



TOWN OF LEDYARD
CONNECTICUT
TOWN COUNCIL
HYBRID FORMAT

741 Colonel Ledyard Highway
Ledyard, CT 06339
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Roxanne M. Maher
Administrative Assistant

Chairman S. Naomi Rodriguez

MINUTES
ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING

Wednesday, April 9 2025

5:30 PM

Town Hall Annex Building

DRAFT

- I. CALL TO ORDER – The Meeting was called to order by Councilor Buhle at 5:30 p.m. at the Council Chambers Town Hall Annex Building.

Councilor Buhle welcomed all to the Hybrid Meeting. She stated for the Town Council Administration Committee and members of 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. ROLL CALL-

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Location	Arrived	Departed
Jessica Buhle	Committee Chairman	Present	In-Person	5:30 pm	6:32 pm
April Brunelle	Town Councilor	Present	Remote	5:30 pm	6:32 pm
Kevin Dombrowski	Town Councilor	Present	In-Person	5:30 pm	
S. Naomi Rodriguez	Town Council Chairman	Present	In-Person	5:30 pm	6:32 pm
Carmen Garcia-Irizarry	Town Councilor	Present	In-Person	5:30 pm	6:32 pm
Elizabeth Burdick	Land Use Director/Town Planner	Present	In-Person	5:30 pm	6:32 pm
Brandon Graber	Board of Education Member	Present	In-Person	5:30 pm	
Deborah Edwards	Resident	Present	Remote	5:30 pm	6:32 pm
Allyssa Siegel-Miles	Resident	Present	Remote	5:30 pm	
Roxanne Maher	Administrative Assistant	Present	In-Person	5:30 pm	6:32 pm

III. CITIZENS COMMENTS

Ms. Deborah Edwards, 30 Bluff Road-West, Gales Ferry, stated that she wanted to address the following subjects:

- (1) ***Flying Third-Party Flag Ordinance*** – Ms. Edwards stated that she was opposed to any other flags other than the United States American Flag and the State of Connecticut Flag. She stated that she could reiterate what she has said at previous meetings and all of the great material the Administration Committee has already received from other residents. However, she stated in the interest of time, that she just wanted to make sure the Committee understood that she was against the proposal, because it opens up a lot of legal issues. She noted in reading the Administration Committee's past meeting minutes that Mr. Peeler pointed out the legal problems that could come of this.

- (2) ***Ethics Commission*** - Ms. Edwards stated that Ledyard needed to have an Ethics Commission and a Code of Ethics, and she questioned how long this could go on. She stated that the Administration Committee has received some wonderful letters over the last ten more months providing the reasons the town needed to have an Ethics Commission. She noted the Gales Ferry District's April 9, 2025 letter stating that she wholeheartedly agreed with it. She also noted Mr. Carlo Porazzi's April 8, 2025 and December 11, 2024 emails in which he suggested a couple of changes to the current draft Ordinance and pointed out a few things. She stated that she agreed with Mr. Porazzi's suggestion to extend the time for former town employees from one-year to three years .

Ms. Edwards noted Section 3 "Definitions" (7) Gifts; and she stated that she thought "*Gifts exceeding \$100.00*" was high and she suggested Gifts be restricted to ***\$25.00***. She stated that it was about the thought that counts, noting that \$25.00 in this day and age may seem low to others, therefore, she stated that perhaps they could find something in the middle.

Ms. Edwards stated she appreciated the work that has gone into drafting the proposed "*Ordinance Establishing an Ethics Commission*"; and she stated that it was unfortunate that it was on the shoulders of two people. She stated that she did not like to see responsibilities fall on just two people. She stated if residents were going to be on a committee that they should participate in the committee, and all of the work and tasks that were before them.

- (3) ***Mr. Edwin Murray's Appointment Application*** - Ms. Edwards stated that she was on Social Media and that she reads things from all kinds of people. She stated that she was disappointed to see once again the responsibility to move Mr. Murray's Appointment Application to serve on the Planning & Zoning Commission forward to the Town Council fell on just two people. She noted that Mr. Mike Cherry spoke in favor of Mr. Murray, noting that he thought Mr. Murray could be fair. She stated that Mr. Cherry brought up the fact that everyone does have opinions; and that everyone has biases. However, she stated as Mr. Cherry stated that it was the Commission Member's responsibility to check those biases at the door when they go into a meeting; and she stated that she agreed with those comments.

