



TOWN OF LEDYARD

Town Council Meeting Minutes

741 Colonel Ledyard Highway
Ledyard, Connecticut 06339-1551
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council@ledyardct.org

Chairman Gary St. Vil

Regular Meeting

Wednesday, January 28, 2026

7:00 PM

Town Hall Council Chambers

In-Person: Council Chambers Town Hall Annex

Remote: Information noted below:

Join Zoom Meeting from your Computer, Smart Phone or Tablet:

<https://ledyardct.zoom.us/j/89977322259?pwd=IV3J6CtZGWNfNF47zha0li9VubaOZgC.1>
Audio Only: Telephone: +1 646 558 8656; Meeting ID: 899 7732 2259; Passcode: 807991

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman St. Vil called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. at the Council Chambers, Town Hall Annex Building.

Chairman St. Vil welcomed all to the Hybrid Meeting. He stated for the members of the Town Council and the Public who were participating via video conference that the remote meeting information was available on the Agenda that was posted on the Town's Website - Granicus-Legistar Meeting Portal.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. ROLL CALL

Present: Town Councilor William Barnes
Town Councilor April Brunelle
Town Councilor Jessica Buhle
Town Councilor Ty Lamb
Town Councilor Adrienne Parad
Town Councilor James Thompson
Chairman Gary St. Vil
Town Councilor Carmen Garcia-Irizarry

Excused: Town Councilor Tim Ryan

IV. PRESENTATIONS

None.

V. RESIDENT & PROPERTY OWNERS (COMMENTS LIMITED TO THREE (3) MINUTES)

Mr. M. Dave Schroeder, Jr., 290 Whalehead Road, Gales Ferry, commented on the following:

- Supported the proposed “*Ordinance Establishing a Town of Ledyard Code of Ethics and Ethics Commission*”.
- By-Right Approvals -Mr. Schroeder expressed concern that changes to the Zoning Regulations have fundamentally altered the future of their town, such as allowing for “*By-Right Approvals*” and 50 foot building heights; without meaningful public input. He noted that those decisions become political issues whether the Planning & Zoning Commission recognized them as such. He stated *By-Right Approvals* remove the public from the process entirely. Mr. Schroeder stated that these changes carry real consequences. They risk fueling public opposition not only to large-scale development, but also to related initiatives like sewer expansion and infrastructure investment, because residents feel they have lost any meaningful voice in shaping what their community becomes. He stated once projects were approved there was no going back.
- Route 12 Corridor Development Corridor Study - Mr. Schroeder stated that both the initial public outreach and the follow-up survey responses showed there was little local support for the type of large-scale, high-density multifamily development now allowed by Ledyard’s Zoning Regulations; and being contemplated by developers almost to the exclusion of any other use. He stated that residents have consistently called for sidewalks, pedestrian safety, beautification, preservation of green space, modest commercial growth, and village-scale improvements-the very qualities that have in fact already been implemented successfully in Ledyard Center. He noted a few years ago this area was a designated as the Gales Ferry Village District.
- Reinstate the Village District Protections and Design Guidelines for Ledyard Center and Gales Ferry - Mr. Schroder noted the Village District Regulations were removed, and residents want them back; not to stop growth, but to guide it responsibly. Mr. Schroeder stated the Village Districts and special-permit review were proven tools that help to manage building scale and design, balance competing interests, and support growth that benefits residents, businesses, developers, and the town's tax base alike.
- Gales Ferry's Historic Village Center - Mr. Schroeder stated the Gales Ferry Cetner remained an underutilized economic and cultural asset. He stated its waterfront setting, historic character, and ties to Mount Decatur and the War of 1812 gives it unique potential if it was properly protected and planned thoughtfully.
- Separate Planning Commission and Separate Zoning Commission - Mr. Schroder asked the Town Council to formally consider separating the Planning and Zoning Commission into two distinct and separate commissions so that they can function as intended. He stated that he hoped a subcommittee or working group could examine this issue in a timely way. Mr. Schroder concluded his comments by thanking the Town Council for their time and continued service to the Town.

VI. COMMITTEE COMMISSION AND BOARD REPORTS

None.

VII. COMMENTS OF TOWN COUNCILORS

Councilor Barnes noted his comments at the Town Council's January 14, 2026 meeting regarding the *Pledge of Allegiance*. He stated the *Pledge of Allegiance* was included on the Town Council's Agenda for the following reasons: (1) To come together as a community to make a commitment as a group regardless of their party; and (2) The Agenda provides the opportunity to share comments about what was happening in the world separately from the *Pledge of Allegiance*. He asked that Council Members to consider doing that during the afforded comment period. He concluded his comments by asking for just a few moments that all nine Council Members join in reciting the *Pledge of Allegiance* and their commitment to their country and not a political party.

Councilor Brunelle addressed her decision not to stand and recite the *Pledge of Allegiance*. She stated that she did not sit down because she was against their country or because of her political party. She stated that she sits down because she did not want to say the lines "*For Liberty and Justice for All*" when they were not being upheld. She stated another man died this week, noting on January 7, 2026 Renee Good died; and on January 24, 2026 Alex Pretti, an American citizens who was working as intensive care nurse for the United States Department of Veterans Affairs was killed. She stated that there has been no investigation into the two Immigration Custom Enforcement (ICE) Agents Jesus Ochoa and Raymundo Gutierrez. She stated that this was not "*Liberty and Justice for All*". She read a statement from Mr. Rogers as follows: "*Loving Yourself and Loving your Neighbors*", "*You know, the toughest thing is to love somebody who has done something mean to you. Especially when that somebody has been yourself. Have you ever done anything mean to yourself? Well it's very important to look inside yourself and find that loving part of you*".

Councilor Thompson stated as he attempted to articulate at the Town Council's January 14, 2026 meeting, that you can love something and be disappointed in it. He stated those were not mutually exclusive concepts. He stated that he loved his country, noting that he grew up saying the *Pledge of Allegiance* each morning at the start of the school day. He stated that he did not understand that there could be such an active and frequent betrayal of what the words in the *Pledge of Allegiance* stand for. He noted as Councilor Brunelle mentioned since the last Town Council meeting that following has occurred:

- A man was shot ten times for trying to assist a woman who had been knocked down by a very aggressive, heavily armed, poorly trained, and poorly regulated Police Force.
- A small child was used as bait to lure their parents out of their house, noting that the child has been sent off to who knows where.
- An Immigration Custom Enforcement (ICE) Agent was recorded on camera saying to a peaceful protestor "*If you raise your voice to me I will erase your voice*".

