



TOWN OF LEDYARD

741 Colonel Ledyard Highway
Ledyard, CT 06339-1511

Town Meeting Meeting Minutes

Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget - Annual Town Meeting- Hybird Format

Monday, May 19, 2025

7:00 PM

**Council Chambers, Town Hall Annex
Building,
741 Colonel Ledyard Highway
Ledyard, Connecticut 06339**

In-Person: Council Chambers, Town Hall Annex Building

Remote Participation: Information Noted Below:

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

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85101827648?pwd=eDrlaQbuLKOQqwNkFGkm5bbPaaPag8.1>

or by audio only telephone + 1-646-558-8656; Meeting ID: 851 0182 7648; passcode: 195006

I. CALL TO ORDER

Town Councilor Gary St. Vil called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

There were 21 people in attendance and 11 remote attendees.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. CALL FOR NOMINATIONS FOR MODERATOR

Carmen Garcia-Irizarry, 58 Eagle Ridge Drive, nominated Gary St. Vil. Seconded by Jessica Buhle, 65 Pheasant Run Drive.

IV. ELECTION OF MODERATOR

Those voting in favor of Mr. St. Vil as Moderator: All present. Opposed: None.

V. CALL OF THE TOWN MEETING

Legal Notice - Annual Town Meeting - Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Proposed Budget- May 19, 2025 @ 7:00 p.m.

TOWN OF LEDYARD

**NOTICE OF ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
MAY 19, 2025 7:00 p.m.**

All persons entitled to vote at Town Meetings of the Town of Ledyard, Connecticut, are hereby warned the Annual Town Meeting for the consideration of the budget will be held in a Hybrid Format on the nineteenth day of May, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.

Please join the Annual Town Meeting in-person or remotely from your computer, tablet or smartphone as follows:

In-Person Attendance will be at:
Council Chambers, Town Hall Annex Building
741 Colonel Ledyard Highway, Ledyard, Connecticut

Remote Attendance Via Zoom Video Conference at:
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85101827648?pwd=eDrlaQbuLKOQqwNkFGkm5bbPaaPag8.1;>
or by audio only telephone + 1-646-558-8656; Meeting ID: 851 0182 7648; passcode:195006

The Annual Town Meeting is for the following purposes:

1. To consider and act upon a Resolution to adopt the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 budget as proposed and recommended by the Town Council at the Annual Budget Meeting.
2. Pursuant to Article VII, Section 6 of the Town Charter to adjourn said Town Meeting at its conclusion and to submit the question presented below to an in-person vote upon the voting machines between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. on the twentieth day of May, 2025 under the following heading:

"Shall the Town of Ledyard adopt a Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget as proposed by the Town Council in the amount of \$71,062,240?"

(comprised of General Government of \$30,394,998; and Board of Education of \$40,667,242)

Voters approving said resolution will vote "Yes" and those opposing said resolution will vote "No".

In addition, the following Advisory Questions will appear on the ballot:

- 1.) Do you believe the **Board of Education budget** is:
 - Too High
 - Or Too Low
- 2.) Do you believe the **General Government budget** is:
 - Too High
 - Or Too Low

Should the referendum fail, the adjourned Town Meeting will be reconvened on:

Tuesday, June 10, 2025 from 12:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. on the voting machines in accordance with Chapter VII, Section 6, of the Town Charter.

Should the second referendum not approve a budget; the Town Council shall adopt a final budget by the fourth Monday in June, in accordance with Chapter VII, Section 6, of the Town Charter.

- 3. To transact other business which shall properly come before said meeting.

Electors will vote in-person at the following polling location:

- District One: Town Hall Lower Level, Registrar’s Office
- District Two: Town Hall Lower Level, Registrar’s Office
- District Three: Town Hall Lower Level, Registrar’s Office

Persons qualified to vote in Town Meetings who are not electors shall vote in-person at:

Town Hall Lower Level, Registrar’s Office.

Absentee ballots will be available. Pursuant to C.G. S. 9-396c, eligible persons requesting an absentee ballot must apply in person at the Town Clerk's Office.

Central counting of absentee ballots will be conducted at: Town Hall Lower Level, Registrar’s Office.

