



Board of Selectmen

Ware Town Hall, Meeting Room, 126 Main Street

Regular Meeting Minutes – Tuesday, June 15, 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 Keith J. Kruckas, Selectman John J. Morrin, Selectman Thomas H. Barnes, Selectman Nancy J. Talbot, Selectman Caitlin M. McCarthy, Town Manager Stuart Beckley, Executive Assistant Mary L. Midura, Senior Center Director John Zienowicz, Danielle Souza, Paul Opalinski, Tracy Opalinski, Chris Murphy, Carol Zins, David Stevens, Melissa Stevens, Brandy Brusio, Alex Bergeron

Present via Zoom: Ware River News Reporter Paula Ouimette, Health Director Stephen Bell, Town Planner Rebekah Cornell, Shelley Regin

Meeting Opened by Chairman Kruckas at 7:00 p.m.

Opening Remarks, Announcements, and Agenda review by Chair

Selectman Barnes thanked the DPW for all their work around the town.

Selectman Morrin read an announcement regarding the next cycle of the Senior Citizen/Veteran Tax Work Off Program: applications will be accepted for qualified residents beginning on July 1, 2021. Senior Citizens can earn up to \$1,500 off their real estate taxes, Veterans can earn up to \$1,000 off their real estate taxes.

Selectman McCarthy noted the food drive at Grenville Park earlier today and thanked all volunteers.

Consent Agenda

- Approval May 4, May 18, and June 1, 2021 Meeting Minutes
- Appointment: Part-Time Police Officer Owen R. Sablack
- Special Event Permit Application: Domestic Violence Awareness Walk, October 23, 2021

Selectman Talbot made the motion to approve the consent agenda. Selectman Morrin seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 5 Yes, 0 No on the first and third items. The motion passed on a vote of 4 Yes, 0 No, 1 Abstention (Selectman Talbot) on the second item.

Scheduled Appearances

- Discussion with Town Hall Auditor, Set Parameters

Mr. Beckley introduced Eric Kinsharf, CPA. Mr. Kinsharf noted that the Town has Scanlon & Associates already, and he noted that the Town can ask them to look at areas of interest for you. Mr. Kinsharf can provide Fraud Risk Assessment and can give recommendations. He asked what the Board has in mind with this audit. Chairman Kruckas noted the Board wants to have the billing looked at, as there are concerns where taxes go, to be as efficient

as possible. Mr. Kinsherb questioned if the Board had this conversation with their auditor. He noted the Town is already paying for the audit and can ask the auditor to examine specific areas. Mr. Kinsherb noted that his firm cannot take on the Town as an account until Fall, but he is willing to work with Mr. Beckley to list a scope of services. He also advised the Town to rotate the outside auditor, as most towns rotate their outside auditor every 5-6 years. Chairman Kruckas thanked Mr. Kinsherb for the excellent advice.

- **Update Senior Center: John Zienowicz, Director**

John Zienowicz presented information regarding a soft opening in July, and full opening of the Senior Center in August. He noted most centers in Western Massachusetts are following DPH guidelines to resume operations. He noted that the homebound program is available for vaccines. The Board requested Mr. Beckley to look into use of CARES money to assist in stocking the kitchen and providing meals to senior citizens.

- **Update Health Department: Stephen Bell, Director**

Stephen Bell noted the town now has 50% fully vaccinated. A Delta variant of COVID-10 has also come to the area. A vaccine clinic will be held on June 23 from 5-7pm at the town great hall.

Old Business

- **Discussion RE: Water Rates, Pipe Replacement, Tank Cleaning Cost**

Selectman Barnes stated he will give a report from the Water Resources Committee to the full Board on July 20, 2021. Selectman Talbot noted that the Board will need to schedule a public hearing to consider any increase in rates. Selectman Barnes also noted the age of pipes is a concern to be reviewed.

- **Hardwick Ambulance Service Agreement**

Fire Chief Gagnon noted the revised agreement will be sent to the ambulance committee and will come back to the Board on July 6, 2021. Chairman Kruckas noted he was not invited to the meeting and numbers need review. Selectman Talbot questioned if Barre is included in the contract. Selectman Morrin also noted that a map would be very helpful. Chief Gagnon noted resources are essential and most calls are Basic Life Services. He gave an example of a person having a heart attack near Cedarbrook, and Ware EMTs handling this extremely well with direct transport, with the resident recovering well in Baystate.

