

**Town of Panton Annual Meeting**  
**Town Meeting Minutes**  
**Monday, March 4, 2019**

Howard Hall introduced himself and asked the residents in attendance to please stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

ARTICLE 1: To elect a Moderator for the 2019 Annual Town Meeting.

Howard Hall stated that Town Moderator Doug Dows had resigned from the position and they were in need of a new Town Moderator. Teresa Smith moved to nominate Jason Fearon, Beth Tarallo seconded. The motion passed.

At 6:36pm, Town Moderator Jason Fearon took over the meeting and called the meeting to order. Jason asked for a moment of silence for the Panton residents who had passed away in 2018. Jason read off the list of rules for the meeting to the voters.

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

Teresa Smith announced that this year's Annual Report is dedicated to our friend and neighbor "Gramma" Barb Fleming and recognized her for her many years of service to the Town of Panton. The Board showed a PowerPoint presentation highlighting all of the improvements to Town Hall to include the renovated Town Offices and building, new furnace, and better accessibility. Teresa mentioned some additional highlights such as the addition of an Assistant Town Clerk to the Town Office, a successful summer Town Meeting with a Monday night meeting resulting, child care being offered during Town Meeting, continuing improvements to the Town beach, a new plow/salt truck with an extended warranty, and the new ADA compliant ramp. Teresa stated that with all of these improvements, there is a budget increase of less than two percent. Zachary Weaver informed the voters about the FY2019/2020 proposed budget and stated that it is a nice lean budget this year and very low compared to other towns. Teresa stated that two major culverts on Lake Road were replaced, parts of East Road and Lake Road were paved, the Arnold Bay retention wall was completed with grant money from the State, a beaver baffle was installed with VT Fish and Wildlife to help prevent washouts on Slang Road, more than a half ton of debris was disposed of from Green Up Day in May, and there is a five-year road paving plan all laid out. Howard Hall added that all the road signs had been replaced through a grant and thanked Road Foreman Rick Cloutier as well as Road Crew Member Chris Dion for all of their hard work keeping the roads open and safe to travel.

Jason Fearon asked for any comments and requested voters state their name before speaking. Debbie Brace wondered who she should talk to about getting a sign on Panton Road that will identify the entrance into Panton from Vergennes. Road Foreman Rick Cloutier stated that he will contact the Agency of Transportation. Anna Hopper inquired about any plans for digging a bigger ditch on Panton Road and stated that the ditches are already dangerous. Rick advised the ditch will be stone lined in the spring since he didn't have the time to do it this year. There were no other comments.

Howard Hall advised the voters that the Town bought a new truck outright and paid for it without having to borrow any money. Howard also referenced the June 30, 2018 external audit and stated that the Town is in great shape. He stated that another grant will be applied for to finish up the Town beach and the voters were in agreement. Diana Raphael added that there needs to be better signs for parking at the Town beach such as a handicap sign and a better directional sign that identifies where people can park.

Representative Diane Lanpher thanked the voters for sending her back to Montpelier. Representative Lanpher stated that the working relationship right now is really good, very functional, and she has had good news with all Vermonters. She stated that the House is very active in issues such as childcare, the environment, and housing. Representative Lanpher also stated that there are 40 new members in the House this year, which is an incredible breath of fresh air. She added that there are a lot of things to work on but she is delighted about the new representatives coming in.

Representative Matt Birong spoke about housing and general military affairs, a new project on Armory Lane backed by the Boys and Girls Club with mixed use for the elderly and low income folks. Representative Birong stated that there are more initiatives to help working families, attract and keep young people, and he briefly spoke about the school system. He also spoke about the labor policy to include the family medical leave insurance bill and stated that he brought his own agreement to the table this year while expressing his reassurance that this is something that has to be done. Representative Birong stated that people he has spoken with are very optimistic about industrial hemp and added that there are a lot of opportunities to help farmers transition to it if they want to.

The Selectboard presented the FY2020 budget to the voters and advised that the change to the new budget is an \$11,351 increase. The Board stated that the increase is relatively small and they are pretty proud of what they did to keep the budget in check. Michael Morris asked the Board what sticks out from other towns. Howard Hall spoke briefly regarding the Town and Highway budget. He stated that there are three times the amount of roads in Ferrisburgh so it is hard to compare, but the budget went up due to higher costs in commodities, asphalt, salt, insurance on buildings, raises, and insurance costs for employees. He stated that these areas of the budget are sliced really thin so light can be seen through it. Howard stated that the budget being \$625,000 is not a massive effort, which consists of only 15-20% of the tax bill and the rest goes to other areas.

