



Board of Selectmen

Ware Town Hall, Meeting Room, 126 Main Street

Regular Meeting Minutes – Tuesday, March 2, 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 Alan G. Whitney, Selectman Keith J. Kruckas, Selectman Thomas H. Barnes, Selectman Nancy J. Talbot, Selectman John J. Morrin, Town Manager Stuart B. Beckley, Executive Assistant Mary L. Midura, DPW Director Gilbert St. George-Sorel, Chief Shawn Crevier, Terrance W. Smith

Absent: None

Present via Zoom: Rick Lotuff, Mary Feeny, Beth Greenblatt, COA Director John Zienowicz, Kim Mongeau, WRN Editor Eileen Kennedy

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

Opening Remarks, Announcements, and Agenda review by Chair - none

Consent Agenda

- **Meet and Greet New Police Officers**

Chief Crevier introduced new Police Officers Jacob Crevier, Troy Turpin and Derek Ames. The officers were sworn in by Town Clerk Nancy Talbot. The Board of Selectmen offered congratulations.

- **Spring Sports**

Mr. Beckley noted that the Parks Commission met on Monday, March 1, to discuss the plan for summer activities and sports such as softball and baseball. There is a packet of extensive State rules and safety regulations. All plans will be reviewed for approval by the Health Director.

Selectman Kruckas asked why vaccines were not made available at the Senior Center. Mr. Beckley noted that the State has chosen larger sites to distribute the vaccines. Selectman Kruckas questioned why the Senior Center has been closed. See further discussion below.

Scheduled Appearances

- **7:10 p.m. Public Hearing Water Rate Evaluation**

Chairman Whitney read the Public Hearing notice into the record.

Mr. Beckley noted the packet gives suggested options for the Board to consider. This includes an evaluation of capital improvements needed for the water system. The water filtration plant is now estimated to cost \$13 million. Options are to increase rates on water users, increase rates on all taxpayers, or a combination of both. An article to

increase the water filtration plant funding from \$6 million to \$13 million. Selectman Morrin stated he would not recommend asking for an override. Mr. Beckley noted the Town has funds without an override. If the USDA gives the loan, it may be for 40 years and would affect capital planning. Selectman Kruckas noted the taxpayers' burden would and can cause people to leave due to high taxes. Selectman Barnes stated that those who use the water should pay. Selectman Talbot noted that the community benefits from businesses that use the water, and all water should be clean and safe. Mr. St. George-Sorel recommended an exclusionary override to cover rate increases. There are other things happening in the Town, such as the closure of Baystate Mary Lane Hospital, a large water and sewer contributor. He noted several multi-family homes with water shut offs not being turned back on. He stated that an override would give some flexibility. Selectman noted that other towns have faced these decisions, and he noted the Clean Water Act. Mr. St. George-Sorel noted examples of restaurants and businesses to "put a face on this" as the decision affects everyone.

Selectman Morrin made the motion to fund with rate increase only. Selectman Barnes seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 4 Yes, 1 No (Selectman Talbot).

Town Manager Stuart Beckley will present amounts at the next meeting.

- **Solar – Beth Greenblatt**

Ms. Greenblatt noted there are still interconnectivity issues with National Grid. She noted there are programs to get estimates for the Town and suggested the Town might investigate State solar incentive programs such as the SMART program with declining block payments. Selectmen noted the water project is a greater consideration at this time. She noted a cost benefit analysis could be done if she is consulted. National Grid has additional studies and goals. Ms. Greenblatt suggested the Town might wait for those results before making a decision. Mr. Beckley may discuss further with Ms. Greenblatt.

Old Business

- **Quabbin Feasibility Study**

Selectman Barnes noted the Water Resources Committee was a good start. Mr. Beckley will advertise that those interested should send a letter with their experience. The Board noted a committee of 7 to include Selectman Barnes, DPW, Planning Department, and to include community from commercial industry and residential.

Selectman Talbot made the motion to Table the Quabbin Feasibility Study and to advertise for a Water Resources Committee to be formed on March 16, 2021. Selectman Kruckas seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 5 Yes, 0 No.

- **John Zienowicz, Director Senior Center**

Selectman asked why the heat is still on a proprietary system and is costing taxpayers now in the amount of \$12,000. He questioned why this problem continues and why Mr. Zienowicz has not previously come before the Board. Mr. Zienowicz explained that Heat Pro has worked on the system which has run for long periods without problems, previously consulted with Deputy Fire Chief Wloch as the Senior Center is part of emergency shelter. He noted that the system failed on its own and the sensors were opened by computer, no one has turned the system on or off.

