



Board of Selectmen

Ware Town Hall, Meeting Room, 126 Main Street

Regular Meeting Minutes – Tuesday, December 8, 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

Passcode: 01082

Phone: 929-205-6099

Present at Town Hall: Selectman Alan G. Whitney, Selectman Keith J. Kruckas, Selectman Nancy J. Talbot, Selectman John J. Morrin, Town Manager Stuart B. Beckley, Building Inspector Anna Marques, Executive Assistant Mary L. Midura

Present via Zoom: Ware River News Editor Eileen Kennedy, Treasurer Erica Brunell, Planning and Community Development Director Rebekah Cornell

Absent: Selectman Thomas H. Barnes

Meeting Opened by Chairman Whitney

Opening Remarks, Announcements, and Agenda review by Chair

Selectman Morrin announced the super-exciting parking news. He thanked Rebekah Cornell, Town Planner, Dennis Craig, Charlie Lask, Shelly Regin and Country Bank and Gary O'Grady QVDC. There are now two lots on Bank Street with new signs for parking during the day.

Selectman Kruckas noted great work by the DPW during the winter storm.

Consent Agenda - none

Scheduled Appearances

- **Update - Building Inspector Anna Marques**

Ms. Marques noted that Duk Ha, owner of 92-104 Main Street, is currently quarantined, but plans to come out the week of December 14-18. The building will be secured by December 20, has already been condemned, will have back and sides boarded up, per 780 CMR. While Ms. Marques cannot force someone to have an engineering report done, she has indicated to the owner that it is in his best interests to do so. Ms. Marques noted that many towns have faced similar situations with vacant buildings: Holyoke has top 25 properties recently reported in news media. The only way to resolve quicker would be for the Town to pay for demolition, then take the owner to court. Town counsel has actively looked at ways to handle these situations. Selectman Talbot noted every city and town faces this and the community suffers, and we should work with the Attorney General and legislators. Chairman Whitney noted all are frustrated and not only are these buildings dangerous, but also this impacts the Main Street project. Selectman Kruckas stated this information was requested weeks ago, and he did not appreciate that new information was just presented a few minutes before the meeting started. He previously has asked about the \$90,000 Code Enforcement funds and asked where those funds were transferred to. Town Planner Rebekah Cornell stated that the CDA will meet on December 14, 2020 to discuss the allocation of funds from FY19 CDBG.

Chairman Whitney noted that all information for a meeting must always be in the Selectmen's mailboxes by noon on the Friday before a Tuesday meeting. No new information should be added after that time.

Ms. Marques noted the cost for the Town should be considered, and the cost for the owner. Chairman Whitney stated the owner could say that he was forced to do this, and the Town should not set a precedent on this. Selectman Kruckas asked why, if the town counsel advises against this, does this go back on a warrant. He noted a recent meeting with National Grid and Mass DOT in which there was animosity towards the Town. Selectman Talbot asked the timeline regarding 92-104 Main Street. Ms. Marques noted the building should be secured by December 21, 2020 with sides and back to have additional work plus the front is boarded. The fencing at 114 Main Street is a result of the wall height. The state gives guidelines to secure the building. Ms. Marques can begin to issue fines if the building is not secured in time. Selectman Morrin encouraged Ms. Marques to be aggressive. Selectman Kruckas questioned when the owner has been in town. Ms. Marques stated the last visit was in August. Selectman Kruckas questioned the barriers and sidewalk at 114 Main, and what to do when snow accumulates. Chief Crevier noted the barriers must stay up through the winter. Ms. Marques noted that if an owner does no improvements, the Town gets the burden to address the issues. Chairman Whitney stated his concern that if a building falls, the Town becomes liable. He told Ms. Marques, We know you are doing your best. He encouraged the use of fines or any legal means to be used.

Town Planner Rebekah Cornell stated the CDA has not taken this lightly, with three months of discussion, but the funds were set aside for multi-family units for code enforcement. The CDA has until March to allocate the funds. The next meeting of CDA will be December 14 at 6:30 p.m. and available on Zoom. There is also the discussion of demolition of 13-15 Parker Street and engineering plans for demolition of 114 Main Street. The study for 114 Main Street cost \$1,700. Selectman Kruckas noted he has been asking for update on this for 6-8 months. He noted the owners of 114 Main and 92-104 Main should work together to save costs. Chairman Whitney noted a new bylaw is needed to address abandoned buildings.

Old Business - none

New Business

- **Request for Hire of Police Officer(s)**

Chief Crevier requested the Board approve Civil Service list for two (2) vacant officer positions for February-March academy, 24 per class.

Selectman Kruckas made the motion to authorize the Town Manager to obtain a Civil Service list for the two positions. Selectman Morrin seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 3 Yes, 0 No, 1 Abstained (Selectman Talbot), 1 Absent (Selectman Barnes).

