

Town of Panton
Town Meeting Minutes
March 4, 2014 10:00 A.M.

John Viskup called the meeting to order at 10:00A.M.

John Viskup asked for nominations for Moderator. Ralph Burt nominated J. Douglas Dows. Paulette Bogan 2nd. There were no other nominations. John Viskup asked for a voice vote. All approved saying aye. There were no nays.

Doug Dows's first order was to Pledge Allegiance to the Flag.

There was a moment of silence for the residents of Panton who had passed away last year.

Doug Dows explained that when nominations were made no one had to second it. When people voted he would announce that the aye or nays had it and pause, thus if someone thought that they had heard the vote differently this would give them a chance to say so, if no one did he would announce the ayes or nays had it.

Doug Dows moved to the Articles.

Article 1. Select Board nominations. Wendy Vorsteveld asked if you had to be a registered voter to be nominated. Doug Dows told her that you did not have to be a registered voter but you did need to be a resident of the Town. Wendy Vorsteveld nominated Gerard Vorsteveld. Doug Dows asked if there were any other nominations. Ralph Burt nominated John Viskup. There were no other nominations. Doug Dows closed the nominations and asked if people wanted to vote by hand count or ballot. They decided to do a hand count. Doug Dows declared that John Viskup was elected and asked the Clerk to cast one vote for John Viskup .

Doug Dows asked for nominations for Treasurer. Wendy Knight nominated Diane Merrill. There were no other nominations. Doug Dows closed the vote and asked the Clerk to cast one vote for Diane Merrill.

Doug asked for nominations for Lister for three years. Joan Burt nominated Beverly Biello . Someone asked if you needed to be present to be nominated. Doug Dows told them that it was smart if they were here but they did not need to be present to be nominated. Seeings as there were no other nominations; Doug Dows closed the vote and asked that the Clerk cast one vote for Beverly Biello.

Doug Dows asked for nominations for position of Lister for two years. Joan Burt nominated Cheryl McEwan. There were no other nominations, Doug Dows closed the nominations and asked the Clerk to cast one vote for Cheryl McEwan.

Doug Dows asked for nominations for the position of Auditor for three years. Doug Dows term was up. Barbara Fleming nominated Doug Dows for the position. There were no other nominations, so Doug Dows closed the nominations and asked the Clerk to cast one vote for Doug Dows.

Doug Dows sked for nominations for the position of Auditor for two years. John Viskup nominated Paul Sokal but Paul Sokal was already serving a term for another Auditor position so the nomination was not accepted. Doug Dows explained that the 2 year open position is to fill the vacant term of the third Auditor position. There were no nominations. The position was left vacant

Doug Dows asked for nominations for Constable for a term of one year. Roger Kayser nominated David Palmatier. There were no other nominations so Doug Dows closed the nominations and asked the Clerk to cast one vote for David Palmatier for Constable.

Doug Dows asked for nominations for Dog Warden. There were no nominations. The position was left vacant. The Select Board will appoint someone to the position.

Doug Dows asked for nominations for Grand Juror. There were none. The position was left vacant.

Doug Dows asked for nominations for Town Agent. Muriel Neel nominated Ted Bolens. There were no other nominations. Doug Dows closed the nominations and asked the Clerk to cast one vote for Ted Bolens.

Doug Dows asked for nominations for Vergennes Union Elementary School Board. Kathy Cannon nominated Jason Fearon for the position. There were no other nominations. Doug Dows closed the nominations and asked the Clerk to cast one vote for Jason Fearon.

Doug Dows asked for nominations for the position of Water District Board. Chris Cook nominated Meddie Perry. There were no other nominations. Doug Dows closed the nominations and asked the clerk to cast one vote for Meddie Perry.

