



TOWN OF LEDYARD

Town Council Meeting Minutes

741 Colonel Ledyard Highway
Ledyard, Connecticut 06339-1551
(860) 464-3203
council@ledyardct.org

Chairman S. Naomi
Rodriguez

Regular Meeting

Wednesday, February 26, 2025

7:00 PM

Town Hall Council Chambers

WORKING DRAFT

In-Person: Council Chambers Town Hall Annex

Remote: Information noted below:

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

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88950267229?pwd=4PaiqoC9am2jFC6lbE6dX7cPsPjFTO.1>

Audio Only: Telephone: +1 646 558 8656; Meeting ID: 889 5026 7229; Passcode: 039130

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Rodriguez called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. at the Council Chambers, Town Hall Annex Building.

Chairman Rodriguez welcomed all to the Hybrid Meeting. She stated for the members of the Town Council and 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-Legistar Meeting Portal.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. ROLL CALL

Present: Councilor William Barnes
Councilor April Brunelle
Councilor Jessica Buhle
Councilor Kevin Dombrowski
Councilor Carmen Garcia-Irizarry
Chairman S. Naomi Rodriguez
Councilor Tim Ryan
Councilor Tony Saccone
Councilor Gary St. Vil

IV. PRESENTATIONS

None.

V. RESIDENT & PROPERTY OWNERS (COMMENTS LIMITED TO THREE (3) MINUTES)

Mr. Milton (Dave) Schroeder, Jr., 290 Whalehead Road, Ledyard, addressed the following:

- **Ethics Commission** - Mr. Schroeder stated that it was disappointing that both a Code of Ethics and a Ethics Commission were still yet to be established for the town of Ledyard. At the start of December 2024, it seemed that substantial progress had been made on formulating the framework under which a town Ethics Committee would operate. He stated that it then appeared that the adoption of the operational guidelines and for the establishment of a Commission was imminent. However, he stated that it was disappointing to see that almost three months later, that the good effort seemed to have stalled. He asked if this apparent slow-walking of the issue should be a matter for concern to the public. He once again urged the Town Council to establish an Ethics Commission, as ethical behavior in government was a key component to good governance, and that a lack of ethical oversight leaves the town, and the intended functioning of its governing bodies open to abuse.
- **Planning & Zoning Commission** - Mr. Schroeder stated that notwithstanding that he was very happy with the current P&Z Commissioners upholding Ledyard's Regulations with the denial of what was for all intents and purposes a quarry on Mount Decatur. He stated not long ago, Ledyard had a separate Planning Commission and Zoning Commission, two different entities with two different functions: one to plan, and the other to enforce. He stated the language of Ledyard's Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) speaks of a balance between development and preserving the recognized positive character of the town and the well-being of its citizens. And yet, as the result of changes made to our Town's Regulations in recent years under the combined functions of the P&Z Commission, Ledyard now finds itself under a deluge of applications where the pretext seems to be that development supersedes well-being and preservation, noting that it was not always so. He stated our town's forefathers understood the danger when developers essentially were able to write changes to the town regulations that would be beneficial to them; and then put pressure on Commissioners to make those changes and approve their projects. He stated that we all want to see responsible development. But the proper way to ensure it was to have two separate entities a Planning Commission and a Zoning Commission. He encouraged the Town Council to make the change before the town becomes irreversibly disfigured by irresponsible development that irrevocably mars what makes the town - in all its parts - so special to its inhabitants.
- **Route 12 Corridor Study - Gorman + York** - Mr. Schroeder stated that it was disappointing that the town has contracted with the firm Gorman + York to do a far-reaching study on future development of the Route 12 Corridor. He stated this was the same firm that called everyone in the public who opposed the recent denied Gales Ferry Intermodal (GFI-Cashman) Application for Mount Decatur a NIMBY (*Not in My Back Yard*) out of the hand (see Ex#102 for Public Hearing: PZ#24-8SUP & PZ#24-9CAM), without even

recognizing they had justifiable cause for concern. Mr. Schroeder stated that this firm, Gorman + York demonstrably provided false conclusions to cited reports and excluded relevant economic data from their report to prop up their arguments (EX#227 from Joanne Kelly and Ex#337-2 from Jennifer Zerosa for Public Hearing: PZ#24-8SUP & PZ#24-9CAM). He stated that being told what you want to hear from a consultant with an agenda was not the basis for making good planning decisions. He stated that he highly urged the Town Council to impose financial pressure on the Town Planner to cut all contact with the firm Gorman + York, and seek any consultancy services elsewhere.

- ***Housing Developments - Impact on Schools*** - Mr. Schroeder noted that he has heard that there were many new housing projects in the works here in Ledyard that were sure to result in an influx of new families with children into the school system. He asked when they could expect the Town Council to address the ever-growing need to expand our already over-stretched existing schools.

Ms. Anne Roberts-Pierson, 4 Anderson Drive, Gales Ferry, stated that she agreed with Mr. Schroeder's comments, noting that all of his points were spot on, and that she hoped the Town Council was listening. Thank you.