Councilor Thompson stated that he was having trouble rationalizing what line within the *Pledge of Allegiance* supported these things. He stated that he did not sit down during the *Pledge of Allegiance* because he hated his country, he stated that he was sitting down because he loved his country. He stated what they were seeing right now was not what this Flag and the *Pledge of Allegiance* stands for.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated as we all have seen in news and other sources, two

American citizens have died at the hands of Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) Agents. There is a lot of despair and angst amongst many. There have been reports of American citizens that are Latinos and Native Americans that have been detained by ICE and only released when they were able to prove that they were US citizens. Last year, there was a case in Wisconsin of a grandmother from Puerto Rico that was talking in Spanish with her daughter and granddaughter. An ICE heard them and the three were detained and later released when they were able to prove that they were American citizens.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry went on to state in September 2025, the Supreme Court said that U.S Immigration Officers could make investigative stops based on several factors such as apparent race or ethnicity, speaking Spanish, or speaking English with an accent. Based on this ruling any US citizen with those characteristics can be stopped and asked to prove that they are legally here in this country. She stated because of her race and ethnicity, and because she speaks Spanish, and because she speaks English with an accent that she could be stopped and be required to prove that she was a US citizen. She stated that she was a 4th Generation American, noting that her family has been US citizens for almost 110 years, longer than some politicians in this country whose legal status was never questioned. Meanwhile, she stated that her immigration status as well as her husband, her kids can be questioned. She stated the Supreme Court was saying that Americans should look and speak a certain way and anyone that deviates from those looks and way of speaking were not how Americans should look. She stated that being of a certain race or ethnicity means that as an American she does not get to enjoy the same rights and benefits that others do; and that she has been told by some that she should be okay with that.

She stated when she expressed this to a former Board of Education member and candidate during the last election, his answer was the following: *“Available data showed that: (1) The vast majority of homicides involving Hispanic victims in the US were committed by 84% of other civilians - primarily other Hispanics - not police or other races; and (2) Intimate partner violence & community violence account for the largest share of overall deaths in the Hispanic community. So stop being scared of the police or other races by listening to liberal fake media and you need to be more worried about walking through a Hispanic community .If you don’t believe me just do a little research before you take your next vacation.”* Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated that this resident didn’t only double down on his comments; he also made a similar claim regarding Black people noting that they said: *“54.2% of all homicides are most frequently Black or African American accounting for 54.2% of cases where race is known. Furthermore, Black males aged 15-24 & 25-44 have the highest homicide rates by a substantial margin”, so I guess stating facts is racist but blaming whites & police who are minimal isn’t.”*

Councilor Garica-Irizarry stated that she would like to explain a few things to this resident and anyone else that thinks like him. She stated that Puerto Ricans have been US citizens for almost 110 years, noting in 1898, the United States of America was at war with Spain in what was called the *Spanish-American War*. She stated that Spain gave its sovereignty over Puerto Rico to the United States of America; noting in other words, Puerto Rico was part of the War’s Bounty. She went on to note in 1917, thanks to the Jones Act, that Puerto Ricans were granted US Citizenship; which was almost a 117 years ago. She stated the main

language in Puerto Rico was Spanish and they speak English with an accent because that's usually what happens when people speak multiple languages, and didn't grow up speaking that 2nd, 3rd, or 4th language.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry addressed the resident's comment that she mentioned regarding statistics noting the following: (1) In Puerto Rico, almost a 100% of the crime was Hispanic on Hispanic because the population is almost 100% Hispanic; (2) If they go to a rural community in which the population is almost 100% white, the statistics would say in that community most of the crime was white on white. She stated the thing about statistics and other scientific data was that in itself that it does not tell you anything. The data has to be interpreted and conclusions have been derived from it. She stated if one only sees the race and the ethnicity of a community as problem, that to put it politely, they have certain biases, noting that other factors such as social, economic, mental health, and educational do not even cross the minds of some. She stated being from one race or another; or one ethnicity or another was not the cause of crime.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated the resident she mentioned was not the only one she has heard these types of comments from. She stated that a former Town Council Candidate told her that she should be okay with her citizenship being questioned because she had an accent. She noted that another resident basically equated her life to the value of a car, noting that the resident stated: *"If police were looking for a suspect connected to a crime and the description included the make and model of her car, that she might be stopped simply because she drove that type of vehicle."* Councilor Garcia stated that human beings were not cars, noting that the Police might stop you because of the looks of your car, which was a material object that could be replaced, stating that material things do not have feelings or dignity. She stated when you specifically get stopped by ICE in cases where there were no indications at all that you might be an undocumented immigrant, then what is the reason for the stop? After all, the Supreme Court says that her looks make her a prime candidate to be questioned.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry shared a story noting that years ago, she traveled from San Diego, California to Tijuana. She stated while going through immigration a British lady ahead of them was told by the Immigration Officer to keep going without asking her to see her papers; or asking her any questions at all, noting that he just looked at her and said keep going. She noted the British lady was not a US citizen, but that she and her friends, who were US citizens were stopped and questioned. She stated during the questioning, the Immigration Officer asked them what they were doing in California to which they responded that they were at an American Chemical Society Conference. She stated the Immigration Office responded to them saying that his advice was not to cook any drugs in their basement. She stated the British lady that was not a US citizen was treated with more dignity than she and her friends were.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry continued by stating that her Uncle was drafted for the Vietnam War and not only did he do his mandatory duty back then, but he also volunteered to go on a second tour, during which he did not come back alive to his family. She stated that her Uncle did not sacrifice his life so his family was told that they should be okay with being targeted

due to their looks and that they should be okay with it. She stated that you would think that 20 years later, things would be different. However, she stated that they were not. She stated that she has been told that she should be carrying her passport everywhere she goes and that her sons should be carrying their passports and documents with them at their Middle School and High School; and that they should be willing to do this even though others do not have to.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry explained that Puerto Ricans were Hispanic/Latino stating that being Hispanic was not a race; that it was an ethnicity. She stated that Hispanics were white, brown, black, and many other shades in between. She stated that families have members of all colors and heritage from almost everywhere in the world. She stated if anyone was interested, that she could show them her Ancestry DNA results. She stated that they were living in times in which empathy was becoming harder and harder to find. She stated that some people were okay with others being killed just for protesting or helping another human being to get up from the floor after being pushed violently to the ground.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated that the question for everyone today was: *“Are we okay with asking citizens that look a certain way to carry their passports everywhere they go so they can prove to others that they were citizens; and what else were they going to be okay with tomorrow?”*

Councilor Lamb commented on the following:

- The events that were occurring in the Country today - Councilor Lamb stated that his wife was an immigrant that came to the United States and went through the process to become a US Citizen, noting that the process took about 15-years. He stated that he concurred with Councilor Garcia-Irizarry's comments. He stated being in the community of Massachusetts,

and Connecticut that there were a lot of partially papered and undocumented immigrants. He stated over the past 25-years he has been involved with this community in helping with housing, furniture banks, reading legal documents, find sacred spaces, driving them to hospitals, and English as second language classes. He stated that residents could get involved with helping the immigrant community and that he could help others connect with people to have these types of conversations. He noted as he has stated at past meetings that if they continue to let the people on the hard right and hard left to drive the conversation that the people in the middle who can empathize and work with each other was where they needed to be.

- Potentially separating the Planning & Zoning Commission into two separate Commissions - Councilor Lamb stated that he would like to see Chairman St. Vil assign this initiative to one of the Town Council's Subcommittees to look into.

- Spicer Homestead Ruins Motion - Councilor Lamb stated at the Land Use/Planning/Public Works Committee's January 5, 2026 meeting the Committee

unanimously approved the following:

MOTION to recommend the Town Council appoint the Ledyard Historic District Commission to conduct a study of the proposed Spicer Homestead Ruins and follow all steps in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes; Chapter 7a; Section 7-147 (q) "Procedures for Establishing a Historical Property".

Therefore, Councilor Lamb questioned the process, stating that it was his understanding that the Motion would be included on the Town Council Agenda for the nine members to discuss. He stated that he would like some clarification regarding the process.