Selectman Kruckas asked about the parking ban. Chief Crevier stated the department gave warnings, but since the snow, tickets are now being issued. Selectman Kruckas noted that some residents blow snow into the street. Chief Crevier noted those residents will be given citations. Selectman Kruckas questioned the Pulaski Street parking situation; Mr. Beckley noted to change parking sides would eliminate parking spaces. Chief Crevier noted that the academy students are in the 11th week and should graduate February or March.

Chief Crevier also requested the Board approve three (3) Part-Time Officers: Matthew Schlegel, Judy Sellez, and Leon Muraguri.

Selectman Kruckas made the motion to approve Three (3) Part-Time Officers: Matthew Schlegel, Judy Sellez and Leon Muraguri. Selectman Morrin seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 3 Yes, 0 No, 1 Abstained (Selectman Talbot), 1 Absent (Selectman Barnes).

Chief Crevier noted that Ware Police Department participates in Coats for Veterans, and an officer went to Gillette Stadium for coats and supplies. Send any veterans in need to the Ware Police. Chief Crevier noted his gratitude to Darlene Gildert for her countless hours to make this year's Christmas for Kids a success.

- **Consideration of Hardship Letters from Section 12 Licensees, Waiver of 2021 Renewal Fees**

Executive Assistant Mary Midura presented the following: Selectmen, before you tonight are licenses for renewal for 2021. All licensees have been extremely cooperative this year and returned proper required documentation. All Section 12 licensees have, or are scheduled to have, annual inspections by the Building Inspector and Fire Inspector. Ms. Midura thanked Building Inspector Anna Marques and Fire Inspector and Chief Chris Gagnon for their hard work on the inspections.

Based on the vote of the Board of Selectmen on September 22, 2020, I have worked hard to show compassion and understanding to all businesses. Since that date, Covid-19 restrictions have increased on these businesses, such as limits on occupancy and no service of alcohol after 9:30 pm, all patrons must leave by 10:00 pm.

The following licensees have submitted letters of hardship to request a full waiver of renewal fees for 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic:

Aspen Street Rod and Gun Club	Teresa's
Astronaut Pizza	Weir River Social Club
Asian Garden	Mexicali Grill
Niko's Pizza	New United China
Rollaway Lanes	Hanna Devines
Gabryel Narutowicz	Wicked Wings Ware
Melha Shriners	Debbie Wong
Workshop 13	

Original anticipated revenue at full renewal fees was \$23,925. Waiver of Section 12 establishments (and Workshop 13), and Bed and Breakfast at Bird Hill Farm fees total ~~\$15,275~~ \$15,325. This brings actual revenue received to a total of ~~\$8,650~~ \$8,600.

Ms. Midura noted that this may seem like a lot of money to waive, but this helps 14 businesses to stay operational. Selectman Morrin noted he has supported small businesses here all year. Selectman Kruckas noted the Board should do this, as these struggling businesses have contributed to lights, little league sports and other community events and we need to support them. Selectman Talbot noted we all need to do our part. Ms. Midura noted that several businesses thought they must give up their liquor licenses, but that she advised they not do that as the documentation and costs to get a new license were not easily done.

Mr. Beckley noted that Selectman Kruckas has continued to advocate for small businesses. Mr. Beckley questioned if the Board wanted to waive all listed fees, including others with Common Victualler or Car Dealer licenses. Ms. Midura noted that those licensees have been open throughout the pandemic. Selectman Kruckas noted that the lodging license should be included in the waiver.

Selectman Kruckas made the motion to approve a full waiver of Renewal Fees for licenses (Alcoholic, common victualler, entertainment, automatic amusement devices) for 2021 for the above Section 12 establishments and Workshop 13 and Bed and Breakfast at Bird Hill Farm. Selectman Talbot seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 4 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Selectman Barnes).

- **Approval of 2021 Renewals of Alcoholic, Common Victualler, Entertainment, Automatic Amusement Devices, Lodging, and Car Dealer Licenses**

Selectman Kruckas made the motion to approve Renewals for 2021 for all Alcoholic Licenses (Section 12 and Section 15), Common Victualler, Entertainment, Auto Amusement Devices, Lodging, and Car Dealer

Licenses. Selectman Talbot seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 4 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Selectman Barnes).

- **Vote to Re-Open Old Belchertown Road Bridge**

Selectman Kruckas made the motion to Re-Open Old Belchertown Road Bridge. Selectman Morrin seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 4 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Selectman Barnes).

- **Town Policies Packet**

This topic was tabled to December 22, 2020.

- **Application for Appointment: Finance Committee – Ken Willette, Term to Expire June 30, 2023**

Selectman Talbot made the motion to approve appointment of Ken Willette to Finance Committee, Term to Expire June 30, 2023. Selectman Morrin seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 4 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Selectman Barnes).