- **Update and Map on Slum & Blight Designation Benefits, Abatements, Revenue**

Mr. Beckley noted the assessors' map showing the designated area. Chairman Kruckas noted the house values and some have received abatements. Mr. Beckley noted that a block grant is for low/moderate income in a target area. Paul Opalinski stated that the CDA uses funding for infrastructure and CDBG was \$1.3million for two years. All must qualify by income. The Façade Improvement funds are \$300,000 for awnings and signage. This is a 10-year program, and Ware is now in year 4. Danielle Souza noted that appraisers are not concerned with a slum and blight designation, rather the condition of the home and location. Ms. Souza noted all residents would benefit from improvements to the Town.

- **Advice on a Demolition Lien on Main St. Property, and Other Properties**

Mr. Beckley noted this was turned over for language and experience of new counsel KP Law.

- **"Somewhere Worth Seeing" Vote**

Chairman Kruckas stated that a Selectman was told that her vote was not legal.

Tracy Opalinski, Trustee of the Edward Urban Foundation, gave background information on this. In 2014, the Foundation gifted money and hired Arnett Muldrow & Associates to work on a visioning and branding to compliment the Master Plan. Over nine months and 50 meetings, the consultants worked to create an "authentic identity" as many have done for mill town marketing to spur economic development. All sectors of Ware were

polled and a Survey Monkey was done. The goal was to listen to the entire community, identify with Quabbin, and revitalize downtown.

Chris Murphy, tech for Ware Business and Civic Association, noted a Facebook survey was also done to ask “Does the “Somewhere worth Seeing” give a positive connotation? People were basically locked in t the historical phrase “Ware, Nationally Known as the Town that Can’t Be Licked”.

Selectman Morrin noted his motion was simple. Selectman McCarthy stated that she is not against the branding, but she would like to see more history promoted. She noted that she likes the signs.

Paul Opalinski noted that the Foundation or the WBCA did not take those signs down. Chairman Kruckas stated that many businesses have struggled to survive. Tracy Opalinski questioned why the Board was trying to decide what the whole community wanted. Selectman Barnes noted that the “Somewhere Worth Seeing” sign is placed as you enter the town, the next thing you see is the junk yard. The other sign is placed just before the recycle center. Ms. Opalinski note that the roads are state roads, and Mass DOT told the Foundation where the signs could be placed.

Carol Zins stated that she came from Haverhill, MA which had a history of the shoe factories. She noted the need to respect history, but to also promote the town to visitors.

Selectman Morrin made a motion that Town Departments are not to use “Somewhere Worth Seeing” without permission from the Board of Selectmen. Selectman Barnes seconded the motion.

Mary Lotuff Feeney questioned if the Town formally adopted the tagline or has followed a particular protocol. Selectman Talbot noted that the idea was presented to the then Board of Selectmen. Mr. Beckley noted that the marketing plan was not formally adopted but was presented to allow flexibility to be used many ways such as for living, biking, hiking and such. Selectman McCarthy noted she would like to see the historic slogan incorporated into the marketing plan.

Brandy Brusco stated this is a marketing strategy to grow the town. Paul Opalinski questioned what the Downtown Improvement Committee recommended.

Rebekah Cornell, Town Planner, via zoom, stated that the Downtown Improvement Committee had a discussion about the language on the banners. She noted that Selectman Morrin did not like the “Somewhere Worth Seeing”. Selectman Morrin noted Ms. Cornell was mischaracterizing him. Ms. Cornel stated that the State just awarded \$12,000 to the Town of Ware based on this campaign and asked that this campaign be allowed to be used. Ms. Cornell asked to show a short video; the Board did not view the video. Ms. Opalinski noted these are tools to spur economic development.

Shelley Regin, Senior Vice President Marketing Country Bank, via zoom, stated that “Somewhere Worth Seeing” was the anchor tagline to represent your brand. She noted you must know your audience to grow and attract new growth to town. To make it successful, she noted that a lot of time, money and effort went into this campaign. She expressed the hope that the Board continues to support this.

Chris Murphy stated this was a group effort to raise the town up and the larger scheme is to work together.

Selectman Morrin again stated his motion. Chairman Kruckas stated he did not think this was legal and the Board did not have this authority.

Selectman Morrin made a motion that Town Departments are not to use “Somewhere Worth Seeing” without permission from the Board of Selectmen. Selectman Barnes seconded the motion. The motion failed to pass on a vote of 1 Yes (Selectman Morrin), 4 No.

- **Next Steps on Dangerous Dog, 16 Howard Road**

Mr. Beckley noted the judge will give his decision the appeal of the owner on Thursday, June 17. The Town has not yet been presented with proof of insurance. Conditions set by the Board of Selectmen have not been met.