- Ledyard Fair - Councilor Lamb stated in early March there would be a Kick-Off Meeting to look at establishing a 501(c) non-profit status and bylaws, noting that this would be a non-partisan effort and an opportunity for everyone to come together. He stated that his intention was to be a facilitator, noting that eventually they would have a Ledyard Fair Board.

Councilor Parad commented on the following:

- Recent snowstorm - Councilor Parad stated the January 18 - 19, 2026 snowstorm was a block buster. She thanked the Public Works Department for their work to plow the roads; and that she was thankful that the School Superintendent cancelled school for two-days and their children were home and safe.
- Federal Health and Human Secretary - Councilor Parad stated at the Town Council's January 14, 2026 meeting that she alluded that there was be a divide between what the Federal Government Center for Disease and Control (CDC) was pushing, versus the Medical Society's Publications. She stated as a Medical Doctor she would suggest that the public follow the advice of the Medical Society, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Family Physicians; and not the advice of the CDC. She stated that their Federal Health and Human Secretary does not take science seriously; and therefore, it was important that they listen to the doctors and nurses that were doing the work.
- The events that were occurring in their Country today - Councilor Parad noted the personal stories that Councilors have shared this evening. She stated when she was a kid that she put herself in the shoes of Anne Frank and the people around her, noting that she imagined herself as every single person at that time. She stated that she imagined what she would have done if she was a German citizen, or if she was in Amsterdam, or what she would do if she was Jewish. She noted that she did not grow up Jewish, that she married into it. She stated this was a time for them to look at where they were, stating that they were now in those times. She stated that some may say that the comparisons were a stretch, but that they were not. She stated if they looked at what Hitler and the Schutzstaffel (SS) were doing; that today President Trump and the Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) Agents were doing the same thing to our citizens. She stated that she was a Veteran and that she does stand for the *Pledge of Allegiance*, but that she felt the same way her fellow Councilors feel, noting that she does it out of habit. She stated that she supported those who wanted to exercise their rights of Free Speech, noting that the Second Amendment was now up for

question.

Councilor Buhle commented on the following:

- January 18 - 19, 2026 Snowstorm - Councilor Buhle stated she measured 14 inches of snow, noting that her husband and neighbors helped clear some of their neighbors driveways, stating that she was sure that this occurred in neighborhoods across the State. She thanked the Public Works Department for their work to plow the roads, noting that the storm went on for 48-hours. She also thanked anyone who went above and beyond to help a neighbor. She stated that was what Mr. Rogers was about "*Won't You Be My Neighbor*". She stated it was not just about helping people who look like you, or talk like you, or act like you, or vote for who you vote for. She stated that it was about recognizing that your neighbor may need some help; and that was the attitude that they all need to take.
- The events that were occurring in their Country today - Councilor Buhle stated being a great neighbor was not enough, noting that they have to do what they can to help their community. She read the following quote: "*The World is a dangerous place to live, not because of the people who were evil, but because of the people who do not do anything about it*". Therefore, she stated when they see things that make them uncomfortable, angry, or frustrated that they speak-up. She stated that what they allow becomes their standard, and therefore, it was important that they speak-up. She stated by allowing others to erode the rights that so many in our families have fought for, that Councilor Parad and Councilor Barnes fought for, and her husband who was currently serving for. She stated that these were rights they were afforded to people in America. She stated when they start eroding those rights, that they have nothing, noting that they used to be so proud of their freedoms as Americans. However, she stated now they were not allowed to help people in the street, or allowed to question things. She stated that it was important that they continue to speak up and say "*This was not Okay*"; and "*It was okay to be unhappy with what they thought they had voted for*". She stated it was okay to be unhappy and that they should be able to go to the street and hold a sign and not hurt anyone. She stated that Protest was a right that they were guaranteed in their Constitution, noting that they were allowed to be mad at their Government. She concluded her comments by stating that she was disgusted by her Government.

Chairman St. Vil noted the comments of his fellow Councilors this evening regarding the events that were occurring in their Country today. He stated that some folks would distance themselves from what was going on in the Federal Government. He stated that some have said that the "*Powers that Be Operate in D.C.*"; without understanding that the *Powers that Be* were setting up an environment where things were being allowed to happen, and therefore, it was okay to treat others different because of their immigration status, because of the color of their skin or the money in their bank account. He stated when he was growing up he saw how his Father was treated differently, noting that he was an immigrant. He stated that his Father would tell him "*There was no other country like America*". However, he stated there was a disconnect, because his Father would come home from work and tell his Mother that he was called a "*Token*"; or that he was called the "*N*" word; and it was okay. He stated that his Father would advocate for himself, and he would work harder, but

nonetheless, nothing changed; and that his Father continued to tell him : “*There was no other country like America*”. Chairman St. Vil stated it was not right to continue to disconnect themselves from the actions of the people in the Federal Government. He stated they had to stand-up and they have to say something now because there were folks in their community that were doing things to people in their community, that were similar to the things that were done to his Dad. He stated that they think it was okay because *the Powers that Be in Washington D.C.* have given them the environment for it to be okay. He stated that he agreed that they needed to protest, and that there would be some who choose different ways to voice and express themselves, noting that this defiantly needed to happen. He stated that Fredrick Douglas stated: “*If there was not struggle there was not progress. Power concedes nothing without demand. It never did and it never will*”.

VIII. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION to approve the following Town Council Minutes

- Special Meeting Minutes of January 14, 2026
- Regular Meeting Minutes of January 14, 2026

Moved by Councilor Buhle, seconded by Councilor Garcia-Irizarry

VOTE: 8 - 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

MOVER: Jessica Buhle

SECONDER: Carmen Garcia-Irizarry

IX. COMMUNICATIONS

Communications List - January 28, 2026

Chairman St. Vil noted that a Communications List has been provided on the meeting portal for tonight’s meeting, and she noted there were referrals were listed.

RESULT: RECEIVED AND FILED

X. REFERRALS

XI. COUNCIL SUB COMMITTEE, LIAISON REPORTS

1. Administration Committee Report Fiscal Year 2025/2026

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated the Administration Committee met earlier this evening noting that they discussed the following: (1) Proposed “*Ordinance Establishing a Town of Ledyard Code of Ethics and Ethics Commission*”; (2) Res#001-2023/Feb 22 “*Resolution Establishing Administrator Department Head Benefits*”; (3) “*Resolution Establishing an Ad Hoc Committee to Develop Process for Capital Improvement Building Projects*” which would be presented that the Town Council’s February 11, 2026 meeting; and (3) New Appointments -

Permanent Municipal Building Committee (PNBC); Beautification Committee, and Sustainable CT Ad Hoc Committee.

RESULT: .

2. Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion – Report- Fiscal Year 2025/2026

Councilor Brunelle stated the Committee would be meeting on January 29, 2026.

RESULT: .

3. Finance Committee Report Fiscal Year 2025/2026

Councilor Buhle noted the Finance Committee had a few items on tonight's agenda that they would discuss later in the meeting. She stated on February 4, 2026 the Finance Committee has scheduled two meetings as follows: (1) Regular Meeting at 5:00 p.m.; and (2) Special Finance Committee between the Town Council and Board of Education at 5:30 p.m. She also noted that the President has signed the Congressionally Spending Grant, noting that Ledyard would be receiving the grant funding in the amount of \$229,000 to replace the Ledyard Dispatch Emergency Communications CAD/RMS System.

RESULT: .

