



TOWN OF LEDYARD

741 Colonel Ledyard Highway
Ledyard, Connecticut 06339

Community Relations Committee For Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Meeting Minutes

Chairman S. Naomi
Rodriguez

Regular Meeting

Wednesday, August 21, 2024

6:30 PM

Annex Meeting Room - Town Hall
Annex - Hybrid Format

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

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87629713769?pwd=qF8TcQmjEnf2senibDY4BDAKDCcbf.1>

Or by Audio Only: Telephone: +1 646 558 8656; +Meeting ID: 876 2971 3769; Passcode: 464666

I CALL TO ORDER

the Meeting was called to order by Councilor Brunelle at 6:30 p.m.
at the Annex Meeting Room - Town Hall Annex Building.

Councilor Brunelle welcomed all to the Hybrid Meeting. She stated for the Town Council Community Relations 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-Insite Meeting Portal.

II. ROLL CALL

In addition, Administrative Assistant Roxanne Maher was present.

Present: April Brunelle
Gary Paul
Gary St. Vil

III. RESIDENTS & PROPERTY OWNERS COMMENTS

None.

IV. PRESENTATIONS / INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

None.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION to approve the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Special Meeting Minutes of June 5, 2024.

Moved by Councilor Brunelle, seconded by Councilor Paul

VOTE: 3 - 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

VI. OLD BUSINESS

1. Continued discussion and possible action draft a schedule for Public Information Forums to present to residents the types of services the town offers; how to access services and the authority residents should direct concerns regarding services.

Councilor Brunelle noted Ms. Beth Ribe's July 22, 2024 email regarding Town Governance Training for residents to learn about how the town operated. Councilor Brunelle stated that she thought this was a good idea. She stated that she planned to make more informational videos, similar to the one she previously made regarding the "*Notify Me*" Tab on the Town's Website for residents to sign up to receive notifications regarding meetings and other town government events. She stated that she thought she would use some of Ms. Ribe's suggestions for the educational videos which included how to navigate the Agendas and Minutes, etc.

Councilor Brunelle stated that her homework would be to create a list of the types of educational videos that she would make.

It was noted that Ms. Ribe's July 22, 2024 email regarding establishing a new Committee to provide *Town Governance Training and to Improve Communication with Residents* was included as part of Old Business Item #3 this evening, as it was in-keeping with that Agenda Topic. The Committee agreed to continue their discussion to improvement communication with residents during Old Business Item #3.

RESULT: CONTINUE

2. Continued discussion and possible action to identify various town venues to host "Informal Conversations in the Park" to engage residents in discussions regarding their concerns and their ideas for potential solutions
 - Long Pond on Lantern Hill Road (Showcase the Lantern Hill Waterfront Park, (2) Provide some history regarding Long Pond; (3) Provide information regarding the importance of preventing invasive plants from being transferred from different bodies of water, and (3) Engage residents)
 - Winthrop Park near the Gales Ferry Community Center (Town Council April 10, 2024 meeting Mr. Kelly expressed concerns regarding the tennis courts, pickle ball courts, engage

residents etc.).

- ***Lantern Hill Waterfront Park (Long Pond)***

Councilor Brunelle stated that she met with Mrs. Betsy Graham at Long Pond to discuss scheduling an Outreach Program in the Fall, 2024. She stated Mrs. Graham would provide some history regarding Long Pond; and information regarding the importance of preventing invasive plants from being transferred from different bodies of water. Councilor Brunelle stated that she would have more information as they get closer to the Fall.

Councilor Paul questioned if the event would be held at the Lantern Hill Waterfront Park and if it would be held in October, 2024. Councilor Brunelle stated the event would be held at the Park and that it would be held sometime in October, before the weather gets too cold.

- ***Christy Hill Park on East Drive*** - No Discussion.

- ***Winthrop Park near the Gales Ferry Community Center*** - Councilor St. Vil stated he had a conversation with Parks, Recreation & Senior Citizens Director Scott Johnson, Jr. He noted that Mr. Johnson agreed that an informational Forum at Winthrop Park was a good idea; and he suggested they schedule something in August because that was when the Tennis League and Pickleball League starts. He went on to note that Mr. Johnson stated that they could schedule the Informational Forum one evening between when one League ended and before the other League started, because that was when they would have both of the interested groups there to participate in the discussion. Councilor St. Vil stated that Mr. Johnson had a lot of information that he would like to share.

Councilor St. Vil stated that he would contact Parks, Recreation & Senior Citizens Director Scott Johnson, Jr. to invite him to the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion's September 18, 2024 meeting; or whether if he would like to meet with the Committee before then.

RESULT: CONTINUE

3. Discussion regarding ideas to increase communication/transparency with residents.

RESULT: CONTINUE

- Ms. Ribe email dated 7/22/2204 re: Suggest New Committee for Town Governance Training - Improve Communication with Residents.

Councilor Paul questioned whether Ms. Ribe was suggesting the town provide information on the roles of the various Departments/Committees/Commissions/Boards; such as what does Land Use Department do and how does it all work.

Councilor St. Vil provided some background explaining that over the last six-months or so there has been several Land Use Applications that their citizens/constituents have been concerned about; and they have expressed their viewpoints on the Land Use Applications at the Public Hearings. He stated what Ms. Ribe was alluding to

was that there would be value in educating the community on:

- Roles and Responsibilities of the various Commissions such as the Planning & Zoning Commission; Inland Wetland and Watercourses Commission.
- What was the Process for Land Use Applications to be submitted.
- What are the attributes of a Land Use Application submittal that were reviewed.
- What can Citizens bring up to express either their Approval or Disapproval.

