



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, March 20, 2024

6:30 PM

Town Hall Annex - Hybrid Format

In -Person: Council Chambers, Town Hall Annex Building

Remote Information Noted Below:

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

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86337941765?pwd=SivwAdJvR6lyubpchob2NaKVOpbz4G.1>

Or by Audio Only: Telephone: +1 646 558 8656; +Meeting ID: 863 3794 1765; Passcode: 519849

I CALL TO ORDER

the Meeting was called to order by Councilor Brunelle at 6:31 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

Present: April Brunelle
Gary St. Vil

Excused: Gary Paul

In addition, the following were present:
S. Naomi Rodriguez, Town Council Chairman
Roxanne Maher, Administrative Assistant

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION to approve the Community Relations Committee Minutes of January 17, 2024

Moved by Councilor Brunelle, seconded by Councilor St. Vil.

VOTE: 2 - 0 Approved and so declared

III. RESIDENTS & PROPERTY OWNERS COMMENTS

None.

IV. PRESENTATIONS / INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

None.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

1. Discuss ideas and preparations for the 2025 Black History Activity/Contest.

Councilor St. Vil provided an update regarding the 2024 Black History Month Activity/Contest noting that they had a great response to both the Poster and Essay Contest this year. He stated the judging was held on March 15, 2024 noting that because they received so many outstanding submissions that there were some ties providing more than one winner for several of the grade levels. He thanked the Contest Judges for participating in the process, noting that the Judges were: Library Commission Member Mr. Ralph Hightower, Police Sergeant Michael McKinney, Board of Education Chairman Alex Rode, Town Council Chairman and himself. He stated that the winners would be presented their awards at the Town Council's March 27, 2024 meeting.

- Poetry Slam:

Councilor Brunelle stated a Poetry Slam was held on February 19, 2024 at Lucille's Restaurant in Ledyard Center, noting that it was a great event. She stated that the Library's Program was also a great success.

RESULT: CONTINUE

2. 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.

The Community Relations Committee noted for the past two-years they chose three subjects/service areas to feature at the Farmers' Markets. They reviewed the Farmers' Markets 2024 Schedule to try to coordinate their Outreach Event Topics with the Farmers' Market Weekley Themes. They agreed to request space at the following Farmers' Markets:

2024- Outreach Events

- ***June 5, 2024 - Earth Day - Feature the Town's Land Use Commissions***

- ✓ Agricultural Commission to advocate for Ledyard farmers and the agricultural community serving as a resource for the changing environment of modern farming.

- ✓ Conservation Commission to protect our environment; blaze and provide picturesque hiking trails, maintain and protect our open spaces such as Whitehall Park, Mount Decatur, etc.
- ✓ Economic Development Commission to attract and encourage responsible development.
- ✓ Planning & Zoning Commission to develop regulations to limit urban sprawl and oversee local compliance in accordance with state statutes, address blight properties and work to update the Plan of Conservation & Development.
- ✓ Inland Wetlands & Water Courses Commission to protect our wetlands, and watershed areas.
- ✓ Ledyard Beautification Commission keeps Ledyard beautiful and a welcoming community by cording events such as Earth Day Clean-ups, and mobilizing volunteers to plant flowers and design creative streetlight banners.
- ✓ Parks & Recreation works to maintain and provide wonderful, safe parks for both kids and adults alike to live an active healthy lifestyle.
- ***August 21, 2024 - Old Folks Day***
- ✓ Ledyard Senior Citizens Center provides programs for seniors to be engaged and active in their community including rides to medical appointments, shopping, day-trips, etc.
- ✓ Brian Dagle Healing Hearts Foundation to provide support for the loss of family members, friends, and depression.
- ✓ Home heating fuel through Thames Valley Council for Community Action (TVCCA) and other assistance programs.
- ✓ Utilities - Electric/Water Assistance.
- ✓ Homeowners Assistance program that provided no interest loans to help people replace their furnace, roof or septic system, etc.
- ✓ Home meal delivery available for those who cannot get out to grocery shop through Thames Valley Council for Community Action (TVCCA).
- ✓ The Linda C. Davis Food Pantry located in Ledyard Center.
- ✓ United Way located in Gales Ferry was a great resource.
- ✓ Police Department “*Green and/or Blue Envelope*” for drivers with Autism or Hearing Impaired.
- ***September 11, 2024 Hometown Heros***
- ✓ To promote the many organizations and committees that are operated with volunteers from the community.
- ✓ To provide information on how people could get involved and volunteer to serve on the Ledyard or Gales Ferry Fire Department, or on a town

committee/commission or board or become a Police Officer, etc.