Mr. Eric Treaster, 10 Huntington Way, Ledyard, suggested the Town consider revising the Town Charter. He provided some background noting in 1963, when Ledyard initially adopted Zoning Regulations, they established a combined Planning and Zoning Commission; and that the Town Council served as the combined Commission. However, he stated subsequently the Town Council established two separate Commissions, one for Planning and one for Zoning, and appointed volunteers to serve on the two Commissions. He stated the two separate Commissions were in effect for about 40 years, until the end of 2012 when the Town Council merged the two Commissions back into a single Combined Planning & Zoning Commission. Mr. Treaster stated that the Zoning Commission's mission was to *Protect Public Health, Safety, Conveyance, and Property Values; and more recently to protect Natural Resources*; which was achieved by amending the Zoning Regulations. He stated these Regulations imposed reasonable constraints on the height and size of buildings, the area of the lot that the buildings may occupy; the size of yards, and other open spaces; as well as the height, size, and location of advertising signs and billboards and other things.

Mr. Treaster went on to explain that the Planning Commission had the following two missions: (1) *Develop and maintain the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD); which provided a statement of the policies, goals, and standards for Ledyard's physical and economic development; and (2) Develop and maintain Subdivision Regulations*, which included reviewing and approving proposed subdivisions. He noted the key word was "*Planning*".

Mr. Treaster stated that it was his opinion for a combined Planning & Zoning Commission that the amount of work required of the volunteers was excessive to properly perform the duties of a Zoning Commission and the duties of a Planning Commission, which resulted in both missions being compromised, by a lack of time to do both well; and the town not being well served. He noted as an example, the Zoning Regulations unintentionally allowed for an unlimited number of six-story, 350-unit or larger apartment complexes in Gales Ferry and in

Ledyard Center; *by right*, and without a public hearing, and without any consideration to traffic congestion, impact on noise, the school population, nearby property values, aesthetics, consistency with the Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD); or the need for more social services. He stated the apartment complexes would be similar to the Triton Square Apartments located west of the Super 8 Motel on Route 12 in Groton.

Mr. Treaster went on to note that the Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD) was deficient because it was ambiguous as to whether a development would take precedence over the protection of the town's character, or if the protection of the town's character was more important than development.

Mr. Treaster stated if the Planning & Zoning Committee reverted back into two separate Commissions that the quality of their work would improve, and their respective missions would be better achieved. He stated that separate commissions sometimes act as a check and balance on each other, noting that the benefits to the town by having separate Commissions, would outweigh the disadvantages. He asked the Town Council to consider the value and desirability of development that occurred during the 15-years before the town Commissions were combined; and that they also consider which was better for our town. He stated if the Town Council concluded that the 15-years before the Commissions were combined was superior; then he would ask that the Town Charter be amended, and the Planning and Zoning Commissions be separated for essentially the same reasons they were separated by the original Town Council during the 1960's or 1970's. Thank you,

Chairman Rodriguez thanked the Residents for their comments this evening.

VI. COMMITTEE COMMISSION AND BOARD REPORTS

Chairman Rodriguez stated that the Board of Education was supposed to present their Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget to the Town Council this evening. However, she stated that they were unable to attend tonight's meeting. She stated that she was waiting for the Board of Education to provide a date that they could present their proposed budget to the Town Council.

VII. COMMENTS OF TOWN COUNCILORS

Chairman Rodriguez noted at the Town Council's February 12, 2025 meeting Mayor Allyn, III, announced that Prides Corner Nursery would like to make a donation in the name of the Town of Ledyard to a charitable organization of the town's choosing.

Chairman Rodriguez suggested the Town Council consider choosing *Hopei in Focus* as the recipient of the Prides Corner Nursey donation. She explained that *Hope in Focus* was a 501c(3) nonprofit patient advocacy organization dedicated to transforming the lives of those affected by blindness caused by a rare inherited retinal diseases characterized by severe vision loss at birth. She stated their Mission was to generate awareness, raise funds for research, and provide outreach, support, and education to those affected by Leber Congenital Amaurosis (LCA) and other rare retinal diseases characterized by severe vision loss at birth.

She stated while some children were born with little or no vision, that others may have significant vision loss in the first few years of life, or stable vision for a period of time, and then eventually vision loss, as the retina deteriorates into total blindness. She stated *Hope in Focus* was founded in 2014 by Ledyard Residents Laura Manfre and Charles Priebe when their daughter, Sofia, was born with Leber Congenital Amaurosis (LCA). She asked the Town Council to consider recommending that Prides Corner Nursery provide a donation on behalf of the Town to *Hope in Focus*.

Councilor Dombrowski stated that they were not ready to make a decision this evening on the charitable organization for Prides Corner Nursery to make a donation to. He stated that he had no advanced notice or knowledge regarding the Organization, *Hope in Focus*, that Chairman Rodriguez has suggested the Prides Corner Nursery's donation be made to this evening.

Councilor Ryan questioned whether there was a deadline as to when they needed to get back to Prides Corner Nursery.