Bob Hartenstein asked the Board if the Town Hall Restoration Fund had been exhausted and if additional funds had been used. The Board stated that a huge amount was used on the ADA compliant handicap accessible ramp and the upgrades done downstairs in the Town Hall. Howard Hall stated that the Selectboard was the general contractor in order to try to save money. The Board advised that on a vote taken on the cupola last year, the voters approved spending up to \$100,000. Howard stated that a cupola was found identical to the original one made out of aluminum. He stated the cost of the cupola is \$51,000 with a 30-year warranty and there would be no painting-no nothing, not much maintenance, and the same architect was used as for the US Naval Academy. Howard advised that a meeting is coming up soon with the Cerf people and \$7,000 has been used of the \$20,000 grant, but they are excited to finish. Howard also noted that the cupola on Ferrisburgh's building is rotting and they will have to spend a lot of money. Teresa stated that \$4,400 has been included in the budget for a year's worth of payments. Howard added that the payment would be for five years. Howard also stated that the other restoration items left to be done at the Town Hall are to sand the floors, stairs, and painting upstairs. He stated that a lot of time and money has been put into the Town Hall restoration. Diane Merrill wondered if there was any plan for the old cupola and what the cost of the removal will be. Howard stated that it will be put on Front Porch Forum and if there is no interest then Road Foreman Rick Cloutier will take it to the transfer station.

Debbie Brace asked the Board going forward if they will be doing something about collecting some of the delinquent taxes specifically in the 2011 and 2013 tax year range and wondered why the delinquent taxes are not listed in the Town Report any longer. Howard Hall stated that for anybody who has delinquent taxes, a lien is put on the property automatically by the Town. Zachary Weaver stated that the Town is moving forward on the delinquent taxes and working with Delinquent Tax Collector Barbara Fleming.

Dave Sullivan inquired about an interim solution for trash collection. Howard Hall stated that the price of the recycling went up so high that they could not keep covering the cost and nobody had a place to put it. Howard advised that they are not putting any money towards recycling because the five towns don't want to do that and are seeking an alternative plan. Howard added that they are not excited about doing garbage in Panton and are trying to find a site. The costs for recycling was discussed further.

David Rheaume wondered if the cost of the cupola is \$50,000 installed on the roof, will there be more costs to come afterwards. The Board advised that a contract has not been signed yet because the budget needs to be approved. Howard Hall stated that he has talked to the builders and they are willing to do the project, he has gotten prices from Brown's, and if the budget passes, Howard stated that the Board can move some money from the Town Hall Restoration Fund and they presently have some money if they need to offset costs. Teresa Smith added that the money the Board has is a really good estimate.

**Articles 3 – 21 are for discussion only Monday night. VOTE TO BE TAKEN BY AUSTRALIAN BALLOT ON TUESDAY, MARCH 5, 2019 BETWEEN 9AM AND 7PM AT PANTON TOWN HALL.**

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

Moderator, 1 year (2019-2020)  
Selectboard Member, 3 year  
Lister 3 year, to fill remaining 1 year of 3-year term  
Lister 3 year, to fill remaining 2 years of 3-year term  
Lister 3 year  
Auditor, 3 year, to fill remaining 1 year of 3-year term  
Auditor, 2 year  
Auditor, 1 year  
Constable, 1 year  
Dog Warden, 1 year  
Town Grand Juror, 1 year  
Town Agent, 1 year  
Water Commissioner, 3 year

Howard Hall stated that he has been on the Selectboard for five years, would like to do another three years, and asked for votes. He expressed that he believes he is doing a great job, getting a lot of things done such as buying a new truck without a loan, and is doing a lot of work without raising a lot of taxes. Howard stated that he would appreciate the votes and hopes to have them on Election Day.

Steven Morris inquired about the responsibility of the role of Lister. David Sullivan stated that he was appointed by the Selectboard and is currently working with Lisa Truchon who is an assessor with NEMRC. David stated that he has some IT background but no experience as a Lister. He stated that there is an upcoming mapping project and he reached out to the State and group that is coordinating that with the Town. David expressed that he hopes to continue in the Lister role.

Bob Groff stated that his term for Auditor is up on the ballot again and he would love to continue as Auditor. Julie Rheume asked what the responsibility of Auditor is. Bob briefly explained the position. Howard Hall added that the Auditors came to budget hearings and gave their input while the external auditors come in and audit the books every year.

