



Board of Selectmen

Ware Town Hall, Meeting Room, 126 Main Street

Regular Meeting Minutes – Tuesday, November 16, 2021, at 7:00 p.m.

Instructions for call in option: at or before 7:00 p.m., call the phone number below and when prompted enter the Meeting ID number. The platform is Zoom Meetings.

Join online: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7846041861> (the online option will require a download).

Meeting ID: 784 604 1861

Passcode: 01082

Phone: 929-205-6099

Present: Selectman Thomas Barnes, Selectman Nancy Talbot, Chairman Keith Kruckas, Selectman Caitlin McCarthy, Vice-Chairman John Morrin, Town Manager Stuart Beckley, Executive Assistant Chris Nolan, Michael Schrader from Tighe & Bond, Devin Peterson, Lynn Nenni, Ken Willette, Terrance Smith, Catherine Cascio, Jennifer McMartin, Alex Bergeron, Todd LaValley

Absent: None

Present via Zoom: Eileen Kennedy from Ware River News, Town Accountant Tracy Meehan, Director of Planning & Community Development Rob Watchilla

Meeting Opened by Chairman Kruckas at 7:00 PM.

Opening Remarks, Announcements, and Agenda review by Chair

- A moment of silence was held to honor Trish Barnes, the Town's HR Director, who sadly passed away on November 10, 2021 at the age of 70.
- Chairman Kruckas thanked Ms. Barnes for all the good work she did for the Town.
- Selectman Barnes thanked the Police, Fire, and Building Departments for their fast response times to the recent house fire on Aspen Street.
- Vice-Chairman Morrin thanked the community for their coming out to show support at the Veterans Day parade and ceremony.

Consent Agenda

- Approval of October 5, 2021, and October 19, 2021 Meeting Minutes
- Approval of One-Day Liquor License: Workshop 13, November 18, 2021, from 7-10 PM
- Approval of One-Day Liquor License: Workshop 13, December 5, 2021, from 1-4 PM
- Approval of One-Day Liquor License: Workshop 13, December 16, 2021 from 7-10 PM
- Special Event Permit Application: Ware Flair Committee presents the Ware Flair Holiday Drive Thru, Saturday, December 11, 2021 from 4:30-9:00 PM @ Grenville Park
- Special Event Permit Application: Proprietors of the Ware Center Meeting House present the Ware Tree & Wreath Festival, Saturday, December 11, 2021 from 11 AM – 3 PM @ Grand Hall of Ware Town Hall
- Selectman Barnes expressed the wish for the minutes to be pulled from the agenda, claiming there were

some issues he wanted to see addressed. Chairman Kruckas expressed agreement.

- Mr. Nolan explained that due to some last-minute communications from Workshop 13, the first two One-Day Liquor License applications would need to be pulled, as the former event had been cancelled, while the latter was rescheduled.

Selectman Talbot made the motion to approve the latter three items on the Consent Agenda. Selectman McCarthy seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Scheduled Appearances

- **7:05 PM- Carol Zins presentation on Shop Small**
 - Ms. Zins began by thanking small businesses for all the work they do to support the local community.
 - She announced that the event, Shop Small Weekend, will be starting on Saturday, November 27th at the Welcome Center, located at 52 Main Street.
 - A lottery basket, sponsored by North Brookfield Savings Bank, would be stationed here.
 - A crafters station would be located at E2E (79 Main Street), to be utilized by local businesses and crafters who do not have their own storefronts.
 - Ms. Zins recognized Ware's underappreciated and eclectic group of local shops and establishments, giving specific acknowledgements to Workshop 13, ArtWorks, Talk of the Town, Nat Falk, Lost & Found Mercantile, It's Wine O'Clock, This N' That 2, Feel In Great Nutrition, Cluett's, Ware River News, Niko's, Lazer's, Rollaway Lanes, All out Rc, KM Graphics, and Otto Florist & Gifts.
 - Ms. Zins also encouraged residents to give to local charities and youth programs, and to cherish the wonderful community they live in.
- **7:15 PM- Water & Sewer Rate Hearing with Finance Committee**
 - Michael Schrader, Project Manager from Tighe & Bond, introduced himself.
 - Mr. Schrader gave a brief overview of the Town's water system, which consists of 42 miles of pipes and serves about 2,300 customer accounts (roughly 70% of Ware households).
 - Mr. Schrader addressed some of the Capital Improvements needed to the water system, such as
 - A generator needed at the Dismal Swamp Well
 - Hydrant replacements
 - Rehabilitation of two water tanks
 - Water main replacement
 - Construction of a water filtration plant (pushed back to 2026)
 - Mr. Schrader then addressed some statistics.
 - The water system's demand is increasing roughly 2-3% per year.
 - The water system is in overall decent shape and not in need of any major overhauls.
 - The Town's water fund has a fairly robust balance, and he recommended using it to make improvements.
 - If the aforementioned water filtration plant is approved later this decade, that would come with a steep upfront cost.
 - Mr. Schrader listed some facts and recommendations regarding the Town's water system.
 - A 2% rate increase in the first year is necessary.
 - The average household consists of 2.5 persons.
 - The average person uses 50 gallons of water per day.
 - In per-person water use, Ware falls below the state average.
 - According to the trajectory from 2017, Ware is ahead of the state's curve in having water rates match system improvements.
 - Mr. Schrader then began discussing the Town's sewer system.