4. LUPPW Committee Report Fiscal Year 2025/2026

Councilor Thompson stated the LUPPW Committee's next meeting was scheduled for February 2, 2026.

Chairman St. Vil addressed Councilor Lamb's request for clarification regarding the Land Use Planning/Public Works Committee's Motion regarding the Spicer Homestead Ruins; that he talked about during Councilor Comments earlier this evening. Chairman St. Vil stated that last night he spoke with Councilor Lamb, who sponsored a draft motion to appoint the Historic District Commission as a Historic Properties Study Committee under CGS §7-147q.

Chairman St. Vil stated that he wanted to be transparent with everyone about why that proposed motion from the Land Use/Planning/Public Works Subcommittee regarding the Spicer Homestead was not on tonight's agenda. He explained as Town Council Chairman that he was responsible for managing the Town Council's order of business and ensuring that matters brought before the Council were orderly, procedurally sound, and ready for action. He noted that *Robert's Rules of Order* recognizes that the presiding officer manages the order of business and helps ensure that the Town Council acts deliberately and with sufficient information before it. He stated in this case, that he believed additional clarity was needed before the Town Council acts.

Chairman St. Vil stated to be clear, that he agreed that CGS §7-147q was the appropriate

statutory framework for a single-site historic property, and he agreed that the Spicer Homestead ruins meet that definition. He stated that this was not a disagreement about the statute or the objective. He stated that his decision was about the timing and clarity; specifically, whether the Town Council had enough information to act responsibly tonight.

Chairman St. Vil went on to state under §7-147q, that once the Town appointed a Historic Properties Study Committee; including the appointment of the Historic District Commission to that role; that the Town would initiate a formal statutory process. He stated that process included required study elements, transmittal of materials to the state and local commissions for comment, public notice requirements, a public hearing, and the potential for a future ordinance establishing boundaries for a historic property. He stated at this point, there were several foundational questions that he believed should be clearly understood before the Town Council takes that formal step. He noted for example, the Town currently had a Survey defining the Spicer Homestead site at approximately one-acre. However, the Land Use/Planning/Public Works subcommittee materials reference a larger area, closer to four-acres, and after reviewing the discussion, that he was not yet confident that the Mayor's Office and Town Staff were aligned on that revised boundary. He stated under §7-147q, that the Study Committee's Report must include a map showing the exact boundaries of the proposed historic property, and the statute does not expressly limit those recommendations to an existing survey unless the Town Council clearly sets that scope. He stated that this raises the following reasonable questions for the Town:

- Is the intent that the Study be limited to the Surveyed Parcel?
- If so, how is that intent clearly reflected in the motion?
- And if a broader boundary were recommended, what would that mean for the Town as property owner - practically, financially, and procedurally?

Chairman St. Vil went on to note that there were also questions of process and sequencing - specifically, what obligations were triggered for the Town once §7-147q was formally invoked, and whether the Town Council was comfortable initiating that Statutory Process without first addressing the scope and boundary considerations. He stated because those questions have not yet been fully addressed, that he decided not to include the motion on tonight's agenda. He stated this decision was not a judgment on the substance of the proposal. He stated that it was a determination that additional clarity would help the Town Council act deliberately and with a shared understanding of the potential risks and implications. He noted that the Land Use/Planning/Public Works Committee Chairman indicated an intent to meet with the Subcommittee next week to work through these questions and return with a recommendation that clearly addressed the scope, boundaries, and the Town Council's intent.

He stated that once those questions were resolved; that he fully expected the item to return to this Town Council for consideration. He stated until then, he believed it would be premature to act this evening.

RESULT: .

5. Liaison Reports

This was ..to the Town Council due back on 2/11/2026

RESULT: .

XII. REPORT OF THE MAYOR

Mayor Report Fiscal Year 2025/2025

In Mayor Allyn's, III, absence Councilor Buhle read his Report as follows: (1) Snowstorm - January 18 - 19, 2026 - This snowstorm hit the town hard, budgetarily. The cost was \$50,000 of which \$31,000 was for Overtime, this was 20% of budgeted total. This year, more than 98% winter operations have occurred on overtime; with 75% of that being double time. Councilor Buhle added that this was because the storms have been occurring on weekends and holidays. Mayor Allyn's report noted the January 25, 2026 snowstorm on Sunday was another long duration event, which ate up another \$40,000 of the Winter Operations Budget, and that they were watching for possible a Nor'easter this coming Sunday; which was expected to be another long-duration Sunday event expected. Therefore, the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Winter Operations Budget was exhausted. *Public Service Announcement #1: Shoveling or snow blowing into streets was prohibited;* (2) Fiscal Year 2026/2027 Budget Preparation - The Departments submitted their proposed Budgets on January 20, 2025. Meetings with Department Heads began today during which each line of every budget would be reviewed along with the Department Heads justification; (3) Retirement Board January 20, 2026 Meeting - The Board recommended a \$750,000 contribution to Pension Fund for Fiscal Year 2026/2027. The minimum amount suggested by the town's Pension Professionals was \$697,794. Ledyard's Pension Funds were 90%+ funded (excellent position); (4) Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (SCCOG) has approved Ledyard's \$3.2M Local Transportation Capital Improvement Projects (LOTICIP) Grant for the 2nd Lantern Hill Road Bridge. This was one of the Town's Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaption (CIRCA) Flood Mitigation Zones. The approved Plan was now headed to the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CONNDOT) for a final design approval and/or comment; (5) Driving during Inclement Conditions/ Winter Driving Cautions - *Public Service Announcement #2: Slow down, start braking early, etc. Despite Public Work's efforts and large amounts of road salt, in extreme cold, the salt does not cause the melting reaction that occurs at 20+ degrees. This means slick spots on the roads would remain until some level of warming occurs.*

Questions to the Mayor: None.

RESULT: .

XIII. OLD BUSINESS

None.

XIV. NEW BUSINESS

Councilor Parad questioned during New Business this evening whether they could discuss an email they received from a resident today, who had a significant injury while sledding.

Chairman St. Vil stated that he would entertain the discussion that Councilor Parad has requested.

Councilor Parad stated that she was very alarmed that people were sledding in a very dangerous way on their public property; noting that people were building ramps to

sled off. She stated that someone who was just planning to sled down the hill; and did not plan to sled off a ramp, sled off a ramp that someone else built and ended up with a spinal fracture. She stated the resident was requesting the town consider putting up a sign to ban people from putting structures out there. Councilor Parad stated that she thought the resident's request was reasonable, noting that she did not like to see unsafe things happening on their lands.

The Town Council discussed the situation Councilor Parad described as follows:

Chairman St. Vil stated the Middle School Property was under the cognizance of the Board of Education. The email was forwarded to Board of Education Chairman Jennifer Reguin. The Mayor also responded to the email stating that he would forward it to School Superintendent Jason Hartling.

Councilor Buhle stated while she agreed with the request to post signage to prevent others from building ramps and surprising parents, that it would be difficult to enforce, because kids were going to build ramps for them and their friends to snowboard down, because they were kids and they do not see the harm in it. She suggested signage designating areas for ramps and designating areas for no ramps. She also suggested posting a sign that said, "*Sled at your own risk*". She stated that it was an unfortunate situation that someone was injured. She stated short of banning the most popular hill in Ledyard for sledding; there was really not a good solution. She stated that she agreed that this was a Board of Education issue.