Ms. Edwards went on to state that what she found disappointing during the Administration Committee's March 12, 2025 meeting was their reason to decline on moving Mr. Murray's Appointment Application forward because one of the Councilor's saw remarks on social media. Ms. Edwards stated that she thought that was unfair, and she stated what made it doubly unfair was listening to a very long, what she would not even call a conversation. She stated denying someone because of social media comments was unfair. She stated if the Committee felt that they could not vote for Mr. Murray, that they could have forwarded Mr. Murray's Appointment Application with no recommendation, either for or against, and let a larger group of people consider Mr. Murray's Appointment Application to the Planning & Zoning Commission.

Ms. Edwards continued by stating that she did not know what it was, but that she felt like they were being schooled where the opinions of the two Town Councilors evolved into a discussion about LGBTQ+ Rights. She stated the commentary went on forever. Therefore, she stated the subject of Flying Third-Party Flags no longer became about all other kinds of groups. She stated although there were a couple of other groups that were mentioned in passing, that it turned into a LGBTQ+ issue. She stated the Administration Committee had to approve their minutes; and she stated if they read the March 12, 2025 minutes that there were pages and pages devoted to that one topic. She stated that was bias; noting that particular Councilor did not check their bias at the door, noting that the meeting turned into a rally for LGBTQ+ Rights, of which she stated that honestly, she was behind them. However, she stated that this was just not the place, noting that it showed bias; and it showed hypocrisy.

Councilor Buhle thanked Ms. Edwards for her comments this evening.

IV. PRESENTATIONS/INFORMATIONAL ITEMS – None.

V. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF PRIOR MEETING MINUTES

MOTION to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of March 12, 2025.

Moved by Councilor Dombrowski, seconded by Councilor Brunelle

VOTE: 3– 0 Approved and so declared

VI. OLD BUSINESS

1. Continued discussion and possible action to create an Ethics Commission for the Town of Ledyard.

Councilor Buhle stated after hearing a lot of support and great concerns from our residents to create an Ethics Commission that she personally wanted to move forward with a proposal. She noted that the residents feel that having an Ethics Commission would protect them, and protect the town. However, she stated that she wanted to make sure that the Administration Committee could all come together to draft the Ordinance, noting that she did not want to create unnecessary legal burdens for the town. She suggested the Administration Committee schedule a Special Meeting dedicated to only drafting “*An Ordinance Establishing an Ethics Commission for the Town of Ledyard*”. She stated because Councilor Dombrowski did not support creating an Ethics Committee that she was interested in his thoughts this evening.

Councilor Dombrowski stated that he would reiterate that he was not 100% in support of creating an Ethics Commission because the town already had provisions to address fraud, financial improprieties, and conflicts of interest. However, he stated if they were going to move forward with creating an Ethics Commission that in reviewing the proposed draft Ordinance, it was his opinion, that there was language in the draft Ordinance that was in direct contradiction of what Connecticut General State Statute allowed for an Ethics Commission.

Councilor Dombrowski noted the draft Ordinance pointing out the following:

- ***Filing of Complaints*** – Councilor Dombrowski stated the draft Ordinance called for Open Public Hearings where accusations can be made against an employee, or elected officials, or a town volunteer who was serving on a committee. He noted in accordance with State Statute that accusations were supposed to be held in confidentiality. He stated from the time that the Complaint was filed that it was supposed to be heard in an Executive Session by the Ethics Commission. He stated that all Hearings were supposed to take place in Executive Session unless the accused requested it to be conducted in a Public Hearing. However, he stated the way draft Ordinance was currently written that was not what was going to happen.
- ***Financial Gains*** – Councilor Dombrowski stated the Connecticut General State Statute limits the authority of an Ethics Commission to Financial Gain which would include things that would involve either an individual or their family may benefit financially. He explained that the authority of the Ethics Commission would basically be for somebody who was embezzling money, or somebody was using their position of power for a financial gain.
- ***Authority*** – Councilor Dombrowski stated per Connecticut General State Statute that the Ethics Commission’s role did not include hearing Complaints because someone did not agree with the decision that somebody made, or they did not agree with a decision made by a Board or Commission, explaining that would require a whole separate Appeals Process, noting that it was not the purpose of the Ethics Commission.

Councilor Dombrowski continued by stating the things he mentioned was not how the draft Ordinance was worded. Therefore, he stated that there were some conflicts between the how the draft Ordinance was written, versus what the State Statute allowed.