Chairman Rodriguez stated that *Hope in Focus* was wonderful non-profit Organization, noting that she has known the family since they have lived in Ledyard. She questioned since the Town Council learned about Prides Corner Nursery's offer to make a donation to a charitable organization two weeks ago whether anyone had other charitable organization ideas.

Councilor Dombrowski noted that the United Way was in Gales Ferry. Mayor Allyn, III, noted that the Lantern Hill Valley Association was looking to do some aquatic, and invasive plant work.

Mayor Allyn, III, stated although he did not know the amount of the donation that Prides Corner Nursery has offered to give on behalf of the Town; that it sounded like it was going to be about \$2,000 - \$3,000. He also noted that he did not know if Prides Corner Nursery would give the donation to more than one Organization. He stated that he would ask about the amount of the donation; and the distribution for the March 12 2025 Town Council meeting.

Councilor Dombrowski suggested the subject of potential charitable organizations for Prides Corner Nursery to make a donation to be included on the Town Council's March 12, 2025 Agenda.

Councilor Barnes stated that he agreed with Councilor Dombrowski that they should include a discussion regarding potential charitable organizations for Prides Corner Nursery to make their donation to, be included on the Town Council's March 12, 2025 Agenda. However, he stated with that being said, he noted that *Hope in Focus* was a great organization, but that everyone should have the opportunity to provide suggestions and learn about the charitable organizations. He stated that he has known the family that began *Hope in Focus* since they lived in Ledyard, noting that they were a wonderful family.

Chairman Rodriguez asked that Councilors provide ideas of non-profit organizations for the Town Council to discuss at their March 12, 2025 meeting, so that they could come to a consensus regarding the Organization that they would like Prides Corner Nursey to make donation to.

Chairman Rodriguez stated that recently she received some anonymous letters that were mailed to her home and to her at the Town Hall. She announced that anonymous letters would not be included on the Town Council's Correspondence List, noting that residents should sign their name to their letters.

Councilor Barnes stated that his wife and her friend enjoyed an evening walk from the High School to Ledyard Center on the new trail. He stated although he thought the nice weather had something to do with it, that his wife said the Multi-Use Pathway was wonderful. He thanked all those who made the construction of the trail happen.

Councilor Brunelle stated March was Women's History Month; and she announced the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion was accepting nominations for the first *Linda C. Davis Woman of the Year Award*. She stated that they were asking that those submitting nominations only submit the name of one person, noting the deadline was Sunday, March 30, 2025. She asked that folks email their nominations to Abur@ledyardct.org <<mailto:Abur@ledyardct.org>>; noting that the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion would vote on the nominations. Chairman Rodriguez stated that she loved the idea of the *Linda C. Davis Woman of the Year Award* to acknowledge outstanding women in their community.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated for all those who have kids at home she wanted to remind them that when you get home that you give your kids a hug and just appreciate that they are there with you, especially if they are young. She noted that parents need to make their kids understand that they were not invincible, and that stuff can happen to them. She stated if your kids were learning to drive, or even if they have been driving for a long time, that they remind them to be careful and to follow the traffic laws.

Councilor St. Vil stated as part of the Black History Month Activities that a Gospel Concert was scheduled for February 28, 2025 at 6:30 p.m. at the New Life Church, on Route 117; noting that all were welcome to attend, and that he hoped to see everyone there. He continued by reminding residents that the Black History Month Essay and Poster Contest for students has been extended to March 7, 2025. Therefore, he stated if your child has not yet submitted an entry that they still had some time.

Councilor Dombrowski stated that he wanted to echo the following comments that were made earlier this evening: (1) Traffic Laws - Councilor Dombrowski stated with the warmer weather they were already seeing more people out walking, riding bicycles and motorcycles. He reminded everyone to drive safely, and to be aware of everyone else who was on the road. He stated that he has seen people not stop and run right through the stop signs. He went on to note that the worst area was the stop sign that was behind the High School on Gallup Hill Road to Spicer Hill Road. He stated whether motorist were taking a right turn, left turn or going straight, nobody was stopping at the Stop Signs. He reminded people to obey the

traffic laws, stating that “*Stop*” means “*Stop*” noting that Stop Signs were not a suggestion or were meant to allow motorists to just slow down and keep going through it.

Councilor Ryan questioned whether Councilor Dombrowski witnessed the infractions firsthand and whether he talked to Police Chief Rich. He suggested that perhaps the Police Department could put a patrol car in that area to help people to stop at the Stop Sign.

Councilor Dombrowski stated that the intersection behind the High School was not the only intersection where motorists were not obeying the Stop Signs, noting that there was also the stop sign on Town Farm Road by Gallup Hill School. He continued to address the intersection by the High School where it turned onto Colonel Ledyard Highway, stating that since the intersection was straightened out, the curve was awful. Chairman Rodriguez noted that the Water Pollution Control Authority also commented on that particular intersection. Councilor Dombrowski stated the area was currently being protected by three Traffic Cones.

Councilor Dombrowski also commented on the Multi-Use Pathway, noting that with the snow he saw one vehicle mistakenly drive on the path instead of the road. Therefore, they agreed that some barriers needed to be installed.

