



Board of Selectmen

Ware Town Hall, Meeting Room, 126 Main Street
Regular Meeting Minutes – Tuesday, March 1, 2022 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, Fire Chief Christopher Gagnon, Liz Whynott from Tapestry Health, Briana Anair, Katlyn McGuigan, Lisa Bail, Edward Porzuczek, S.K. Robinson, Terrance Smith, Alex Bergeron, Stephen Bell, Katrina Velle, Jennifer McMartin, Cathy Cascio, Jack Cascio

Absent: Selectman Caitlin M. McCarthy

Present via Zoom: Stanley Ciukaj from Ware Community Television, Eileen Kennedy from Ware River News, Lisa Jasinski from National Grid, Chris Desjardins

Meeting Opened by Chairman Kruckas at 7:00 PM.

Opening Remarks, Announcements, and Agenda review by Chair

Selectman Barnes thanked the Police Department for their recent uncovering of a narcotics operation in Town.

Consent Agenda

- Approval of January 18, 2022, and February 1, 2022 Meeting Minutes
- Approval of One-Day Liquor License: Workshop 13- Friday, February 18, 2022, 6:30-10:30PM
- Approval of One-Day Liquor License: Workshop 13- Sunday, February 27, 2022, 2:00-4:00PM
- Approval of One-Day Liquor License: Workshop 13- Sunday, March 13, 2022, 7:00-10:30PM
- Approval of One-Day Liquor License: Workshop 13- Friday, March 18, 2022, 6:30-10:30PM
- Approval of One-Day Liquor License: Workshop 13- Friday, April 15, 2022, 6:30-10:30PM
- Special Event Permit Application: St. Aloysius Catholic School 5k- Saturday, May 14, 2022, 9:00AM-12:00PM @ Grenville Park

Selectman Talbot made the motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Selectman Barnes seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 4 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Selectman McCarthy).

Mr. Beckley recommended that the Board move on to the approvals under 'New Business' to fill the time before the public hearing at 7:10.

Chairman Kruckas introduced the application by Mr. SK Robinson to serve on the Housing Authority.

Selectman Morrin made the motion to appoint SK Robinson to the Ware Housing Authority. Selectman Barnes seconded the motion. Selectman Talbot called for discussion before voting.

Selectman Talbot noted that Mr. Robinson has applied for the vacant position of the state appointee, and strongly recommended setting his term for five years, in agreement with the State's procedure. Chairman Kruckas agreed that a five-year term was fine.

The motion passed on a vote of 4 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Selectman McCarthy).

Chairman Kruckas introduced the applications by Briana Anair and Katlyn McGuigan to serve on the Youth/Community Center Committee, thanking them for taking initiative on behalf of the community.

Selectman Morrin made the motion to appoint Briana Anair and Katlyn McGuigan to the Youth/Community Center Committee. Selectman Barnes seconded the motion. Selectman Kruckas asked what the term would be for these appointments. Selectman Morrin suggested three years, with Selectman Talbot expressing agreement. The motion passed on a vote of 4 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Selectman McCarthy).

Chairman Kruckas introduced the Town Meeting Warrant for approval.

Selectman Talbot directed the Board to the guidelines provided by Mr. Beckley.

Selectman Talbot made the motion to approve the opening of the Town Meeting Warrant, with articles to be submitted by departments and/or the public between March 2nd and March 31st at noon. The warrant will be placed on the agenda for approval at the April 5th Board meeting. Selectman Morrin seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 4 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Selectman McCarthy).

Selectman Morrin suggested approving the Easement Release next.

Selectman Talbot noted that Article II of the May 2021 Town Meeting had been approved by the Board, called for the Town to terminate its easement with the owners of 127 Church Street.

Selectman Talbot made the motion for the Board to turn over to Attorney Maynard a certified copy of the vote to release the easement. Selectman Morrin seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 4 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Selectman McCarthy).

Selectman Talbot suggested moving to set the public hearing date.

Selectman Talbot made the motion to set the public hearing date for Tuesday, March 15, 2022 at 7:05 PM on the application for Liquor License #0012-RS-1326, CV License #5, previously held by GNK, Inc. d/b/a Astronaut Pizza House to be transferred to Yostina Farag d/b/a Adam's Pizza. Selectman Morrin seconded the motion. Selectman Talbot asked whether this transaction should be classified as a transfer of license, or as an application for a new license. Mr. Nolan responded that the ABCC indicated that the circumstances could favorably be classified as a license transfer. The motion passed on a vote of 4 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Selectman McCarthy).

