



Board of Selectmen

Ware Town Hall, Meeting Room, 126 Main Street

Regular Meeting Minutes – Tuesday, December 7, 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 H. Barnes, Selectman Nancy J. Talbot, Chairman Keith J. Kruckas, Vice-Chairman John J. Morrin, Town Manager Stuart B. Beckley, Executive Assistant Christopher J. Nolan, Police Chief Shawn Crevier, Lynn Nenni, Ken Willette, Terrance Smith, Sarah Chaplin, Margaret Sullivan, Melissa Stevens, Alex Bergeron

Absent: None

Present via Zoom: Stanley Ciukaj from Ware Community Television

Meeting Opened by Chairman Kruckas at 7:00 PM.

Opening Remarks, Announcements, and Agenda review by Chair

Selectman Barnes expressed appreciation for the Town's festive Christmas decorations, including those set up Downtown by the Ware Flair Committee, as well as those on people's private residences.

Vice-Chairman Morrin thanked the Fire Department for their fast response time to a recent incident.

Consent Agenda- None

Scheduled Appearances

- **Discussion with Resource Waste, Host Community Agreement**
 - Mr. John Farese (owner of Resource Waste, located at 198 East Street, formerly Tri County Recycling) introduced himself and his business.
 - Resource Waste is a construction debris recycler that deals with materials including wood, concrete, aggregate, and plastic.
 - After recyclable materials are removed from the aggregate, the remaining waste material is held in Ware before being trucked to landfills in Ohio.
 - Mr. Farese explained that he was looking for his business to expand operations, and had met with Mr. Beckley and Chairman Kruckas about specific plans.
 - Chairman Kruckas added that Resource Waste does not use many roads in Town, as its location is more commonly accessed via Hardwick and the Brookfields. He referred to Mr. Farese's proposals as a 'win-win' for the Town.

- Selectman McCarthy expressed support for Mr. Farese's business, and recommended that the Town partner with it for future Bulky Waste disposal events.
- Mr. Farese emphasized that Resource Waste is not affiliated with the former business located at that site, and that it has been under new ownership for the past two years. He added that the company used responsible trucking routes and would never enter the MSW business.
- Selectman Talbot asked if sites like the company's property in Ware could be found elsewhere in the State.
 - Mr. Farese answered that a different facility in Boston specializes in separating re-usable materials from the construction waste, and that the aggregate arrives in Ware before being transferred to Ohio landfills.
- Mr. Beckley asked the Board if they wished to seek input from residents or potentially set up a committee to discuss establishing a Host Community Agreement for Resource Waste.
- Mr. Farese recognized that the expansion would be a long process with a high number of authorizations needed, hearings held, and opportunities for public input given. He also noted that agreements held by Resource Waste with the municipalities of Holyoke and Wilbraham could be used for reference.
- Chairman Kruckas stated that the Board wished to establish a five-member subcommittee for this topic, once again describing the proposals as a 'win-win' for the Town.

Selectman Talbot voted to authorize the formation of a five-member subcommittee on developing a Host Community Agreement for Resource Waste. Selectman Morrin seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Old Business

- **Update from Finance Committee & Discussion on ARPA Funds, Police Chief**
 - Chief Crevier appeared before the Board to propose that each member of the Town's police force be awarded \$10,000 from ARPA Funds.
 - He claimed that his officers have worked honorably and tirelessly each day, despite the risk posed to them since the start of the pandemic, and that there have been multiple COVID scares and 'domino effects,' on the force from officers falling ill or coming into contact with the virus.
 - A \$10,000 bonus for each officer would equal approximately \$2.77/hour of retroactive hazard pay for each officer dating back to March 2020.
 - Chief Crevier also noted the state of emergency due to COVID, and argued that the Police Department has offered consistent, high-quality service to the community through all of it.
 - Vice-Chairman Morrin mentioned that there have been essential workers throughout the pandemic from several Town departments, including Fire, EMTs, Teachers, Wastewater workers, and more.
 - Selectman McCarthy agreed that all these workers have been essential and should be considered as such.
 - Chairman Kruckas interjected, arguing that workers from some of these departments have had paid time off, while others have not.
 - Selectman McCarthy argued that even agreeing to only provide the bonus to essential workers who had not received paid time off would still prove to be a very large sum of money that the Town would be obligated to pay several individuals.
 - Chief Crevier made the argument that police have been frontline workers in one of the most vulnerable positions throughout the pandemic.
 - Selectman McCarthy retorted that the same could be said of people in several other occupations, namely nurses.
 - Chairman Kruckas argued that Police, Fire, and parts of the DPW have been the Departments whose workers have had no opportunities for paid time off or remote work in the past twenty-one months, and that other essential workers are not the Town's responsibility to compensate (specifically stating that if teachers wished for hazard pay, it should be taken from the ARPA money allotted to the Schools, not the Town).

