



TOWN OF LEDYARD

Community Relations Committee

Meeting Minutes

741 Colonel Ledyard Highway
Ledyard, Connecticut 06339

Chairman
Kevin J. Dombrowski

Regular Meeting

Wednesday, February 15, 2023

6:30 PM

Town Hall Annex - Hybrid Format

In -Person Location - Council Chambers-Town Hall Annex Building

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

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89051604658?pwd=aEVxT1JvVVdCQ2RpRittY1Z2Z05ldz09>

Or by Audio Only: Telephone: +1 646 558 8656; +Meeting ID: 890 5160 4658; Passcode: 234940

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
Juliet Hodge Director of Land Use
Roxanne Maher Administrative Assistant

III. RESIDENTS & PROPERTY OWNERS COMMENTS

None.

IV. PRESENTATIONS / INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

None.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION to approve the Community Relations Committee Minutes of January 18, 2023

Moved by Councilor Marshall, seconded by Councilor Saums

VOTE: 3 - 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

MOVER: John Marshall

SECONDER: Bill Saums

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 noting that students have begun to submit their entries. She stated that she would be posting a reminder on social media and would also send a reminder to the School Principals about the February 22, 2023 Contest Deadline. She noted the Deadline was moved from February 20th to the 22nd because the schools were going to be closed over the long Presidents Day weekend.

Councilor Rodriguez continued by noting 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. However, she stated because Ms. Whipple was going to be away on vacation that she has asked Ms. Whipple whether she could recommend another member of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation who would be willing to step-in as a judge for her.

Councilor Marshall questioned whether any home-schooled students have submitted entries for the contest. Councilor Rodriguez stated that students were sending in their entries' however, she did not know if any were from home-schooled students. Councilor Paul suggested for next year that they ask the contestants to identify their grade and their school. Councilor Rodriguez stated that she did receive a comment from someone who said that they were happy to see that they were including all the students in entire town and not only the Ledyard public-school students.

Councilor Paul stated he spoke with Chairman Dombrowski about presenting the awards to the Black History Month Contest Winners at the Town Council's March 8, 2023 meeting and also about presenting some Black History facts at that meeting as well. He noted at the Community Relations Committee's January 18, 2023 that both Councilor Saums and Councilor Marshall mentioned some articles they found regarding local historical figures. He questioned how they wanted to the present the

articles they found.

Councilor Saums stated that he posted two articles on the Ledyard-Gales Ferry Community Forum regarding Jordan Freeman and Lambo Latham. He stated both these men were credited with killing Major Montgomery; and he noted to have these slaves, who were freed by Colonel Ledyard, fighting by his side said a lot. He stated he thought the *Old Saybrook Daughters of the American Revolution* (DAR) Article was the most meaningful and he read the following:

“Why is our Chapter named after Jordan Freeman? On the sixth of September 1981 eighty plus men of all colors jointed together to unite in battle against the common enemy the British Army run by Benedict Arnold, Traitor to the Colonies. The small army was fairly decimated by the British but the few that survived were led by Colonel William Ledyard to Fort Griswold. By his side was his servant Jordan Freeman, who remained loyal to his formal owner to fight alongside Colonel Ledyard. Although all of the men in the fort found themselves faced with overwhelming odds and very small chance of success they were resolved in their belief in the cause. They armed themselves as best they could against the inevitable attack. With only a few small cannons, riffles with bayonets and spikes and a limited supply of ammunition, the Patriots were prepared to hold their ground. To that end and with that determination it was Jordan Freeman who speared and killed the leader of the attackers Major Montgomery, as he scaled the walls of the Fort. A battle ensued which was inevitably won by the British but the taking of Fort Griswold was not the end of that battle, for the British were humiliated by the losses they suffered at the hands of so few many. In an act of retaliation, the British brutally slaughtered the surviving men in the Battle of Groton Heights, including Jordan Freeman. The strength in character of Jordan Freeman along with loyalty, determination, and resolve that he displayed throughout his life were the reasons he was selected by the Founders of this Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) to be honored with the Jordan Freeman Chapter name.”

Councilor Saums stated that history was often hard to discern noting that there was another version of this account of history.

“Some historians believed that the British Officer that took Colonel Ledyard’s sword and thrust it thru his body, was the earlier flag bearer loyalist Capitan George Beckwith. Others claimed that it was Capitan Stephen Bromfield, who assumed command after and Major Montgomery was killed.”

