



Board of Selectmen

Ware Town Hall, Meeting Room, 126 Main Street

Regular Meeting Minutes – Tuesday, August 18, 2020 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

Phone: 929-205-6099

Present: Chairman Alan Whitney, Selectman Thomas Barnes, Selectman John Morrin, Selectman Keith Kruckas, Town Manager Stuart Beckley, Executive Assistant Mary Midura

Absent: Selectman Nancy Talbot

Present Via Zoom: PCD Town Planner Rebekah DeCourcey, Superintendent of Schools Dr. Marlene DiLeo, Health Director Judy Metcalf, QVCDC Sheila Cuddy, QVCDC Gary O’Grady, PVPC Ted Harvey

Meeting Opened by Chairman Whitney

Opening Remarks, Announcements, and Agenda review by Chair

- **Commendation: Fred Urban, Planning Board 2007 – 2020**

Mr. Urban was present to receive the commendation and thanks from Board members.

- **Resolution: Soldiers’ Home in Holyoke**

Chairman Whitney read the Resolution.

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

- **Acknowledgement of Open Meeting Law Complaint**

Chairman Whitney acknowledged receipt of the Open Meeting Law Violation from Mary Midura. The complaint now passes to the town attorney for investigation and next steps. Chairman Whitney noted he had spoken to other Board members, and stated “There’s no longer going to be discussion of specific performance, pay or any other personal details of any town employees in the Select meeting. That’ll be limited to Executive Session only. Competency, asked before, is fine.”

Selectman Barnes asked about Emergency Preparedness and Tornado Warning; Mr. Beckley noted that Fire Chief Gagnon is the Emergency Management Director and the Code Red and Town website are used. Selectman Barnes noted Palmer’s emergency plan which tests the emergency alarm each Friday

at noon. Selectman Barnes noted the old alarm on Dugan Road is still functional. Resident Kim Mongeau noted the Spencer Fire Chief has implemented a very good plan using radio.

Consent Agenda

- **Approval of June 23 and July 7, July 21 and July 28, 2020 Minutes**

Selectman Kruckas stated he is fine with July 28, but wants to discuss other minutes with Mr. Beckley.

Selectman Kruckas made the motion to approve the minutes of July 28, 2020. Selectman Barnes seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 4 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Selectman Talbot).

- **Special Event Application: Friday Night Fun**

Selectman Kruckas suggested using Grenville Park instead. Mr. Beckley noted the intent was economic development and gaining interest in the downtown and Bank Street area. Rebekah DeCoursey, Town Planner, noted the next event was scheduled to be yoga with social distancing and masks required. Chairman Whitney suggested approval, and revisit this in October. Ms. DeCoursey noted all work is done by volunteers from Workshop 13 and herself.

Selectman Barnes made the motion to approve the Special Event Application: Friday Night Fun. Selectman Kruckas seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 4 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Selectman Talbot).

Scheduled Appearances

- **7:15 p.m. Business Community Discussion RE: Slum & Blight**

Chairman Whitney noted the need for more economic benefit to Main Street. Selectman Kruckas noted that the Slum and Blight Designation does not appear to have helped the Town.

Charles Lask noted the biggest concern is parking for customers. He suggested the direction of Bank Street be reversed with new signage for parking.

Mark Andrews stated he owns four properties and noted the phrase "dinner in the slums" used by friends and acquaintances. He suggested that parking for employees at Veterans' Park be removed, so that residents can more easily visit Main Street businesses. He suggested the need for an industrial park to create jobs. He stated he has lowered rents to his tenants during the pandemic, and he stated he is willing to put money into downtown revitalization. Mr. Lask agreed he would do the same.

Chairman Whitney stated the Board should have another hearing devoted to the parking issues. He noted that Great Barrington uses maps to direct visitors to parking and businesses. Mr. Beckley noted that Country Bank has generously offered use of their lot on Bank Street during the construction. Chairman Whitney suggested a committee be formed to prioritize needs for Main Street businesses. The Board noted a hearing on September 15, 2020 at 7:15 p.m. for discussion of Main Street. Selectman Barnes encouraged Mr. Lask and Mr. Andrews to rally other businesses to attend the discussion.

Sheila Cuddy noted that the QVDC is a private, non-profit that helps 15 towns with loans to

businesses and lowers loan rates with targeted funding. Gary O'Grady noted the ongoing good efforts of the QVCDC.

Rebekah DeCoursey stated that the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission works continuously on economic efforts.

Ted Harvey, PVPC, stated that the Slum and Blight designation is specifically used as a tool to obtain CBDG funds, and it is a competitive annual application. This year the funds were used toward the Code Enforcement Program.

