



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, February 19, 2025

6:30 PM

Town Hall Annex - Hybrid Format

REMOTE MEETING INFORMATION

In -Person: Council Chambers, Town Hall Annex Building

Remote Participation: Information Noted Below:

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

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85421420640?pwd=BWbNb9a21ewdonxNWanB1nsECguU4t.1>

Or by Audio Only: Telephone: +1 646 558 8656; +Meeting ID: 854 2142 0640; Passcode: 431484

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 for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion 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
William Barnes

In addition, the following were present:

S. Naomi Rodriguez, Town Council Chairman
Roxanne Maher, Administrative Assistant

III. RESIDENTS & PROPERTY OWNERS COMMENTS

None.

IV. PRESENTATIONS / INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

1. Mr. Lamb email dated 2/17/2025 re: Topics for the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion.

The Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion reviewed Mr. Lamb's email noting that his suggested topics included the following ideas:

- American with Disabilities which is observed on July 26th by promoting inclusion, raising awareness of those with disabilities, and to support disability organization, such as United Cerebral Palsy.
- International Migrants Day, which was observed on December 18th each year to acknowledge and celebrate the diversity of migrant communities worldwide and uphold the rights and dignity of all migrants and refugees, regardless of their backgrounds or reasons for migration. International Migrants Day promotes the protection of their rights and raises awareness of their contributions around the world and their impact on global communities.

Councilor St. Vil suggested that should the Committee choose to take on these two nationally recognized days that they start planning the events at least two-months out to prepare adequately.

Councilor Brunelle noted that she would look at which months these Organizations were recognized to try to work them into the Committee's schedule. She went on to note that currently the Committee was working on Black History Month; and that she was preparing for March to celebrate Women's History Month.

Councilor Barnes noted that International Migrants Day, was observed on December 18th each year; therefore, he stated the Committee would have plenty of time to prepare.

Chairman Rodriguez suggested the Committee invite Mr. Lamb to their next meeting to discuss his suggested ideas. Councilor Brunelle stated that she would email Mr. Lamb to invite him to the Committee's March 19, 2025 meeting.

RESULT: CONTINUE

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION to approve the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Minutes of January 15, 2025

Moved by Councilor Brunelle, seconded by Councilor St. Vil

VOTE: 2 - 0 - 1 Approved and so declared (Barnes abstained)

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

MOVER: April Brunelle

SECONDER: Gary St. Vil

AYE: 2 Brunelle and St. Vil

ABSTAIN: 1 Barnes

VI. OLD BUSINESS

1. 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)

- Visit Parks in town .

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

Councilor Brunelle stated that it was her understanding that Parks, Recreation, & Senior Citizens Director Scott Johnson, Jr., was working to make some improvements to the Park that would include a picnic benches, etc., before they invited residents to see the new Park.

Chairman Rodriguez stated at the February 18, 2025 Parks, Recreations, & Senior Citizens Commission Meeting that Director Scott Johnson, Jr., presented a Lantern Hill Waterfront Park Plan which included a parking area, picnic area, and boat launch and other things. She stated that Mr. Johnson would present the Plan to the Inland Wetland and Water Courses Commission for their review in March, which would start the process. She noted that public access to Pond was donated to the Town by the Graham Family.

Councilor Brunelle suggested they coordinate their event at the Lantern Hill Waterfront Park with a Ribbon Cutting.

Councilor Barnes, Liaison to the Parks, Recreations, & Senior Citizens Commission, noted that the Lantern Hill Waterfront Park Plan was actually located across the way from Long Pond, noting that the Park area would be on Bush Pond.

Master Park Plan - Councilor St. Vil stated in talking with Parks, Recreations, & Senior Citizens Scott Johnson, Jr., that he discussed allocating some resources to develop a Master Plan for all of the Town’s Parks. Councilor St. Vil suggested they combine the unveiling of the Lantern Hill Waterfront Park with a

conversation regarding a Master Park Plan, noting that these topics may be of interest to the community.

Pickleball Court Information Conversation - Councilor Brunelle stated that they had a good turnout at the November 7, 2024 Informal Conversation at Winthrop Park regarding Pickleball Courts. Councilor St. Vil stated that he believed the reason they had such a good turnout was because it was a subject matter that residents were interested in and could relate to. He stated whether the residents were Pickleball aficionados or parents who wanted a safe place for their children to enjoy, that they were all interested in a Master Park Plan.