Copies of the proposed Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget are available in the Town Clerk's Office, Ledyard Town Hall; and on the Town’s website at:

<https://www.ledyardct.org/proposed-annual-budget>

s/s S. Naomi Rodriguez, Chairman
Ledyard Town Council

RETURN OF PUBLICATION AND POSTING OF NOTICE

*S. Naomi Rodriguez, Chairman of the Ledyard Town Council, caused a copy of notice of the Annual Town Meeting to be held Monday, May 19, 2025 at 7:00 o'clock pm, in the Ledyard Council Chambers, Town Hall Annex, 741 Colonel Ledyard Highway, Ledyard, CT to be legally posted in the office of the Town Clerk and that a copy of said notice to be published in **The Day**, a newspaper having a circulation in the Town of Ledyard, in its issue of May 5, 2025.*

*Dated at Ledyard, Connecticut
this 21st day of May 2025.*

Attest:

*Patricia A. Riley, MCTC, CMC
Town Clerk*

VI. MOTION MUST BE MADE AND SECONDED

"Shall the Town of Ledyard adopt a Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget as proposed by the Town Council in the amount of \$71,062,240?"

**(General Government: \$30,394,998
Board of Education: \$40,667,242)**

Ms. Carmen Garcia-Irizarry, 58 Eagle Ridge Drive., moved that the Town approve the question. Ms. Jessica Buhle, 65 Pheasant Run Drive, seconded the motion.

VII. PRESENTATION

Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Annual Budget- Annual Town Presentations

Town Council Finance Committee Chairman, Tony Saccone, made a presentation on the General Government and

Board of Education Superintendent, Jay Hartling presented on the Board of Education. The presentations are attached.

VIII. MODERATOR CALLS FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. St Vil opened the floor for in-person public comments.

Eric Treaster, 10 Huntington Way, asked if the Magnet School in New London had any positive or negative impact on the school budget. He also inquired about the reason for the Town Hall lift for residents to the main level and wondered if it was mandated.

Superintendent Jay Hartling explained that magnet schools in Southeastern Connecticut were designed to reduce ratio isolation. Both the ones run by LEARN and New London have not met those criteria, and they are in the process of trying to figure out how they make that happen. From a budgetary piece it is relatively neutral for us. We don't have the space in our buildings to take all the students back from Magnet schools. The marginal cost of Magnet school students is not impacting on our budget. The Magnet schools are having a significant challenge right now because of the way the State has funded them.

Councilor Saccone, mentioned that the lift is already operational and was funded with the ARPA funds. The Town continues to find ways to comply with the Americans with the Disabilities Act and the lift will enhance that. Prior to the lift, residents would need to park on Route 117 and try to get out of their car to get to the first floor. Now they can park in the back parking lot where it is much safer for people with disabilities.

Mr. Treaster, asked if there were any mandates for electric school buses in the future.

Superintendent Hartling answered no, and commented that the cost is significant.

Mayor Allyn, noted that they priced out an elevator as opposed to a lift and the cost was about \$700,000. The lift option was a very cost-effective move to avoid legal issues if the Town of Ledyard were to ever have an ADA complaint brought forward.

Councilor Buhl, added that the ARPA funding had a very strict deadline. All the projects had to be contracted by December 31, 2024. If the contracts weren't in place, the money would have gone back to the Federal Government. The lift was one of the projects that could be completed by the deadline.

Councilor Ryan, mentioned that the lift project fit inside the guidelines of a favorable ARPA project that did not create a new reoccurring expense. It was also decided to fund it now with Federal Government funding instead of using town money at a later date.

Thomas Thomas, 14 Anderson Drive, Owner of Sugar Cake Design. He talks about when the subject was mentioned about bringing in new business in Town and commented on how his experience with bringing in their new business was terrible including the building and permitting process. The process delayed them significantly. He mentioned that others avoid opening businesses in Ledyard because of it. He mentions that the Town is spending money to get new businesses in but not streamlining the process to make it easier. He also notes that the increase in taxes will make it worse. He asks what will be done to help streamline the process.

Councilor St. Vil, asked for clarification if there was a budgetary line item that Mr. Thomas was challenging.

Mr. Thomas responded yes, how is the money being spent to attract new businesses helping the town grow. How is it going to benefit Ledyard.

Councilor Ryan, thanked Mr. Thomas for persisting in establishing his business in Ledyard. He asked if Mr. Thomas could also share his sentiments with the Economic Development Committee as well. The Commission can help with those difficulties, and they can help make suggestions to the full Council for improvements that can be made.

Councilor Buhl, added that there was additional funding added to the Land Use Department budget for consulting to help streamline processes and become more efficient and help small business owners.