Scheduled Appearances

- **7:10 PM- Public Hearing for National Grid Pole Petition (#30513595- Church Street)**
 - Lisa Jasinski introduced the petition, which calls for a new pole to be installed near the corner of Church Street and East Main Street. The petition does not involve the alteration or removal of any existing poles.

Selectman Talbot made the motion to approve the pole petition with the information that was provided by National Grid. Selectman Morrin seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 4 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Selectman McCarthy).

- **Ware Public Schools- Update on Masking/COVID Protocols**
 - Chairman Christopher Desjardins of the School Committee announced that the indoor mask mandate in Ware schools would be ending on March 7th in response to relaxed guidance from the state. Masks will still be required on school buses and in the nurse's offices, but optional during classes and athletics.
 - Chairman Kruckas asked if anyone in attendance had questions. None were had.
- **Board of Health- Update on Harm Reduction Programs & COVID-19 Test Kits**
 - Ms. Liz Whynott, Director of Harm Reduction at Tapestry Health, introduced herself and the organization to the Board.
 - Ms. Whynott gave a presentation on Tapestry and harm reduction.
 - She stated that Tapestry works with individuals reliant on substances (with an emphasis on users of heroin).
 - In the past 15 years, Tapestry's harm reduction services have gone from being available exclusively in Northampton, to being offered in various communities across Western Mass.
 - Ms. Whynott stated that Tapestry does not promote drug use, but rather keeps individuals as safe and healthy as possible while they continue to be reliant on substances.
 - Some of the various services offered by Tapestry include overdose prevention and education, syringe access and disposal, testing for bloodborne pathogens, and referrals for additional treatment and care.
 - Ms. Whynott stated that a strong pool of evidence indicates the positive outcomes and effectiveness of harm reduction programs such as the ones offered by Tapestry.
 - Selectman Barnes noted that he had seen a moving piece from Tapestry years ago that documented substance use as a serious issue.
 - Selectman Talbot asked if the Board of Health would be voting to engage Tapestry's services.
 - Ms. Grammarossa answered that the organization was having a similar discussion with the Board of Health, but no vote had been taken on the matter.
 - Mr. Cascio voiced his support for the programs offered by Tapestry.
 - Mr. Smith asked what types of resources Tapestry would need from the Town in order to operate here.
 - Ms. Whynott responded that the answer is different in each community, and that Tapestry's work would be a collaboration between the organization and community members.
 - Ms. Cascio spoke of the importance of these organizations prioritizing mental health.
 - Selectman Barnes asked if the pandemic had exacerbated the number of individuals using substances, and if Tapestry also sought to prevent doctors from overprescribing opiates to patients.
 - Ms. Grammarossa answered that yes, the recent rise in overdose deaths indicated such, and that while over-prescription is an issue, forcing doctors to stop prescribing opiates often leads to opioid-addicted patients switching to heroin.
 - Chairman Kruckas thanked the representatives from Tapestry for their informative presentation.
 - Mr. Desmond of the Board of Health discussed the unpredictability of the ongoing pandemic, and recommended that the Selectmen dedicate \$100,000 from ARPA funds to support public health measures for the Town's vulnerable populations.

- Chairman Kruckas expressed hesitation with purchasing COVID test kits upfront, given the unpredictability of the virus' future.
- Ms. McMartin clarified that the money would not go to purchasing test kits upfront, but rather would be treated as a reserve fund for addressing public health issues as they appeared.
- Chairman Kruckas stated that the Town wrongfully gave away test kits to non-residents after receiving them from the state in December.
 - Mr. Bell denied that there was widespread distribution of the initial tests to non-residents, noting that himself and other Town personnel who staffed the hand-out event were actively checking IDs to confirm Ware residency before any person could receive their kits.
- Vice-Chairman Morrin noted the importance of strategic purchasing, as opposed to buying in bulk and accumulating surpluses.
- Selectman Talbot expressed her support for the Board of Health's recommendation.
- Ms. McMartin stated that the Board of Health was fully supportive of the work done by Tapestry, as well.
- Chairman Kruckas asked if any of the proposed public health earmark would go to Tapestry.
 - Mr. Beckley responded that it potentially could, but that Marijuana Impact Fees would be a better option for funding Tapestry's programs.

Old Business

- **Discussion on Hardwick Ambulance Agreement**
 - Selectman Barnes noted that the 90-day mark to not renew the agreement would be expiring at the end of the month.