Article 2. Shall the Town adopt the Town Officers Report? Doug Dows asked that someone move to start the discussion. Ted Boelens so moved. John Viskup spoke. He stated that Beth Tarallo and Wendy Knight had delved into the Statutes to make sure they were following them to the best of the Select Boards ability and commented on how much work they both did. He thanked many people for contributing to the Town, Ann Russett, Marge Huff, David Chase, Louise Giovanella, Paul Sokal, Arnold Bay Farm, Vorsteveld Farm, Ben Chamberlain, David Raphael, Town Hall committee, Brenda Blacklock, Ralph, Joan Burt, Diane Merrill, Brenda Jarring, Jean Miller, M'Lissa Dayton, Listers (Joan Burt, Cheryl McEwan & Beverly Biello), Water District (Meddie Perry, Chris Cook & David Philbrook), Rick Cloutier, Chris Dion, and Doug Dows. John Viskup said he hoped he had not forgotten anyone but was sure he had and wanted to thank them too and apologized if he had forgotten to name anyone. Doug Dows said at this time if anyone wanted to ask the Select Board any questions regarding the report, now was the time. Wendy Knight asked if there were any interested residents that would like to join the Town Hall Committee, they would be happy to have the help. David Raphael commented that he would like to see the cupola back on the roof. John Viskup said that some money had been donated to help in the restoration of the cupola for when it was decided in what direction to go with the cupola restoration. Howard Hall wanted to thank the road crew for the great job that they had done this winter and to say that he appreciated the Town of Panton signs that had been put up. The Raphael's designed the signs. David Raphael wanted the Select Board thanked for their dedication and all the hard work that the three of them had done for the Town.

The Zoning Report and the Auditors Report were that last two reports. Doug Dows asked if there were any questions. Doug Dows stated that there was a mistake in the Auditor's Report, on page 18 second to the last paragraph it read June 30, 2013 and the next June 30, 2012 was a typo and should read June 30, 2013. There were no questions on these two reports. Doug Dows moved that a vote be taken to accept the Town Officers Report. A vote was taken and all voted Aye. There were no Nays.

Article 3. Shall the Town vote to have the Treasurer collect Taxes as provided by law? David Raphael moved. Doug Dows asked for discussion. There was none. He called for a voice for. The Ayes had it. There were no Nays.

Article 4. Shall the Town vote to place money in the Reserve Funds, the Highway Capital Equipment Fund \$20,000, Town Hall Restoration Fund \$15,000, the Grader Tire Fund \$2,000, the Reappraisal Fund \$2,000, the Highway Capital Project Fund \$20,000 for a total of \$59,000 for these funds. Paulette Bogan moved.

Kathy Cannon asked for the amounts that were presently in these funds. Page 19 in the Town Report states the Fund Balances as of June 30, 2013. Diane Merrill stated that the funds that had been voted on last year at Town Meeting had not yet been transferred to the accounts this year. The funds would be transferred after the first of May tax payments were received.

Nancy Morgan wanted to know if the Select Board or the Treasurer could take money from these funds at any time. She was told that these funds were set aside for specific projects/purposes and could only be used for the project/purposes for which they are set aside. For example recommendations could be made by the Town Hall Committee and the Select Board would review the recommendation and see if there was enough money in the Town Hall Restoration Fund account to do the work and then make a decision.

Fund balances were drawn on for the purchase of a Frontend Loader and painting of the Town Hall. John Viskup stated that the money in these funds were set aside to be used for their specific purpose when it was necessary.

Muriel Neel wanted to know if a figure could be given stating the amount that was currently in these funds.

Caroline Bitler asked if the money that was voted to be put in these funds at last year's Town Meeting in March had been transferred to these accounts as of June 30, 2013. Beth Tarallo explained that the money that would be voted on to go into these accounts this year would not show up in these account until next year's report.

Diane Merrill gave balances of these funds as of January 30, 2014, Capital Equipment Fund \$11,648, Reappraisal Fund \$3200, Digitization Fund \$4002, Grader Tire Fund \$4002, Town Hall Restoration Fund \$822. The Highway Capital Fund has not been funded at this time. It will be funded after May taxes.

Howard Hall wanted to know if any of the money in the General Reserve Fund had been specifically set aside for an Emergency Fund. He was told that it would have to go before the voters. The Select Board is looking in to setting up this fund, but it would have to be warned in an Article for the residents to vote on at Town Meeting before a Fund could be set up.