VIII. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION to approve the following Town Council Minutes:

- Special Meeting of February 12, 2025
- Regular Meeting Minutes of February 12, 2025

Moved by Councilor Dombrowski, seconded by Councilor Garcia-Irizarry

VOTE: 9 - 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

MOVER: Kevin Dombrowski

SECONDER: Carmen Garcia-Irizarry

IX. COMMUNICATIONS

Communications List - February 26, 2025

Chairman Rodriguez stated a Communications List has been provided on the meeting portal for tonight’s meeting, and she noted referrals were listed.

X. REFERRALS

XI. COUNCIL SUB COMMITTEE, LIAISON REPORTS

1. Administration Committee

Councilor Buhle stated although the Administration Committee has not met since the last Town Council meeting they have a number of appointments on tonight’s agenda.

RESULT: .**2. Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion**

Councilor Brunelle stated the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion met on February 19, 2025 and discussed the following: (1) Black History Month Poetry Slam - Councilor Brunelle stated the Poetry Slam that was held at Lucille's Restaurant was well attended noting that everybody was happy; (2) March - Women's History Month - Councilor Brunelle stated in celebration of Women's History Month the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion decided to sponsor a Linda Davis Woman of the Year Award.

Chairman Rodriguez noted that Councilor St. Vil would be reading at the Children's Library in Gales Ferry on Thursday, February 27, 2025.

RESULT: .**3. Finance Committee**

Councilor Saccone stated the Finance Committee met on February 19, 2025 and they have three items on tonight's agenda. He noted with the month of March the Finance Committee would begin their work on the upcoming Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget. He stated that the Committee would be holding Budget Work Sessions on **Thursday, March 6, 2025; Monday March 10, 2025; and Tuesday, March 18, 2025** to meet with Department Heads to learn about their projected expenses. He stated the Budget Work Sessions were open to the public and he encouraged residents to attend, noting that the Work Sessions would be held in a Hybrid format providing residents the option to attend in-person or remotely via Zoom.

4. Land Use/Planning/Public Works Committee

Councilor St. Vil stated the LUPPW Committee's next meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 3, 2025.

RESULT: .**Parks, Recreation & Senior Citizens Commission Fiscal Year 2024/2025**

Councilor Barnes noted the Parks, Recreation & Senior Citizens Commission met February 18, 2025 and discussed the preparation of a \$1 million Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) to replace the playscapes at the following parks: Town Green, Aljen Height's, Blonders Park (Colonel Ledyard park) and East Drive. He stated that there was a lot of excitement among the members of Parks, Recreation & Senior Citizens Commission with the Town Council's February 19, 2025 approval to move the Grant Application and Playscape Projects forward at their February 19, 2025 Special Meeting; noting that the Commission was looking forward to the park improvements.

RESULT: .

Public Safety Report

Councilor Saccone stated that the Town Council would be voting on a request from the Police Department later this evening. He noted that the Police Department had one Police Officer position open. He suggested any Residents, or High School Students who may be interested in pursuing a career in law enforcement to contact Police Chief John Rich.

RESULT: .

Library Commission

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated the Library Commission met on February 24, 2025 and addressed the following: (1) Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget Work Session - Library Administrative Assistant Erica Christofferson would be presenting the Library's Budget to the Finance Committee on March 13, 2025; (2) Insurance for Library Facilities - Because the Bill Library Association owned the building their President Dianne Holmberg questioned who was responsible to pay the insurance the Library Facilities. Ms. Holmberg's main concern was regarding catastrophic insurance. Mayor Allyn, III, stated that he attended the Bill library Trustees' Dinner last year and that the previous Bill Library Association President asked the same question. He explained that the Town has a Umbrella Insurance Policy for all the town's buildings, stating that everything was covered. He stated at that time he explained the different insurance coverages to the Bill Library Association; however, he stated the information must not have been conveyed to Ms. Holmberg. He stated that he would email the Insurance information to Ms. Holmberg; and (3) Library Director Jennifer Smith - February 24, 2025 was Ms. Smith's last meeting with Ledyard before she moved on to her new position in Central Connecticut, where she has taken a job to be closer to her family. Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated that Ms. Smith would be missed.

RESULT: .

Board of Education

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated that she was disappointed that this evening the Board of Education would not be presenting their proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget to the Town Council as initially scheduled; and as they have in years past. She continued by reading the following:

"Back in September of 2024 the Board of Education's agenda included their Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget Timeline, which included a presentation to the Town Council on February 26, 2025. However, in October, 2024 the Budget Timeline was changed.

Board of Education Chairman Anthony Favry has served as the Board's Chairman for many years, with the exception of a few months when Mr. Alex Rode served as their Chairman, until he became ill. Therefore, it should not have come as a surprise to Mr. Favry that the Town Council was expecting the Board of Education to present the Board's proposed budget at a Town Council meeting.