Councilor Lamb stated that a sign would help to minimize liability. He stated they should officially be *On the Record* saying "*No Ramps*". He stated that there should be people who monitor and if they see ramps that the ramps should be destroyed to make sure there were no dangerous situations.

Councilor Thompson stated that he was shocked when he read the resident's email today about spending time in the hospital, the recovery process, and especially the part when she said, "*Thank God her child was not hurt*". He stated he agreed with Councilor Lamb's comments regarding the question of liability; and the effectiveness of the sign being a deterrent.

Chairman St. Vil suggested they take action on Councilor Parad's highlight this evening. He asked Councilor Barnes, in his role as Board of Education Liaison, to publicly and proactively state what the occurrence was and ask for the Board of Education to keep him informed on how they adjudicate or disposition it. He also asked Councilor Garcia-Irizarry, in her role as

Parks & Recreation Liaison, to talk with the Parks & Recreation Director about the situation that occurred on school property; and ask for his recommendation and how they handled people getting hurt at their parks. He stated this would address Councilor Lamb's concern to get the

right people engaged; and understanding the implications of signage. He asked that Councilor Barnes and Councilor Garcia-Irizarry report back to the Town Council at a later meeting.

Councilor Parad stated the reasons she thought this situation needed be discussed this evening was because it was still the middle of winter; that this was something that could happen again next week, with the next snowstorm.

Councilor Barnes stated that generations of Ledyard residents have been sledding down the Middle School hill because it was probably the best hill in town, and he noted that there were natural dangers that come with sledding. He stated that they do not want to be the “*Fun Police*”; and that they should make it clear that the Middle School hill was not insignificant. He stated it was his understanding that this matter has been shared with the Board of Education; and that as the Board of Education Liaison, he would ensure that they get their input on what the next steps were.

Councilor Barnes went on to state as members of their community that they all have a duty to act. He stated if someone was around and they observe an unsafe condition, that they should make people aware. He stated it was wonderful that parents were sledding with their children, and that they should not have situations where people were getting injured doing something that should be fun and safe. However, he stated that sledding comes with inherent dangers. He stated that there would be more injuries and that he hoped they could prevent the more significant ones.

Administration Committee

1. MOTION to appoint the following Temporary Members to the Permanent Municipal Building Committee (PMBC) to serve as Representatives for Board of Education Projects in accordance with Ordinance #100-015 (Rev. 1) “An Ordinance Establishing A Permanent Municipal Building Committee for the Town of Ledyard:

- Mr. Branden Graber (R) 42 Church Hill Road, Ledyard
- Mr. Alex Fritsch (D) 1 North Wind Circle, Ledyard

Moved by Councilor Garcia-Irizarry, seconded by Councilor Brunelle

Discussion: Councilor Lamb stated as a former member of the Board of Education that he worked with Mr. Graber, noting that has been serving as the Board of Education’s Facilities Committee Chairman. He stated that he also got to know Mr. Fritsch, noting that he was a detailed person, stating that he has worked on the Schools Safety and Security. He stated they were both great selections.

VOTE: 8 - 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

MOVER: Carmen Garcia-Irizarry

SECONDER: Jessica Buhle

AYE: 8 Barnes, Brunelle, Buhle, Lamb, Parad, Thompson, St. Vil, and Garcia-Irizarry

EXCUSED: 1 Ryan

Finance Committee

2. MOTION to authorize overexpenditure of winter operations budget accounts 10140103-51815 (Snow Overtime), 10140103-58300 (Employee Reimbursement), and 10140107-56301 (Salt and Sand) due to higher-than-normal winter operation's needs.

Moved by Councilor Buhle, seconded by Councilor Thompson

Discussion: Councilor Buhle explained as mentioned during the Mayor's Report, that most of this year's snowstorms have occurred on weekends and holidays. Therefore, all Winter Operations budget lines were nearly depleted, noting that although they were not even at the 50% point of winter, that nearly 70% of the budget has been spent/committed. Therefore, she stated if they wanted to keep safe roads for the remainder of the winter that they needed to authorize the over expenditure of the Winter Operations Budget.

Councilor Lamb questioned what the recovery plan was; and the reason the Motion did not include a dollar amount that the Winter Operations would be over spent by. He questioned what the process was.

Public Works Highway Supervisor Joe Tillman explained the reason there was not a dollar amount to overspend the Winter Operations Budget by was because they do not know what the costs would be to get them to the end of this winter relative to both the cost of salt and the cost of labor; noting that 300 tons of salt would be delivered this week. He stated Public Works Director/Town Engineer Steve Masalin was very meticulous with the management of the Public Works budget, noting that he typically gives money back at the end of the year. He stated during the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget process that the Sand/Salt line was reduced by \$30,000. He stated graphs were attached to the Agenda on the meeting portal and that they have not seen a graph like this year in many years.

Councilor Buhle noted that the Town Council has discussed Councilor Lamb's question in the past. She explained the following two budgets were the only ones they do not include a dollar amount in the over expenditure request: (1) Legal Fees; and (2) Winter Operations, because they do not know what the total costs were going to be at year end. She went on to explain that the other reason they do not include a dollar amount to over spend the Winter Operations Budget was because if they authorize a dollar amount tonight and they get another snowstorm on Sunday, and another snowstorm on the following Sunday; and they get another snowstorm a few days later, that they would be back here every two weeks voting to over spend the Winter Operations Budget over and over again. She stated that she understood that Councilor Lamb was asking why they do not take funding from other budget lines within the Public Works Budget to cover what they expected to be the over expenditure, noting that was what they do in other businesses. However, she stated the reasons they do not request Public Works Director/Town Engineer Steve Masalin to move money from his other accounts was because there were other Public Works expenses that still needed to happen; which was accounted for in those budget lines.

Councilor Buhle went on to explain that in some cases the town receives more revenue than

budgeted from grants, interest earned on town reserve funds, transfer station fees, land use fees, etc. Therefore, she stated the additional revenues received along with using funding from other underspent accounts would be used cover the Winter Operations over expenditure and to smooth out the gaps. She noted as Mr. Tillman stated that Public Works Director/Town Engineer Steve Masalin was very meticulous with the management of the Public Works budget, and that he often has a surplus in other accounts that could help offset some of the overage in the Winter Operations Budget. She also noted during the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget process that the Sand/Salt Line was reduced by \$30,000; because in prior years they had mild winters, and they did not need it; and because they were staring down a large mil rate increase. Unfortunately this year they were reminded of what a New England winter looked like.

Councilor Barnes stated that he agreed with Councilor Lamb's comments that when there was a request to over spend an account that they should establish a cap; which could be 100% of budget, 50% of budget, etc.; otherwise he stated what was the purpose of giving Departments a budget. He stated that he did not agree with nickel and diming this, meaning they approved an additional \$100.00; and now they had 2-inches of snow, and they had to come back for more money. He stated that they should approve a bold amount; however, they should set a limit. He stated that he had faith in Public Works that they would use the funding reasonably; but that the Town Council had a fiscal responsibility to ensure there was some oversight. He stated as the Motion was presented this evening that he would vote "No" without them providing a cap, noting the cap could be 200% of budget. He stated that they should put a cap on all over expended cases.

