



Board of Selectmen

Ware Town Hall, Meeting Room, 126 Main Street

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

6:30 p.m. Executive Session: M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 21(a) #3 Litigation

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 Alan G. Whitney, Selectman Thomas H. Barnes, Selectman Nancy J. Talbot, Selectman John J. Morrin, Town Manager Stuart B. Beckley, Executive Assistant Mary L. Midura, Interim Fire Chief Chris Gagnon, Police Chief Shawn Crevier, Terrance Smith, Nicholas Mastromatteo

Absent: Selectman Keith J. Kruckas

Present via Zoom: Molly Gray, President Baystate Eastern Region; Bob Kelley, Cedarbrook; Cathy Buelow-Cascio, Tracy Opalinski

Meeting Opened by Chairman Whitney at 7:03 p.m.

Opening Remarks, Announcements, and Agenda review by Chair

Selectman Barnes noted the great work by the DPW in clearing the streets of snow.

Selectman Morrin noted the next Downtown Improvement Committee meeting of Monday, March 15, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. in Town Hall.

Consent Agenda

- Approval of January 19, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Selectman Talbot made the motion to approve the meeting minutes of January 19, 2021. Selectman Morrin seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 4 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Selectman Kruckas).

- Schedule Water Rate Hearing, March 2, 2021

Selectman Talbot made the motion to Schedule a Public Hearing for Water Rate Evaluation on Tuesday, March 2, 2021 at 7:10 p.m. Selectman Barnes seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 4 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Selectman Kruckas).

- **Right of First Refusal, Chapter 61A, Shady Path**

Mr. Beckley explained the land was under agricultural, and this is recommended by the Conservation Commission.

Selectman Talbot made the motion to Waive the Right of First Refusal per MGL Chapter 61A, Section 14 for Martowski, Shady Path, Map 10 Block 140 Lot 1, Parcel A (.16 acre). Selectman Barnes seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 4 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Selectman Kruckas).

Scheduled Appearances

- **7:10 p.m. Public Hearing: Declare 13 Parker Street a Nuisance and Unsafe Property**

The Board of Selectmen will conduct a Public Hearing on **Tuesday, February 16, 2021 at 7:10 p.m.**, in the Selectmen's Meeting Room, 126 Main Street, Ware, MA. The purpose of the Public Hearing is to determine if property at 13 Parker Street, Ware, MA is dilapidated, dangerous, unsafe or otherwise constitutes a nuisance, in accordance with MGL Chapter 139, Section 1, and to take any action thereto. The Board of Selectmen will receive comments from interested residents at the hearing, or residents may send written comments to Town Manager, 126 Main Street, Ware, MA 01082. **This notice shall also be posted on the Massachusetts Newspaper Publishers Association's (MNPA) website (<http://masspublicnotices.org>).**

All interested parties are invited to attend. Alan G. Whitney, Chairman Board of Selectmen, date of legal notice

Anna Marques, Building Inspector provided copies of all relevant reports, including evidence as to the identity of the owners of the property, and entered in the public hearing record. Ms. Marques noted the parties have been notified as the law allows, with several owners of interest being deceased. The building has been vacant for over a year, after Ms. Marques noticed it's condition the prior year. The building is in the tax taking process, and the Town had to go to housing court. The roof is exposed, water leaking, and the building is not habitable.

Chairman Whitney asked if there was anyone present or online who wished to be heard. There were none.

Selectman Talbot made the motion, **Based on the information presented, I move that the BOS issue an order adjudging the building at 13 Parker Street to be a nuisance to the neighborhood and dangerous.** Selectman Morrin seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 4 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Selectman Kruckas).

Selectman Talbot made the motion that the Chairperson be authorized to sign the following order on behalf of the BOS:

ORDER

To: Chester W. Podkowka, Frances Podkowka, Todd J. Podkowka, David G. Podkowka, Micheal M. Fiore, William M. Fiore, Jr., James W. Fiore, Gary S. Podkowka, Joseph W. Podkowka

Pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 139 section 1, after notice and a public hearing held on February 16, 2021, and upon consideration of all testimony, reports, documents and evidence presented, the Board of Selectmen adjudges the building located at 13 Parker Street, Ware, MA to be a nuisance to the neighborhood and dangerous and hereby orders and directs that it be demolished and that all debris be removed and that the lot be leveled to uniform grade with proper sanitary fill on or before March 2, 2021."