Councilor Buhle stated that Councilor Garcia-Irizarry did a lot of work on the draft “*Ordinance to Establish an Ethics Commission*” and that she had some comments. Therefore, she stated that she was going to have Councilor Garcia-Irizarry speak and that she would also like to hear Councilor Brunelle’s comments this evening as well.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry provided an overview of the draft “*Ordinance to Establish an Ethics Commission*” noting the following:

- ***Filing of Complaints*** – Councilor Garcia-Irizarry explained when somebody was going to make a Complaint that they would have to go to the Town Clerk and sign a Form in front of the Town Clerk, or a Judge, or a Notary. She stated that the Form would then go to the Ethics Commissions for them to determine if they have jurisdiction over the matter. She stated after the Ethics Commission determined if they have jurisdiction, then they go to a Hearing for Probable Cause. She stated at that Hearing the Ethics Commission would decide if there was Probable Cause. She stated all of this was confidential. She stated that the draft Ordinance stated if the Ethics Commission finds that there was No Probable Cause then everything gets sealed and it was sent away,

noting that it would not come out to the public. She stated that the Public things were the Hearings in which they would present evidence, and all the other stuff.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated that it was expressly written in the draft Ordinance that everything was Confidential up until the last Step where the Ethics Commission would hear the evidence, and then they would decide if there was actually Probable Cause. She stated according to State Statute all that was going to happen in a Confidential Executive Session. She stated that the only part that was not done in a Confidential Executive Session was the final decision as to whether the Ethics Commission agreed or they agreed to disagree.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated when she drafted the Ordinance that she used a document from the State and that she included all their recommendations, noting that she could send the document to everyone. She stated that if there was anything in the draft Ordinance that was in violation with the Connecticut State Statutes that they could fix it. She stated that she wanted to provide clarification noting that basically almost the whole process was confidential.

Councilor Brunelle stated that she agreed with Councilor Dombrowski, noting that if the draft Ordinance does not comply with State Statutes then they had to fix it. She stated that she did not know the state statutes per se and she asked Councilor Dombrowski if he could share the Chapter of the State Statutes that pertain to Ethics Commissions. She addressed the role of the Ethics Commission that Councilor Dombrowski noted, and she stated she was fine with the Commission only having oversight of Financial Gain, stating that it made sense. However she stated that she agreed that Ledyard needed to have an Ethics Commission. She stated that the proposal to establish an Ethics Commission was never intended to be a finger pointing match such as “*You don't like me type of thing*”. Therefore, she stated that the Administration Committee needed to get their hands on those actual State Statutes so that they could compare and contrast, and make sure that Ledyard’s Ordinance was rock solid and does not violate anything.

Councilor Dombrowski stated although he was not in favor of *Establishing an Ethics Commission* that if they were going to make it work that they needed to make sure that it was consistent with what State Statute allowed. He stated that he understands there were a lot of the concerns that he was against an Ethics Commission; noting that he did not want it to be a political finger pointing tool; or to be used for someone to go after people they do not like, or anything like that.

Councilor Buhle stated that they have heard comments that Ledyard does not need an Ethics Commission, we have never needed one, however, she stated that was the time to make one, because she has also heard that they cannot use an Ethics Commission to go after people for things that have already happened. Therefore, she stated that if things happen in the future it would be nice to have an Ethics Commission, just in case.

Councilor Buhle suggested the Administration Committee work together to draft an Ordinance to move the initiative forward. Therefore, she suggested the Committee schedule a Special Meeting designed specifically to only work on drafting the Ordinance, noting that they would not address any regular business at that meeting.

The Administration Committee agreed to schedule a Special Meeting on May 14, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. to work on the draft *Ordinance Establishing an Ethics Commission*; and to cancel their Regular Meeting scheduled for 5:30 p.m. that evening.

Councilor Buhle asked that the Committee be prepared to review the current draft and the Connecticut State Statutes and to bring their suggested changes to the draft Ordinance for the May 14, 2025 Special Meeting for discussion.

RESULT: CONTINUED

Next Meeting: 05/14/2025 5:00 p.m.

2. Continued discussion and possible action to draft an Ordinance regarding the raising of Unofficial-Third-Party Flags on Town Property.

