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Member, Ledyard Finance Committee
Submitted remarks for 6/12/24 Town Council Meeting to be included in the official record

Comments for Agenda Item VII – Comments of Town Councilors

I'd first like to congratulate all volunteers involved on another successful Regatta festival, especially councilor Buhle for all her organizational efforts, and councilor Paul for his multimedia contribution; it truly is a great event that is quickly becoming a Ledyard tradition.

June is Men's Health Month! This annual observance, established in 1994, and in conjunction with Men's Health Week, is a time to help educate men and their families about the importance of being proactive about their health, heightening awareness of preventable health problems for males of all ages, supporting men and boys to engage in healthier lifestyle choices and to encourage the early detection and treatment of diseases and depression.

On average, men in the United States die nearly 6 years earlier than women and are at higher risk for many serious diseases, including heart disease, HIV, lung cancer, and of course, prostate cancer.

With regard to mental health, according to the Anxiety & Depression Association of America, Men are less likely to openly discuss mental health issues and seek help than women, due to social norms, reluctance, and belittlement from others, and these stigmas have a significant impact on males.

Approximately one in ten men experience depression or anxiety. Yet, fewer than half of them receive treatment, and each year, four times more men commit suicide than women.

A good first step on the path toward improved health is to make a call and establish with a primary care provider (PCP) who can recommend age- and risk-appropriate health screenings. Yet, Men 15-65 years of age are significantly less likely than women to seek preventive care services, and they are more likely to report not having a primary care provider.

As such, please take the opportunity this month to support the men and boys in your life, reinforcing the need to get screened early and often. As always, if you or someone you know is in a crisis, get help immediately. You can call 911 or call or text to reach the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Comments for New Business Item #1

I do have some concerns with regards to flying flags, other than the U.S. and State of Connecticut Flags, on town-owned property.

The first concern is that we, as a town, have no official policy governing what flags are allowed to be flown on town property and when they can be flown. In the case of SHURTLEFF ET AL. v. CITY OF BOSTON, the Supreme Court of the United States held that since Boston, at the time, had no written policies or clear internal guidance about what flags groups could fly and what those flags would communicate, third-party flag raisings would be classified as private, not government, speech. Therefore, without a written policy, denial of any third party flag would likely end up being construed as a denial of free speech, a legal quandary we do not want to find ourselves embroiled in.

Yet, as we've seen just last week in Wethersfield, CT, even when following a written policy approved by the town council, the town can get unnecessarily embroiled in a social controversy that can cast a dark shadow over the town, whether merited or un-merited. In the Wethersfield case, even the author of the town's Flag Policy commented that it seemed like they would need to revisit their policy in light of these recent events. Interestingly, when the policy was first adopted, some council members in Wethersfield noted the policy may lead down a slippery slope of deciding winners and losers.

Is this the kind of attention and issues we need to attract in Ledyard? I personally don't think so.

The current and past mayors established and continued a wise, but informal, policy of only flying official U.S. and State of Connecticut Flags on town property. I feel we should continue this practice, and more than that, formalize it in a written policy, especially in light of what Wethersfield is enduring, and in the interest of keeping the town from engaging in wasteful, potentially costly, legal problems. In this case, the conservative path forward is the best path.