



TOWN OF WARE

Planning & Community Development
126 Main Street, Ware, Massachusetts 01082
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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Meeting Minutes from
Monday, June 14, 2021
Select Board Room, Town Hall

CDA Members Present:

Chairman Paul Opalinski, Danielle Souza, Brandy Bruso, Jim Baird and John Carroll (remote)

CDA Members Absent:

Guests:

Ted Harvey and Nick Peavy (PVPC) (remote)

Staff Present:

Rebekah Cornell, Director

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIENCE

Chairman P. Opalinski called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

LRRP PROGRAM PRESENTATION

Ted Harvey and Nick Peavy of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) gave a presentation on the Local Rapid Recovery Program (LRRP). The goal of the LRRP is to tailor economic recovery from COVID-19 to the Town of Ware. This presentation covered the findings of Phase I of the LRRP.

In the initial assessment, PVPC looked at factors such as market information (trends and consumer profiles), the physical environment (public and private realms), business environment and administrative capacity (partners, funding). The business environment was analyzed via an online survey of local businesses.

The downtown public realm is satisfactory as sidewalks and signage are in good condition. In terms of the private realm, building facades and vacant properties are in need of improvements. Downtown has good vehicle and pedestrian accessibility, but lacks any accessibility for bicycles.

The mix of businesses in Downtown Ware is good as the total mix of commercial, public, and civic uses meet a wide range of needs. Approximately 14% of businesses are restaurants/ cafes, 34% services/offices, and 56% other retail. Out of 67 total storefronts, only 17 (25%) are vacant. In terms of parking downtown, there are about 280 in total which is considered to be a sufficient amount. About 45% of Ware's workforce live in the Downtown Area which is a higher than average amount.

90% of Ware's businesses were negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, 60% of businesses generated less revenue in 2020 than they did in 2019, and 50% of business had a decline of 25 % or more in revenue. Not to mention that all of these businesses were operating at reduced hours and capacity.

The businesses who responded to the LRRP survey indicated that a lack of quality infrastructure was there number one priority for improvement. Complaints of parking were another major issue written in by businesses in the surveys.

Moving forward, PVPC will hold meetings and discussions with local stakeholders. PVPC and the CDA will narrow down potential projects and decide which Subject Matter Expert's (SME's) to consult. CDA officials will choose ten projects to pursue in more detail by mid-July while developing them by the end of August.

The LRRP project end date is September 15, 2021.

Questions and Comments from the Public:

- Would it be possible to add a parking garage or additional parking to meet parking needs?
- Could the additions of pedestrian bridges be added to a few areas (Between Cedarbrook/West St, Laurel Dr., and behind CVS)?
- A good project could be to add a dog park that could also be used to host community movie nights.
- Possible mosaic project on West Street's sidewalks to help seal in cracks.
- Food truck event

CDBG UPDATES

FY19

The final abatement is nearing completion as the testing facility may be packed up soon. Parker Street is close to being done with a deadline by the end of July. Two retaining walls need to be fixed in Town, one behind Gabe's Bar and the other on Sherwin Street.

Motion by D. Souza to reallocate up to \$10,000 to install new street light with footing near Dioguardi Jewelers. Seconded by J. Baird. All in favor. Approved 5-0.

Motion by J. Carroll to use \$3,600 for housing rehab of 212 Belchertown Road. Seconded by D. Souza. All in favor. Approved 5-0.

FY20

There continues to be addition of work to the project on Park Avenue. Bids for this project will most likely be completed by November with the hopes that the job itself is completed by Spring of FY22.

FY20-CV

The senior outreach food/grocery deliveries have been very helpful and a big need for Ware's aging population. Those who rely on using the Quabbin Connector may have trouble fitting all of their groceries on the public transit system. There is a possibility of providing "shopper" jobs in the Ware, Warren and Hardwick areas to assist with these deliveries.

In terms of the Microenterprise grants, small businesses that suffered COVID financial loss can receive \$10,000 at first then up to \$25,000 afterwards. For certain businesses that don't show losses in 2019 they usually did not show any losses until 2020. There is also the availability of technical assistance minigrants at about \$750.

There is the possibility of starting a financial fitness club which teaches skills in a monthly meeting format to both residents and business owners. Subjects that will be covered include buying a new car, having an online presence, needed home appliances and modest home repair. The hope is to start this coming fall and to have 80% of participants live in the Quaboag Region.

FY21

The deadline for FY21 is September 15, 2021.

Old/New Business

Issues regarding downtown parking were briefly discussed by the CDA. The question of what funding opportunities exist through QVDCDC to create more parking are available. The only parking available is on Main Street, at Veteran's Park, and on Pleasant Street.

The Façade Improvement Plan was briefly touched upon. In terms of the telephone poles on Main and West Streets, American flags should be added to them.

ADMINISTRATIVE

Motion by D. Souza to approve the minutes from May 17th, 2021. Seconded by B. Brusco. All in favor. Approved 5-0.

REVIEW FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS

Brief review of account summaries.

Motion by D. Souza to approve the financial accounts thorough May 2021. Seconded by J. Carroll. All in favor. Approved 5-0.