Youth Fishing Designated Waterway - Councilor Barnes stated there were many places in town where people can fish; however, he stated that there were no places that were designed for only youth to fish. He noted an idea for the town to have a place just for their youth to fish, noting that of course adults would be there to supervise, was brought up to the Historic District Commission about a year ago. However, he stated the Historic District Commission only had access to the Up-Down Sawmill; and he noted that there were many waterways in town.

Councilor Barnes stated that he would reach out to the Parks, Recreations, & Senior Citizens Commission about the idea for a Designated Youth Fishing Area.

Informal Conversations - Councilor St. Vil noted the importance to facilitate events to informally engage with the residents, because it provided both the residents and their elected officials (decision makers) the opportunity to learn about the needs of their residents.

- **Visit all of the Parks in Town** - No Update

RESULT: CONTINUE

2. Review status of Department Heads Government Training Presentations.

Administrative Assistant Roxanne Maher stated that she forwarded a February 13, 2025 email to the Committee noting that the MIS Department created a **Ledyard Academy Link** located under the *Our Community Tab*. The link is noted below:

[<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLsJAGmKziDMTXgiAUdDzirHQDuGWusk6Q>](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLsJAGmKziDMTXgiAUdDzirHQDuGWusk6Q)

Councilor Brunelle stated that a couple Department's have already submitted their Presentations.

Councilor St. Vil stated that New London was also doing Civic Academy noting that it may be worthwhile to review some of the topics that they were addressing, to see if there was anything they may like to add here in Ledyard. He stated the mission of the New London Civic Academy was to increase civic engagement. He stated the more residents understand and know how their community operated the better equipped they would be to participate in the process of their local government.

Chairman Rodriguez stated at their February 4, 2025 meeting the Economic

Development Commission noted that would add their video to the *Ledyard Academy Link*. She also noted that once other Departments get through their work on the budget process that they would also be adding presentations to the Link.

RESULT: CONTINUE

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

Chairman Rodriguez while she and Mayor Allyn were attending a Ledyard Prevention Coalition Meeting that Ms. Mylasia Thomas introduced herself to them, noting that she was with Mr. Whipple. She stated during their conversation that she gave Ms. Thomas her card, noting that they talked about community relations and getting together to discuss initiatives such as Black History Month, and others. She noted that Ms. Thomas was excited about the things they discussed, noting that their engagement was going well.

Black History Month Activities -Chairman Rodriguez stated that she and Councilor St. Vil met with Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation (MPTN) Mylasia Thomas. She stated that Ms. Thomas deals with youth services and college preparation; and that she asked Councilor St. Vil to send her the information regarding Ledyard's Black History Month Poster and Essay Contest information, noting that she was happy and eager to participate in the Town's Black History Activities. Chairman Rodriguez stated that Ms. Thomas has posted the Black History Month Activities information on their social media site.

Mental Health -Chairman Rodriguez went on to note that Ms. Thomas stated that she would invite Ledyard to their Mental Health Event at the MPTN.

Native American Heritage Month- November - Chairman Rodriguez stated that they also discussed Native American Heritage Month. She sated one of the ideas was to invite a Native American Chef to the Senior Center to do a cooking class. She stated that Ms. Thomas also suggested having some Native American Dancers perform.

RESULT: CONTINUE

4. 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 although this item was on the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion's agenda that they were not currently working on it, because some of their other Committees have been taking the lead. She noted the town was working with Organizations to provide opioid and substance abuse and recovery programs.

Chairman Rodriguez stated at the Finance Committee meeting that was held earlier this evening they discussed the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) Program

with Police Chief John Rich. She noted that Police Chief John Rich stated although many of the supplies the Police Department used for the DARE Program were donated; and therefore, that most of the costs to administer the program was for personnel, which involved about 133-man-hours. She stated that the Finance Committee discussed the possibly to allocate funding from the National Opioid Settlement Funding to pay for the man-hours to for the DARE program. She stated that Mayor Allyn, III, noted in the Opioid Settlement Funding Guidelines under *Prevention Programs* that it stated: “*Funding for evidence based programs in schools*”. Therefore, using the National Opioid Settlement funding could be used to pay for the costs to administrate the DARE Program.

Chairman Rodriguez also noted that Finance Director Matthew Bonin reported that allocation of \$10,000 from the National Opioid Settlement Fund that the Town Council approved at their January 22, 2025 meeting for services provided by the Connecticut Recovery Center would be going out this week.