Chairman Whitney asked Mr. Beckley and Ms. DeCoursey to present a listing of what benefits the Town has derived from the Slum and Blight designation.

Resident Kim Mongeau questioned what other towns have received from PVPC. Mr. Harvey noted that Spencer has a Slum and Blight designation, and had one previously, to work on infrastructure. The Town of Ware had the designation at Vigeant Street and the area over 15-20 years ago.

Selectman Kruckas noted the importance to invest in the Main Street area.

- **Dr. DiLeo – Schools Update**

Dr. DiLeo noted that the schools will open on September 14 with a hybrid of in-person and remote learning. She noted that each principal gave a presentation. The total school days are 170. She noted that the CARES and Covid Relief of \$500,000 have been used for chromebooks, connectivity, bandwidth, and all preparations for a 1 to 1 district. Selectman Morrin asked for an update on the Parent and Teacher Survey; Dr. DiLeo noted the first results are online, the next survey results should be online by the end of the week. Dr. DiLeo noted that 225 students will be taught remotely.

- **Judy Metcalf: Update RE: Covid-19**

Ms. Metcalf stated that Town of Ware numbers are in the “white” designation as very good. She noted that any community that goes to “red” in the Fall could see school closures again. She noted the importance for all residents to keep wearing masks and maintaining social distance, with no large gatherings. She noted that economic recovery is dependent on open schools, as parents go back to work and revitalize the economy. Chairman Whitney questioned if any towns adjoining Ware are in the “red”; Ms. Metcalf answered no, with Granby the closest “red” town. Selectman Kruckas asked about clubs’ service of food or ability to open; Ms. Metcalf noted the importance of food service and noted that Aspen Street Rod and Gun Club did a good transition to food service. She noted that many businesses must tweak their business model to stay operational.

Old Business

- **Landfill/Banas Farm Solar Project – Forefront Lease Discussion**

Ed Switzer, Forefront representative, joined the meeting via Zoom. Ms. Metcalf noted the discussion of two weeks ago in which areas to be repaired and the corner erosion and cleaning of the swale were topics. Mr. Switzer asked to receive the scope of the work and specifications; Ms. Metcalf stated that she had already sent the 2019 list, and would send the 2020 list. Mr. Switzer stated that the interconnection may not occur for several years. Ms. Metcalf noted that Mr. Lubelczyk does the mowing for \$1,500 annually, DEP environmental costs for gas and groundwater annually are \$5,000.

The rental amount is \$ 6,000 annually as worked out with town counsel.

Selectman Kruckas made the motion to approve the extension of the lease for six months, with all repairs to be done. Selectman Morrin seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 4 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Selectman Talbot).

Selectman Kruckas questioned the mowing of Sheehy Road landfill. Ms. Metcalf not that the DPW mowed previously, but the area must be monitored for the turtles. This past Fall, the grass was too high and a local contractor was used. It was found in February that one of the monitor wells was damaged, and the town will have to pursue the contractor for liability.

New Business

- **Warrant for State Primary of September 1, 2020**

Chairman Whitney read the Warrant aloud.

Selectman Kruckas made the motion to approve the Warrant for State Primary of September 1, 2020. Selectman Barnes seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 4 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Selectman Talbot).

Selectman Morrin questioned the use of the Town Hall drop box; Mr. Beckley noted a new drop box will be installed soon. He noted that early voting will be August 22 and 23 from 9am – 1 pm and on August 24 – 28 from 9am – 3pm at the Ware High School gymnasium. The Quaboag Connector will be available to transport voters on September 1, 2020.

- **Decorations Committee Appointments and Spending Authorization**

Mr. Beckley noted the dissolution of the Rotary Club and all funds have been deposited into the Decorations account. The Board is seeking additional members of the Decorations Committee, to be considered on September 15, 2020.

Selectman Kruckas made the motion to approve Decorations Committee expenditures for purchases and maintenance of decorations. Selectman Morrin seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 4 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Selectman Talbot).

- **Appointment: Ware Cultural Council, Aileen O'Regan, Term August 1, 2020 – July 31, 2023**

Selectman Kruckas made the motion to approve the appointment of Aileen O'Regan to Ware Cultural Council for a Term of August 1, 2020 – July 31, 2023. Selectman Barnes seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 4 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Selectman Talbot).

Comments and Concerns of Citizens

Kim Mongeau – Catch Basin Care – Ms. Mongeau noted flooding on Pulaski Street due to catch basins covered on Main Street. She noted the potential for vehicles to be ruined, or residents hurt or swept into the water. She noted this was done 2 ½ years ago. Chairman Whitney asked Mr. Beckley to look into this for the next meeting.

