



# TOWN OF LEDYARD

## Community Relations Committee

### Meeting Minutes

741 Colonel Ledyard Highway  
Ledyard, Connecticut 06339

Chairman  
Kevin J. Dombrowski

#### Regular Meeting

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Wednesday, January 18, 2023

6:30 PM

Town Hall Annex - Hybrid Format

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In -Person Location goes here

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

**<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83430605191?pwd=eTdkbXhIbzRtYm9LUzh1WlVvOXIyQT09>**

**Or by Audio Only: Telephone: +1 646 558 8656; +Meeting ID: 834 3060 5191; Passcode: 775584**

#### I CALL TO ORDER

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

Councilor Paul welcomed all to the Hybrid Meeting. He 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:** Bill Saums  
Gary Paul  
John Marshall

In addition, the following were present:

Mary McGrattan Town Councilor  
S. Naomi Rodriguez Town Councilor  
Roxanne Maher Administrative Assistant

#### III. RESIDENTS & PROPERTY OWNERS COMMENTS

None.

#### IV. PRESENTATIONS / INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

1. Chorus Director Cometa e-mail dated 1/9/2023 re: Ledyard High School Chorus Concert- January 16, 2023 - Black History Month

Councilor Saums stated this was the second Black History Month Concert noting that it was great. He stated the auditorium was packed, noting that it was standing room only.

Councilor Rodriguez stated the Martin Luther King Concert was a great event, noting that she saw Town Councilors and Board of Education Members who came from other towns. She stated there was no charge to attend the Concert noting that it was donation only to support the Martin Luther King Scholarship.

- 2.. Library Services

Councilor Paul stated he met with Library Director Jennifer Smith, noting that she was passionate about library services and about providing community services. He commented on the many programs and services available at the Library which included a Star War Trivia Night for the kids, and a separate space for residents who do not have internet to use a computer for a Tela Med Appointment or a job interview, etc. Councilor Marshall questioned whether residents would need to make an appointment to use the private computer space. Councilor Paul stated if the space was available that folks could use it. He stated that he talked with Ms. Smith about participating in an Informational Forum, and he stated that this was something that the Committee could discuss later this evening.

## V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Community Relations Committee Regular Meeting Minutes of December 21, 2022

Moved by Councilor Marshall, seconded by Councilor Saums

VOTE: 3- 0 Approved and so declared

**RESULT:** APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

**MOVER:** Bill Saums

**SECONDER:** John Marshall

**AYE:** 3 Saums, Paul and Marshall

## VI. OLD BUSINESS

1. Continued discussion regarding Black History Month and update on the 2023 Black History Activity/Contest.

Councilor Rodriguez provided an update regarding the Black History Month Essay and Poster Contest Program as follows:

- Essay and Poster Contest
  - Essay Contest for the Middle School and High School students.
    - ✓ Middle School Grades 6 - 8
    - ✓ High School - Grades 9 - 12
  - Poster Contest for the Elementary School students.
    - ✓ Kindergarten - Grade 2
    - ✓ Grades 3 - 5
- Contest Duration: February 1 - 20, 2023
- Prizes were as follows:
  - ✓ Elementary Student would receive a gift card to the Book Store BAM.
  - ✓ Middle School and High School would receive a Cash Prize and a letter that they could mention on their College Application.

Councilor Rodriguez went on to note that this year they would like to include all students, whether they were home schooled, attend a private school; or tech-magnet school, noting that the Program would be open to all students in Ledyard. She stated the Contest Details for those not attending Ledyard Public Schools would need to be disseminated through social media.

Councilor Rodriguez noted that last year's High School Essay Contest Winner also received an Award and Scholarship from the Masons. She stated with presenting the Contest Winners their prizes at the Town Council meeting that you could see that the Students and their parents were very proud, as they should be for winning the contest, and she noted the essays and posters were remarkable.

Councilor Rodriguez went on to note that the judges this year were as follows: A Board of Education Member, Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Council Member Crystal Whipple, Ledyard Police Department Sergeant McKinney, and herself.

Councilor Marshall commented that during Black History Month everyone seemed to focus on the popular figures in history such as Martin Luther King or George Washington Carver. However, he stated there were a number of others who should also be recognized noting as an example the following:

- First African-American Senator - In 1870 Hiram Revels of Mississippi became the first African-American Senator and five years later, Blanche K. Bruce of Mississippi also took the oath of office.
- First African American Woman elected to the United States Congress was Shirley Anita Chisholm in 1968. Congresswoman Chisholm served for seven terms from 1969 to 1983 and represented New York's 12th Congressional District.

- First African-American that went into space was Guion (Guy) Bluford on August 30, 1983. He noted Mr. Bluford launched into a low Earth orbit aboard the Space Shuttle Challenger. He subsequently flew aboard three additional shuttle missions, logging a total of 688 hours in space.
- First African-American Woman that went to space was Mae Jemison in 1992. He noted Ms. Jemison was a US Astronaut, Doctor and Engineer. She was one of the member seven crew aboard the Space Shuttle Endeavour.