Councilor Barnes questioned how often the town received disbursements from the National Opioid Settlement Program and the annual amount they receive. Chairman Rodriguez stated the amounts of the disbursements varied based on each of the settlement cases and other factors such as the municipalities population. She noted that Mayor Allyn, III, stated that Ledyard would continue to receive funding from the National Opioid Settlement for another nine-years. She noted to date that Ledyard has made the following allocations from the National Opioid Settlement Fund:

- \$30,000 Ledyard Prevention Coalition- Town Council Action 9/27/2023
- \$10,000 - Community Speaks Out - Town Council Action 10/24/2024
- \$10,000 - Connecticut Recovery Support Center - Town Council Action 1/22/2025

RESULT: CONTINUE

5. Discussion and possible action to begin preparations for the 2025 Black History Month Program.

Councilor St. Vil noted the following Black History Month Events:

- ***Poetry Slam*** - Councilor St. Vil stated this week Lucille’s Restaurant in Ledyard Center held a Poetry Slam that was well attended.
- ***Reading at Gales Ferry Children’s Library*** - Councilor St. Vil stated on Thursday, February 27, 2025 at 10:00 a.m. he would be reading to the community’s youth. He stated he looked forward to the event, noting that his grandson would also be at the Library that day.
- ***Black History Month Celebration*** - Councilor St. Vil stated on Friday, February 28, 2025 at 6:30 p.m. Black History Month Celebration would be held at the New Life Christian Church, on Route 117; noting that singer Lisa Claton would be performing and that refreshments would be served. He stated that all were welcome to attend, and that he hoped to see this Committee up-front and participating in the event. He stated

Black History is American History and that he hoped to see everyone there. He stated that he would post the Event's digital flyer online and also share it with the Committee.

Councilor Barns questioned how the Black History Month Celebration at the New Life Christian Church unfolded. Chairman Rodriguez stated it began as an idea, and that Councilor St. Vil made the connections. She stated that she and Councilor St. Vil met with Reverend Clayton, and presented their plan and that more ideas grew from there. She stated that they asked Reverend Clayton, who has been at the Ledyard High School's Martin Luther King Day Concerts for the last two years, to participate. She stated that Reverend Clayton was excited and stated that her group could participate in the Celebration. She also noted when Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation (MPTN) Mylasia Thomas heard about the event that she also noted that they were excited to attend. Chairman Rodriguez stated when everyone started talking about the idea it just kept growing. She stated that it was going to be a lovely event and that she expected 200 people would attend.

- ***Black History Month Activity Poster and Essay Contest*** - Councilor St. Vil stated he sent a reminder email to the School Principals (Elementary Schools, Middle School & High School) about the deadline and to ask that they remind the student to get their entries turned in. He stated this was another beautiful event where the winners of the Contest were awarded prizes at a Town Council Meeting. He stated last year it was great to have a room full of students and their proud families.

Councilor St. Vil stated that they were nearing the end of closing out their 2025 Black History Month Activities. He stated that they had a lot of success, good events, and good participation this year. He stated that he looked forward to participating in the planning of other events scheduled throughout the year. .

RESULT: CONTINUE

6. Discussion and possible action to set a 2025 Schedule for Informal Conversation Forums and Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Initiatives.

Councilor Brunelle stated that March was Women's History Month and that she has been working on some ideas that included the following:

- ***Poetry Slam*** - Councilor Buhle stated that last year Lucille's Restaurant, in Ledyard Center, hosted a Poetry Slam for Women's History Month and that they would be doing that again this year.
- ***Linda C. Davis Woman of the Year Award*** - Councilor Brunelle stated to honor one of the best people she knew in Ledyard, former Town Council Chairman Linda Davis, who passed away in 2021, that she thought it would be fitting to have a Woman of the Year Award in her honor, noting that Mrs. Davis was known as "Mother Ledyard". She stated residents could nominate a woman who has done a lot

for Ledyard. She stated the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion could review the entries and vote to select the Woman of the Year.

Chairman Rodriguez stated at she like the idea of the *Linda C. Davis Woman of Year Award*, noting that they would have to put together an graphic and put the word out for people to submit nominations. She suggested the Committee could accept nominations during the month of March and then present the Award at the Town Council's April meeting.