As the Town Council's Liaison to the Board of Education, I have been attending most of the Board's meetings. During their last meeting, as I mentioned in the Town Council's February 12, 2025 meeting, the Board of Education discussed the Town Council's February 6, 2025 letter in which the Town Council requested additional information, as a follow-up to the January 21, 2025 Joint Work Session of the Town Council and Board of Education's Finance Committees. During the Board of Education's meeting they kept asking why the Town Council needed to ask for that information, because supposedly all the information was in the Munis Report. Various Members of the Board of Education mentioned that perhaps what they needed to do was teach the Town Council how to read the Munis Report, because apparently we don't know; and that was why we were asking for the information. In addition to that, the Superintendent of Schools made a comment that it seemed like the Town Council only liked to communicate via letters; and that this whole thing could have been done over a phone call.

I would like to go back to the Town Council meetings from 2024, in which the Town Council directly asked Superintendent Mr. Hartling in the presence of other Board of Education members for the same information, and never provided it.

This year, during the January 21, 2025 Joint Work Session of the Town Council and Board of Education's Finance Committees, the information was requested again, and it has not been provided. Since the information had been requested verbally multiple times, it was necessary for the Town Council to send a letter, because our verbal requests kept ignored.

The Town Council is asking, amongst other things, for information regarding the salary lines in the Board of Education's Budget. Each salary line includes multiple staff, and sometimes the amount allocated in one year differs significantly the next year for the same salary line. The information the Town Council is asking for is how many people that salary line covers. That's it. We're not asking for personal information; or any other information that might violate any privacy laws; we just want to understand what each line involves.

At the end of the day, Mr. Favry mentioned in one of his emails that this is about transparency. The Town Council, and the taxpayers, have the right to know this information.

I don't know how many teachers for general instruction were in each elementary school. And when I look at the Munis Report I cannot tell that. And I can also not look it up on their Board of Education website, because the website is not up to date. And one of the reasons that is not up to date is because it is difficult to know how many teachers, or staff of any subject we have in our school, due to the high turnover they have.

Town charter. Chapter 7, Section 1 states the following:

The Board shall annually prepare a budget submission to include the information required by the Town Council.

*Also for the Board of Education Bylaws Policy:3108 states: “**The Board of Education shall***

prepare an itemized estimate of the cost of operating Ledyard Public Schools for the ensuing year, and shall submit each such estimate to the Town Council via the Mayor no later than the 4th Monday in February. The Budget document shall contain the information requested by the Town Council, and shall be in a format that is compatible with the budget submission for the General Government". Which I referred to at the Town Council's February 12, 2024 meeting.

I mention the Board of Education Bylaws and the Town Charter because the Town Council is the stewards of the taxpayers' money; and we wouldn't be doing our job if we didn't ask questions. The information that we are asking the Board of Education to provide, is the same information that we also receive from other Town Departments, and no other Department seems to have an issue with providing it.

The Mayor's Office provides a budget with information that the taxpayers and the Town Council needs. More than half of our town's budget goes to our schools. What kind of job would we be doing if we just didn't ask any questions, or didn't ask for additional information. We are facing a budget that can increase the mil rate significantly, and it would be irresponsible for us not to do a thorough job. We need to ask these questions because we need to know what we're voting for. It shouldn't be that difficult for us to get this information.

RESULT: .

Planning & Zoning Commission

Councilor St. Vil stated that collaboration is the key. He stated a good example of collaboration was our Planning and Zoning Commission. He commended everyone that participated in evaluating the recent application for work at the former Dow/Styrenics Chemical Site on Route 12 in Gales Ferry. He stated that the decision has been completed, noting the Commission made a decision last week. He stated this work involved a countless number of hours by the volunteers, either those currently sitting, or previously sitting on that Commission. He stated that he understood that a lot of those discussions were contentious at times, but yet the Commission, steadily reviewed the facts and came out with a decision. He thanked everyone who served on the Planning & Zoning Commission for all their hard work. He stated that he greatly appreciated their work and time and that he was sure everyone on the Town Council and the Mayor did as well. He stated the Planning & Zoning Commission was a good example of collaboration that needed to be seen and felt everywhere in town.

RESULT: .

XIII REPORT OF THE MAYOR:

Mayor Allyn, III, reported on the following: (1) Ledyard Center Sewer Line Extension Project Update - Mayor Allyn stated the installation of the sewer line from the High School to Penny Wise Lane has been completed. However, he stated the final work to spread loam and grass seed would be done this spring; (2) Playscape Replacement Projects (Town Green, Aljen Heights, Blonders Park & East Drive) - Mayor Allyn stated the \$1 million Small Town Economic Assistant Program (STEAP) Grant Application was submitted on Thursday,