- Mr. Beckley stated that if the Board wished to use ARPA money for essential worker bonuses, it would need to develop a plan for how much would specifically be allotted to each department with essential workers.
- Vice-Chairman Morrin remarked on the importance of ensuring the money is distributed equitably among the departments.
- Mr. Beckley stated the need for the Board to agree upon a definition for 'essential workers,' seeing as this term has been used very broadly to describe a massive percentage of workers in both the public and private sectors.
- Chairman Kruckas asserted that the Town should only be concerned with essential Town employees, and requested that Mr. Beckley provide the Board with a thorough list of employees (by department) that have been essential and fully on-site throughout the pandemic.
- Mr. Beckley noted that the current list of possible ARPA spending options was developed by the Finance Committee, and it did not include this proposal. He also noted that the Committee's list is not currently set to balance.
- Chairman Kruckas argued that the Board needed to be provided with the aforementioned list of workers before further action could be taken.

Selectman McCarthy made the motion to table the discussion on ARPA funding of essential worker bonuses until after the Board had been provided with a comprehensive list of essential workers by department. Selectman Barnes seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously (5-0).

- Chief Crevier additionally updated the Board that the PD had been awarded body-camera grants, and that his department was currently struggling with the state's tighter training requirements for part-time officers, and the shrinking police workforce.
- Selectman Talbot asked for an update on the WestComm regional dispatch facility.
- Chief Crevier announced that the transition to the regional dispatch had been made, and had been mostly successful despite a few bumps. He also added that the Department was having repairs done on its fingerprint scanner, which had been having some issues.
- Mr. Beckley noted that the Fire Department and EMTs have also been extremely busy with high recent call volumes, and that the regional dispatch system as a whole was still having some of its issues tweaked.
- Chairman Kruckas brought the discussion back to ARPA spending, and argued that some of it should be used for the Town to hire a grant writer.
- Selectman McCarthy agreed, noting that this was an important issue from a public health standpoint.
- Chairman Kruckas argued that the Town is currently missing out on potential grant awards by not having a person designated to coordinate them. He asserted the importance of hiring a seasoned Grants Coordinator with a proven track record, rather than someone the Town would need to train.
- Selectman Barnes argued that another area on which the Town needs to focus is engineering.
- Selectman McCarthy expressed appreciation for the list developed by the Finance Committee, noting that it leaves enough leeway from a budgeting standpoint that items can be arranged as necessary by category.
- Mr. Smith explained that the list had been categorized during a meeting between himself, Mr. Devin Peterson, Selectman Talbot, and Mr. Beckley, and that the next step would be to calculate estimates for each item, after which discussions with the Capital Planning Committee can be held.
- Chairman Kruckas stated that the Board's foremost two priorities were currently
 - Engineering for the influent screen system at the Wastewater Treatment Plant
 - The hiring of a Grants Coordinator
- Mr. Beckley asked if the Board was seeking the coordinator position as part-time or full-time.
 - Chairman Kruckas answered that the Board wished to see this be a full-time position for at least the first year.
- Ms. Nenni asked if the Grants Coordinator job would be considered a permanent position.

- Mr. Beckley answered that no, this would be a grant-funded position only to be utilized for a given number of years.
- Mr. Willette asked for clarification on whether the position would be a 'Grant Writer' or 'Grants Coordinator,' and that this needed to be decided in advance.
 - Chairman Kruckas answered that 'Grants Coordinator,' was a more accurate description, as Town departments are currently busy and should not be expected to write and coordinate grants by themselves in addition to all their other duties.
- Ms. Nenni inquired for what funding the Board was specifically seeking to have grants written.
 - Vice-Chairman Morrin cited the list provided at the previous meeting.
- Ms. Nenni asserted that the Board should not frame the job as a primarily-writing position, but should instead actively seek out a candidate who understands ARPA.
- Vice-Chairman Morrin interjected that ARPA was not the only source of money being discussed, as the Town was also expecting some money from the federal infrastructure package, as well as a number of other sources.
- Mr. Smith noted that the monetary values assigned to each item would be arbitrary until after the budgeting process has concluded.
- Ms. Nenni emphasized the importance of prioritizing specific items so that none are neglected or forgotten.
- Chairman Kruckas expressed that the Board needed monetary estimates before they could take any further action.
- Mr. Beckley revealed that the WWTP screen design estimate was \$350,000, while the Grants Coordinator position would likely total about \$150,000 in two years.
- Selectman Talbot reiterated that the Town needed to hire a qualified, experienced individual for the Grants Coordinator position.
- Selectman Barnes remarked that his experience working with grant writers has proven to him that the most successful ones seek the 'low-hanging fruit,' before anything else.
- Ms. Stevens asked how the position would be posted, and who specifically would be hiring for it.
 - Mr. Beckley answered that the normal hiring process would take place, and he would look into having the job posted on the Town website, the State municipal job database, and Indeed.