Mayor Allyn, noted that he doesn't mind facilitating a meeting between the Department Heads involved and Mr. Thomas to help with the process. He also mentioned that the sewer line was put forward with the concept of supporting the higher density housing in the center of town. People drive businesses and without them, our businesses suffer. With the sewer line in place, he is expecting a few projects in the near future that will be very walkable and will be market rate housing.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry, added that the sewer lines are what attract bigger businesses, and they will not come to Ledyard without it.

Councilor Barnes, Thanked Mr. Thomas for sharing. He asked if there was one thing that stuck out

more than the rest that he would share so that they could have something to work on.

Mr. Thomas replied that it would be helpful if there was a system in place for new business owners to help guide them in what needs to be done to get started up.

Febie Herndon, 16 Bittersweet Drive, stated she would like to open a business here in Ledyard. She suggested having a packet with a checklist available to first-time business owners.

Jacob Hurt Nugget Hill Drive, thanked everyone for the amount of work put into the budget. He wanted to address the fellow residents of the partisan rhetoric that's been going on around town. He would like it to stop. He also addressed the increase in the budget and that it is tough to afford. Mr. Hurt mentioned that we need to grow the grand list for revenue, break down barriers for business, get the infrastructure in place faster, stop blocking developments, pursue grants, and get more housing in town that people can afford.

Gary McKeon, 15 Elizabeth Goerge Drive, he also owns two pieces of property in Ledyard where he houses two of his companies. He thinks the biggest take away here is that this is a massive tax increase. On one of his businesses alone he estimates the tax increase to be \$4,500 -5,000. This council has a duty and obligation. We are one of two towns in this region where the Council did not push back on the Board of Education budget. He has a ton of grandkids in the school system, but he also feels that the Superintendent is doing a great job but that he feels he came forward with a wish list and we all must live within our means. Mr. McKeon will be voting no so that they can come back and reassess what their needs are and not what our wishes are.

Councilor Ryan, wants to clarify that the budget vote at Council was not unanimous. If anyone is interested in looking at how the votes went, they can go back and watch it.

Councilor Buhle wanted to share that the current assessed value is based on the 2020 grand list, not current market value. We are going through a current revaluation, but it does not affect this current budget.

Mr. McKeon, also shared that he agrees that it is not easy for businesses to come into Ledyard. Ledyard does not have a very friendly reputation. We need to grow the grand list.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry, wanted to clarify a couple of things with the Board of Education budget. Seventy percent of the budget is contractual salaries and inflation and there is nothing the council can do without being in violation of the contract. The other thirty percent includes things such as interventionists, materials, etc. If they cut into that portion, they will be sacrificing the educational experience of the students. She asked if you vote no, what do you think can be cut to decrease the mill rate.

Councilor Brunelle, summed up that she is hearing from the public is how we want to make Ledyard more welcoming to businesses and families as well. A big point of that is to take care of your children and take care of your schools. If they keep cutting, the school system goes down and people won't want to move here. No one likes taxes. We want our children to grow up and get jobs here and open businesses here. You need to build your community.

Jamie Lohr, 16 Barton Lane, inquired if the Federal Government grants that go to the town programs are pulled, how will it affect our budget.

Mayor Allyn, stated that there is a contingency plan for both the Superintendent's budget and the

General Government budget if the funding doesn't meet the anticipated level. The Town could absorb a smaller cut for instance five percent but if they were to cut fifteen percent, that is a whole different ball game.

Mr. Hartling, added that the Federal funding represents about 2.9 percent of their budget. About \$400,000 is federally appropriated and can't be rescinded. They receive a total of about 2.2 million in Federal dollars. There is no good answer to what will happen if they cut these funds.

Chairman St. Vil then asked if anyone online had any public comments.

Bruce Edwards, 30 Bluff Road West, agreed with the comment on Ms. Herndon's idea about having business packets available using a flow chart and series of applications. He also understands the uncertainties around the funding of the State and Federal Government, but the residents are the ones getting hit with the increases, many who are limited in their income and are a staple of this town. A more serious effort needs to be made to have zero increase mill rate. Wants everyone to consider the water levels in the reservoir and if it can even support bringing in more housing to Ledyard and surrounding towns. Voting no on the budget.

Christine Krupansky, 18 Saw Mill Drive, asked how the Board of Education justifies a six percent increase when the town side has a manageable increase. What is the plan regarding the boxes on the ballot that were checked to indicate that the Board of Education is where the cuts should occur. What about furlough days instead of supplementing tax bills. In the past there have been mid-contract concessions by teachers. Why would that not be considered. What is their current rate increase by current contract, and in today's market, does that exceed market rates and other districts.