February 27, 2025, noting that the Town met the deadline; (3) Historic Cemetery \$5,000 Grant - Mayor Allyn thanked the Town Council for their February 12, 2025 action authorizing the Town to submit the Office of Management & Policy (OPM) Grant Application. He noted the Application was submitted on February 13, 2025 to meet the submission deadline. He stated the Cemetery Committee developed a Plan for the use of the funding which included removing brush, fixing gravestones, repairing fences and a number of other maintenance items at the Town's Historic Cemeteries; (3) Eastern Regional Tourism Annual Conference February 20, 2025 - Mayor Allyn stated he attended the Conference that was held at the Mohegan Sun Casino. He stated although Southeastern Connecticut was clearly the number one destination in all of Connecticut for tourism, that the State was not investing enough to help support Southeastern Connecticut for tourism. Therefore, he stated they made a big pitch to the State's Department of Economic Development for more support; (4) Board of Education Roof Replacement and Heating Ventilation & Air Conditioning (HVAC) Projects - Mayor Allyn stated on February 18, 2025 Board of Education Director of Facilities and Grounds Wayne Donaldson, Permanent Municipal (PMBC) Chairman Joe Gush, Finance Director Matthew Bonin and other staff met with STV Managing Partner, who was hired to be the Owners Representative for Ledyard's \$8,550,000 School Projects (Replacement of Roofs at the Central Office, Gales Ferry School, and Juliet W. Long School, along with the installation/mounting of Solar Pannels; and the HVAC System at Juliet W. Long School). He stated that STV has since has changed the Representative for Ledyard explaining that their new Representative was actively working on the projects. He stated that they hoped the new STV Representative would be a big plus in terms of getting these long-delayed project across the finish line. He stated the contractor was currently working to put the cap pieces on the roof. He stated because some of the roofing materials were installed incorrectly that the contractor would go back to the Gales Ferry School to remove and replace the panels, noting the Roofing Manufacturer, Garland, has provided the new roofing materials for the contractor to reinstall; (5) Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (SCCOG) - Mayor Allyn stated SCCOG met last week noting that they discussed the projected State's Funding to Municipalities for the upcoming Fiscal Year (fy 25/26). He reported that the early indications was that funding from the State would be flat funded for the sixth straight year, noting that this would pose a challenge for everybody. He stated that he would be working the projected State Revenues into his proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget; (6) Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget - Mayor Allyn stated the Board of Education submitted their \$40,667,242 budget on Monday, February 24, 2025 in accordance with the Town Charter. He stated that he would be submitting the General Government's proposed Budget along with the Board of Education's proposed Budget to the Town Council on Monday, March 3, 2025. He stated that he planned to include a Budget Summary of the General Government's Budget in addition to his Budget Transmittal Letter. He explained the idea of providing a Budget Summary was to enable everyone to understand the budget within five minutes. He stated that he welcomed the Town Council's feedback, noting that it was important that they provide transparency on how residents' tax dollars were being spent. He stated although he was still working on the General Government's proposed budget; the increase was about \$644,000; and the Board of Education's budget increase was \$2,297,419 or 5.98% over the current year's budget. He stated a 3.15 mil increase would be required to support the upcoming budget as it currently stands. He stated residents would see a \$1,000 to \$1,500 increase in their tax bills, noting that this did not bode well, when 31% of Ledyard's residents were at the Asset Limited Income Constrained & Employed (ALICE) threshold

based on the United Way Report; (7) Library Director job Posting - Mayor Allyn stated the town received about a dozen applications and that they would be conducting interviews to fill the Library Director position tomorrow. He stated that Library Director Jennifer Smith and other staff would participate in the interview process. He stated that Library Director Jennifer Smith was fantastic, noting that she did some great things for the town during the three-years she was in Ledyard and that he was sorry to see her go; (8) Motor Vehicle Taxation Formula- Mayor Allyn noted the changes to the Motor Vehicle Tax explaining that the current tax was based on the Blue Book Value. However, he stated under the new Legislation which will commence with the October 2024 Grand List utilizes the vehicles MSRP (Sticker Price) in year one, followed by a 20% depreciation in year two, then a straight-line annual depreciation of 5%. However, the new Legislation permits municipalities to change the depreciation schedule by a vote of the Town Council, which would move to MSRP, then 90% in year two, 85% in year three and so on. He explained that this change would reduce the Grand List decline to 0.64% as opposed to the 1.6% and it would recover nearly \$444,000 in taxes. He stated that he has talked with neighboring towns about what they were considering relative to the motor vehicle taxation formula, noting that Stonington amended their agenda for tonight because they recognize that they were losing tax revenue from both Motor Vehicle Taxation Formula and from Public Act 24-46 *“An Act Establishing a Property Tax Exemption for Veterans Who Have a Service-Connected Permanent and Total Disability Rating”* (9) Public Act 24-46 *“An Act Establishing a Property Tax Exemption for Veterans Who Have a Service-Connected Permanent and Total Disability Rating”* - Mayor Allyn stated that he absolutely supported providing a tax benefit to Veterans who have served our country and were 100% totally and permanently disabled and was unemployable. He explained the intent of this Legislation was to provide tax relief to veterans that were disabled, and do not have the ability to work. However, he stated the problem was that Ledyard has people who were gainfully employed, earning six-figure salaries and living in some of the nicest houses in our town, submitting the Veteran’s Administration (VA) Form, which stated the individual’s combined service disability was 100% and that they had conditions that could never be fully cured when they speak about being gainful employment. He went on to explain the Legislation’s fix to add *“100% permanent and total disability”* does not help the Municipalities; and he noted that the Legislation would be considering another Veteran’s Tax Benefit Bill that would fully exempt the land, outbuildings, pools, and anything else on the property. Therefore, he stated Ledyard would see a tax revenue loss of about a \$550,000; (10) *“An Act Establishing a Property Tax Exemption for Property Located on Certain Indian Lands”* - Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation (MPTN) Foxwoods Casino Third Party Vendors Taxation - Mayor Allyn stated that the taxation issue at Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation (MPTN) Foxwoods Casino Third Party Vendors Taxation was still pending. He stated if the State Legislation approved the Bill that Ledyard would see another \$625,000 tax revenue loss, noting with the Great Wolf Indoor Water Park and Resort that the loss of tax revenue from this Bill could be as much as \$825,000.