RESULT: CONTINUE

MOTION to establish the Linda C. Davis Woman of the Year Award to recognize one woman each year in Ledyard who has made a difference for the betterment of their community.

In addition, the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion would be co-organizing a Women's Poetry Slam at Lucille's Restaurant, in Ledyard Center; and will work to expand the scope of activities to include additional activities in celebration of Women's History Month.

Moved by Councilor Brunelle, seconded by Councilor St. Vil

Discussion: Councilor Brunelle stated that the residents could submit nominations to the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion at Abur@ledyardct.org <<mailto:Abur@ledyardct.org>>; noting that the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion would vote on the nominations and the winner would be presented the Award at a Town Council meeting.

Councilor St. Vil suggested the addition of the following language as a "*friendly amendment*" "***and will work to expand the scope of activities to include additional activities in celebration of Women's History Month***" The Committee agreed to the additional language as a "*friendly amendment*."

Councilor Barnes stated that he thought the *Linda C. Davis Woman of the Year Award* was a great idea. However, he stated if they implemented the Award this March, 2025, that there would be a limited window of awareness for the Award, noting that the inaugural recipient may be the rapidly nominated candidate, which would be fine. However, he stated as part of their Women's History Month work this year that they could declare that they would have the *Linda C. Davis Woman of the Year Award* beginning in 2026; noting that he was not advocating for one or the other. He stated that his concern was that they may not have enough time for people to submit nominations for this March, 2025. Chairman Rodriguez stated that Councilor Barnes would be surprised on how quickly they can get things done.

Councilor Brunelle stated that she was planning for the *Linda C. Davis Woman of the Year Award* to be annual event not only to recognize women in the community, but also to recognize and honor Linda Davis who did so much for Ledyard.

Councilor St. Vil stated that he would echo Councilor Barnes concerns about the limited time to provide the first year's award this March, 2025. However, he stated as Chairman Rodriguez mentioned that it was amazing on what they could do in a short amount of time. He stated the reason he was bringing this up was because there was no guarantee that they would all be serving in these positions this year, noting that at least one of them might be. Therefore, he stated if they shared a common a value set that it was important to move ahead with the *Linda C. Davis Woman of the Year Award* this March, 2025; noting that it would be talked and would help to ensure that the Award be brought up year after year.

VOTE: 3 - 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

AYE: 3 Brunelle, St. Vil and Barnes

7. Any Old Business proper to come before the Committee.
None.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

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

Recognition of Colonel William Ledyard

Councilor Barnes stated every year the Town has a great Memorial Day Parade to recognize those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our town and our county. However, he noted that the Town was named after Colonel William Ledyard who died in the defense of Fort Griswold against the British in *The Battle of Groton Heights*, noting that he was Revolutionary War Patriot. He stated not only was Colonel Ledyard killed, but two Black Soldiers were also killed, one who was defending Colonel Ledyard, and one who killed the Commander of the British Troops as he was coming over the wall.

Councilor Barnes went on to explain that he was not suggesting they should do something as part of the Memorial Day Celebration to recognize these men who gave the ultimate sacrifice at *The Battle of Groton Heights*, but as part of their Diversity Celebration and Education Programs that they could more to recognize the name sake of their Town. He suggested that they do something at the stone that marked where Colonel Ledyard was killed; or at Colonel Ledyard's Memorial Gravesite, which was at the Colonel Ledyard Cemetery on Mitchell Street, Groton. He stated that although recognizing these three Americans, who gave so much for our community, was something they could do as part of the Memorial Day Programs that it was not a Parade Type of event.

Councilor Barnes went on to note that Colonel William Ledyard was born on

December 6, 1738 in Groton; and died at the age of 42 on September 6, 1781 during *The Battle of Groton Heights*. He noted that Colonel Ledyard's sword was in the Groton Library. He stated Memorial Day was a fitting time to recognize and honor Colonel Ledyard and the Black Soldiers. He stated if people would attend the event that what he would like to see was a gathering at the that site and then have a procession to his gravesite carrying his sword. He stated the Program could involve community groups such as the Girl Scouts, and the Boy Scouts. He stated although he has never talked to the Groton Library about the sword; that perhaps if they had an event they could talk to the Groton Library.

RESULT: CONTINUE

IV ADJOURNMENT

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

VOTE: 3 - 0 Approved and so declared. The meeting was adjourned at 7:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

April Brunelle

C o m m i t t e e

Community Relations Committee

C h a i r m a n

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