Councilor Brunelle stated that she has been giving the idea about drafting an Ordinance to address the Flying of Third Party-Flags a lot of thought. She stated that she loved the fact that they had so many people come out to speak about the proposal. She stated although she had her personal opinion on it, that a lot of people do not share her opinion and that was totally fine. Therefore, she stated at this point that she thought that she would just like to not move forward with it. She stated that she thought the Administration Committee had the Ethics Commission and other things that they needed to focus on, and seeing as how she has heard a lot of people for and against the proposal to draft an Ordinance to Fly Third Party Flags, more against than for it, that she personally wanted to be able to represent more people than just herself. Therefore, she stated that she thought for right now that they do not need to move forward with this draft Ordinance for Flying of Third Party Flags because there were other ways that we could help show their support and welcome our community. She stated that it was frustrating for many people and that she thought that they could find a more equitable way to address those issues.

Councilor Buhle thanked Councilor Brunelle for all of the work she put into drafting the proposal, noting that it was extremely important to her.

MOTION to remove the discussion to draft an *Ordinance regarding the raising of Unofficial-Third-Party Flags on Town Property*” from the Administration Committee’s future Agendas.

Moved by Councilor Brunelle, seconded by Councilor Dombrowski

Discussion: (see Above).

VOTE: 3 – 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT:	3– 0 APPROVED
MOVER:	April Brunelle, Committee Member
SECONDER:	Kevin Dombrowski, Committee Member
AYES:	April Brunelle, Kevin Dombrowski, Jessica Buhle

3. Continued discussion and possible action to draft a resolution establishing a Sustainable-CT Ad-hoc Committee.

Councilor Buhle stated that a draft “*Resolution Supporting their Continued Participation in the Sustainable CT Municipal Certification Program And Establishing A Sustainable CT Ad Hoc Committee*” was provided for review and discussion this evening.

Land Use Director/Town Planner Elizabeth Burdick stated she was in a training today and that she just received the draft Resolution today, therefore, she did not have the opportunity to review the proposal. She provided some background explaining that five years ago the town embarked on obtaining a Sustainable CT Certification, however, she stated that due to the Covid Pandemic and limited staffing the submission of paperwork stalled. However, she stated that the town continued with a number of Sustainable CT qualifying initiatives which included converting our streetlights to Light-Emitting Diode (LED) light bulbs saving both energy and our taxpayers dollars; the construction of the Multi-Use Pathway from Ledyard High School to Ledyard Center to provide safe transportation for pedestrians and bicyclists; extending the sewer line providing infrastructure for both affordable housing and business development; improvements to the Linda C. Davis Food Pantry, and improvements to the Town Green providing handicap access to Ledyard’s Farmers’ Market. She stated that per the Sustainable CT Program that for initiatives to qualify for points toward the Certification that they needed to be done within three years of their Application Process. However, she stated that because of the Covid Pandemic that they could talk to the Sustainable CT Administrators to see if whether any of these projects could be used toward their Certification.

Ms. Burdick went on to state because the Land Use Department had a very small staff that it would be a challenge for them to take on the Sustainable CT Certification Process, noting that it was a lot of work. She stated when she worked in the Town of Montville, that their Sustainable CT Committee, which was comprised of town employees, handled the process. However, she stated that she talked with the Mayor to ask if they could hire a Consultant using some of the Land Use Department’s Consulting funds to assist the Sustainable CT Ad Hoc Committee with this process. She also noted that Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (SCCOG) typically had Interns, explaining that they have helped towns with the legwork to organize their Sustainable CT initiatives and the required paperwork, noting that Montville used the SCCOG Interns, stating that they were wonderful, and there was no cost to the town,. She stated that the SCCOG Interns were college students, who work during the summer months and come in to help put all of the paperwork together.

Ms. Burdick stated that she was in favor of the Town seeking the Sustainable CT Certification; and she provided an overview of the Sustainable CT Certification Process noting that the first step was to obtain the Bronze Certification. She stated although it was a lot of work, that with the assistance of an Intern, or perhaps a Consultant, or a part time Planner that she thought the Sustainable CT Ad Hoc Committee could get a lot accomplished.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated she has spoken to people at Sustainable CT and although the information was not included with tonight's Agenda Packet that it was her understanding that they had a dedicated Fellow named Summer Mitchell that could meet with Ledyard's Sustainable CT Ad Hoc Committee to help them get started.