- The sewer consists of 23 miles of pipe.
- It serves 1,550 customers (roughly 50% of Ware households).
- Sewer systems are more capital-intensive to improve and maintain than water systems.
- Ware's Wastewater Treatment Plant was built in the 1960s and had its last major update in the 1980s.
- All the plant's equipment is likely in need of replacement.
- The plant's most pressing issue is currently the presence of rags and wipes getting caught in the piping and needing to be removed manually.
- If these objects are not caught and removed quickly enough, they create sewage backups into drains and homes, which in the worst case scenario could lead to a consent order from the State.
- An influent filtration screen at the WWTP would alleviate this issue.
- This important proposed piece of equipment would free up plant operators from needing to constantly monitor for problematic objects, allowing them to focus more on plant operations.
- This upgrade would be funded by ARPA.
- The Assessment of the plant would be covered by the sewer rate.
- Improvements to the plant would need funding from debt and the State's Revolving Fund.
- Sewer rehabilitation would need to be covered by debt.
- After improvements, ongoing evaluations and rehabilitations should be rate-funded.
- Mr. Schrader revealed that without the allotment of ARPA funds toward the screen project, each ratepayer could expect to pay an additional \$60/year.
- He mentioned that the Town Sewer has been running at a deficit, receiving money from the General Fund in 2020, with a projection to do the same in 2021.
- According to Mr. Schrader, the principal challenge is determining how to raise rates adequately, without hurting low-income residents of the Town.
- He acknowledged that the goal of the system is solely to function and does not aim to generate a profit.
- Mr. Schrader shared some income statistics for the Town's population.
 - Median household income is just under \$43k.
 - The lowest quintile (20%) income is just under \$18k.
 - According to the poverty prevalence indicator used by Tighe & Bond, 35% of Ware residents meet the criteria for being impoverished.
- Selectman Talbot asked Mr. Schrader if other Town's systems were having the same issue with non-flushable objects clogging the pipes.
 - Mr. Schrader answered yes, that rags, wipes, and masks are endemic to sewer systems, and all have become a significant problem during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Mr. Schrader revealed that using the poverty prevalence indicator shows that the financial burden to Ware residents resulting from sewer rates will be classified as 'Moderate-High' by 2026.
- Selectman Barnes asked whether Ware would benefit from the federal infrastructure bill, expressing concern that all the awarded money in Massachusetts would go to the Boston area.
 - Mr. Schrader answered that awards from the infrastructure bill will be based on needs, and that while Ware certainly has a long list of competitors for the money, it should expect to receive at least some funding.
 - Specifically, situations that are classified as being a threat to human safety generate the strongest guarantee of funding from the bill.
- Finance Committee member Terrance Smith asked about the importance of leveraging ARPA monies with the State Revolving Fund, in addition to other potential funding sources. He also asked about debt authorization, the expected timeline on the WWTP influent screen project, and whether completion could be expected by the deadline for determining the use of ARPA funds in 2024.
- Chairman Kruckas expressed fear that the cost of the project might be vastly underestimated.
 - Mr. Schrader reminded the Board of the essential nature of this project, and also reassured them