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

Any such order by the BOS must be given to the Town clerk who "shall deliver a copy of the order to an officer qualified to serve civil process" who serves the order on the owners.

- **John Zienowicz, Director Senior Center**

Selectman Talbot made the motion to Table to March 2, 2021. Selectman Barnes seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 4 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Selectman Kruckas).

- **Molly Gray, President, Baystate Eastern Region, and Bob Kelly, Cedarbrook**

Molly Gray stated that Baystate is working hard to grow essential and key services in our community. It was a difficult decision to close the Mary Lane campus. Baystate has spent five years investing and innovating, with GI, colonoscopy, endoscopy, wound center, hyperbaric chamber, but patients did not come and the numbers did not grow. Chief surgeon, Dr. Thomas Canto, will continue to see patients at Wing Hospital. Women's imaging and 3D mammogram will move to Wing. Emergency room patients were 85% conditions for primary care, with ages 0-18 and could be cared for at expanded walk-in at Wing. The DPH regulatory is next, and Baystate gives two years before vacating. Cancer services and ER will relocate to Wing in June 2021.

Chairman Whitney asked if insurance was a factor; Ms. Gray stated fewer than 3% had no insurance. Chairman Whitney questioned the use of trust funds; Ms. Gray noted the Gilbert Trust and legacy of donors will be honored. Selectman Barnes asked about employees; Ms. Gray noted that employees will be retained and recruited and optimized with a need for robust and supportive health care providers. Selectman Morrin questioned the letter noting demolition and green space; Ms. Gray noted the aging facility and best interests of the town. Chairman Whitney questioned the list of \$5million in repair costs.

Resident Terrance Smith suggested a task force be formed to transition and better serve the Town. Selectman Morrin asked about transportation. Ms. Gray noted this is a challenge and Baystate has given \$170,000 to Quaboag Connector over four years. Baystate can look at this for patients for cancer services. Resident Cathy Buelow-Cascio questioned would Baystate sell to another. Ms. Gray noted the need for urgent care and demand in the area was not at the volume or acuity to sustain partnership. Resident Tracy Opalinski questioned how the satellite emergency facility compares to Springfield. Ms. Gray noted that admission at Wing is 8-10% while Springfield is 30%. Ms. Opalinski questioned if there would be additional training. Ms. Gray noted EMS and Chiefs would have access to training. Ms. Opalinski questioned primary care and cancer care; Ms. Gray noted the consolidation for advanced practitioners and to answer what is best for cancer patients. Ms. Gray noted the need to use all ambulance services and continue to manage services.

Robert Kelley, Cedarbrook legal counsel, stated the decision to close Mary Lane is unsettling and the wish to influence or be party to a MOU. Cedarbrook would like to be involved in ongoing communication and a strong relationship with Baystate and the Town of Ware, and would advocate for a seat at the table and for green space. Chairman Whitney agreed that the Town of Ware Board of Selectmen and Cedarbrook should be kept informed by Ms. Gray. Resident Terrance Smith noted the hospital is the second largest water and sewer payer for the Town, and the Board needs to consider the lost revenue. He questioned if the hospital would consider a PILOT to help transition. He again noted the need for a task force to discuss greenspace or EPA requirements. He asked what is on that property and noted EPA regulations to clean the site. He questioned if Baystate will financially contribute to the Town for this transition. Ms. Gray noted that Baystate will work with the Town.

Chairman Whitney noted this is the first chance to open a discussion, and the Town has concerns for which Baystate must consider and discuss. Resident Nicholas Mastromatteo noted that his is a driver at the senior center, and the extra 9 miles is 18 miles round trip, often patients suffer extremely. Fire Chief Gagnon noted the decision is very impactful on the EMS system, and short-term and long-term plans must be discussed. Ms. Gray noted that Baystate is very willing to discuss. There will be a virtual town hall discussion on February 23, 2021.

- **Regional Dispatch Proposal**

Mr. Beckley noted previous presentation of the WESTCOMM Regional Dispatch, and noted a grant would include the Town of Ware, if approved by the Board tonight. Police Chief Crevier and Fire Chief Gagnon recommended this action. Chief Gagnon noted that Federal funds allocated for Regional Dispatch would benefit the town greatly.

