

Board of Selectmen Joint Meeting with Town of Hardwick Board of Selectman

[Transcriber's note: This is an accessible transcription of scanned meeting minutes (image-only PDF, 3 pages). Each page of the source bears the running header: "Board of Selectmen: John E. Carroll, Nancy J. Talbot, Michael Fountain, Alan G. Whitney, Tracy R. Opalinski — Town Manager: Stuart Beckley, sbeckley@townofware.com." Roll-call vote tables are reproduced as accessible tables; checkmarks in the source are rendered as "Yes ✓".]

Ware Town Hall, 126 Main Street, Meeting Room

Meeting Minutes — Tuesday, April 11, 2017 at 6:00 p.m.

Chairman Carroll opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m.

Executive Session: MGL Chapter 30A, Section 21 (a) #2, Negotiations.

Selectman Talbot moved to Adjourn Regular Session at 6:00 p.m., to move into Executive Session per MGL Chapter 30A, Section 21 (a) #3, Collective Bargaining, TO RECONVENE IN OPEN SESSION; Selectman Fountain seconded. The motion passed on a Roll Call Vote of 5 Yes, 0 No:

Roll call vote — motion to adjourn Regular Session and enter Executive Session

Member	Vote
John E. Carroll	Yes ✓
Nancy J. Talbot	Yes ✓
Michael Fountain	Yes ✓
Alan G. Whitney	Yes ✓
Tracy R. Opalinski	Yes ✓

Selectman Talbot moved to Adjourn Executive Session at 6:35 p.m., TO RECONVENE IN OPEN SESSION; Selectman Opalinski seconded. The motion passed on a Roll Call Vote of 5 Yes, 0 No:

Roll call vote — motion to adjourn Executive Session

Member	Vote
John E. Carroll	Yes ✓
Nancy J. Talbot	Yes ✓
Michael Fountain	Yes ✓
Alan G. Whitney	Yes ✓
Tracy R. Opalinski	Yes ✓

Meeting Opened by Chairman Carroll at 6:43 p.m.

Present: Selectman Carroll, Selectman Talbot, Selectman Fountain, Selectman Whitney, Selectman Opalinski, Stuart Beckley, Fire Chief Thomas Coulombe, Hardwick Selectman

Keenan Young, Hardwick Selectman Kelly Allen, Theresa Cofske, Hardwick Town Administrator, Mary Midura, Stanley Ciukaj.

Board of Selectmen Joint Meeting with Town of Hardwick Board of Selectman
Chairman Carroll welcomed the Hardwick Board of Selectmen and Town Administrator.

Ware Town Manager Stuart Beckley noted that Hardwick Board of Selectmen approached the Town of Ware several months ago. Discussion tonight regarding the draft agreement, which has been reviewed by our town counsel. Hardwick Selectman Young explained that Hardwick has had private Basic Life Services for over 40 years, however, the contract and license expired March 31, 2017. The service relied on contributions from townspeople, and Ware has always supported and filled in. This agreement includes compensation to Town of Ware to provide services.

Chief Coulombe noted a good working relationship with Hardwick, as backup and majority of ambulance service; like many small communities the needs have become more difficult to meet. Regulations and requirements have become tougher and volunteerism is down. Goshen, Cummington, and Williamsburg have a regional ambulance service. Many towns go to their community for funding. EMS is required 24/7. There were 275 EMS calls in 2016, for average of 5.3 calls per service. Chief Coulombe stated he believes this agreement is an opportunity for the Town of Ware.

Chairman Carroll asked for comments from the audience.

Resident Jen McMartin questioned the numbers and asked how much is Hardwick willing to take on. Ms. McMartin noted there is question as to what if the ambulance is not here. Chief Coulombe stated this would not impact the staff, and the majority of the calls go to BMLH now. Selectman Whitney questioned if two ambulances are out, who must decide whether to take a call?

Resident Frank Bateman questioned primary aid or mutual aid and noted this discussion should address increased responsibility, increased liability, and our resources used. Chief Coulombe noted this is why he advocates the 60 day reevaluation clause to be used if cost is greatly increased. Mr. Bateman stated our resources should be used for Ware residents first.

Resident George Staiti questioned the liability issue if 2 ambulances are out and the Chief decides not to send out the third ambulance. Selectman Whitney noted this is addressed in paragraph one of this agreement. Resident John Desmond noted the closing of BMLH and longer transport times, and quoted Chief Coulombe from the 2016 Annual Town Report regarding this. Mr. Desmond questioned costs and billing, and noted the town should not rush to sign this agreement.

Resident Bill Jackson noted the extreme area of Hardwick could take 15-20 minutes for an ambulance to arrive. Ms. McMartin noted that other towns have mutual aid, and West Brookfield has increased their services to communities.

Hardwick Selectman Kelly Allen noted that she sat on the board for EMS, spoke to other communities, and this was never resolved. Chief Coulombe noted the community will not be short changed and this is our opportunity to do the right thing and help our neighbors, as well as generate some revenue. Chief Coulombe also noted that the Town can exercise the 60-day out if the plan does not work out.

Hardwick Town Administrator Theresa Cofske stated that they are about to lose the non-profit EMS, and the process now is to gather facts, meet with towns who may be interested in providing the services, with an obligation to do what is best for the residents of Hardwick. Discussion may be about a flat basic fee. Resident Frank Bateman noted his hope that no vote is taken tonight. Hardwick Police Chief Ayotte stated that there are a few EMTs and basic first responders.

Resident Bill Jackson questioned this process and suggested this issue should be a town meeting vote. Chairman Carroll noted that no decision will be made tonight. This issue is not on the warrant for the Annual Town Meeting on May 8, 2017.

Resident John Desmond noted that public hearings should be held with data on a handout for all to look at. Selectman Opalinski suggested that Town Manager Beckley create a document.

Hardwick has \$25,000 earmarked for this. Resident Frank Bateman noted that risks are on the table with funds needed for services the town is already doing.

Fire Chief Coulombe explained that 3% or less of bills are non-collection, and there is a 67-73% return payment. The town relies on Medicaid/Medicare, with better quality insurance of Hardwick residents. There is a 25% reimbursement rate for ambulance maintenance, and this is part of the EMS budget. Chief Coulombe noted the good care at BMLH, but it would be a disservice to the area if there is no Emergency Room.

Resident Roger Lacoste questioned transports unavailable after 5:00 pm. Mr. Beckley noted this is contractual, and this must be discussed and negotiated with the union. Mr. Lacoste protested that this issue should go to town vote; Chairman Carroll noted that the issue was a money issue in years past and the current Board of Selectmen hope to readdress this issue.

Chairman Carroll suggested the Boards of Ware and Hardwick set a date for another meeting on this issue. Selectman Talbot noted that the State has been promoting regionalization, as all small communities are facing these issues. Chief Coulombe stated that the goal is to build the best service that we can, and he would want to send three people to paramedic school to be proactive. Chief Coulombe stated that the primary responsibility is to take care of the Town of Ware first.

Selectman Talbot moved to create an Ad Hoc committee with 2 Selectmen, Town Manager, 1 Hardwick Selectman, Hardwick Town Administrator, and Fire Chief Coulombe; Selectman

Opalinski seconded the motion. Selectman Talbot and Selectman Opalinski volunteered to represent the Board of Selectmen on this committee. The motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Resident Bill Jackson suggested an information packet be given out at this next meeting. Mr. Beckley stated that the needed information can be placed on the town website and available in hard copy soon.

Selectman Talbot moved to Adjourn at 8:07 p.m., Selectman Opalinski seconded. The motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Attest: [signature] Mary L. Midura, Executive Assistant.