- that their estimates would be fairly accurate.
- Mr. Schrader showed via visuals that the worst-case scenario featured the Town funding the sewer project with no help from ARPA whatsoever, and that luckily, this was not the situation.
 - Mr. Beckley remarked that the Board needed to decide whether they would be voting that evening to change rates for the February bill, or if they would defer the decision to early 2022, when they could adjust rates for the May bill.
 - Mr. Schrader recommended changing the rates immediately as the better option from a funding standpoint.
 - Finance Committee Chair Lynn Nenni stated the Committee's recommendation to set Tighe & Bond's recommended 2023 rates as soon as possible, as the first part of FY22 has already passed.
 - Mr. Schrader replied that this was a sound idea from a funding perspective.
 - Ms. Nenni expressed the desire for the Town's fund to build up its reserves and start major projects as soon as possible.
 - Mr. Schrader stated that avoiding a \$60/year increase in customer sewer rates was ideal.
 - Chairman Kruckas argued that even smaller increases would pose a hardship to some households with unreasonably high rates.
 - Mr. Schrader replied that households whose sewer rates seem unreasonably high likely have system issues that should be investigated.
 - Ms. Nenni emphasized that Tighe & Bond's numbers are merely estimates, subject to change.
 - Mr. Schrader countered that their estimates are made from years of compiled and thoroughly researched data, arguing that there is a certain degree of predictability with rates such as these.
 - Ms. Nenni inquired what would occur if usage of the water system were to decrease.
 - Mr. Schrader stated that the estimates took this possibility into consideration, accounting for as much as a 4% annual decrease in customer usage, which should be considered unrealistically severe.
 - He also noted that Ware, like most predominantly residential Towns, saw an increase in water usage in 2020, from increased time spent in homes and more frequent handwashing.
 - Mr. Smith asked what impact the closure of the hospital would have on water and sewer rates, as it had been the second-highest rate payer in the Town.
 - Chairman Kruckas answered that the Town was encouraging new growth to compensate for this loss, notably including a marijuana cultivation facility at the Millyard.
 - Mr. Schrader commented that cannabis cultivation was ideal from a water/sewer perspective, as they heavily use water while contributing little to sewer.
 - Ms. Cascio asked what the impact of residents failing to pay their bills may have on the system.
 - Mr. Schrader reinforced that missed payments are also fairly predictable numbers that were accounted for in Tighe & Bond's calculations.
 - Ms. Nenni asked for clarification over whether the chart displayed by Mr. Schrader suggested that rates would stabilize by 2028.
 - Mr. Schrader answered in the affirmative, based on today's calculations.
 - Mr. Smith mentioned that the WWTP assumes SRF Funding in 2026.
 - Mr. Schrader stated that from a funding perspective, an increase in ratepayers is always beneficial.
 - Chairman Kruckas called for a recess so that the Board could deliberate numbers.
 - Mr. Beckley noted that immediately assuming Tighe & Bond's recommended FY23 rates would be an immediate substantial increase in rates.
 - Selectman Talbot agreed, stating that this could be too financially strenuous for residents.
 - Chairman Kruckas also agreed, noting that this was especially the case with the rising costs of other utilities today.
 - Mr. Willette responded by calling for the Board to develop as aggressive a funding plan as possible in order to build a strong reserve.
 - Mr. Smith argued that if ARPA money is committed to funding the WWTP influent screen, rather than relying on rate funding, then immediate assumption of the FY22 rates could be acceptable.
 - Vice-Chairman Morrin interjected that ARPA is meant for the General Fund.