- **Town Meeting Follow Up – New Date**

Mr. Beckley noted that January 19, 2021 is for consideration. For the water filtration vote, February may be better. Due to concerns of Covid-19 increased cases, this topic was tabled to December 22, 2020.

Comments and Concerns of Citizens

Selectman Kruckas questioned the practice of the school busses leaving on West Street each day all at once, blocking the intersection and holding up traffic. The Board asked for Chief Crevier to address this at the next meeting.

Selectman Morrin asked about the well on Sheehy Road. Mr. Beckley noted the bill. Selectman Morrin questioned the East Street overpass. Mr. Beckley noted Mass DOT has not answered.

The Board requested the Health Director and Superintendent of Schools to give updates at the December 22, 2020 meeting.

Town Manager Report

Upcoming meetings:

December 10, 7, Public Forum #3 Water Filtration Plant, Senior Center

The Main Street sidewalk work is wrapping up. A project meeting will be held on Tuesday morning.

The House and Senate Conference Committee submitted their budget to the Governor for approval. This budget is within \$1,000 of previous revisions, so no adjustments to the local budget will be necessary. A copy of the latest preliminary Cherry Sheet is attached.

The Town financial departments and the Board of Assessors submitted the documentation required to set the tax rate. If the Department of Revenue approves, the rate will be \$20.18 per thousand of value. This is lower than the FY20 tax rate of \$20.63.

Through Mary Midura's efforts, the Town received a \$5,700 grant from MIIA, the Town's insurance agency for funds for new safety mats for the Town Hall, PPE for the schools and a gas meter for the Fire Department.

The Quaboag Connector's ridership is starting to rise. After dropping from 1000 rides per month last winter to 275 during the early months of COVID, the rides have grown back to almost 600 per month. The Connector has recently increased hours to run through 7 p.m. and is now offering Saturday service for employment trips.

Food –the food distributions at Grenville Park and the Senior Center are well used. The volunteers continue to request additional food from the Food Bank to support the over 250 families who attend each month. The Town is hoping to coordinate extra food during December through the use of CARES funds.

The Senior Center heating system froze up this weekend. Temporary heaters are in place while repair parts are sought. MIIA has been notified. Selectman Kruckas questioned why the department head has not come to the Board regarding this, and he noted the HVAC system has broken and been fixed several previous times.

Water Forum. This Thursday's forum regarding the Water Filtration Plant will focus on financing of the plant and future water enterprise costs. The presentation should be complete by Wednesday morning. I will forward to the Board ahead of time.

The Beaver Lake area suggested consideration of a speed hump to slow traffic. The Highway Supervisor explored with MassDOT. Their guidance is attached.

Mr. Beckley noted receipt of cable contract information from the State Department of Telecommunications. The Town should create a Cable Advisory Committee. Chairman Whitney strongly stated he would like to be on that committee, as every road is not on cable and internet. A discussion with Fire and Police regarding Regional Dispatch should be on the December 22, 2020 or January 5, 2021 agenda.

Selectman Kruckas questioned if businesses owe taxes, can these properties not be further taxed or attached. Mr. Beckley noted that taxes or interest cannot be waived. A resident or business can make a payment plan with the Tax Collector. Erica Brunell, Treasurer, joined via zoom and noted she is always willing to work with taxpayers, with communication a key factor. The Treasurer/Tax Collector has no right to waive or adjust taxes. There may be help through Representative Smola for COVID-19 relief. She noted that the Governor's orders allowed the Board to postpone due dates and extend deadlines. Selectman Talbot also noted the Town should contact MMA.

Construction equipment should be removed next week.

If an application is incomplete, no action should be taken until completion, with 60-90 days to a hearing.

The ambulance committee does not have any scheduled meetings. Options need to be evaluated.

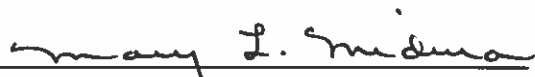
Selectman Morrin questioned the letter from Forefront Solar which terminates the lease. He questioned whether the Town could develop solar for the Town? Mr. Beckley will research this.

Adjournment

Executive Session: M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 21 (a) #2 Conduct Strategy Sessions for Negotiations with Non-Union Personnel

Selectman Kruckas made the motion at 8:26 p.m. to Adjourn the Regular Meeting to go into Executive Session: M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 21(a) #2 Conduct Strategy Sessions for Negotiations with Non-Union Personnel, NOT TO RECONVENE IN OPEN SESSION. Selectman Morrin seconded the motion. The motion passed on a roll call vote of 4 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Selectman Barnes).

Selectman Alan G. Whitney	Yes√
Selectman Keith J. Kruckas	Yes√
Selectman Thomas H. Barnes	Absent
Selectman Nancy J. Talbot	Yes√
Selectman John J. Morrin	Yes√

Attest: 
Mary L. Midura, Executive Assistant to
Town Manager