- ✓ Representative from the Police Department.
- ✓ Representative from the Ledyard Center Fire Company.
- ✓ Representative from the Gales Ferry Fire Company.
- ✓ Chairman from each of the town's committees/commissions/boards.

****POST MEETING NOTE 3/21/2024:**** The Farmers Market could accommodate the Community Relations Committee's reservation request for August 21, 2024. However, they did not have space available on June 5, 2024; or September 11, 2024.

"From: Ledyard Market <ledyardfarmersmarket@gmail.com>

Sent: Thursday, March 21, 2024 7:58 PM

To: Roxanne Maher <council@ledyardct.org>

Cc: April Brunelle <ABru@ledyardct.org>; Gary St. Vil <GSVil@ledyardct.org>; Gary Paul <gpaul@ledyardct.org>; Naomi Rodriguez <NaomiR@ledyardct.org>

Subject: Re: Community Relations Cmt- Booths at 2024 Farmers Market

Hello All!

I believe the market will have room on August 21.

Opening and closing days are already full. Would you like to try for some other dates?

Pam

From: Roxanne Maher

Sent: Thursday, March 21, 2024 1:48 PM

To: Ledyard Market <ledyardfarmersmarket@gmail.com>

Cc: April Brunelle <ABru@ledyardct.org>; Gary St. Vil <GSVil@ledyardct.org>; Gary Paul <GPaul@ledyardct.org>; Naomi Rodriguez <NaomiR@ledyardct.org>; Roxanne Maher <council@ledyardct.org>

Subject: Community Relations Cmt- Booths at 2024 Farmers Market

On Thu, Mar 21, 2024 at 1:48 PM Roxanne Maher <council@ledyardct.org> <<mailto:council@ledyardct.org>> wrote:

Good Afternoon Chairman Ball:

Again this year the Town Council's Community Relations Committee would like to host some Community Booths at the Farmers Market and was hoping that the Market could accommodate them with space on the following Markets Dates:

- *June 5, 2024 - Earth Day*
- *August 21, 2024 - Old Folks Day*
- *September 11, 2024 Hometown Heros.*

Please let the Community Relations Committee know if the requested dates are

available.

Thank you,
Roxanne”

Chairman Rodriguez stated that April was *National Volunteer Appreciation Month*. She suggested the Town Councilors work to attend their Liaison Assignment Committee’s meetings next month to thank all of the town’s volunteers for the service they provide to the Town. She stated that she would draft a “Thank You” flyer to provide to the volunteers and she also encouraged the Town Councilors to try to do something special to show their volunteers that they were appreciated, noting that it could be a simple gesture such as baking them cookies.

Councilor Brunelle noted that April was also Arab-American Month; and she suggested that perhaps the Community Relations Committee could do something each month to recognize and acknowledge the diverse members of the community. She noted examples such as: June being Pride Month recognizing Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) community; and September as National Hispanic Heritage month. Councilor St. Vil urged caution, noting that if they were going to do something each month, as Councilor Brunelle suggested, that they would need to make sure they do not miss anyone.

Councilor Brunelle stated that they would keep this on their agenda.

RESULT: CONTINUE

3. 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.).

Chairman Rodriguez noted the Community Relations Committee had been working with Parks, Recreation & Senior Citizens Director Scott Johnson, Jr. to coordinate a program to visit all of the Town’s Parks to showcase to the residents the variety of parks Ledyard offered, which include both water access venues and land activities venues such as Town Green (Upper & Lower) Highlands Lake, Blonders Pavilion, Erickson Park, Lantern Hill Waterfront Park, just to name a few, noting that many of these facilities were available to be rented for events.

Chairman Rodriguez went on to note that getting residents out to visits their parks would also provide an opportunity to engage with residents to learn about the issues that were of concern to them. She stated listening to their residents would enable them to begin a dialogue regarding their concerns and to work to find solutions.

Councilor Brunelle stated that they would keep this on their agenda.

RESULT: CONTINUE

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

Chairman Rodriguez noted the town was currently using the following sources to communication with the public:

- Town website
- Ledyard News
- Mayor's News
- Events Magazine (quarterly)
- Meeting Portal

Councilor Brunelle noted after the Community Relations Committee's January 17, 2024 meeting that she created a short video that was posted on the town's website to show residents how to sign-up for the ***Notify Me***. She explained all residents had to do was visit the town's website at www.ledyardct.org <<http://www.ledyardct.org>> and click on the ***Notify Me*** tab that was located in the middle of the screen; and then follow the prompts to enter in their information. She stated residents could sign up for email and/or text messages. (please see below):

Chairman Rodriguez stated the ***Notify Me*** information (as shown above) was included in the Town Council's Article that was published in the February 2024 Events Magazine. She noted the article also included the following dates regarding the upcoming ***Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget***:

