years of 3-year term: Eric recognized Kirsten De La Cruz. Kirsten introduced herself as a graduate of Vergennes Union High School and mother of six, three of whom have graduated; the other three are in 11th grade, 6th grade, and 3rd grade. She is heavily involved in the community, including serving on the Panton Development Review Board since 2005, Chairing the Vergennes Governor Booster Club, and DUS Community Group Board. Living in Panton and not having our own town [sic], feels it is important that Panton has a voice on the Board. She understands residents' concerns about high taxes as well as the importance of quality education. By being on the school board, she wants to help figure out our schools' very complicated future and wants residents to feel free to reach out to her.

Eric thanked Kirsten and asked for further comment. There was none.

Eric closed article 3.

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>Fund</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Digitization Fund	\$2,000
Highway Capital Equipment Fund	\$20,000
Highway Capital Project Fund	\$20,000
Reappraisal Fund	\$2,000
Tire Fund	\$2,000
Rainy Day Reserve	<u>\$4,500</u>
Total	\$50,500

Eric recognized Howard Hall who stated that all the reserve funds are essential and pointed out that the Selectboard felt that the Town Hall Restoration Fund balance was sufficient and therefore was not requesting additional funding this year. Howard gave the example that grader tires are \$2000.00 each and that the Town works to save for new trucks and/or equipment, as well as keep

the Rainy Day Fund balance at 7% of overall budget and would appreciate voters' support of these appropriations.

Eric recognized Bob Groff who explained that as auditor he saw the work the Selectboard did on the budget and reviewing the Reserve Funds. He reiterated that these funds are very important to the Town and recommended voters support these funds.

ARTICLE 5: Shall the voters adopt the proposed Fiscal Year 2022 (July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022) General Fund Operating Budget in the amount of \$744,375 of which \$585,197 shall be raised by taxes and \$104,178 by non-tax revenue? (\$55,000 FY20 Surplus)

Eric noted that the proposed budget starts on Page 10.

Eric recognized Teresa who directed voters to places where line items were reduced. She highlighted ways the Selectboard was able to recognize reductions. She stated that Covid-19 had restricted spending, health insurance savings were realized by changing plans and reduced costs for new town clerk, and not requesting additional funds for Town Hall Building Maintenance Fund. She pointed out that the payment for the salt shed and equipment barn is included in the proposed budget.

Eric recognized Bob Groff who stated he attended all the budget meetings and believed that the Selectboard, Clerk-Treasurer, and Road Foreman had gone over the budget with a fine-tooth comb, that it contains no pork, and encouraged voters to support the budget.

Eric recognized Howard who apologized for missing the Selectboard's 3-Year Work Plan for the Town, which includes plans for the salt shed and equipment barn, interior and exterior painting at Town Hall as well as refinishing the floor, re-establishing the Town newsletter, pursuing Dead Creek Bridge repair, obtaining a tabulator for counting votes, digitizing town records, continuing education for staff, and investigating ways to save money on the phone system.

Eric recognized Selectboard member Zach Weaver who was in attendance via internet but Eric had missed acknowledging him.

Eric recognized Catherine Hayes who asked about the design of the salt shed and equipment barn. Eric asked to have that addressed after he got to Article 6.

ARTICLE 6: Shall the voters authorize the Selectboard to acquire a loan to construct a salt shed and an equipment barn at the Town Garage for an amount not to exceed \$ 270,000.00 to be financed over a period not to exceed 10 years?

Eric recognized Catherine Hayes who asked for background on how the buildings will be designed, how they will look, and the process for determining who will build them.

Teresa answered that salt sheds are a specific design due to corrosive nature of salt and that it would look a lot like the ones in Addison and Vergennes and that the pole barn is simple pre-fab structure.

Eric recognized Derek Matson who asked about the bidding and award process.

Howard answered that there are only two major builders who construct salt sheds for the bid process. The barn is a very basic structure that will probably be bid out to two or three builders.

Eric recognized Stevie Morris who asked how long the existing salt shed has lasted.

Howard explained that the current shed is 40 to 50 years old and that about 25 years ago the shed was lifted and a cement base constructed under it. He expressed concerns for the safety of workers using the shed.

Eric recognized Sharon Ashcraft who asked about the construction materials for the salt shed, confirming the combination of plastic and concrete and that it would look like the one on the road to Bristol.

Howard confirmed the Panton salt shed would look like the one Sharon referenced.

Eric asked for further questions and comments. There was no further discussion.

Eric introduced Articles 7 - 22 and noted that none could be changed and that the amounts requested came from the organization making the requested.

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

No discussion.

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

No discussion.