Selectman Talbot made the motion to authorize immediate action for the hiring of a grant writer and the engineering of the WWTP screen, while tabling the discussion on essential personnel matters until further investigations had been completed. Selectman Barnes seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously (5-0).

- Mr. Smith acknowledged the importance of keeping track of the approved spending, specifically recognizing that ~\$500,000 had just been approved, and that a running list should be made for continuation at future meetings.
- Ms. Nenni reminded the Board that they would need an estimated \$1.5 million to cover the entire cost of the WWTP screen project.
 - Mr. Beckley noted that the Town was seeking another grant that could free up a large portion of this allotted money to be used on other matters if received.

New Business

- **Approval of 2022 Renewals of Alcoholic, Common Victualler, Entertainment, Automatic Amusement Devices, Lodging, and Car Dealer Licenses**

Selectman Talbot made the motion to approve the 2022 License Renewals as laid out by Executive Assistant and Licensing Clerk Chris Nolan in his Memo to the Board. All licenses were approved, with the exception of License #3731 (Wicked Wings Ware Inc. d/b/a Wicked Wings Co.) which permanently closed in October

2021. Selectman Barnes seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Comments and Concerns of Citizens- Request for Modification of Parking Rules

- Ms. Sullivan appeared before the Board with a letter requesting the Town adjust its Winter parking rules. She discussed having contacted other local towns, including Palmer, Warren, and Belchertown, all of which only apply a temporary on-street parking ban during snow events, rather than a ban which lasts all season, as Ware's does.
- Ms. Sullivan expressed that her driveway and the nearby street are not safe to walk on when they are glazed over in ice, and that her and other residents would not need to face this hazard as frequently if the Town adopted similar Winter parking rules to its neighbors, where residents could be alerted via the CODERed alert system whenever the parking ban was being activated.
- Ms. Sullivan argued that there is no need for Ware's Winter Parking Ban to be as strict as it is.
- Chairman Kruckas retorted that the ban is strict because of the numerous issues faced by the Police and DPW during this season as they deal with unpredictable weather. He stated that plowing is done on an 'as-needed' basis, and that getting ahold of every resident to alert them of a temporary parking ban would be extremely difficult, especially given the CODERed system's mixed reliability.
- Chief Crevier added that 2020-2021 was the Town's smoothest Winter yet in terms of parking compliance, but that inevitably, some people would follow the rules while others would not.
- Chairman Kruckas expressed that when plows need to wait for vehicles to be moved or towed, the snow continues piling up on the streets, which makes for a challenging situation for first responders.
- Ms. Sullivan added that first responders are also challenged by the inconsistent plowing schedule.
- Chief Crevier noted that the police consistently make every effort to contact a vehicle's owner before having it towed, as towing vehicles is a nuisance for all parties involved.
- Chairman Kruckas complained of new regulations on sidewalk width forcing streets to become narrower than they once were.
- Ms. Chaplin introduced herself, adding that she is a resident of Park Street who understands all sides of this issue, but expressed desire to see a discount for households with multiple vehicles, as it costs her family \$90 to purchase municipal lot parking passes for their three vehicles.
- Ms. Chaplin also added in regard to the idea of changing the seasonal parking ban to a temporary one activated during inclement weather that she feels the fear of being towed would be enough to motivate most residents to move their cars.
- Chairman Kruckas agreed that most people obeyed the policy, but that the minority who would not posed a problem.
- Ms. Sullivan stated that there are also instances where an event, such as a funeral, causes parking to fill up so much that people who paid for parking permits still cannot use the lot.
- One resident introduced himself as a landlord in the Downtown area, and argued to the Board that not all local streets have sidewalks, and that the Board was effectively forcing his tenants to walk long distances on the street to their vehicles in harsh, icy, and hazardous conditions.
- Chairman Kruckas retorted that when residents choose to buy or rent a home that lacks off-street parking, that is their individual problem.
- Ms. Chaplin responded that by this logic, the Chairman was effectively telling people not to live in a number of historic Downtown homes that in many cases were built over 150 years ago.
- Chairman Kruckas argued that the conversation had strayed away from the topic at hand.
- A resident asked about the legal liability if someone were to slip, fall, and injure themselves on untreated sidewalks or roadways while walking to or from their vehicle.
 - Mr. Beckley answered that if the person falls in the street, it is the Town's liability, whereas if they fall on a resident's property (or the sidewalk in front of it), the liability falls with the property owner.
- Ms. Chaplin mentioned that when Downtown was first constructed, cars were not an issue, but today, as

someone interested in buying a home Downtown, her main personal hesitation was the parking situation. She also added that the DPW has been known to plow snow to the incorrect side of Park Ave, which makes matters more challenging for residents.

