



# TOWN OF WARE

## Planning & Community Development

126 Main Street, Ware, Massachusetts 01082

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## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Meeting Minutes from

**Monday August 10, 2020**

Select Board Room, Town Hall

### CDA Members Present:

Paul Opalinski, Danielle Souza, James Baird, &  
Brandy Bruso

### Guests:

Ted Harvey (PVPC), Tom Barnes (BOS)

### Staff Present:

Rebekah DeCoursey, Director of Planning &  
Community Development; Stuart Beckley, Town  
Manager; Anna Marques, Building Inspector; Jack  
Carolan, PCD Assistant

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### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

### ADMINISTRATION

Approval of minutes from 5/18/20 and 6/10/20.

**Motion** by B. Bruso to approve the meeting minutes from 5/18/20 and 6/10/20. Seconded by J. Baird. All in favor. Approved 4-0

### PROGRAM INCOME

**Motion** by J. Baird to approve financial accounts. Seconded by B. Bruso. All in favor. Approved 4-0. (13 min)

### UPDATES- CDBG

#### FY2018

T. Harvey provided an update on the Spring Street project. This project is complete and the final payout is in process. The other component of the FY2018 CDBG includes Housing Rehab with currently 6-7 units in the process for this program, and Social Services. T. Harvey also noted that part of the FY2019 portion of the CDBG will include extending the Senior Outreach Program from just to Hardwick to include Ware and Warren. Belchertown will also be included

by using money the CDBG-CV award. T. Harvey stated that there is still no word on when the FY2020 money will be announced because everything has been pushed back due to the pandemic.

R. DeCoursey noted that Ware is also part of a microenterprise program of which Palmer is the lead community. Palmer has been collecting names of interested businesses that want to apply when the funds become available. Only businesses of 5 employees or less are eligible. B. Brusco asked what the money can be used for and T. Harvey responded by saying that it is primarily for covering operational costs that have been impacted by Covid-19.

### **FY2019-Code Enforcement**

P. Opalinski asked for an update of how the code enforcement program was going. A. Marques stated that the multi-family inspections had been delayed due to Covid-19 but it is starting back up.

S. Beckley if it would be worthwhile to bring in outside help when it comes to conducting inspections given the delay caused by Covid-19. A. Marques stated she would be concerned about consistency between the outside inspectors and the Town officials. S. Beckley asked T. Harvey if the 2021 CDBG application could be impacted if the town doesn't reach a certain level of expenditure of funds by the end of 2020. T. Harvey stated that the town would need to have spent 80% of the FY2019 funds by the time they submit their 2021 application for the next year around March.

P. Opalinski asked if any of the funds could be reprogrammed if necessary. T. Harvey said that it is possible but that the case would have to be made why the money has not been spent for its original purpose. He also stated that DHCD is more lenient when it comes to reprogramming funds as a result of Covid-19. P. Opalinski asked if there would be any way to spend a portion of the funds on the legal fees associated with the proposed demolition of the 114 Main St. property but S. Beckley stated that since that is a mixed-use building as opposed to a multi-family building it is probably not eligible for the code enforcement program. T. Harvey stated that it could be possible but would have to be looked into further.

P. Opalinski brought up the need for there to be a more clear process and set of steps to be taken in the case of a house that needs to be taken down. He brought up bringing in a consultant or some type of expert to come up with ways of effectively fining property owners who refuse to address issues with their buildings. J. Baird made the point that part of the confusion when it comes to enforcing building demolition is that jurisdiction could fall on either the Board of Health, Board of Selectmen, or the Building Inspector. P. Opalinski also wanted to know if more could be done to prevent they type of situation where a property burns down and the owner simply walks away with the insurance money leaving the town stuck with the property. He also emphasized that he believes some of the funds definitely need to be repurposed because he is concerned about being able to spend the required amount by the March 1, 2021 deadline. T. Harvey responded by saying he would put some information

together along with a proposed timeline and process for going about repurposing a portion of the funds.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

Official Opening of the Dog Park was held on Friday 8/7/2020 and was a successful and well-received event.

P. Opalinski asked S. Beckley if there was update on the property next to 114 Main St. and whether or not it would also need to be demolished or if it could be rehabbed.

B. Brusco raised a concern with the blinking stop sign at the intersection of North and Pleasant Street and who is responsible for trimming the tree around it that inhibits the view of the sign.

J. Baird asked what t for the special town meeting being held on Monday August 17, 2020. S. Beckley answered by saying that it is being held in order to vote on the appropriation of town funds, approximately \$400,000, for the design, engineering, and the demolition of 114 Main St.

P. Opalinski asked for T. Harvey to give a brief summary of what the "Slum and Blight" designation is. T. Harvey admitted that it is a terrible name for the designation that only relates to the CDBG funding. He stated though that it is a Federal designation and that there are two national objectives for the program. The first being to address and assist low-moderate income residents. The other national objective is to prevent and remediate slum and blight. T. Harvey stated that this term is left over from the 1970's when the program was first started. A visual inventory of buildings and streets is submitted to the state in order for a designated "slum and blight" district to be approved. Properties in the designated district can be eligible for extra funding in order to try to meet the national objective.

T. Barnes asked what additional funding the town has received as a result of the slum and blight designation. T. Harvey noted that the slum and blight designation lasts for 10 years. He also stated that the town used the designation to receive funds for code enforcement. P. Opalinski also noted that the slum and blight designation can be advantageous for getting various grant applications approved. D. Souza was asked if the slum and blight designation has impacted property values, as she works in real estate. She responded that is not the case at all and that it is not something that is factored into the appraisal. T. Barnes stated that after hearing the case in favor of the slum and blight designation he now sees the value and benefit of the designation and will relay that information to his fellow Selectboard members.

D. Souza mentioned how the "Buy Ware Now" program was created as a result of the slum and blight designation as a way to work around the stigma of the term for prospective home buyers in the area. She stated that in the past two years sales have actually increased in the slum and blight designated area. T. Harvey stressed that it is simply a designation that is filed at the state

level and used as a source for additional funding. There are no signs or anything that is put up or advertised showing where the slum and blight district is.

**ADJOURN**

**Motion** by J. Baird to adjourn the meeting at 8:06 pm. Seconded by B. Brusio. All in favor.  
Approved 4-0

Next meeting is scheduled for September 14, 2020, if needed, at 6:30 pm.

Minutes from August 10, 2020  
Respectfully submitted by,

Jack Carolan  
Department Assistant

<i>Minutes Approved on:</i> _____	
Opalinski	_____
Carroll	_____
Souza	_____
Bruso	_____
Baird	_____