“So too, accounts differ as to which American revenged Ledyard’s murder by killing the British Officer who killed the garrison bleeder. While some say it was Capitan Allyn, others claim it was an African former slave, Lambo Latham, who dealt the fatal blow. Some internet articles incorrectly state that Jordan Freeman had also killed the Officer who murdered his In all events, Capitan Allyn and Lambo Latham were soon among those who were slaughtered shortly thereafter.”

Councilor Saums stated that there were several versions of this account. He also noted that the Twenty-ninth Regiment had a lot of men of color who were soldiers. He stated that he was continuing to research these historical accounts, noting that he was getting some help from a Ledyard Historian.

Councilor Paul stated the Community Relations Committee would not be meeting again before the Town Council's March 8, 2023 meeting. Therefore, he questioned how Councilor Saums wanted to proceed with regard to the articles he mentioned, noting that he would like to see this work incorporated with the Awards for the Black History Month Contest. Councilor Saums stated that he would continue his research and would be prepared to read an article at the March 8, 2023 Town Council meeting.

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:

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.

- **Land Use Processes** - The Community Relations Committee discussed with Land Use Director Juliet Hodge the scheduling an Informational Forum in April or May, 2023 to present to residents the Land Use processes relative to the approval of applications, in an effort to help residents understand the complexities involved as they relate to Regulatory, State Statutes, and the Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD), etc.

Councilor Paul noted that the Community Relations Committee has been discussing the format of the Informational Forum and that they would like to include a segment addressing *Frequently Asked Question* (FAQ) that would answer general/common land use questions such as: “*what the process was to build a deck, put in a swimming pool, put on an addition*”, etc. He went on to note that the Community Relations Committee would also like to include some FAQ about the approval process for commercial development as well. He stated as they did with the Public Works Informational Presentation, that they would like to post the Land Use Presentation video and FAQ Sheet on the town's website, the meeting portal, and that it could also be linked to social media pages. Councilor Marshall noted by recording the Informational Forums that the Committee would be creating a video library that residents could view when they had questions.

The Committee and Land Use Director Juliet Hodge noted residents often ask questions such as why the town cannot attract a Trader Joes or Starbucks; or why they let the Dollar General Store open in Gales Ferry, noting the importance for residents to understand the land use process. They also discussed the limited availability of

commercial property, low traffic count for marketing, proximity/location bordering the Thames River, etc.

The Group also discussed with Land Use Director Juliet Hodge the importance to publicize the Informational Forum and to ask people to submit questions in advance so that they can be addressed during the Informational Forum.

Councilor Paul suggested in preparation for the Land Use Informational Forum that they use the Community Forum to ask residents what land use questions they had.

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

The Committee thanked Land Use Director Juliet Hodge for attending tonight's meeting. Ms. Hodge left the meeting at 6:58 p.m.

RESULT: CONTINUE

· Informational Presentation regarding the Fraud

- ***Fraud Presentation-*** The Committee noted at their January 18, 2023 meeting they had discussed inviting Sergeant McKinney to give a Presentation regarding Fraud Prevention and Awareness at their March 16, 2023 meeting.

Councilor Saums noted that the Committee also discussed holding the Fraud Prevention and Awareness at the Senior Citizens Center. However, he stated because the presentation was already given at the Senior Citizens Center, and because the location was hard to get to, the Committee planned to look for another location.

Councilor McGrattan stated Our Lady of Lourdes Ladies Guild would be sponsoring a Fraud Prevention and Awareness Presentation on Monday, February 20, 2023 at 6:30 p.m. in the Church Hall. The Guest Speaker would be Ledyard Police Sergeant Michael McKinney.

The Committee agreed to reschedule the March 16, 2023 Fraud Awareness Presentation to sometime later in the year.

RESULT: CONTINUE

· Informational Presentation regarding Library Services

- ***Library Services*** - Councilor Paul stated at during their January 18, 2023 meeting that the Community Relations Committee discussed doing something with the Library. He stated that they talked about hosting a booth at the Farmers' Market that would feature the Library and the many community services that they provide. He went on to note that Councilor Saums suggested the Library hold an Open House at the same time the Community Relations Committee was hosting a booth at the Farmers Market. He stated the Community Relations Committee could provide some literature regarding the

Library at their booth and then refer residents to stop by the Library Open House.

Councilor McGrattan, Library Commission Liaison, suggested the Committee Relations Committee host an Informational Forum at the Library, noting by bringing residents into the Library that they could see all the different services and programs the Library had to offer.