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

No discussion.

ARTICLE 10: Shall the voters appropriate \$691 to Addison County Transit Resources from Town funds?

No discussion.

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

Eric recognized Kat Nelson who introduced herself as the CEO of Boys & Girls Club of Greater Vergennes, stating she took over the role in September and wanted to participate in Panton's meeting to "meet" people that she has not yet had an opportunity to meet. She thanked the community for its tremendous support of the Club and stated that despite the challenges of Covid-19, the Club provided 25,000 meals with the help of 33 volunteers. She stated that the Club is currently strengthening programs that focus on health and wellness, academic achievement, and character development and good citizenship. The Club will also build summer programs for teens and look to increase its teen membership numbers.

There was no further discussion.

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

No discussion.

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

No discussion.

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

No discussion. Eric pointed out that Elderly Services provided a summary of their work that is included on page 33 of the Town Report.

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

No discussion.

ARTICLE 16: Shall the voters appropriate \$500 to HOPE (Addison County Community Action Group - ACCAG) from Town funds?

No discussion.

ARTICLE 17: Shall the voters appropriate \$300 to End of Life Services (Hospice Volunteer Services) from Town funds?

No discussion.

ARTICLE 18: Shall the voters appropriate \$450 to John Graham Shelter from Town funds?

No discussion.

ARTICLE 19: Shall the voters appropriate \$500 to Open Door Clinic (Community Health Services of Addison County) from Town funds?

No discussion.

ARTICLE 20: Shall the voters appropriate \$350 to RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Program) from Town funds?

No discussion.

ARTICLE 21: Shall the voters appropriate \$600 to Womensafe from Town funds?

No discussion.

ARTICLE 22: Shall the voters appropriate \$250 to Addison County Readers from Town funds?

Eric recognized Diana Raphael who stated that this program provides books every month to children from newborn to age 5 across Addison County and urged voters to support this appropriation.

No further discussion.

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

Eric reminded participants that anything discussed would be non-binding.

Eric recognized Sharon Ashcraft who stated it would be useful to voters to have printed information included in the Town Report about the mission and work of the organizations requesting Town funds.

Eric pointed out that each organizations' full contact information is listed on page 33 of the Town Report.

Teresa acknowledged and thanked Sharon for the suggestion. Teresa said that it would be feasible to supply a link to each organization's website in the online version of the Town Report.

Eric recognized Stevie Morris who asked about the rough condition of the Panton Corners signage and the use of Arnold Bay Beach by non-residents and enforcing parking regulations.

Howard answered that the Town Beach is public property open to anyone who want to use it regardless of residency. The sheriff does patrol the parking, the constable is authorized to issue tickets, and the Town has towed a couple of vehicles. If residents see problems, please call the police. He further stated that the Selectboard will discuss the Panton Corners signage, some of which is antique, with the road foreman.

Howard also acknowledged Barbara Fleming's great work in collecting delinquent taxes. Current delinquent taxes at a mere \$58.62.

Eric recognized David Raphael who stated that in the 40+ years the Town has controlled the Arnold Bay beach it has been open to the public and the Town wants to keep it that way. David noted that the Town has received a grant to initiate a planning study for parking there. David also plans to solicit residents' feedback and hold open meetings on future improvements at Arnold Bay. David recognized the work of road foreman Rick Cloutier and the Vorsteveld family on the Arnold Bay beach this past summer.

Eric recognized Paul Sokal who commended the Selectboard for protecting town assets for the public, including South Road and Turkey Lane.

Eric recognized Sharon Ashcraft who asked for clarification on Turkey Lane access and the Town's right of way boundaries.

Howard answered that the Town is currently unable to comment as the matter is in litigation.

Eric recognized Lorraine Kayser who expressed concern over the visibility of signs the road crew uses to warn road work.

Teresa answered she felt this was a great suggestion and Howard added that how to best post road work is under discussion and will be addressed.

Eric recognized Sharon Ashcraft who expressed appreciation to the Selectboard for protecting Town assets, particularly South Road and thanked Dave Raphael for his efforts there.

Eric recognized Bob Groff who thanked everyone for taking Covid-19 seriously and following guidelines.

Howard responded to Bob thanking him for being the model of an ideal Emergency Management Coordinator and keeping us safe.

There was no further discussion.

Sharon Ashcraft moved to adjourn the meeting. Paula Moore seconded. Eric asked for further discussion and hearing none, called for a vote. All in favor, the meeting was adjourned at 8:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Maggie McCormick
Clerk-Treasurer

Attest:  _____ Date: 3-23-21

Attest:  _____ Date: 3-23-21