Councilor Saums stated he agreed with Councilor Marshall's comments, and he suggested that they also try to present information regarding some local historical figures. He stated part of the Community Relations Committee's Charter was to inform and educate. He suggested they start to publicize what they have found through research noting as an example the following:

- Amasa Lawrence, was born in Thompson, Connecticut, around 1811. While little was known of his childhood or his parents, in 1833 he was enumerated in a private census of tribal members living on the reservation in what was then Groton, Connecticut, now known as Ledyard. The state appointed overseer Erastus Williams, described Amasa as 22 years old, of mixed black, white, and Indian ancestry, and the grandson of Esther Dick. As a as a young man Amasa took to the sea, as a crew member aboard the ship Manchester Packet, which departed from the New London, Connecticut on June 30, 1832 bound for the South Atlantic. On August 9, 1864, Amasa enlisted in the Union Army as a soldier in the 29th CT Volunteer Regiment. He was one of many Connecticut Indians to volunteer for service. He was mustered into service in Norwich on August 15, 1864. As a soldier in Company K he traveled with the rest of the 29th to be stationed outside of Petersburg. On September 26, 1879 Amasa died of dropsy in Ledyard, likely at his home on the reservation. His death record indicates he left behind a widow. Based on the death record, which indicates his age at death as 76, he was born in 1803. The bulk of the extent documentation supports a younger age at death and a birth date of c. 1811. The tribe paid for his burial, burial clothes, and the funeral service.

Council Saums went on to note the battle at Fort Griswold and he stated there were some amazing people in history.

Councilor Paul stated that he would like to see the Black History Month Contest Winners be announced at a Town Council meeting as they did last year.

**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 Committee discussed the following topics for Informational Forums:

- Land Use Processes - Councilor Paul noted that the Land Use Department was currently short-staffed; and due to vacation schedules he has not had the opportunity to meet with Land Use Director Juliet Hodge to talk about the details of holding an Informational Forum to present to residents the Land Use processes relative to the approval of applications, to help residents understand the complexities involved relative to Regulatory, the Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD), etc.

Councilor Paul went onto state that the Community Relations Committee had also discussed including a *Frequently Asked Question* (FAQ) Sheet as part of the Presentation that would answer general land use questions, noting the FAQ Sheet could be posted on the town's website, the meeting portal, and be linked to social media pages.

The Committee agreed that they would like to provide the Land Use Informational Presentation in April or May, 2023.

- Fraud Presentation- Sergeant McKinney gave a 30-minute presentation regarding Fraud at Saint David's Church in Gales Ferry. It was very informative, and the Committee discussed inviting Sergeant McKinney to give the Fraud Presentation at the Community Relations Committee's March 16, 2023 meeting. The Committee discussed the importance to get this type of information out to residents and especially to their Senior Citizens community.

Councilor Saums stated he just texted Sergeant McKinney about inviting him to give the Fraud Presentation at the Senior Citizens Center on March 16, 2023. He noted that Sergeant McKinney responded stating that the first Fraud Presentation he gave was at the Senior Citizens Center about a year ago. The Committee agreed to keep the Fraud Presentation on their schedule and to consider holding the event at a different location.

- Library Services - Councilor Paul stated rather than invite the Library to a Community Relations Committee meeting that the Committee work to do something with the Library. He suggested hosting a booth at the Farmers' Market that would feature the Library and the many community services that they provide. Councilor Saums suggested the Library host an Open House while the Community Relations Committee was hosting a booth at the Farmers Market. He stated they could provide some literature regarding the Library at their booth and then refer them to stop by the Library Open House.

Councilor Paul suggested at their February 15, 2023 meeting that the Community Relations Committee develop a calendar with the events that they would like to feature during the upcoming months. He stated having a schedule in place would allow them to plan and coordinate with other departments/organizations/entities that they would like to feature.

**RESULT:** CONTINUE

- Informational Presentation regarding the Land Use processes relative to the approval of applications, to help residents understand the complexities involved relative to Regulatory, the Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD), etc.

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.

Councilor Paul noted at their December 21, 2022 meeting the Committee discussed launching something like a “*Whiney Wednesday*” on the Ledyard-Gales Ferry Forum to solicit topics that residents were interested in talking or learning about.

Councilor Saums stated that they would need to talk to the Forum’s Administrators to see if they would be willing and able to field something that a *Whiney Wednesday*.

The Committee discussed crafting a general type of open-ended question to post on the Forum to engage residents and to learn about the topics regarding Ledyard that residents were interested in talking and learning about.

The Committee noted the Informal Gathering they held at the Park on East Drive on July 20, 2022 went well; and based on the residents feedback that some great improvements have been made to the Park (Christy Hill Park).

- Draft a schedule for Informational Forums/Gatherings.

4. Continued discussion regarding the possibility to schedule joint meetings with the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation to discuss items of mutual interest.

Councilor Saums stated he would contact Mashantucket Pequot Tribal (MPTN) Council Member Crystal Whipple to try to coordinate an Informal Gathering between the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Council and the Town Council.

**RESULT:** CONTINUE

5. Continued review of status regarding the progress of improvements at the Park on East Drive.

Councilor Paul stated he spoke to Chief Rich and Parks and Recreation Director Scott Johnson, Jr. about the activity at the Park; and that they both indicated that things have been going well.

Councilor Paul went on to note that during the July 20, 2022 Informal Gathering at the Park on East Drive that the Committee told the residents that they would host another Informal Gathering to follow-up on the actions that were taken to make safety and other improvements at the Park.

Councilor Paul continued by stating in speaking with Parks and Recreation Director Scott Johnson, Jr., that he asked him to invite the Parks and Recreation Commission members to the next Informal Gathering at the Park on East Drive, noting: :

- The importance of the Parks and Recreation Commission's involvement

- The importance for the residents to understand that the Park was under the Administrative Control of the Parks and Recreation Commission,
- That residents could attend the Parks and Recreation Commission’s meetings.

Councilor Paul stated that Mr. Johnson would like to have the Informal Gathering at East Park in April or May and that he would follow-up with him.

**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.

None.

**IV** ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Saums, moved the meeting be adjourned, seconded by Councilor Marshall.

VOTE: 3 - 0 Approved and so declared. The meeting was adjourned at 7:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Gary Paul  
Committee Chairman  
Community Relations Committee

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