Councilor Paul stated a couple of years ago the Community Relations Committee held some Informational Forums, noting that they were advertised, and flyers were left at businesses around town. He noted as one example that Public Works Director/Town Engineer Steve Masalin gave a great presentation regarding what the Public Works Department does, Winter Operations relative to snowplowing, mailboxes, etc. However, he stated the Committee found that residents were not attending. He noted that Mr. Masalin's video was on the town's website for residents to watch anytime. He also encouraged the Community Relations Committee to watch the video to see the format of Informational Forum. He continued by questioning whether Councilor Brunelle was alluding to something similar (see Item #1 above), in which the Committee would invite various groups such as the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission; and others like the Planning & Zoning Commission to give a presentation, that the public could attend; and have the presentation recorded for residents to watch; or refer to at a later time.

Councilor Brunelle stated what Councilor Paul described was a good idea; however, she stated that people do not want to sit through a whole meeting, noting that they want quick information. Therefore, she suggested they do quick, short videos, like the "*Notify Me*" video using bullet points to show residents how Government Meeting were run, How to navigate the website to access agendas and minutes on-line, How to submit questions, etc. She stated that she would take on creating the videos, and she asked if others would like to take on some of the topics that would be great too.

Councilor Paul stated having short, bullet point videos was a good idea. He questioned whether the videos would have someone talking or whether they would just be presentation slides. Councilor Brunelle stated the subject matter would help to determine whether the video would just be a slide presentation and/or someone talking as they demonstrate how to access the website.

Councilor St. Vil noted that Councilor Brunelle had some good ideas that would be beneficial for the community. However, he stated that the community also needed a Forum to ask questions. He stated he spoke to Land Use Director/Town Planner Elizabeth Burdick about how residents could get questions answered. He noted that he attended a meeting at which a gentleman had a series of questions, but he was shut down because it was not the appropriate forum to ask questions. He stated the questions were not rudimentary questions, noting that they were interesting, such as

could a citizen challenge a request for special counsel to represent the town with respect to an application, etc. He stated there needed to be a Forum where citizens could ask their unique questions. He stated right now was a unique point in time in their town, where there were some Land Use Applications that have drawn a lot of attention, that people really care about; and they had specific questions on how to address or provide their input to the Commission on these Applications. He stated after the August 14, 2024 Town Council Meeting a citizen stopped him to ask questions about the process. Therefore, he stated they would get the best results if they come at this from multiple angles:

- **Forum to provide Foundational Knowledge such as:**
 - How does a Land Use Application get submitted?
 - How does a Land Use Application come before the Commission?
 - How does a Land Use Application get approved by the Town Planner?

- **Forum to address more in-depth questions:**

Councilor St. Vil stated he talked with Land Use Director/Town Planner Elizabeth Burdick; and that he would follow-up with her to see if she had any additional ideas or thoughts that could help them conduct a Question and Answer (Q&A) for the town.

Councilor Paul stated he agreed with Councilor St. Vil's comments and suggestions. He stated he understands that some of the Land Use Applications have sparked a lot of interest; noting this might open a door for people who may not have been involved with the town in the past, to have this type of knowledge. He stated that providing more information that residents may say that Ledyard was open, and that they would ask questions. He stated this could have a positive impact.

Councilor Brunelle stated that she also agreed with the comments and suggestions that were provided this evening. She noted that she would be interested in hearing about the Forum to address the more in-depth questions. She also noted that she was going to check to see what other towns were doing, noting that they may have a Town Question Forum.

Councilor Brunelle stated that she would put together a list for short educational videos and she asked the Committee to share their ideas for the videos.

RESULT: CONTINUE

4. Discuss starting a relationship with the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Council to help foster communication and mutual points of interest.

No Action

RESULT: NO ACTION

5. Research Community Organizations that provide Opioid and Substance Abuse Disorder, Recovery, and Prevention Programs relative to the use of the Opioid Settlement Funding.

Councilor Brunelle stated that they were waiting to hear back on whether the Opioid Settlement Funding could be used for a Multi-Use/Comfort Dog. She noted Chairman Rodriguez was looking into getting a Comfort Dog.

Councilor Paul questioned whether the Community Relations Committee was looking into Regional Organizations to partner with to provide programs for the substance abuse and recovery. Councilor Brunelle stated the Community Relations Committee was working on it and that the Finance Committee was also looking into it.

Administrative Assistant Roxanne Maher explained that the intent of this assignment was for the Community Relations Committee to meet with Regional Non-Profit Organizations to learn about the types of outreach programs they were currently providing in Ledyard to provide or expand access to opioid use disorder prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery options. She stated after the Community Relations Committee met with the Non-Profit Organizations that they would make a recommendation to the Finance Committee to allocate some of the Opioid Settlement Funding to one or more Organizations to help them facilitate the programs they provide in their community.

RESULT: CONTINUE

6. Any other Old Business proper to come before the Committee
None.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

1. Any other New Business proper to come before the Committee.

Councilor Brunelle stated that she was at the Farmers Market earlier this evening and she signed residents up for the “*Notify Me*” on the town’s website to receive notification from the town regarding meetings, and other town sponsored events.

Councilor Brunelle also noted that the Brian Dagle Healing Hearts Foundation, from Niantic, Connecticut, had a booth and was handing out a lot of useful information.

Councilor Brunelle stated that Councilor Garcia-Irizarry was also at the Farmers Market handing out the Blue Earth Compost buckets and compostable bags, along with information regarding the Food Waste Compost Program.

IV ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Brunelle moved the meeting be adjourned, seconded by Councilor Paul.

VOTE: 3 - 0 Approved and so declared. The meeting was adjourned at 6:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
April Brunelle
C o m m i t t e e C h a i r m a n
Community Relations Committee

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