- April 15, 2024 Public Hearing
- May 20, 2024 Annual Town Meeting
- May 21, 2024 Referendum Vote on the Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget

Administrative Assistant Roxanne Maher noted she obtained the following subscriber information from the MIS Department:

- ***Notify Me*** - 181 Residents were signed up
- ***Town News*** - 200 Residents were signed up
- ***Tax Department Notifications*** -31 Residents were signed up

Ms. Maher also noted that in addition to the communication sources Chairman Rodriguez noted (see above) that all the town's Legal Notices such as Public Hearings, Town Meetings, Referendums, Adoption of Ordinances, and Land Use Decisions were published in the Newspaper. She suggested in response to residents comments regarding

the lack of transparency and the lack of communication regarding town events that Town Councilors ask what sources the residents were using to obtain their town information (i.e. newspaper, town website, social media, etc.) noting that perhaps the town could include the media sources residents were using. She also suggested that Councilors could direct residents to use the many town sanctioned media sources that were currently available.

Chairman Rodriguez stated in attending her Liaison Assignments that Committee members have stated the Town's website was hard to navigate. She questioned whether the website format could be changed. Administrative Assistant Roxanne Maher stated that periodically the MIS Department does work to make the Town's website more user friendly, and she stated that they were open to suggestions.

RESULT: CONTINUE

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

RESULT: CONTINUE

VII. NEW BUSINESS

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

Chairman Rodriguez stated that she was working to connect with the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Council; and she noted that she would provide an update at the Community Relations Committee's April 17, 2024 meeting.

RESULT: NO ACTION

2. Discuss changing the name of the Community Relations Committee to "Community Relations for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)".

Councilor St. Vil noted the Community Relations Committee Mission Statement that was adopted by the previous Committee at their September 21, 2022 meeting as follows:

"The Community Relations Committee is tasked with being both an advocate and a resource for the community by listening, communicating, and engaging with the community, educating ourselves, standing up to discrimination and racism in all forms.

We do this by encouraging dialogue, promoting unity and understanding, and learning from one another as we continue to build a strong community together, making sure no-one is left behind."

Councilor St. Vil stated that he was in-favor of renaming the Community Relations Committee because it would more accurately reflect their role, as provided in their Mission Statement.

The Committee questioned the process to rename the Community Relations Committee. Administrative Assistant Roxanne Maher explained because the Town Council's Standing Committees were established by their Rules of Procedures; that they would need to draft an Addendum to the "*Resolution Establishing the Rules of Procedure for the Twenty-seventh Town Council*" that the Town Council adopted at their Organizational Meeting on December 4, 2023.

- MOTION to recommend the Town Council approve an Addendum - 2024 to the "*Resolution Establishing the Rules of Procedure for the Twenty-seventh Town Council*": Paragraph 12 pertaining to Town Council Standing Committees to the revise the name of the Community Relations Committee to the "*Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion*" as presented in the draft dated March 20, 2024.

DRAFT 3/20/2024

Res: 001-2023/Dec 4

Addendum: _____

ADDENDUM - 2024

RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING THE
RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR THE TWENTY-SEVENTH TOWN COUNCIL

WHEREAS: The Ledyard Town Council would like the title of the Community Relations Committee to more accurately reflect the Committee's *Mission Statement* that was adopted on September 21, 2022;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: Effective April 1, 2024: "*Resolution Establishing the Rules of Procedure for the Twenty-Seventh Town Council*"; Paragraph 12 "*Standing Committees of the Town Council*" is hereby amended to rename the Community Relations Committee to be as follows: "*Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion*".

Addendum Adopted by the Town Council on: _____

S. Naomi Rodriguez, Chairman

Moved by Councilor Brunelle, seconded by Councilor St. Vil

Discussion: Councilor Brunelle stated that the proposed Addendum to rename the Committee was in-keeping with the Community Relations Committee's *Mission Statement*. She stated that she believed renaming the Committee would make residents feel that they were included, and that they could come to the Committee to talk about issues.

Councilor Brunelle went on to state that the proposed Committee name would give Ledyard greater opportunities, not only within our community, but with help from the

State as well. She stated that she has been attending the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) Program to become a Certified Connecticut Elected Official noting that one of the courses was on *Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI)*. She went on to explain the State offered a matching Grant Program for DEI Initiatives.

VOTE: 2 - 0 Approved and so declared

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

None.

RESULT: NO ACTION

IV ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Brunelle moved the meeting be adjourned, seconded by Councilor St. Vil.

VOTE: 2 - 0 Approved and so declared. The meeting was adjourned at 7:02 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.