Councilor Rodriguez questioned whether the Library had the equipment, such as the Owl HQ system to live stream their meetings/presentations. Administrative Assistant Roxanne Maher noted that she had provided the information to purchase the Owl and related equipment to the Library but did not know if they had purchased the equipment. Councilor McGrattan stated the Library Commission meetings were currently being held in-person. Ms. Maher stated that perhaps there was some grant opportunities to help the Library purchase the Owl HQ system, noting that the Library offered a number of educational programs, which may qualify for some type of educational grants. She went on to state that the MIS Department has been hesitant to move the Owl HQ system between different facilities.

The Committee discussed featuring the Library at one of the Farmers' Market's this summer and to coordinate this with the Library by having an Open House for that same evening. Councilor Paul stated the Farmers' Market ended at 7:00 p.m. and that perhaps they could go to the Library after the Farmers Market to host an Informal Gathering to bring awareness to the many things the Library had to offer. Councilor McGrattan noted that the Gales Ferry Library had a new Children's Section; and therefore, she suggested that the Community Relations Committee also plan to hold an Informal Gathering at the Gales Ferry Library at another time.

The Committee reviewed the Farmers' Market schedule and noted that featuring the Library earlier in the Summer Market Season may help families become aware of the many programs the Library offered, including Children Programs, that they may like to bring their families to during the summer school vacation.

The Community Relations Committee reviewed the Farmers' Market Summer Season Schedule as follows to try to coordinate the Programs that they plan to feature with the Farmers' Market weekly scheduled themes as follows:

June, 2023 -

- ✓ 7th - "MEAT" You at the Market
- ✓ 14th - All-American Artisans
- ✓ 21st - Summer Solstice
- ✓ 28th - CREAM of the Crop

July 2023 -

- 5th - Red, White, and Berry
- ✓ 12th - Backyard BBQ
- ✓ 19th - Christmas in July
- ✓ 26th - "Bee" Your Best

August 2023 AUGUST -

- ✓ 2nd - Bubbles and Blooms
- ✓ 9th - Farm Fresh
- ✓ 16th - Beach Blanket Bingo
- ✓ 23rd - Bark 'N Brew
- ✓ 30th - Back to School Bash

September, 2023 SEPTEMBER -

- 6th - Simply Sweet
- ✓ 13th - Hometown Heroes
- ✓ 20th - "SEA" You Next Year

Councilor Saums stated the Farmers Market was open from 4:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. and he stated that although a lot of people arrive at the Market early that some people pick-up dinner and go home, but that there was also a group of people who pick-up dinner and look for places to sit down and eat at the Farmers' Market. Therefore, he stated that was the group of people who would most likely walk up to the Library after they eat. He suggested the Library host an Open House until 7:00 p.m. and then provide a Presentation starting at 7:00 p.m. after the Farmers' Market was closed. He stated during the Community Relations Committee's Booth that they could direct residents to the Library's Open House and tell them about the scheduled 7:00 p.m. Presentation.

Councilor Paul stated he would contact Library Director Jennifer Smith to talk about these ideas and that he would report back at the Community Relations Committee's March 15, 2023 meeting.

Councilor Paul continued by noting at their January 18, 2023 meeting that the Community Relations Committee discussed developing a calendar with the events that they would like to feature during the upcoming months. He stated by having a schedule in place that it would allow them to plan and coordinate with other departments/organizations/entities.

The Committee discussed possibly cancelling some of their meetings to host a Booth at the Farmers Market this summer.

Councilor Paul stated that he would like to see the Community Relations Committee host booths that featured the following services and that he would begin to contact the Organizations to coordinate the events:

- Library Services
- Mental Health Awareness
- First Responders

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.

Councilor Paul stated by scheduling the programs and services the Committee would like to highlight at the Farmers' Summer Market that it would enable them to target other topics that residents may be interested in talking about. He stated possibly bringing back something like a "*Whining Wednesday*" on the Ledyard-Gales Ferry Forum would help the Committee to solicit the types of topics that residents were interested in talking or learning about.

Councilor Saums stated that contacted the three Administrators of the Ledyard/Gales Ferry Forum and he noted that they indicated that they would be willing to field something like a "*Whining Wednesday*" and that they also suggested hosting a "*Thankful Thursday*". He stated the Administrators also suggested the format be like a Poll that would be open from 5: 00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. and that they would manually turn off the comment period at 8:00 p.m.

Councilor Marshall stated that he liked the Ledyard/Gales Ferry Forum Administrator's suggestions.