Caroline Bitler asked if the Loader had been taken out of Capital Equipment Fund. It was.

Doug Dows asked if everyone was ready to vote. Muriel Neel moved. A voice vote was taken. The Ayes had it. There were no Nays.

Article 5. Shall the Town vote to adopt the 2014/2015 fiscal general operating fund in the amount of \$603,961 of which \$472,500 shall be raised by taxes and \$134,461 by nontaxed revenues. Bob Moulton moved for discussion to begin. Beth Tarallo moved to make a motion to amend Article 5. Shall the Town vote to adopt the 2014/2015 general operating fund in the amount of \$603,961 should be amended to \$606,961 the remaining numbers would stay the same. This was a typographical error and the budget on page 30 states the correct balances. Doug Dows said if there no objections that the Article could be amended. There were no objections so the Article was amended.

Doug Dows asked at this time to have the Select Board present the Budget and then he would open it up to the floor for any questions. The budget starts on page 30 of the annual report.

Beth Tarallo presented the budget. She started with a look at how last year's budget ended up giving insight to the budget that is being voted on. She compared income/revenue accounts 2012/2013 actual budget to the proposed 2013/2014 budget. Speeding fines budgeted were \$300 and actual was \$3640 this creating an increase in revenue. State Aid Highway (SAH) is money that the State gives Pantown for

Class 2 and 3 roads. SAH actual was \$55,656, had budgeted \$53,500 more money was received than Town Meeting Minutes anticipated. Recording fees actual were \$8940 and budgeted were \$4000. This was due to interest rates being lower and a lot of refinancing occurred. Current Use Tax is money that is received from the State on land that is in Current Use Program, had \$44,000 budgeted and \$51,919 was received which is a significant amount more. The bottom line for the nontaxed revenues for 2013 was \$135,998 almost \$136,000 and only \$114,115 was budgeted.

At this time Diane Lanphere and Warren Van Wyck had arrived and Doug Dows called for a break so the State Representatives could speak.

Warren Van Wyck said the General Funds, Education Fund and Taxes were up at the State level, that costs needed to be kept under control and it was not happening at this time. The State needs to be careful how they deal with businesses. They need to handle things so businesses would not decide to leave the State and to make it more appealing for new businesses to establish in Vermont as opposed to neighboring States.

Diane Lanphere had some handouts she left for review and the Doyle poll to be filled out. She said that the local schools had done an excellent job with their budgeting. It was not their fault that there was a 32% Educational Fee, there were structural issues or that there was a 47% increase in school funding. The main reason for the increase was due to Special Ed children.

She spoke about the Train Depot being moved from Vergennes to Ferrisburgh. She said that this would be a supported stop and it would eventually come through.

Diane Lanphere talked about 330 State owned acres that surrounded Ferrisburgh and Vergennes. There is a 3rd party involved and they are to come with a plan of what should be done with this land to help bring revenue in. Every committee at State level has its own website. Revisions regarding bills can be viewed there. Diane Lanphere would like to post on Front Porch Forum's website with updates on different issues.

There is a bill H526 that deals with the Lake and shore land. The State has till Spring to come up with a plan on how to address the phosphorous that is polluting the Lake and shore land. If the EPA does not like the plan that the State comes up with, they will take over and mandate what will be done.

Property taxes are unsustainable. It will take a long time to fix or restructure the system to deal with these taxes. Taxes are up and property values are declining. Cost per student is higher.

Diane thanked Pantan for allowing her to speak at Town Meeting.

Town Meeting is now resumed.