Chairman St. Vil stated that he like the discussion regarding the process; however, he stated that he did not think they had the right people in the room this evening to answer the process questions. He suggested they ask Finance Director Matthew Bonin and Mayor Allyn, III to explain the budgetary accounting of overruns. He stated in speaking with some Department Heads and the Mayor that they do have some flexibility within their department's budget to manage overruns. He stated the questions this evening were:

- (1) When do overruns come to the Town Council versus when the overruns were managed within the department
- (2) What was the cap to overspend the Winter Operations; before Public Works Director/Town Engineer Steve Masalin had to come back to ask for additional funding.

Chairman St. Vil stated that he thought they needed to have more facts before their next Town Council Meeting. He asked Administrative Assistant Roxanne Maher to send an email to Finance Director Matthew Bonin and to Mayor Allyn to obtain more information before their next meeting. Ms. Maher explained that Public Works Director/Town Engineer Steve Masalin was currently out of the country and he has gone out of his way to get this request on tonight's agenda, noting that he was looking for approval to over spend the Winter Operations this evening because there was another snowstorm predicted for Sunday. Chairman St. Vil stated that the Councilors were not questioning the need, noting that they were questioning the process.

Councilor Buhle stated as she previously mentioned this evening, there was only two budget categories that the Town Council allowed an unrestricted expenditure: (1) Winter Operations;

and (2) Legal Fees; noting that these were two things that protect their town. She stated every town in the State was having the same problem regardless of what they budgeted. She stated while she loved the recommendation to set guardrails that they had a responsibility to protect their residents, and she noted that Public Works was working hard to make sure their roads were clear so emergency vehicles could respond to calls, residents could get to work, and the kids could go to school, etc.

Councilor Brunelle stated legally they had to plow the roads, or the town would be sued; or people would die. She stated no matter what, that it had to be approved; and this was not something that they had to control or micromanage.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry addressed the process, stating that each Department had a budget; and at the end of the year some departments had some money remaining. She stated it was her understanding that the funding that was not used would go into the Undesignated Fund; and that the over expended budgets would then be funded by the Undesignated Fund. Councilor Buhle stated that Councilor Garcia-Irizarry's comment regarding the process should be addressed by Finance Director Matthew Bonin. However, she stated that she believed all of the over expended accounts would be balanced out before the end of the fiscal year. She stated that they could not pull funding from the Undesignated Fund. Administrative Assistant Roxanne Maher stated a Town Council action would be required to transfer funding from the Undesignated Fund.

Councilor Lamb stated that his question was regarding process and how they would adjudicate the over expenditure, not whether they should approve additional funding for the Winter Operations Budget. He stated that he agreed with Chairman St. Vil that they needed to talk with Finance Director Matthew Bonin, noting that there may be a process in-place, but the Town Council may not understand what that process was.

Councilor Buhle stated that she understood Councilor Barnes' concern regarding what the Winter Operations over expenditure would look like. Therefore, she stated because funding Winter Operations was not optional, that she offered to work with Public Works Director/Town Engineer Steve Masalin and Finance Director Matthew Bonin to provide a Report for the Finance Committee to review at each of their meetings to track the expenses, so that they know where they stand, come the end of the year. Councilor Barnes stated that he would be comfortable with receiving regular updates regarding the over expenditure of the Winter Operations Budget. Public Works Highway Superintendent Joe Tillman stated that Mr. Masalin does a great job with tracking the expenses noting that he could provide them with a daily update if they would like, that was how on top of their expenses Mr. Masalin was.

The Town Council and Public Works Highway Superintendent Joe Tillman continued to discuss the Public Works Winter Operations as follows: (1) 300 tons of salt cost \$30,000; (2) the plow trucks have equipment that reads the road temperature and how much salt should be put down, (3) Public Works provides the salt to the Board of Education for their parking lots. The Board of Education plows the parking lots for their facilities; (4) Public Works Highway

Crew consisted of 19 employees that perform the snow removal for all of the town roads, all the town buildings, all town properties, and the Transfer Station, (5) Mechanics take care of all of

the town's vehicles, police vehicles, Board of Education vehicles, Parks & Recreation vehicles; as well as the Town of Preston's fleet; (6) Equipment - Mr. Tillman noted due to the last storm that two trucks that went down. He stated the Mechanics were able to replace the transmission in their 30-year old truck, and handled some repairs on the second truck, noting that they completed the work on Friday afternoon at 3:30 p.m. before last weekend's snowstorm. He stated the trucks ran during the full duration of the last storm. Mr. Tillman stated years ago the Highway Crew consisted of 25 employees, noting that they were now down to 19 employees stating that they were short staffed.

Chairman St. Vil asked that Mr. Tillman carry back the message to Public Works Director/Town Engineer Steve Masalin, and the whole Department that the Town Council appreciated their hard work to take care of their roads.

VOTE: 8 - 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

MOVER: April Brunelle

SECONDER: James Thompson

AYE: 8 Barnes, Brunelle, Buhle, Lamb, Parad, Thompson, St. Vil, and Garcia-Irizarry

EXCUSED: 1 Ryan

3. MOTION to authorize the transfer of the audited, unexpended balance of the Conservation Commission's FY 24/25 operating budget in the amount of \$1,575 to the CNR Fund and increase the budgeted appropriation for account #21090305-58922 (Trail Maintenance) by the same amount in accordance with Ordinance #300-018 "An Ordinance Establishing a Conservation Commission for the Town of Ledyard".

Moved by Councilor Garcia-Irizarry, seconded by Councilor Buhle

Discussion: Councilor Buhle stated that this item to transfer the Conservation's year end surplus to their Capital Account to be used to maintain trails, which including the removal of dead trees, etc., was being done in accordance with Ordinance #300-018 "*An Ordinance Establishing a Conservation Commission for the Town of Ledyard*"; Section 5 Paragraph C. She stated that this was an annual housekeeping item.

VOTE: 8 - 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

AYE: 8 Barnes, Brunelle, Buhle, Lamb, Parad, Thompson, St. Vil, and Garcia-Irizarry

EXCUSED: 1 Ryan

4. MOTION to authorize overspending account # 0101-20-2050-20501-54300 (Ledyard Fire Company, Repairs and Maintenance) by an amount not to exceed \$8,000.

Moved by Councilor Buhle, seconded by Councilor Garcia-Irizarry

Discussion: Administrator of Emergency Services Steve Holyfield introduced himself to the recently elected members of the Town Council. He stated his role was to assist Gales Ferry Fire

Chief Erhart and Ledyard Center Fire Chief Jon Mann manage their budgets and to advocate for them for these types of situations. He explained that during the course of normal preventative maintenance in late October, 2025, it was discovered that the springs on Ledyard Engine R-11 were nearing the end of their life. He stated that Chief Mann contacted three (3) authorized repair shops and obtained quotes for the repair. He noted the quotes ranged from \$7,981 to \$10,768.

Mr. Holyfield continued by explaining that the replacement of the springs on Engine R-11 would use 25% of the Ledyard Fire Repairs and Maintenance Budget, noting that this Account currently had an \$11,000 balance. He stated with the repairs to the springs on R-11 that the remaining \$4,000 balance would be of concern because there were still 5 months left in the fiscal year; and because they needed to keep the fire apparatus fleet running and repaired. He went on to note that all three vendors that provided quotes were included on the Town's Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Standing Bid Waiver List.