- only benefit half of the Town's taxpayers.
 - Ms. Cascio disagreed, arguing that residents have a right to decent water and infrastructure, which is currently lacking from the Town's hundred-year-old system.
- Chairman Kruckas interjected that residents are moving out of Ware every day because of its high cost of living.
 - Ms. Cascio responded that no one would choose to live in the Town at all if it failed to meet their basic infrastructure needs.
- Mr. Beckley argued that it made no sense to borrow from the Enterprise Fund before taking from the Town's \$1.4 million reserve.
- Mr. Peterson stated that the rate calculations included the Town drawing from its \$1.4 million reserve for scheduled improvements, but not using all of it.
- Chairman Kruckas argued that the cost of the engineering for these projects was unreasonably high.
- Selectman Talbot asked for clarification on what the \$300,000 number represented.
- Ms. Nenni answered that this was the design estimate for the water tank rehab.
- Vice-Chairman Morrin noted that executing the rehab projects would be an additional \$1.4 million for each, on top of the design cost.
- Mr. Smith explained that the cost accounts for a water safety issue resolution, and that the Finance Committee recommended a single package for the rehabilitation of both tanks. Since the new Tighe & Bond estimates were higher than the previous ones, taking from ARPA would be a necessity.
- Mr. Smith emphasized that Tighe & Bond were a company with a great reputation, built on the work they have done for local municipalities. He argued that the Town has continuously jumped between consultants, which explains why the estimates for these projects have failed to be consistent.
- Chairman Kruckas interjected that the cost of all goods and services are inflated and inconsistent at the present moment.
- Mr. Schrader reiterated that Tighe & Bond's studies were extensive and thorough.
- Mr. Peterson recommended that the Board at least approve the design costs for these projects if they were not willing to dedicate funds for the construction phases as well, also noting the Finance Committee's concern regarding the expediency of the WWTP screen project.
- Chairman Kruckas expressed worry that if the screen project is approved, the WWTP will continue to ask for more funding.
 - Selectman McCarthy disagreed, noting that future projects can be handled on an as-needed basis.
- Selectman Talbot expressed belief that the Board should at least authorize funding for the design phase before re-evaluating.
 - Mr. Schrader responded that while design is important, the Town should not overlook the construction phase, as this is needed in the immediate future.
- Mr. LaValley remarked that water quality in the Town has declined significantly over the course of his life, noting that not only has this had an adverse effect on humans, but fish as well.
 - Chairman Kruckas demanded silence from Mr. LaValley.
- Ms. McMartin asked if after spending \$1.4 million on the screen project, there was a risk that the money would have to be spent again if the Plant were to be upgraded or replaced in the coming years.
- Mr. Schrader answered that reconstructing the screen would not be necessary, and that that equipment could be built around when and if the Plant is upgraded.
- Vice-Chairman Morrin recognized the permanence of a sewer system needing to always be operational, never being able to shut off.
- Ms. Nenni expressed the need for a prioritized list to be made of ARPA funding possibilities.
- Mr. LaValley asked about the status of Banas Farm.
 - Chairman Kruckas answered that the property was a "dump," but that this was not the topic of conversation.
- Selectman Talbot stated that she concurred with the Finance Committee.

- Mr. Beckley expressed that utility improvements are a perfectly acceptable use of ARPA funds.
- Chairman Kruckas argued this topic needed to be tabled until further discussion on ARPA was had.
- Selectman Barnes expressed his desire to ensure all the money received from ARPA will be spent.

Selectman Kruckas made the motion to table the hearing until after the discussion on ARPA later in the meeting. Selectman Morrin seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously (5 Yes, 0 No).

- Mr. Schrader noted the need for some future adjustments to be made based on half vs. quarter-year rate adjustments.
- Mr. Smith asked the Board what they planned on using ARPA for, if not the WWTP screen project.
 - Selectman McCarthy spoke in favor of funding the project with ARPA monies, noting the urgency of the project and lack of time for deliberations.
 - Chairman Kruckas asserted that every Town department was eagerly requesting Capital Improvement money, and he was not willing to make guarantees.
- Mr. Smith noted the lack of progress made on discussing this issue since February.
 - Selectman McCarthy responded that she was hopeful they would make progress that evening.
 - Chairman Kruckas asserted that the Board was still not committed to voting on this issue at the meeting.