Selectman Kruckas asked why the Senior Center remains closed and why it is not used for vaccine distribution. Mr. Zienowicz noted that the Department of Public Health (DPH) is responsible for vaccine distribution and the State decides where vaccines will be administered. Ware was not considered as vaccines require specialized refrigeration. He noted that the Big Y in Palmer and some CVS have received small amounts of vaccines. The State continues to look at the numbers. With patience, more vaccines should be available in the weeks ahead. Mr. Zienowicz noted that the Senior Center has continued throughout the pandemic to distribute lunches to seniors, provide to the Grenville Park food distribution, and continues to help seniors with fuel assistance and MassHealth needs. He noted that Western Mass Councils on Aging advise not opening the senior center until most seniors have been vaccinated and all community senior centers follow similar best practices.

New Business

- **Mary Lane Discussion, Committee**

Mr. Beckley is drafting a letter for the Board and legislators and surrounding town boards to send to the Department of Public Health. Selectman Talbot noted the letter is critical to ask for a halt on immediate closure and give time for planning.

The Board of Selectmen will meet on Monday, March 8, 2021 at 4:00 p.m. to finalize the letter to DPH.

- **Appointment: Finance Committee – Terrance W. Smith, Term to Expire June 30, 2024**

Selectman Kruckas made the motion to appoint Terrance W. Smith to the Finance Committee, Term to Expire June 30, 2024. Selectman Barnes seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 5 Yes, 0 No.

- **Host Community Agreements – River Bend, LLC, 2 and 16 East Main Street**

Rick Lotuff and Mary Feeny, representing River Bend LLC, joined via Zoom. The millyard would have a cultivation facility in buildings which have had water shut off for almost 25 years. The revenue will depend on use of the lots. Mr. Lotuff noted he is seeking partners on the project.

Selectman Kruckas made the motion to approve the Host Community Agreements for River Bend, LLC, 2 and 16 East Main Street. Selectman Morrin seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 5 Yes, 0 No.

Comments and Concerns of Citizens

Mr. St. George-Sorel stated a 50/50 split with 50% as an override would be another solution. He noted Flint, Michigan over 5 years later.

Resident Kim Mongeau noted that users would be burdened twice if taxpayers are also charged.

Resident Terry Smith noted the drinking water regulations and recommended at least a 6% increase as the Town will lose revenue from the hospital closure. Mr. Beckley noted that clean water also affects home values.

Selectman Barnes noted a STOP sign is needed at Old Belchertown Road and Babcock Tavern Road intersection.

Selectman Morrin asked about the Ambulance Committee; Mr. Beckley noted the April 1 deadline for June 30, 2021 contract.

The Board further discussed use of marijuana revenue towards the water filtration project or toward water rates. Mr. Beckley will provide details on March 16, 2021.

Town Manager Report

COVID –Ware returned to being a Moderate Risk (yellow) community, with a 2.5% positivity rate on testing.

As noted at the last meeting, the proposed premium rate increase for the Town in fiscal year 2022 is 12.8%. The Town and its insurance consultant continue to push back and are reviewing other options for comparable plans.

Attached is the invitation to the Pathfinder annual budget meeting on March 10. Whether in person (limited to 2) or by zoom, this is a good opportunity to learn about the Pathfinder programs. The number of students from Ware going to Pathfinder decreases this year (as does the total school population), so the annual budget requirement will decrease.

On Friday, the WestCOMM Board of Directors approved accepting the application from Ware (and Southwick) and to move forward with the State grant application to incorporate the police and fire into the regional dispatch system.

The budget for Fiscal 2022 will be forwarded to the Finance Committee this week.

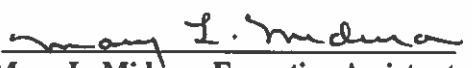
The committee set up to review applications for the Curaleaf community funds completed their 2020 award reviews. The next round of funding will be available for application on March 1 with awards made at the end of June.

Selectman Morrin questioned the First Student demand and questioned easements; Mr. Beckley noted these items will be on Town Meeting warrant.

Selectman Kruckas asked when Town Hall would be open to the public. Mr. Beckley noted the Governor's Order with Phase 4 starting on March 22 with capacity limits lifted. Mr. Beckley will provide more information at the March 16, 2021 meeting.

Adjournment

Selectman Barnes made the motion at 9:27 p.m. to Adjourn the Regular Meeting. Selectman Morrin seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 5 Yes, 0 No.

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