

Roxanne Maher

From: Beth Ribe <beth_ribe@live.com>
Sent: Monday, July 22, 2024 3:22 PM
To: April Brunelle
Cc: Town Council Group
Subject: Community Relations Commission: Town Governance - training

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Dear Chairperson Brunelle,

In my experience to date on different committees/commissions and the review of meeting minutes; in addition to observations regarding voter turnout and community feedback/backlash, it's become apparent that there needs to be a more strident, directed, deliberate and persistent attempt at community relations as it pertains to transparency of the workings of local governance. Town government is a complex, highly matrixed and diverse as well as also rigid process. It is not an intuitive engagement.

This complexity and the fact that modern times has in itself become more complex demands that our town adjust and adapt to accommodate and try to reach as many of our residents as possible. We need to be able to provide well-intentioned, well-thought-out and broad overview of our town government: how it is shaped, governed and our oversight. In our town, we have several individuals who have dedicated a good part of their lives in their civic duty to this town and we could perhaps enlist them as subject-matter experts or at the least, help us shape this community outreach program.

It would not be the first attempt to develop broad engagement with residents. There are many existing and previous councilors and commissioners who have tried to make town government accessible. The resounding feedback is that residents simply don't take advantage of the outreach that the town has provided. This is particularly felt around budget referendum season - there are always an alarming amount of residents who are enraged about the perceived lack of transparency with the process, even though the process is a year's long one with numerous methods of communication and many steps taken throughout the process. Voter turnout also suggests that residents do not prioritize town business.

Our residents are our assets and are those that we serve within the confines of the legal and regulatory parameters which are mostly unknown to the public at large, despite the very public nature of our governance. Still - and despite - it is in the town's best interest to continuously strive to create an informed public. We need to foster a sense of community and engagement and create stakeholders and enrich our processes and the solutions to our town's very unique (and not so unique) complex problems. **Our residents in**

return can confidently engage in town governance in a meaningful, productive way.

With that said, I submit a recommendation to create a temporary committee/commission structured similarly as the Committee to Review the Budget Process. This committee can invest in and research the viability and execution of the following:

PURPOSE:

To provide for our residents an opportunity to become more knowledgeable and involved in local town governance by holding workshop(s). The substance of this workshop(s) would provide for a high level overview of how our town government works, focusing on the process and the parties/commissions and their functions, including but not limited to:

1.
State of CT General Statutes
2.
Town of Ledyard Charter and Ordinances.
3.
Town of Ledyard Commissions - Rules and Regulations: overview of each, what functions they perform, how they perform them, who is involved, how to be involved, etc.
4.
Special Meetings: key stakeholders, requirements, purpose and process
5.
Public Hearings: key stakeholders, requirements, purpose and process
6.
Town Budgets: key stakeholders, requirements, purpose and process

METHOD(s):

1.
In person presentations at Town Hall Annex and via zoom.
- 2
Pre-recorded and uploaded to town website.
3.
Provide handouts/info with pertinent links, contacts, etc
4.
Each town commission, at each monthly meeting will promote the workshops and date of the workshops and encourage resident involvement.
5.
The workshops/video are to be promoted on the official Town Website, social media, and text alert, along with registration link and info.
6.
Other

It is my hope that we can foster improved community engagement and accountability while strengthening and reinforcing the integrity of our town government, in all its forms.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this matter!

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Ribe

Sent from my iPad