Town Manager Report

Friday August 7th, soft opening of Dog Park, Ribbon cut at 5

COVID – working with departments and unions, the Town is tightening and re-emphasizing policies on health and distancing with staff. Additional equipment and personal protection have been acquired including a fogger for the police department that will be shared with other buildings. The Fire Department has ordered UV disinfecting equipment for the ambulances. As numbers begin to trend up slightly in Massachusetts, maintaining protocols is increasingly important.

Mr. Beckley noted storm damages on the past Tuesday, and thanked Ludlow Construction and Gibby for their quick work. He noted that police, fire, and DPW all worked through the night to take care of downed trees, clear roads and take care of wires until National Grid arrived.

Mr. Beckley credited Mary Midura with recent sales on Municibid of a police cruiser and two Quaboag Connector vans for a total revenue of \$12,650.

Old Belchertown Road bridge: Construction is ready to begin. Although 90 days are allowed for construction, the contractor believes it will take significantly less, so the project will be complete well before winter.

Per the attached announcement from the Mass Municipal Association, the legislature and Governor have committed to minimum local aid funding at FY2020 levels. This is good news for the Ware budget based on the Town Meeting's appropriations in June. The State has moved forward with approval of a three month budget which will cover into October as all wait to learn the level of funding assistance from the Federal government. This will affect the final approval timeline of a State budget and firm local aid numbers. This in turn will affect Towns' abilities to set their final budgets and tax rates. Special legislation may be needed to address any late issuance of tax bills.

Chairman Whitney noted that the Town Meeting was well done.

Mr. Beckley noted the paving of Route 32, and the State has announced that Route 32 to the North will also be done next year.

Selectman Morrin noted he has questions for the Hardwick Selectmen. Mr. Beckley noted they will join the meeting on September 15, 2020.

Mr. Beckley noted next steps for 114 Main Street. The Town must work with the owner as his deadline is October 1, 2020. Mr. Beckley noted that USDA will also represent at the September 15, 2020 meeting to discuss the water treatment plant and old water pipes.

Resident Kim Mongeau questioned why the Town cannot condemn and tear down unsafe buildings more quickly. Mr. Beckley noted the Town must follow process to pursue any steps.

STATE LEADERS ANNOUNCE LEVEL FUNDING FOR MAJOR LOCAL AID ACCOUNTS

FY21 UGGA TO BE LEVEL FUNDED AT FY20 AMOUNTS

FY21 CHAPTER 70 SCHOOL AID AT LEAST LEVEL FUNDED FOR ALL

July 30, 2020

After months of uncertainty regarding the size of the state's fiscal crisis, state leaders today announced a framework for protecting the two main sources of local aid in the state's fiscal 2021 state budget. According to a statement issued by A&F Secretary Michael Heffernan, the Governor and Legislature are committing to no less than level funding of Unrestricted General Government Aid and Chapter 70 education aid as the baseline amount for fiscal 2021 funding for each community.

Because of the difficulty in projecting tax collections, unanswered questions about whether the federal government will provide fiscal relief, and the unknown impact that the coronavirus will have this fall, the Legislature has enacted a bill to continue with a temporary budget through October 31. The state had previously adopted a one-twelfth budget through July, and has added a 3-month extension. This will give lawmakers and the Administration more time to gather information and shape their budget plans.

Knowing that local officials need firm information on local aid and school funding in order to finalize their municipal budgets, the state's top leaders have joined together to provide guidance to cities and towns, and the news is good for communities.

In an alert issued via the Division of Local Services, the Baker-Polito Administration announced that House and Senate leaders and the Governor would be protecting the two major local aid accounts, UGGA and Chapter 70, from cuts as they set the state's fiscal 2021 budget later this fall.

They announced that the \$1.13 billion Unrestricted General Government Aid (UGGA) program will be level funded at fiscal 2020 amounts for all communities, and that all cities and towns will receive at least level funding of their Chapter 70 education aid. Some school districts will receive school aid increases due to inflation and enrollment under the current formula. In total, Chapter 70 school aid will increase by \$107 million, bringing that account up to \$5.28 billion.


[Click here to download the topline local aid UGGA and Chapter 70 numbers for each community and school district, as released by DLS this afternoon.](#)

Local officials with questions about the numbers can email DLS at databank@state.ma.us.

The Governor-House-Senate framework closely matches the MMA's request to state leaders, which the association delivered earlier this week. MMA has asked state leaders to protect local aid from cuts by preserving aid at fiscal 2020 levels at a minimum.

Adjournment

Selectman Barnes made the motion at 9:06 p.m. to Adjourn the Regular Meeting. Selectman Morrin seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 4 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Selectman Talbot).

Attest: 
Mary L. Midura, Executive Assistant to
Town Manager
Minutes Completed 8/24/2020