Old Business

- **ARPA Spending (with Finance Committee)**
 - Ms. Nenni introduced the Finance Committee's recommendation for the Board to approve \$1.5 million from ARPA for the WWTP screen project, in addition to \$300,000 for two water storage tank rehabilitations (on Church Street and Anderson Road).
 - Mr. Beckley noted that the state legislators representing Ware had successfully earmarked funding in the state's ARPA spending for flood prevention at Quarry Street, the Town pool project, and the North Street bridge replacement, totaling \$5 million.
 - Vice-Chairman Morrin questioned whether Climate Improvement money could be used for the water storage tanks.
 - Mr. Beckley answered that this was a possibility.
 - Chairman Kruckas asked about the culvert on Old Poor Farm Road.
 - Mr. Beckley answered that one application for this project was not accepted, but there remained the possibility of a state culvert program.
 - Vice-Chairman Morrin asserted that he disagreed with the Town continuing to take from its General Fund.
 - The Board members took a few moments to individually look through the Finance Committee's list of potential ARPA spending options.
 - Chairman Kruckas asked when the Town might have a better idea of how much money it is to receive from the federal infrastructure bill.
 - Mr. Beckley estimated that this answer could be expected in about one year.
 - Mr. Smith argued that funding Capital Improvements with the General Fund helped to benefit the entire community.
 - Vice-Chairman Morrin disagreed, arguing that the improvements merely represented the Town footing the bills of large companies like Baystate Health.
 - Vice-Chairman Morrin expressed that there are Enterprise Funds for purposes like these.
 - Mr. Smith disagreed, stating that 50% of residents use the Town Sewer, and that borrowing from the Enterprise Funds would raise taxes for all residents.
 - Mr. Willette emphasized that the Finance Committee disagreed with the statements of Vice-Chairman Morrin.
 - Mr. Smith emphasized the importance of the Town investing in its own infrastructure.
 - Chairman Kruckas expressed disagreement with taking drastic measures for projects that would

- Mr. Peterson responded that Baystate is pulling operations out of the hospital very strategically in order to pay as few taxes to the Town as possible.
- Selectman Talbot remarked that the Board is no longer making progress on this discussion.

Selectman Talbot made the motion for the Board of Selectmen to revise the water regulations' rates to: 36.72 Base 5.87 Usage Beginning 11/1/2021, 38.19 Base 6.10 Usage Beginning 11/1/2022, and 41.24 Base 6.59 Usage Beginning 11/1/2023, and that the Board of Selectmen revise the sewer regulations' rates to 50.60 Base 6.04 Usage Beginning 11/1/2021, 58.19 Base 6.94 Usage Beginning 11/1/2022, and 66.92 Base 7.98 Usage Beginning 11/1/2023, and to begin review and discussion on this issue for after July 1, 2022. Selectman Morrin seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously (5-0).

- Ms. Nenni stated that the Finance Committee was satisfied with the Board's decision.
- Selectman Talbot reiterated the need for the Board to further deliberate on this issue after other funding sources had become known.
 - Mr. Beckley agreed with this statement, but also reminded the Board to be sensitive of timing.
- Selectman Talbot noted that the WWTP influent screen is an immediate need that will cost the Town much more in the long run if not addressed now.
- Selectman Talbot requested that the Board table the discussion on ARPA until the December 7 meeting.
- Chairman Kruckas thanked the Finance Committee for all their work.
 - Vice-Chairman Morrin agreed with this statement, while noting his disagreements with the Committee.

Discussion on Main Street Business Grant Applications

- Chairman Kruckas noted that among a recent swath of local Downtown businesses that applied for business grants, only one was accepted (this being Workshop 13, which Chairman Kruckas noted does not pay taxes due to its non-profit status).
- Chairman Kruckas expressed his disappointment, noting that a large motivation behind the ongoing Main Street improvement project was to be able to help support these local shops and restaurants.
- Chairman Kruckas argued that small businesses keep the Town's community spirit alive, citing Nat Falk and Balicki's as local establishments in need of improvements, who have failed to receive any help.
- Vice-Chairman Morrin asserted that the Town should find a way to fund a grant for local businesses itself.
- Chairman Kruckas asked about using ARPA funds to help struggling local businesses.
- Vice-Chairman Morrin stated that finding a way to financially assist the Town's local businesses must be a high priority.
- Selectman Talbot asked whether the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission had grant-writers who could establish this type of proposal.
 - Mr. Beckley answered that they currently do not.
- Selectman Talbot asked if the Town could push the PVPC into supporting this idea.