Teresa Smith stated that if there is anyone interested in the Dog Warden position to let the Selectboard know and if it is not filled during the election, the Board can appoint someone.

Howard Hall advised that Louise Giovanella is on the ballot for Town Grand Juror. Abbie Winsten asked the Board if there was a description of the job descriptions anywhere. Howard Hall advised that there is a handbook listing the duties of each position in the Town Office. Town Treasurer/Clerk Pam Correia added that the positions could also be found on the Secretary of State's website.

Howard Hall stated that the duties of Town Agent are to represent the Town if the Town is in a lawsuit.

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.

Gordon Turpin asked the Board about the trucking of the cupola and if the cost is \$40,000 to get it here from Kentucky. The Board clarified that the trucking of the cupola is included in the cost.

ARTICLE 5: Shall the voters adopt the proposed 2019-2020 fiscal year General Fund Operating Budget in the amount of \$722,154 of which \$555,045 shall be raised by taxes and \$167,109 by non-tax revenue?

This article is voted on by Australian ballot.

There was no discussion or questions from the voters.

ARTICLE 6-21: Voter Appropriations

These articles are voted on by Australian Ballot.

Diana Raphael expressed support for Article 21, Addison County Readers. She explained that Addison County Readers will provide any child born in Addison County a free book every month until the child is five years old. Diana added that it is funded by Dolly Parton and costs \$30 per child a year for postage. She added that there are 21 kids in Panton who are a part of the project and it costs a total of \$630 a year just in postage. Diana stated that is the reason why the Addison County Readers are asking for money and she would appreciate the voters passing it.

Debbie Brace expressed her thoughts about Article 8, Addison County Transit Resources. She stated that they do have buses going all over and do a great job but personally she doesn't think the voters should be funding ACTR. Debbie added that they are buying new buses all the time and have a coach service on the eastern side of Vermont. Debbie stated that ACTR's building is paid off with a grant, they don't need Town money, and the voters should start looking at the funding request a lot closer.

ARTICLE 22: To transact any other non-binding business.

Bob Groff, who is the Emergency Management Coordinator for the Town, advised the voters that he had small notebooks referencing cyber security, cyber bullying, 211 information, and family preparedness which would be available downstairs in the Town Office for anyone that is interested. Howard Hall thanked Bob for all of his hard work.

Beth Tarallo thanked the Board for changing the Town Meeting time and for their proactiveness with providing child care and the accessibility of it down stairs during Town Meeting.

Nadie Vanzandt inquired about the Panton Road speed limit and road striping issue. Howard Hall advised that under the Vermont Department of Transportation guidelines, if the Town keeps the speed limit at 45 miles per hour, there would need to be fog lines added to the roads and the Town would have to spend \$8,000 every year to paint the white lines. Howard also advised that the Town will have a hearing on this

issue and residents will have an opportunity to attend. Sean Willerford expressed his concerns for safety when driving at the 45 mph speed limit and supported painting the fog lines. Debbie Brace asked for clarification as to whether the State is saying the Town has to paint the fog lines every year. Teresa Smith confirmed that the fog lines will need to be painted every year if the speed limit is 45 miles per hour or higher. Gordon Turpin stated that lowering the speed limit would never be enforced and believes that 45 miles per hour is fine but he would also be fine with the change to 40 miles per hour too. Debbie expressed her agreement that it could be very dangerous at night without fog lines painted on the roads. Howard stated that starting next year a decision has to be made about what has to be done as he does not want to be cut out of any grants. Debbie wondered if the fog line issue was something new as they are not painted every year and stated that she would like to see a statute in writing. Lonnie Vanzandt stated that if the fog lines are not visible in the winter then why bother spending the money and believes it is something to consider. Teresa Smith stated that the roads have to have fog lines. Abbie Winsten wondered if the \$8,000 comes from the Town budget. Howard Hall confirmed that the money will come from the budget every year. Howard also stated that a highway grant is filed every year and the fog lines are the responsibility of the Town.

There were no other comments or questions.

Teresa Smith thanked Morgan Lynk and Megan Vorsteveldt for volunteering their time during Town Meeting for the childcare.

Jason Fearon then thanked everyone for coming and asked everyone if they would please bring their chair to the back corner of the room to help set up for the election to follow.

At 7:46pm, with no further discussion, Jason Fearon moved to adjourn the meeting, Teresa Smith seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Pam Correia

Town Treasurer/Clerk