Selectman Barnes made the motion not to renew the Town's ALS agreement with Hardwick after its expiration on June 30, 2022. Selectman Morrin seconded the motion. Selectman Kruckas stated that Ware had done more than its fair share to assist its neighbor, but could not continue to strain its EMS staff. The motion passed on a vote of 4 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Selectman McCarthy).

- Ms. McMartin asked if the Town would be missing out on any revenue from not renewing the agreement with Hardwick.
 - Chief Gagnon answered yes, but that ending the agreement was needed to help reduce the current unreasonably high call volume, noting that the combination of the pandemic and the hospital closure has placed his department in a difficult position.
 - Chief Gagnon also stated that ending the agreement would not resolve the issues of being short-staffed with high call volume, and that the Town needed to execute constructive staffing solutions.
 - Vice-Chairman Morrin called on Mr. Beckley and the Finance Committee to determine possible solutions.

Comments and Concerns of Citizens

- Selectman Barnes asked for an update on the status of ordering drones for use by various Town departments.
 - Mr. Beckley responded that plenty of research had been done on both purchasing and funding for drones, but nothing had been ordered yet.
 - Chairman Kruckas stated that he felt too little progress had been made on this issue given how long it had been discussed.
- Vice-Chairman Morrin asked about the status of youth swim lessons for the upcoming Summer.
 - Mr. Beckley responded that the Town was considering partnering with Belchertown or Wilbraham to utilize their sites.
 - Vice-Chairman Morrin asked when the Board could expect a definitive answer on this subject.

- Mr. Beckley responded that this should be arranged by the end of the month.
- Vice-Chairman Morrin asked for an update on the Blighted Building Bylaw.
 - Mr. Beckley responded that this bylaw would be voted on at the May Town Meeting.
- Ms. McMartin asked for an update on the Town's departmental audits.
 - Vice-Chairman Morrin responded that they were still in search of the right accountant for the job, and that this was a high priority of the Board.
- Mr. Smith argued for the Board to prioritize public health issues with some of its available ARPA funds.
 - Chairman Kruckas agreed, but stated his hesitancy for allocating large sums of money before determining if the Town will receive a separate grant for the Wastewater Treatment Plant screen project.
- Mr. Smith expressed frustration with the Board, arguing that they were deflecting responsibility onto other public officials by not taking action.
 - Chairman Kruckas stated that Mr. Smith should have filed papers to run for a seat on the Board if he was dissatisfied with its leadership.

Town Manager Report

Budget binders are in the process of being prepared.

The Pathfinder Regional Vocational Technical High School budget meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 9th, with refreshments. All interested parties are invited to attend.

The Board was invited to the Eagle Scout Court of Honor Ceremony hosted by Troop 281 to honor two new local recipients of scouting's highest honor.

The Planning & Community Development Department will be inviting local business owners to stop by Town Hall for help with applying for the State's OneStop grant on the afternoon of Wednesday, March 2nd.

Chairman Kruckas asked why the traffic light for drivers travelling West on Route 9 at the intersection of Main, West, and West Main Streets turns red so frequently, when drivers continuing straight never encounter oncoming traffic. He asked Mr. Beckley to look into arranging for this light to only turn red when the pedestrian crossing signal was activated.

- Mr. Beckley stated that he would look into this.

Selectman Talbot asked for an update on the closing of Mary Lane Hospital.

- Mr. Beckley responded that the Town was waiting to hear back on the results of Baystate's environmental impact study, and that a meeting would be held with the Assessors next week regarding the grounds' tax-exempt status.

Verizon conducted a balloon fly behind Big Y earlier that day.

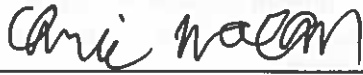
The Town was making personnel adjustments at the Wastewater Treatment Plant in response to a letter of noncompliance received by the State Department of Environmental Protection.

Chairman Kruckas stated that he had concerns regarding staff retention which he wanted to see discussed in a future meeting.

Mr. Cascio extended gratitude to multiple Town personnel, including two Water Department workers who assisted him with a burst pipe, and the Police officers who arrested an erratic driver acting in a threatening manner.

Adjournment

Selectman Morrin made the motion at 8:29 p.m. to Adjourn the Regular Meeting. Selectman Talbot seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 4 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Selectman McCarthy).

Attest: 
Christopher J. Nolan
Executive Assistant to Town Manager