Beth Tarallo continued with Article 5. She went directly to the bottom line of expenses. The actual budget was \$570,745 and the estimated budget was \$598,877, less was spent than was anticipated. The Town ended up approximately \$30,000 ahead. Beth went over a couple of nontaxed revenue items for the 2014/2015 budget. The State Aid is listed at \$55,400 this is an actual figure that will be received. For the Current Use Tax \$57,000 is being budgeted. This is an increase of about \$6,000. Expenses budgeted for 2014/2015 in the Town Office section, Fire Protection is \$20,000 this is a decrease of \$3,000 due to having paid back money that Pantan owed due to an error in billing from a couple of years ago. Accounting Services is a new line item \$3000. These funds are being set aside for a CPA to be of assistance to Pantan's Treasurer on a monthly basis. Audit Services \$5000 is for an external audit of the financials and to provide some assistance from a CPA so that the Internal Auditors could call on

them if they had questions. Part of the Highway budget being reviewed, Property & Casualty Insurance \$8,778 is increased just over \$2700 due to an increase in insurance premiums. Diesel is being budgeted at \$26,600 a decrease of \$1,400 because the price has fluctuated quite a bit. The price has gone down and not as much was used as expected. The same with Chloride \$13,050 is budgeted at a decrease of \$2,900. Equipment (net grant) and Tools & Small Equipment when added together is a decrease of about \$3,000. No purchases of large equipment are scheduled for this year. The bottom line is \$606,961 for the expenses that the Town is being asked to vote on which is a \$5,029 increase from last year. Anticipated non tax revenue is also up. The difference between projected revenue and expenses would be a decrease \$1,149 in the overall budget from last year.

David Raphael asked if the budget is passed on the General Fund, how the Community Service fund amounts would figure in. The Community Services are voted by Australian Ballot separate from Article 5. The amounts being requested by Community Services, if passed, are added separately to the amount requested in Article 5. If the amounts being requested by these agencies are not passed by the voters, then they will not be added to the budget. If the budget is passed and all the Australian ballot requests the total budget to be supported by taxes will be \$540,051 (shown on pp 36 of Town Report). Example of the estimated tax rate, figuring Article 5 and all community service article passing, is shown on pp 36 of the Town Report: The current Grand List Factor is \$1,004,869 which would give Panton a tax rate of 0.5374 which is a decrease of 0.29%. The Grand List Factor is subject to change; the tax rate presented is an estimate. The figure will come from the new Grand List which is established in April.

Doug Dows asked if there were any questions for the Select Board regarding the budget. The Select Board was thanked for holding the budget down and for the level funding which is seldom done in the current age.

Beth Tarallo wanted to pass on a thank you to Rick Cloutier (Road Foreman), Diane Merrill (Treasurer) and Jean Miller (Town Clerk) for their help in keeping the budget down. Diane Merrill passed on Panton's thanks to M'Lissa Dayton for preparing the reports.

Doug Dows called a voice vote on Article 5. The ayes passed Article 5. There were no nays. Articles 6 – 21 are voted on by Australian ballot. The items are not debatable at Town Meeting.

Article 22. Shall the Town transact any other business, which may legally come before the Town?

Doug Dows explained that nothing could legally come before the Town to be voted on because it would have to be warned. Doug told the voters that is was the time to express anything that they might want the Select Board to deal with in the coming year.

Mary Metcalf had concerns regarding chloride and salt being used on the roads and thought that it might be adding to the pollution of the Lake.

Caroline Bitler wanted to know how the Byway would impact Panton. David Raphael addressed this. He said it would not impact Panton very much. It could bring more business for Bed & Breakfasts, camp rentals and visitors to the Lake. It would let tourists know that Panton was recognizing their presence and acknowledging traffic that already existed. The Byway would help visitors navigate and visit places of interest. Wendy Knight told the residents that the Town had not spent any money to become part of the Byway. David Raphael did say that a little bit of money had been set aside to have some signs made to mark the Byway route.

Beth Tarallo told everyone that the Select Board meets the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of the month and that they would welcome anyone that wanted to attend and share their questions and comments. She also

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encouraged people to give their email addresses so they could be included on Town of Panton's email list. Contact Jean Miller, Town Clerk to be added to the list.

Doug Dows asked if there was any other business to discuss, as there was none he asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Howard Hall made a motion to adjourn. Ralph Burt 2nd. Doug Dows adjourned the meeting at 11:56 A.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jean Miller, Clerk