Superintendent Hartling, answered that the teachers right now are in the middle for compensation regionally. They are at the end of a four-year contract. He believes the increase this year is around two percent plus step. The last time they had conversations about teacher concessions was during Governor Malloy's budget recession where the teachers and all staff of the Board of Education took two furlough days. Those funds weren't needed because they ended up getting that money back from the State. He would not recommend or consider doing that right now as many staff members wear many hats. Part of the budget that needs to be addressed is the understaffing in the schools. They continue to lose teachers to other districts, not for the money but for the staffing concerns. They are incredibly lean on every front. He fully expects this next contract negotiation to be challenging. Based on the Board of Education's contingency plan they would make decisions based on programming if the budget doesn't pass.

Councilor St. Vil, asked Councilor Buhle to explain if this budget is voted down and there are some budgetary cuts that need to be made, what is the Town Council's responsibility versus the Board of Education.

Councilor Buhl, explained if the budget does not pass then it goes back to the Finance Committee to determine what amounts will be reduced and then forwarded to the Town Council. If an amount is reduced on the Board of Education side, the committee cannot determine what can be funded or not funded for them.

Councilor Ryan, clarified that if an amount is reduced on the Board of Education side of the budget, that no line items are discussed at all within the Finance Committee or the Town Council.

Joanne Kelley, 12 Thamesview Pentway, wanted to comment on the assessed value question. The

assessed value is seventy percent of the appraised value of the property, not the market value. The Assessor must track the sales ratio and report to the state on a regular basis. She also asked if the downstairs of town hall is assessable from the lower level and if the upper level has its own access.

Mayor Allyn, answered yes, it is accessible, however, there is no handicapped parking in front of town hall, only in front of the Police Station. The parking in front of the Town Hall is pitched too steep.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry, added how difficult it was for a handicapped person to go from the first level of Town Hall to the second level by going all the way around the building and that the lift will help with this issue.

Heather Wolfe, Nottingham Court, left the meeting but added that she supports the budget as is.

Ed Murray, 26 Devonshire Drive, commented that he finds the budget process frustrating. We have two separate budgets with two different amounts that serve different purposes. He feels it does disservice to both budgets and the understanding of them for the residents. He feels that the budgets should be separated. He hopes there will be a good voting turnout tomorrow.

Councilor Ryan, expressed to Mr. Murray that if he ever has any questions regarding the budget process that he can reach out to any of the Town Councilors or Mayor. Mr. Ryan also shared the budget timelines and encouraged people to attend the meetings regarding the budget. He also noted that he felt the advisory questions were valuable because the budgets are not separated and encouraged voters to take advantage of them.

OTHER BUSINESS

IX. ADJOURNMENT

The Moderator adjourned the meeting at 8:53 pm to a Referendum to be held on Tuesday, May 20th, 2025 between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. Electors will vote at the following polling places:

District One: Town Hall Lower Level, Registrar's Office
District Two: Town Hall Lower Level, Registrar's Office
District Three: Town Hall Lower Level, Registrar's Office

Persons qualified to vote in Town Meetings who are not electors shall vote at:

Town Hall Lower Level, Registrar's Office.

Absentee ballots will be available from the Town Clerk's Office. Pursuant to C.G. S. 9-369c, eligible persons requesting an absentee ballot must apply in person at the Town Clerk's Office.

Central counting of absentee ballots will be conducted at: Town Hall. Lower Level, Registrar's Office

Should the referendum fail, the adjourned Town Meeting will be reconvened on:

Tuesday, June 10, 2025 from 12:00p.m. to 8:00 p.m. on the voting machines in accordance with Chapter VII, Section 6, of the Town Charter.

In the event that both referenda fail to pass a budget, the Town Council is required to adopt a Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget by June 23, 2025.

Respectfully submitted,

PATRICIA A. RILEY, MCTC, CMC
Town Clerk

REFERENDUM RESULTS

1. "Shall the Town of Ledyard adopt a Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget as proposed by the Town Council in the amount of \$71,062,240?" (comprised of General Government of \$30,394,998; and Board of Education of \$40,667,242)

Yes:	No:
430	887

2. Do you believe the Board of Education budget is:

TOO HIGH	TOO LOW
855	380

3. Do you believe the General Government budget is:

TOO HIGH	TOO LOW
923	247

4. "Shall the Town of Ledyard appropriate an additional \$1,250,000 (increasing the appropriation and borrowing authorization to an aggregate \$9,800,000) for various school improvement projects, and authorizing the issuance of bonds and notes in the same amount to finance the appropriation?"

Yes:	No:
526	781