Mr. Holyfield noted the Town Council's discussion regarding Item # 2 on tonight's Agenda regarding the process to overspend the Winter Operations Budget and he explained that he met with Finance Director Matthew Bonin to discuss the Ledyard Center Fire Department's request to over spend their Repairs and Maintenance Account. He stated as they reach the end of the fiscal year that he may have some funding in various accounts such as the Firefighter Physicals Account, that could be used to offset this request to overspend. He went on to explain in the upcoming Fiscal Year 2026/2027 that he has requested higher budgets for equipment maintenance costs, because of their aging fleet.

Councilor Barnes noted that he was pleased to see the request to overspend Account # 0101-20-2050-20501-54300 (Ledyard Fire Company, Repairs and Maintenance) included a cap of \$8,000.

Councilor Lamb stated that he appreciated Mr. Holyfield's comments that for the upcoming Fiscal Year 2026/2027 he would be requesting higher budgets to maintain things. He stated that he was hopeful that the Land Use/Planning/Public Works Committee would take on the initiative to work with Public Works Director/Town Engineer Steve Masalin; and Mr. Holyfield to do a true Long-Term Capital Plan that was visionary; so they could look at all of the Town Buildings, and Board of Education Buildings so that they could lay out a responsible, strategic plan.

Mr. Holyfield stated that the Fire Departments have a Long-Term Fire Apparatus Replacement Plan. He noted that when Ledyard needed to replace a fire truck that they have the funding available in their Capital Account to purchase the new piece of apparatus, noting that most town's bond the funding for the replacement of their fire apparatus. He also noted in the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget that the Fire Apparatus Replacement Funding request was reduced by \$60,000; noting with inflation rates of 10%; 12%; 13% that they were not keeping up with their Capital Budget. He also noted that when they have a reduction in the budget they have asked for, that they were creating a huge impact going down the road. Councilor Lamb stated that he has seen the Fire Apparatus Replacement Plan; however, he stated that they need to have the Plan laid out as Phase I, etc., and how they were going to keep it going. Mr. Holyfield stated that the

Fire Apparatus Replacement Plan was projected to 2049 for Fire Apparatus purchases. He stated that they were seeing a 3 - 4 year lead time for the construction of a fire truck to delivery. He also noted because of price gouging that there were some lawsuits at the national level with fire truck manufactures, explaining that the manufactures may have artificially bumped up the costs to gain a profit, knowing that there was a windfall coming from the Federal Government by way of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funding that was released in 2020; and had to be fully expended by December, 2026.

Councilor Buhle stated if any Councilors have not seen Mr. Holyfield's Fire Apparatus Replacement Funding Plan that it was a fantastic spreadsheet. She stated that Ledyard was one of the few Towns in the State that fund their fire apparatus purchases with cash, and they do not go out to bond for them. She stated that this was very uncommon in municipal government, however, she stated that they could not continue to purchase their fire apparatus with cash, if they do not fully fund their Capital Projects. She went on to state that former Town Councilor Saccone suggested the town use the same funding process for all of their capital needs. However, she stated at a certain point they only had so much money; and they also had debt from previous year's projects that they were paying down. Therefore, she stated that it was difficult to plan for 20-years from now, while they were paying for 20-years ago at the same time.

Councilor Buhle continued by addressing the upcoming Fiscal Year 2026/2027 Budget Preparation and she stated not only was it important to accurately estimate their revenues; that it was equally important that they also accurately estimate their expenditures. She stated it was great to aspirationally say that they wanted their budget to come it at \$18,000; but in reality with an aging fleet that they needed to expect that there was going to be increases in repairs and maintenance costs.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry questioned when the warranty started on new fire trucks. Mr. Holyfield stated that warranty started when the fire truck was delivered, and the town accepted the delivery. He explained when they need to replace a fire truck that the Fire Departments form an Committee to determine what they were looking to purchase. He stated the Committee would then travel to the manufacturer to visit the fire truck mid-production. He stated once the fire truck arrived in Connecticut the Committee would go through the fire truck to make sure everything was great. He stated at that time the Mayor would sign-off on the delivery of the fire truck and the warranty would begin. He stated many of the warrantees were lifetime on the frames and rails, ten years on paint, and the motor warranty would go back to the manufacture. He stated that Ledyard typically purchases Cummings Motors so the motor warranty would be company's standard warranty.

VOTE: 8 - 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

MOVER: Jessica Buhle

SECONDER: Carmen Garcia-Irizarry

AYE: 8 Barnes, Brunelle, Buhle, Lamb, Parad, Thompson, St. Vil, and Garcia-Irizarry

EXCUSED: 1 Ryan

5. TOWN OF LEDYARD NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING- FEBRUARY 11, 2026.

Moved by Councilor Garcia-Irizarry, seconded by Councilor Buhle

Discussion: Councilor Buhle stated in accordance with Chapter III; Section 5 of the Town Charter the Town Council was required to hold a Public Hearing before the adoption of any Ordinance. She stated this item would set the Public Hearing date for February 11, 2026.

Councilor Buhle stated the proposed “*An Ordinance of the Town of Ledyard Authorizing Avalonia Land Conservancy to Receive Property Tax Exempt Status As of the Date of Purchase of Real Property to be Preserved And Maintained As Open Space*” would provide a tax exemption status for all of the open space property Avalonia Land Conservancy owned for the purpose of conservation.

Councilor Lamb stated that the Town has been giving Avalonia town-owned land for free; they have been giving Avalonia money from their Open Space Fund to help them purchase land; and now with the proposed Ordinance the town was going to pay the taxes on the properties by giving them a tax exemption on all of the properties Avalonia Land Conservancy owned. He stated that some of the land that Avalonia Land Conservancy has acquired was taxable-buildable land; and therefore, they were taking the land off the tax roll. He stated they should balance everything they do with their open space plan, economic development plan; and the impact to their residents that were on Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed (ALICE) spectrum.

Councilor Buhle explained that the proposed “*An Ordinance of the Town of Ledyard Authorizing Avalonia Land Conservancy to Receive Property Tax Exempt Status As of the Date of Purchase of Real Property to be Preserved And Maintained As Open Space*” would abate the taxes, noting that it would essentially reducing revenues. She went on to state that Open Space was obtained through parcels that aligned with the Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD). She noted as an example at the Town Council’s January 14, 2026 meeting they issued a Letter of Commitment to assist Avalonia with the purchase of 173-175 Stoddard’s Wharf Road, which was the land surrounding the *Kettle Hole* property. She stated that Avalonia Land Conservancy was looking to obtain parcels designed to help the Tri-Town Trail.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated the town would save money by Avalonia Land Conservancy maintaining the properties and the trails, explaining that the town was responsible to maintain the properties; and therefore, they would not have include money in the budget to do that.

Administrative Assistant Roxane Maher explained that Connecticut General Statutes 12-81dd enables conservation properties to be tax exempt, with the adoption of an Ordinance by the Municipalities Legislative Body (Town Council).

VOTE: 8 - 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

MOVER: Carmen Garcia-Irizarry

SECONDER: Jessica Buhle

AYE: 8 Barnes, Brunelle, Buhle, Lamb, Parad, Thompson, St. Vil, and Garcia-Irizarry

EXCUSED: 1 Ryan

General Business

6. Each Town Councilor to identify one priority to accomplish during 2026.

General Items

Chairman St. Vil stated before they moved on to Item #6 that he wanted to provide an update regarding the Freedom of Information Act Complaint (FOIA) that was filed in the fourth quarter of last year with respect to how the Town Council, specifically himself, with how the proposed Ethics Ordinance was added to the October 8, 2025 Agenda. He stated although the Complainant requested an Expedited Hearing that did not occur. However, he stated in preparation for the Hearing that he, Mayor Allyn, III, and Administrative Assistant Roxanne Maher met with Attorney Jack Fassino on January 21, 2026 to discuss the case. He stated on Tuesday, February 10, 2026 Director of Education & Communications Russell Blair from the State of Connecticut Freedom of Information Commission would provide a Training regarding the Freedom of Information Act and its Guidelines. He noted that two sessions were scheduled as follows: 3:30 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.; and he encouraged the Town Council and Committee, Commission, & Board Volunteers to attend the Training.