- Chairman Kruckas expressed hesitation toward approving \$2 million that evening.
- Selectman McCarthy urged her fellow Board members to approve the spending in order to protect the community.
- Chairman Kruckas asked why there was urgency to fund these projects, but not individual taxpayers who need money, such as the struggling businesses on Main Street. He then threatened to remove Mr. LaValley from the room, who was talking over other speakers.
- Selectman McCarthy stated that the Town needed to be a clean community, not one where the sewer backs up.
- Chairman Kruckas stated that he agreed this was a difficult decision.
- Vice-Chairman Morrin asked what the purpose of Enterprise Funds was if not projects like these.
 - Mr. Peterson replied that the Enterprise Fund is meant to be self-sustaining, but the Town has not let it reach that point.
- Mr. LaValley argued that the Town needs its hospital back.
 - Ms. McMartin disagreed, stating that it is time to move on from hoping that the hospital will re-open.
- Mr. Beckley went back to the Finance Committee's list, noting its short length and stating that there is much more detail involved.
 - Ms. McMartin mentioned the list item titled 'Essential Worker Stipends,' and expressed hesitancy regarding its ambiguity. She instead emphasized funding for the WWTP screen, stating that she already knows residents who have had issues with their systems backing up.
- Chairman Kruckas reiterated that residents are leaving the Town because of its high taxes.
- Mr. Peterson asked for confirmation that the Ware Public Schools do not directly pay water/sewer bills.
 - Mr. Beckley answered that this is correct, as the cost is instead taken out of their budget.
- Chairman Kruckas argued that the Town desperately needed to lower its taxes.
- Ms. Nenni stated that taxes would be discussed at the Classification Hearing the following week.
- Selectman McCarthy asked about the possibility of setting a flat rate for seniors and low/fixed income populations.
- Ms. McMartin disputed Chairman Kruckas' argument by pointing out that Ware is a fairly inexpensive Town, especially when compared to communities such as Longmeadow.
- Chairman Kruckas disagreed with this notion.
- Mr. Peterson noted that Ware is a full-service town, which necessitates having higher taxes than similar communities that have volunteer fire departments, smaller police forces, and regionalized schools. He argued that taxes cannot be lowered without cutting services.
- Mr. Willette stated that according to the Town Accountant, each \$200,000 that is eliminated from the General Fund only saves each individual taxpayer 12 cents per year.
- Chairman Kruckas raised the idea of utilizing the Town's free cash to lower taxes.
 - Mr. Willette pointed out that this year's free cash is being used for building demolition.
- Mr. Smith noted that there is free cash left over from the school transit controversy.
 - Ms. Nenni stated that there is a long-term plan in the works for this money.
- Selectman Barnes inquired whether the Town could tax Baystate Health for the hospital grounds after they close the last remaining medical unit, as the facility will no longer be an active medical center.
 - Mr. Beckley noted that this would be a question to ask the Assessors at the following week's Tax Classification Hearing.

- five members may be too many.
- Vice-Chairman Morrin noted the importance of having the committee consist of an odd number of members.

Selectman Talbot made the motion to establish a three-member Disability Awareness Committee. Selectman Kruckas seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Selectman Morrin made the motion to appoint Steven Hawk and Thomas Barnes to the Disability Awareness Committee. Selectman Kruckas seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously (5-0).

- **Discussion on Forming Committee for Pool and Recreation Center**
 - Chairman Kruckas expressed the Board's desire for more frequent updates on the status of these projects, both planning-wise and financially.
 - Selectman McCarthy agreed that there is a lot of financial activity involved in these projects that needs to be communicated to the Board.
 - Chairman Kruckas expressed his wish for the pool and recreation center to be part of a multi-purpose facility that can be used by the community at large.

Selectman Kruckas made the motion to set up a five-member Pool/Recreation Center Committee. Selectman Morrin seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously (5-0).

- Mr. Bergeron commented that if the pool was constructed near the schools, it could be utilized by swim teams. He also noted that there is currently a lack of recreation available to local youth.
- Selectman McCarthy noted that the construction of a pool on the Public Schools campus was voted down several years ago in Town Meeting, but that it could potentially be brought up again. She also expressed the need for community engagement in developing this project.

Comments and Concerns of Citizens

- Ms. Cascio requested that the Board consider forming a 'Friends of the Rail Trail,' group to stimulate community engagement with the Rail Trail.
 - Selectman McCarthy stated that she appreciated citizens reaching back out for sources of community engagement and activities that have been lost over the years.
- Selectman Barnes expressed his displeasure with how much of Mr. Beckley's schedule is spent coordinating Transportation matters with the Quaboag Connector.
 - Mr. Beckley responded that a Transportation Supervisor has been hired and will be starting on November 29 to oversee the Connector's day-to-day operations, which will take much of it out of the hands of the Town Manager's Office.