Questions to the Mayor

Councilor Barnes questioned the new Motor Vehicle Taxation Formula. Mayor Allyn, III, explained instead of basing the motor vehicle tax on the Blue Book value, which has been the practice for years, that per the new Legislation that will commence with the October 2024 Grand List they would use the vehicles MSRP (Sticker Price) in year one, followed by a 20%

depreciation in year two, then a straight-line annual depreciation of 5%. However, he explained that the new Legislation allows Municipalities to change the depreciation schedule by a vote of the Town Council, which would change the formula to start with the MSRP, then 90% in year two, 85% in year three and so on. He explained that this change would reduce the Grand List decline to 0.64% as opposed to the 1.6% and recover nearly \$444,000 in taxes. He stated Ledyard had 14,000 registered vehicles, and by regaining that 5% would result in a \$444,000 in tax revenue for Ledyard. Mayor Allyn went on to state that although Hartford has been saying that they have reduced taxes; that the money has to be made up somewhere; and therefore, the State has now placed the burden on Municipalities to raise taxes from their property owners.

Councilor Ryan questioned the use of the Mil Rate Stabilization Fund to lower the mil rate increase by one mil for the upcoming Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget. Mayor Allyn, III, stated the budget would be using one mil would equate to about \$1,290,422. Councilor Ryan stating in past years although they planned to use the Mil Rate Stabilization Fund that did not need to at the end of the year; and he expressed concern about eating into their Mil Rate Stabilization Fund. Mayor Allyn stated without the use of the Mil Rate Stabilization Fund that the mil rate would increase by 4 mils. He went on to note as he mentioned at the Finance Committee's February 5, 2025 meeting that the Grand List also saw a 1.6% decrease explaining that last year one of the town's Industrial Use Properties missed the filing deadline to receive a tax exemption for their mining equipment; and therefore they paid the taxes for that year. However, he stated they submitted their paperwork on-time this year, noting that the mining equipment was now exempt, which was another contributor to the reduction in the Grand List.

Councilor Ryan questioned what Ledyard's State Delegation was doing to help with all of these losses in revenue. Mayor Allyn, III, stated that he did not know that their State Representatives were doing much. He went on to state that although the Circuit Court awarded Ledyard a victory on the Town's ability to assess and tax non-Indian business entities operating on the reservation- Mashantucket Pequot Foxwoods Casino that State Senator Cathy Osten does not agree with the ruling. He went on to note during the 2023/2024 Fiscal Year a *Taxation of Non-Tribal Property at the Mashantucket Foxwoods Casino Working Group* that was comprised of both the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation (MPTN) Chairman Butler, and Mohegan Sun Tribe Chairman Gessner, Jr., Montville Mayor McDaniel, Mayor Allyn, III, twelve legislators, and five tribal representatives was stood up to write a White Paper regarding the issue. However, he stated after six-months the Working Group reported that more study was needed. He went on to state during their work that he was surprised to learn that some of the Legislators actually thought that Ledyard was collecting taxes on the land and buildings. He stated that he had to explain to the State's Legislators that currently there was no taxation on the buildings of any kind; or on the land within the Tribal Reservation; with taxation being levied only the non-Indian businesses' property that was on the Reservation, such as the Nike Outlet, California Pizza Kitchen, Dunkin Donuts, etc. However, he stated should the State Legislature approve the "*An Act Establishing a Property Tax Exemption for Property Located on Certain Indian Lands*" that the town would lose the ability to assess and tax the non-Indian entities doing business at the Foxwoods Casino, which would include the Tanger Outlets. He noted that currently these outlet stores pay their business taxes, which include the furniture, fixtures, and equipment

and inventory.