1. Each Town Councilor to identify one priority to accomplish during 2026.

Chairman St. Vil asked each Town Councilor to identify one priority to accomplish during 2026.

- **Efficiency of Town Council Business/Meetings**

Councilor Barnes stated although he was only a part of the second part of the Town Council's two-year term that he observed that they had a number of special meetings; which may have been avoided if they had followed the appropriate protocol. He stated although he was not a *Roberts Rules of Order* expert that he would try to ensure that when the Town Council acted that they were doing so with the most efficiently. He stated that he would measure his success by seeing how many special meetings they had; and whether any of them could have been avoided.

- **Communication with Residents**

Councilor Brunelle stated her goal was to better facilitate communication between the Town Council and their citizens. She stated that she would like to organize casual Coffee Hours or Town Meetings to invite the public to talk about anything that was on their mind; and to listen what their citizens had to say. She stated that she would measure her success by whether she had more than three events that were well attended.

- **Green and Clean Economies- Sustainability**

Councilor Thompson stated when he was in Graduate School he wrote a paper that was published in the Southern Journal of Urban and Rural Policy. He stated the data supported that Clean, Green Cities created jobs and lead to happier communities by conserving public spaces, protecting wildlife, cleaning up Brownfields, looking at municipal recycling programs, net metering, looking at consumption by changing the lighting to LED lighting in

their public buildings, etc. He stated that there were some little things they could do as a town to make them more sustainable for the future. He stated that he would measure his success by looking at the Brownfield Clean-ups, quarterly looking at how utility bills have gone down for the average citizen over a 3, 6, 9, 12-month period.

- **Solar Farm, Composting, Shared Expenses**

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry noted that she had the following goals:

✓ Solar Farm - Councilor Garcia stated at the Town Council's December 10, 2025 meeting she talked with the Mayor about preparing and seeking Requests for Proposals (RFP) to lease the 15 -acre former capped Landfill Property located at 889 Colonel Ledyard Highway, to be used as Solar Farm. She stated that it would generate electricity; and it would generate revenue for the town through leasing the property.

✓ Expand the Food Waste - Composting Program - Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated instead of only having the Compost Bins at the Transfer Station that some towns have locked bins around their town that residents could opened using an App. She stated the Compost Company such as Blue Earth or another Compost Company would pick up the bins on a weekly basis. She stated this would allow residents to drop off their food waste any time and would not have to depend on the Transfer Station to be open.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry explained that Southeastern Connecticut Regional Resources Recycling Authority (SCRRA) has been in the process to build a Compost Facility. However, she stated that they have been waiting for two-years for the State Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP) to give them a Permit.

✓ More Collaboration between the Town and the Board of Education - Councilor Garcia-Irizarry noted as an example that the Town shared the cost of the Street Sweeper with the Town of Preston, noting that each town's shared cost was based on their road mileage. She stated she would like to see similar things done between the Town and the Board of Education to reduce expenses.

- **Town Charter**

Councilor Lamb stated that he had a number of goals. However, he stated the goal he would

present this evening was to establish a Charter Revision Commission to specifically review Chapter VII “Finance & Taxation” Section 6 “Annual Town Meeting” paragraphs 3 & 4 which stated the following:

Should the referendum on the budget refer the budget back to the Town Council, the Town Council shall reconsider the budget and present it for a second vote on the voting machines three weeks following the previous referendum.

***In the event that the second referendum does not approve a budget; the Town Council shall adopt a final budget by the fourth Monday in June.** Should both the referenda and the Town Council fail to adopt a final budget by the fourth Monday in June, the budget that was presented at the second referendum shall be deemed to have been adopted, and expenditures made in accordance therewith for the ensuing fiscal year.*

Councilor Lamb stated that he would like to take away the Town Council’s power to set the Annual Town Budget. He stated other towns just keep going back to voters until a budget was approved.

- **Primary Care for All Americans**

Councilor Parad stated that this was more of a long-term goal. She stated that the volunteers have been working on this initiative could use some help with conducting a Survey.

Chairman St. Vil suggested the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion talk about how they may be able to help with the Survey.

- **Grants, State Legislature, OLR Reports, Sustainability**

✓ Grants - Councilor Buhle stated that she has been a proponent for the town to seek grant funding. She stated that her success would be measured by the town applying for at least three grants this year for things that were on their Long-Term Capital Plan.

✓ State Legislature - Councilor Buhle stated that her goal was to make sure Ledyard was heard and represented in the State Legislature in Hartford. She stated that she has already started working with their new State Representative Larry Pemperton on a list of things that specifically affect Ledyard. She stated that she has also been working to make sure Ledyard’s voice and concerns was heard by other State Representatives that do not represent their District. She stated she did not know how to measure the success of this goal, noting that it may just be by her and others showing up in Hartford during the Legislative Sessions to advocate for their town more effectively.

✓ Office of Legislative Research Reports - Councilor Buhle stated that she wanted to keep-up with the OLR Reports regarding the actions that happen in Hartford. She noted that there were so many Bills passed each year; noting that so many new laws and bills that provide different

opportunities for Municipalities to be eligible for Grants.

✓ Sustainability - Councilor Buhle stated that she was the Town Council's Representative on the Town's Sustainability CT Ad Hoc Committee. She stated the Sustainable CT Website was fantastic, noting the opportunities to make their town more efficient to live-in and/or reduce the costs of things in their community, and ideas to help to grow businesses, and to bring wealth to their community. She would like to help the Town's Sustainability CT Ad Hoc Committee to achieve three new goals this year.

• **Letter listing all of Town Council's Goals**

Chairman St. Vil stated his goal was to draft a Letter to Residents stating each of their goals for 2026 for all Town Councilors to sign. He also noted that his goal was to ensure that 90% of their stated goals were achieved.

Councilor Lamb stated that there were some goals that were recently in process such as the "*Ad Hoc Committee to Develop and End-to-End Process for Capital Improvement Building Projects*". Therefore, he questioned whether the Letter to the Residents could also include those goals. Chairman St. Vil stated if they had another goal that had a metric that was a win for their community that it could include it in the Letter.

RESULT: READ INTO THE RECORD

XV. ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Barnes moved to adjourn, seconded by Councilor Buhle

VOTE Approved and so declared. The meeting adjourned at 9:22 p.m.

Transcribed by Roxanne M. Maher
Administrative Assistant to the Town Council

I, Gary St. Vil Chairman of the Ledyard Town Council,
hereby certify that the above and foregoing is a true and
correct copy of the minutes of the Regular Town Council
Meeting held on January 28, 2026.

Gary St. Vil Chairman

DISCLAIMER:

Although we try to be timely and accurate these are not official records of the Town.

The Town Council's Official Agenda and final Minutes will be on file in the Town Clerk's Office.