Town Manager Report

- Mr. Beckley noted that the Tax Classification Hearing was scheduled for November 23.
- Selectman Barnes provided the update that the big screen TV for the meeting room would not be arriving until January due to supply chain issues.
- Mr. Beckley provided an update that the Town continues to wait on the state's approval regarding the Board's proposed name change from 'Board of Selectmen,' to 'Select Board.'

- Mr. Beckley proposed that two years of ARPA funding could assist with this grant-writing process.
- Mr. Bergeron argued that many prospective Downtown business owners are kept out by the high upfront cost of needed improvements to vacant storefronts, with sprinkler system costs being a major issue currently.
- Ms. McMartin inquired about the possibility of the Town Planner seeking and applying for these types of grants.
 - Chairman Kruckas responded that coordinating and writing grants requires a high amount of expertise and time, and that the Town Planner is already busy as is.
- Vice-Chairman Morrin expressed that contributing a small amount of money can make a world of difference to Downtown establishments, and in turn, the entire community.
- Ms. Cascio asked where recent funding used to assist certain building rehabilitations Downtown has come from.
 - Vice-Chairman Morrin answered that the Downtown includes what the Board refers to as an 'S&B' District, which allows for funding that is typically only available for housing to be used on any buildings.

New Businesses

- **Discussion on Section 12 Liquor License Fee Renewal Hardships**

- Mr. Nolan explained to the Board that his office had received a request from a local business for the Board to waive Section 12 (On-Premises) Liquor License fees, as they had done the previous year, and was expecting more requests soon, as many local bars, clubs, and restaurants are still struggling with the negative impacts of the pandemic on their business.
 - Selectman Talbot noted that she felt this was a good idea to benefit local establishments, and that the revenue to the Town lost from the waiving of fees the previous year was overall not significant.

Selectman Talbot made the motion to waive the Section 12 Liquor License Renewal Fees for any Licensee who could produce a hardship letter to the Board. Selectman Morrin seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously (5 Yes, 0 No).

- **Taxes, Free Cash, and Town Meeting**

- Mr. Beckley explained that neither himself nor the Finance Committee recommended lowering the tax rate with Free Cash, but it was possible for the Board of Selectmen to approve this at Town Meeting if they wished.
- He added that although the Town does hold \$2.8 million, it is not required to be spent, and could instead go to stabilization and the reserve.


- **Appointments- Disability Awareness Committee**

- Selectman Talbot pointed out that the Board needed to vote to re-establish this committee first before it could begin appointing members. She suggested establishing a committee of five members, with one designated as the coordinator.
 - Selectman Barnes mentioned that committees like this can be hard to fill and argued that

- The Ware Flair Committee set up Holiday decorations throughout the Downtown area and would also be holding a Holiday drive-thru event at Grenville Park on December 11. The committee would be accepting donations, sent to Ware Town Hall (attn: Chris Nolan)
 - Chairman Kruckas also encouraged residents to donate to the Police Department's Christmas for Kids program.
- The Main Street project is ongoing and rapidly making progress, with new traffic signals at its intersections with West Street, North Street, and Church Street.
 - The decorative lights would unfortunately not be lit until January.
 - The unfinished patch of curb in front of Hanna Devine's Restaurant would be finished in the coming week.
- The whistleblower line is now active.
 - Vice-Chairman Morrin clarified that the Board sought establishing an answering team for this line consisting of the Town Manager, HR Director, Chairman, and Vice-Chairman.
 - Selectman Barnes inquired about when the Board could expect to see the job posting for HR Director.
 - Mr. Beckley answered that this would be posted in the near future.
- Selectman McCarthy asked about the status of the Town's brownfields grant application.
 - Mr. Beckley answered that the positive news regarding this was that the Town did receive some money from this grant, making Ware and Belchertown the only two towns in Western Mass to receive it.
 - However, the unfortunate news was that the Town was only awarded half of what it had requested.
- Ms. Cascio encouraged all to attend the Football game on the evening before Thanksgiving between Ware and Quaboag Regional High School.
- Ms. Cascio inquired about the status of the intersection of South and Main Streets, which reportedly included a right turn too tight for large trucks to comfortably make.
 - Mr. Beckley answered that one parking spot was removed in order to help alleviate this situation, but it still appears to be an issue worthy of investigating.

Adjournment

Selectman Talbot made the motion at 9:36 p.m. to Adjourn the Regular Meeting. Selectman Morrin seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Attest: 

Christopher J. Nolan
Executive Assistant to Town Manager