- Chairman Kruckas asked Mr. Beckley to discuss this matter with the DPW Director.
- Chairman Kruckas argued that overall, the Town is at a loss for parking until more can be added.
- Mr. Beckley asked if the Board wished to take action on establishing a discount for households with multiple vehicles.
 - Chairman Kruckas responded that this idea could be beneficial to some residents, but it was not necessarily practical or in the best interest of the Board to approve.
- Mr. Beckley answered that the only potential alternative he saw was to communicate with businesses and organizations Downtown about letting residents use their parking lots, but this might be legally risky for them from a liability standpoint.
- The Board took no action on the matter.


Town Manager Report

- Mr. Beckley explained that Ludlow Construction will be wrapping up its project Downtown for the Winter within the coming week.
- The Ware Flair Committee's Holiday Drive-Thru would be held from 5-8 PM at Grenville Park on Saturday, December 11, with a rain date of Saturday, December 18. A new traffic pattern would help to alleviate the congestion caused by the Knights of Columbus' Halloween Drive-Thru event in October.
- The State would be receiving \$5 billion in ARPA funds, with some expected to be earmarked to the Town for matters such as road repairs and improvements.
- Mr. Beckley extended a warm welcome to two new personnel additions- Janine Leis as Social Services Coordinator for the Senior Center, and Michael Dambrosio as Transportation Operations Supervisor for the Quaboag Connector.
- Mr. Beckley stated that he would be communicating with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission about the Board's approval for a Grants Coordinator position with the Town.
- COVID case numbers are rapidly increasing in the community, but fortunately, hospitalizations are on a downward trajectory. The Ware Public Schools were in the process of hosting multiple vaccine clinics.
- Chairman Kruckas thanked the Urban Foundation and the Opalinskis for their generous donation to the Rail Trail.
- Selectman Talbot noted the recent closure and analysis of the Hospital survey open to residents.
- Selectman McCarthy asked if the Town had reached out to Baystate Health for assistance with purchasing a needed new ambulance.
 - Chief Gagnon confirmed that Baystate has assisted the Town with some grant money.
- Chief Crevier asked if there was any update from Hardwick regarding ambulance services.
 - Chairman Kruckas answered that a 6-month update was expected soon, but the anticipated results were not encouraging.
 - Chief Gagnon remarked that his EMTs were helped by the fact that they were now only responsible for serving half of the Town of Hardwick, especially given that Ware was still receiving the same payment amount that was decided on when the agreement would have had Ware's ambulance service serving the entire Town.
 - However, Chief Gagnon also noted that forcing the Town's ambulances to make frequent trips to Hardwick has had a disruptive effect on response times, and has resulted in the Town needing to call in assistance from other neighboring communities more often than it should.
 - Chairman Kruckas agreed that the constant travel of Ware's EMTs between Ware, Hardwick, and Baystate Wing in Palmer was not reasonable or sustainable.
 - Chief Gagnon argued that Hardwick severely needs to cultivate its own ambulance service.

- Selectman Barnes noted that Baystate is expected to close down the Radiology Lab at Mary Lane Hospital in the near future, and asked if the closure of the final active medical unit within the facility meant the Town could remove the Hospital grounds' tax exempt status.
 - Chairman Kruckas argued that a meeting needs to be held on this topic specifically, as the Board has not yet received any clear answer on the matter.
- Chief Gagnon wished to tell a positive story, and discussed how the Fire Department's UTV recently stopped working, but while they had initially expected they would need to deal with the expensive cost of a new one, the mechanical skills of Parks Director John Piechota and Mr. Moriarty were enough to fix the vehicle and save the Town hundreds of dollars.
- Mr. Bergeron asked if the vacant lot on Main Street where a building was demolished last year could be converted into additional parking.
 - Chairman Kruckas answered that he thought this was an excellent idea.
 - Selectman McCarthy disagreed, arguing that the Downtown area needs more green space, and that a Town Common area would be much more beneficial.
 - Chairman Kruckas retorted that he felt added parking was more important than green space.

Adjournment

Selectman Talbot made the motion at 8:25 p.m. to Adjourn the Regular Meeting and enter Executive Session in accordance with MGL Chapter 30(a)2 Contract Negotiations, not to return to Open Session. Selectman Morrin seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Attest: 
Christopher J. Nolan
Executive Assistant to Town Manager