Selectman Barnes made the motion to Join the WESTCOMM Regional Dispatch Center by July 1, 2021. Selectman Talbot seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 4 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Selectman Kruckas).

Selectman Talbot made the motion to Adopt M.G.L., Chapter 6A, Sections 18O to 18V, inclusive. Selectman Morrin seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 4 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Selectman Kruckas).

Old Business

- **Quabbin Feasibility Study (attachment, will attend March 2)**

- **Town Meeting and Date**

This will be discussed with the moderator and Health Director on Friday, February 19, 2021.

Comments and Concerns of Citizens

Selectman Barnes questioned the failure rate; Mr. Beckley noted that schools will soon be back to more in-person teaching.

The ACO has two contacts through the Palmer Police Department.

Selectman Morrin asked about Munroe Street; Mr. Beckley noted it is contaminated brownfield.

Selectman Talbot left the meeting at 8:31 p.m.

Selectman Barnes made a motion to place a Stop sign at both entrances of Horseshoe Circle. Selectman Morrin seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 3 Yes, 0 No, 2 Absent (Selectman Kruckas, Selectman Talbot).

Mr. Beckley noted that the Route 9 overpass is not on the State list, and he will ask MA DOT and send to Senator Gobi. Selectman Morrin questioned the slogan "Someplace worth seeing" and the need for specific policy.

Town Manager Report

Upcoming meetings:

Ongoing until February 24, Mass DOT hearing on Three Mile Bridge, link on Website

February 23 – Baystate Virtual Town Meeting, 5 p.m.

COVID – After a week at moderate risk, Ware returned to being a High Risk (red) community, with a 5.5% positivity rate on testing. Overall the state trend is a decrease in the number of cases. The Senior Center is providing assistance with scheduling appointments for residents over age 75, focusing on the two large sites in the area, Eastfield Mall and Amherst High School.

As noted above, the Virtual Town Hall hosted by Baystate Health has been moved to February 23.

Insurance – Town employees enrolled in the health insurance program are eligible to participate in a wellness program, which tracks daily activity. The attached chart shows a strong participation rate by the Town's employees, in individual and group participation. Unfortunately, despite this local work, the proposed premium rate increase for

the Town in fiscal year 2022 is 12.8%. The Town and its insurance consultant are pushing back at this, questioning the impact of claims and the COVID anticipation factor included.

Departmental budgets are due to be submitted on Wednesday, February 3. These will be reviewed in February with the budget scheduled to be submitted to the Finance Committee on March 1. The Governor submitted his budget proposal. The resulting summary of state aid (Cherry sheet) is attached. One highly impactful budget cost is health insurance. The proposed premiums will be provided by Blue Cross Blue Shield later in the month. The industry trend has been an 8%-10% increase.

Grants: The Town participated in two grant submissions this week. The Planning Department, working with the Ware Business and Civic Association, submitted a grant to the Mass Office of Travel and Tourism for a banner system to be attached to the new light poles and for a video/digital media campaign highlighting the businesses and resources of Ware. Working with the Town of Belchertown, a grant was filed for the creation of an app that identifies the historic, cultural, business and natural resources of the area. The WBCA, Historical Commission and Ware Center Meeting House supported the application.

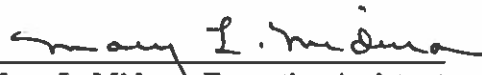
On March 2, Beth Greenblatt will attend to discuss solar on the Robbins Road site. Tighe and Bond will be present for Water rate discussion and a review of the Quabbin MWRA connection study.

The Town has discussed Animal Control services with the Town of Palmer. There have been a couple of incidents with poor communication. Palmer has addressed with the hiring of a team of two officers. The towns, including Monson, will work on a more detailed protocol for how and when the officers will be contacted, and how they will respond to police departments and residents.

The Highway Division is doing a terrific job with clearing the roads and keeping them safe for drivers. Residents are generally adhering to the parking rules. The DPW as needed is picking up snow from Main Street and neighborhoods. To date, the Snow and Ice budget is holding well.

Congratulations to Ware basketball team member Aidyn Welch who scored her 1000th career point on Thursday night.

Selectman Barnes made the motion at 8:42 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 Kruckas).

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