Councilor Dombrowski addressed the draft "*Resolution Supporting their Continued Participation in the Sustainable CT Municipal Certification Program And Establishing A Sustainable CT Ad Hoc Committee*" and he noted that the proposed make-up of the Committee was comprised of volunteers who were currently serving on other Town Committees. He questioned whether anyone talked to them about whether they were interested in supporting another Town Committee. He also explained that Resolutions were typically set up for a certain period of time (time limit), noting that the draft Resolution was calling for two years, with provisions for reappointments. Therefore, he stated that the draft Resolution did not conform with the typical provisions to sunset. However, he noted that the Ledyard Center Committee, which was established by a Resolution, went on for almost 8-years, and they had to keep extending their Resolution.

Councilor Buhle noted Councilor Dombrowski's comments regarding the term of the Sustainable CT Ad Hoc Committee, stating that she agreed that it would be a short-term Committee. She stated that the Sustainable CT Program accepts Applications in the months of April and August. Therefore, she stated they could not meet the Application deadlines this year, stating that they should plan to try to submit their Sustainable CT Application in 2026. She stated providing a two-year term that the Ad Hoc Committee should have enough time to develop sustainable initiatives and to complete the required paperwork.

Ms. Burdick addressed the proposed two-year term for the Volunteer Ad Hoc Committee and she stated when Montville sought their Sustainable CT Certification that their Committee was made up to town staff, noting that they met during the day. She stated that it was comprised of the Mayor, Assistant Planner, Parks & Recreation Director, Social Services Director, and the Senior Citizens Director.

The Administration Committee discussed the proposed composition of the Sustainable Ad Hoc Committee, and questioned whether it should have nine members verses seven members; and the ability to obtain a quorum at meetings. They also discussed the importance to include representatives of the land use commissions (Planning & Zoning Commission, Inland Wetlands & Water Courses Commission, Conservation Commissions, Economic Development Commission, Parks & Recreation, Public Works Director) and others on the Ad Hoc Committee; noting the challenge not to leave out any key representation. They also discussed the size of the Ad Hoc Committee.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated the Sustainable CT Program required that the Committee be comprised of at least three members, one member had to be an Elected Official, or a Staff Member. She stated that the Ad Hoc Committee could also have Subcommittees dedicated to work on specific initiatives/projects.

The Committee agreed that the Sustainable CT Ad Hoc Committee should be comprised of nine members. In addition, they would contact the potential Commissions and Staff Members for their availability to serve on the Ad Hoc Committee. The Committee noted that they would continue to work on the draft *Resolution Supporting their Continued Participation in the Sustainable CT Municipal Certification Program And Establishing A Sustainable CT Ad Hoc Committee*” with the hope to move it forward to the Town Council in June for approval.

RESULT: CONTINUED

Next Meeting: 05/14/2025 5:30 p.m.

4. Any Old Business proper to come before the Committee. – None.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

1. MOTION to recommend the Town Council appoint Ms. Vanessa Sotelo (D) 8 Cedar Ridge Road, Ledyard, and an Alternate Member of the Parks, Recreation, & Senior Citizens Commission to complete a three (3) year term ending June 28, 2028, filling a vacancy left by Ms. Hawes.

Moved by Councilor Buhle, seconded by Councilor Dombrowski

Discussion: None.

VOTE: 3 – 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT: 3– 0 APPROVED TO RECOMMEND

MOVER: Jessica Buhle, Committee Member

SECONDER: Kevin Dombrowski, Committee Member

AYES: April Brunelle, Jessica Buhle, Kevin Dombrowski

2. MOTION to appoint Mr. Christian Allyn, (U) 1010 Shewville Road, Ledyard as a Regular Member of the Cemetery Committee for a three (3) year term ending April 26, 2028, filling a vacancy left by Ms. Staley.

Moved by Councilor Dombrowski, seconded by Councilor Buhle

Discussion: None.

VOTE: 3 – 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT:	3– 0 APPROVED TO RECOMMEND
MOVER:	Kevin Dombrowski, Committee Member
SECONDER:	Jessica Buhle, Committee Member
AYES:	April Brunelle, Jessica Buhle, Kevin Dombrowski

5. Any other New Business proper to come before the Committee. – None.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

VOTE: Councilor Dombrowski moved the meeting be adjourned, seconded by Councilor Brunelle.
3 - 0 Approved and so declared, the meeting was adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica Buhle
Committee Chairman
Administration Committee