New Business

- **Appointment Process for Tree Warden**

Mr. Beckley noted that the Tree Warden should be elected. Town counsel recommends that the Town place an article on the next annual town meeting to Appoint the Tree Warden.

Selectman Talbot made the motion to reappoint temporary tree warden until the next annual town meeting. Selectman Barnes seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 5 Yes, 0 No.

- **Approval of CARES Reimbursement Request**

Selectman Talbot made the motion to submit the CARES Reimbursement Request to the State. Selectman Morrin seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 5 Yes, 0 No.

- **American Rescue Plan Act Priorities**

Mr. Beckley noted the Town may receive \$2.8million over 2 years. Chairman Kruckas asked that this should be used to help business and youth services. Mr. Beckley noted that businesses or departments must demonstrate how they were affected by Covid to qualify.

- **Consideration of Host Community Agreement, 82nd Wellness, 14 West Street, Ware**

Michael Harris joined the meeting via zoom. He noted that he sells CBD oil at the location, and he hopes to also sell retail products.

Selectman Barnes made the motion to approve the Host Community Agreement of 82nd Wellness, 14 West Street, Ware. Selectman Morrin seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 5 Yes, 0 No.

- **Consideration of Host Community Agreement, Cedar Roots, LLC, 50 East Main Street, Ware**

Mary Feeney was present for the meeting. She noted that Cedar Roots, LLC has the cultivation license at the location, and the retail license will bring people into town. Mr. Beckley noted that regulations are still being decided on establishments such as a café.

Selectman Morrin made the motion to approve the Host Community Agreement of Cedar Roots, LLC, 50 East Main Street, Ware. Selectman Barnes seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 5 Yes, 0 No.

- **Set Public Hearing for Tuesday, July 6, 2021, for Application for New Wine and Malt Package Store, Stevens Strong LLC d/b/a It's Wine O'Clock, 164 B West Street, Ware, MA**

Selectman Barnes made the motion to set the public hearing for 7:05 p.m. on Tuesday, July 6, 2021, for the Application for New Wine and Malt Package Store, Stevens Strong LLC d/b/a It's Wine O'Clock, 164 B West Street, Ware, MA. Selectman Morrin seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 5 Yes, 0 No.

- **Juneteenth, State Holiday**

Selectman Morrin made the motion to approve the Juneteenth State holiday. Selectman Barnes seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 5 Yes, 0 No.

Comments and Concerns of Citizens

Carol Zins announced the Town Wide Tag Sale will be on Saturday, June 19. She noted that 42 have signed up and maps will be available at the Meeting House on Saturday morning.

Town Manager Report

Mr. Beckley wished a happy birthday week to Mary Midura.

The Lions Club has tentatively scheduled the fireworks for Saturday, August 14.

National Night Out is traditionally the first Tuesday of August. This would be August 3, on which there is currently a Select Board meeting scheduled. Would the Board consider canceling or re-scheduling the meeting? National Night Out is an opportunity for children to meet public safety and other town departments as well as for family activities.

The Board of Selectmen indicated that the August 3, 2021, meeting will be cancelled.

The Health Department is working to establish a local vaccine clinic on June 23 at Town Hall from 5 to 7 p.m. There is a registration system, but walk-ins will be welcome, too.

The Town is working with a contractor to apply for grant funding from the State and National Grid for electric vehicle charging stations. This grant funding requires the placement on public property, so the Green Communities committee is considering locations such as Veterans Park, the High School, Fire Station and Senior Center.

The Towns of Palmer and Ware have been receiving numerous complaints about noise from the Palmer Race Track. Palmer Town Manager Ryan McNutt has been responding with updates on the Palmer court case regarding the track. In the past, based on recommendations from Ware and Palmer attorneys, the Town of Ware has not participated in the court case. Ware residents are asking that that be reconsidered.

The Town received favorable bids for materials for roadwork for the coming fiscal year. The cost of paving and sealing actually dropped slightly from the past two years.

The Town of Palmer has drafted a proposed agreement for the provision of shelter and animal control services. That is attached and can be discussed at the July 6 meeting.

Selectman Barnes asked about the East Street bridge project; Mr. Beckley noted there has been no response from DOT. Selectman Barnes also noted the Aspen Rod and Gun club will host a chicken barbeque on August 28 at the Grange.

Adjournment

Selectman Morrin made the motion at 10:12 p.m. to Adjourn the Regular Meeting. Selectman Talbot seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 5 Yes, 0 No.

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