Councilor Paul reviewed examples of some open-ended type of questions presenting one question each week, that would keep the comments on topic such as:

1. Where would you like to see Electric Vehicle Charging Stations located in Ledyard?
2. Do you think roadside trash in Ledyard is excessive?
3. Would you be interested in participating in a town-wide Earth Day Clean-up?
4. Did you know that the "Bottle Bill" (Public Act No. 21-58 - An Act Concerning Solid Waste Management") implemented a five-cent surcharge on any beverage container containing a spirit or liquor of fifty milliliters. Each quarter the surcharge fee is dispersed to the town in which the beverages were sold. Last quarter the Ledyard received \$13,027.06, which was for a total of 260,541 nip bottles that were sold during that quarter. The funds could only be used for the following purposes: (1) environmental measures intended to reduce the generation of solid waste; and (2) reduce the impact of litter caused by such solid waste, including, but not limited to, the hiring of a recycling coordinator, (3) the installation of storm drain filters designed to block solid waste and beverage container debris or (4) the purchase of a mechanical street sweeper, vacuum or broom that removes litter, including, but not limited to, such beverage containers and other debris from streets, sidewalks and abutting lawn and turf.
5. What town services would you like to know more about?
6. Would you be interested in participating in informal discussions regarding town

issues?

7. What town issues would you like to discuss?
8. If you are a new Ledyard Resident why did you choose to move to Ledyard?
9. What would you like to see change in our community?
10. Do you use any of the town's parks, and if so, which parks do you like best and why?
11. Do you Love Ledyard and Why?

Councilor Saums stated the hope was to engage and obtain input from residents on topics that they would like to discuss. He noted the safety concerns at the Park on East Drive were brought to their attention by a resident. He stated with the Community Relations Committee's involvement and thru a concerted effort of several Town Departments that they were able to address the concerns. He stated the Community Relations Committee did a mailing to the residents in the area of the Park on East Drive and they received a good turnout at the July 20, 2022 Informal Gathering, noting that it was a positive result and experience.

Councilor Saums suggested the Committee forward the list of questions to the Ledyard/Gales Ferry Forum Administrators and ask them to consider putting one or two questions into a Poll per week.

Councilor Paul addressed how the Poll Question should be presented, questioning whether it should be phased: "*The Town Council's Community Relations Committee would like to know.....(Poll Question)*". The Committee agreed that presenting the Poll Question as Councilor Paul suggested would provide transparency and validation to residents.

Councilor Saums stated that he would work with the Ledyard/Gales Ferry Forum Administrators to post these questions in the format of a Poll on *Whining Wednesday* and *Thankful Thursday*.

Councilor Paul stated this initiative was a great way to engage residents and for any of any of the town's leaders to get residents' temperature on specific issues/topics.

RESULT: CONTINUE

- Draft a schedule for Informational Forums/Gatherings.

RESULT: CONTINUE

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 reached out to Mashantucket Pequot Tribal (MPTN) Council Member Crystal Whipple today to try to coordinate an Informal Gathering between the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Council and the Town Council, possibly outdoors this spring or summer.

Councilor Rodriguez noted that Councilor Saums would most likely not receive a response from Ms. Whipple right away because she was on vacation and would be traveling for the next couple of weeks. Councilor Saums stated that he would ask Ms. Whipple to forward his e-mail to schedule the Gathering to their Public Affairs Director.

Councilor Rodriguez went on to note that she sent invitations to the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal (MPTN) Council inviting them to attend the February 19, 2023 Law Enforcement Appreciation Day at the Methodist Church. She suggested that it may be a good opportunity to connect with the MPTN - Tribal Council to try to schedule the Informal Gathering between the two Councils (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 did not have an update regarding the Park on East Drive. He stated that he would contact Parks and Recreation Director Scott Johnson, Jr., to discuss including the Parks and Recreation Commission members in the next Informal Gathering at the Park on East Drive.

Councilor Saums suggested that the interested residents come to a Community Relations Committee meeting to tell them how things were going at the Park rather than the Committee going to them. Councilor Paul stated Parks and Recreation Director Scott Johnson, Jr., mentioned that some residents have attended the Parks and Recreation Commission meetings. Councilor Saums stated that was great, noting at the July 20, 2022 Informal Gathering that the Community Relations Committee recommended the residents attend the Parks and Recreation Commission meetings because the Park on East Drive was under the Parks and Recreation Commission's Administrative Control.

The Committee noted the last incident that occurred at the Park was in October, 2022 and that the last communication the Town Council saw was from one resident in December, 2022 which was a police matter.

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.

The Committee discussed possibly visiting all of the town's Parks.

The Community Relations Committee noted that they would like to hold the follow-up Informal Gathering in May, 2023.

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 7:41 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.