Councilor Buhle addressed Public Act 24-46 *“An Act Establishing a Property Tax Exemption for Veterans Who Have a Service-Connected Permanent and Total Disability Rating”*. She requested clarification, noting that what Mayor Allyn was saying was that the additional language the State Legislature voted on did not fix the issue. However, she stated in talking with our Legislators that Groton was not having this problem because Groton was applying Bill as it was written. Therefore, she questioned whether the Town Council could review the Veteran’s Administration Forms that residents have submitted to apply for the tax benefit, noting that it looked like the Forms had the percentage of the disability redacted. She stated if the disability percentage was redacted that there was no way for the Assessor to make a judgment on whether or not the person qualified for the tax benefit. She noted the reason she has asked this question was because the Veteran’s Administration (VA) has wholeheartedly stated that Ledyard had 12 Disabled Veterans; and she noted if all 12 qualifying Veterans owned houses, in the nicest neighborhoods in town and paid \$10,000 a year in property taxes; that the town would be looking at \$120,000 a year in lost revenue. However, she stated that she did not think that all of the 12 Disabled Veterans owned houses with \$10,000 property tax bill. Therefore, she stated that she was confused as to how the loss of tax revenue was at \$500,000 for the 100% Totally and Permanently Disabled Veterans. She stated while she understands how an individual could be 100% permanently and totally disabled veterans by the Veteran’s Administration (VA); and still be gainfully employed that she was confused on how the Tax Assessor was coming up with her numbers. She asked Mayor Allyn to provide the information for Town Councilors to review, as they continue to ask their State Legislators to solve this problem.

Mayor Allyn, III, stated that he could email the Veterans Administration Forms to the Town Council if the Forms were fully redacted, so they could see what the Forms looked like. He went on to note that the Veterans Administration (VA) has stated that Ledyard has 19 resident that were 100% Totally and Permanently Disabled Veterans, noting that they broke out the numbers between Ledyard (12); and Gales Ferry (7). He stated in reviewing the Veterans Administration Forms that there were 85 Ledyard residents that qualify. He stated that the percentage of the disability was not redacted from the Forms, noting that the Assessor’s Office redacted the individuals’ names, social security numbers, and addresses for privacy. He stated that he offered to provide the Veteran’s Administration Forms to their State Legislators; and he invited them to meet with the town’s Tax Assessor to help determine what Ledyard may be doing wrong. He noted in a conversation with Senator Osten at 8:30 a.m. this morning he asked if the State would like to give Ledyard the names of the 19 property owners who qualify for the 100% Totally and Permanently Disabled Veterans stating that the Town would give the tax exemption to those Veterans and no one else. However, he stated that because of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Laws the State cannot provide the Town with that information.

Councilor Buhle stated the disability ratings were a combined rating, explaining that was how the Veterans Administration (VA) determined the 100% disability. She stated an individual could be 70% disabled for certain reasons and through their military service they could have other disabilities, which when combined provide 100% permanently and totally disabled. She suggested that they reach out to someone at Submarine Base who administers

their Veterans Administration Program, noting that perhaps they could be a resource to assist with this process.

Councilor Buhle continued by addressing the Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) Program noting in speaking with State Senator Cathey Osten that she mentioned Ledyard received \$700,000 in PILOT Payments to help with the assessments on tribal land.

Mayor Allyn stated all towns received PILOT Payments from the State for land that was owned by the State, explaining that the PILOT Program was not only for tribally owned land. He stated that all Municipalities that had nontaxable land that was owned by the State or by the Federal Government, receive a "*Payment in Lieu of Taxes*" payment. He went on to explain that the State of Connecticut has never met the letter of the law in terms of how they were supposed to fund the PILOT Program.

Mayor Allyn continued to address the Pequot Fund, PILOT Program, and Education Cost Sharing (ECS) Funding, noting that some have argued that Ledyard received more than its share to cover the costs of the kids that live on tax exempt property that attend their schools. However, he stated that Ledyard has to use all of that money for the education of students who live on tax exempt land, noting that the other 168 towns that received the Pequot Fund distributions do not have those same expenses and liabilities.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry questioned the Veterans Association Form. Mayor Allyn explained that it was a one-page form that comes from the Department of Veteran Affairs. He stated although most of the information on the forms were consistent; that the forms all looked a little different depending on the state where the Veteran lived at the time they were discharged. He stated in Connecticut that the VA Forms come from Newington or West Haven. However, he stated for a veteran that was discharged in Florida, that the Form would come from the Florida Veterans Administration. Councilor Barnes stated that the Veterans Administration Forms from each state would look different and that older forms would most likely look different from today's forms.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry questioned whether there could be veterans who were totally disabled, but not permanently. Mayor Allyn replied "Yes" which was also a problem. He explained that there were Veterans who may have a 60% or 70% disability rating, and were at an unemployable level, who would lose the tax exemption, because they were not 100% disabled. He went on to state that while those people should really receive the tax benefit that they would not qualify; however, he stated that there were other people who were working every day, at well-known employers in our area, making a very good paycheck, who would qualify to receive the tax benefit. Therefore, he stated that Public Act 24-46 "*An Act Establishing a Property Tax Exemption for Veterans Who Have a Service-Connected Permanent and Total Disability Rating*" was still problematic. He stated that he did not know if the Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs had the most accurate data on how many veterans were living in their State and in towns.

Councilor Barnes explained that part of the discrepancy could be that the last address the Veterans Administration may have for an individual, may not be the address where the

veteran was currently residing at. He stated an individual who was discharged with a disability may have been living in Georgia at that time, and now they were living in Ledyard. He stated that it was likely that the Veteran's Administration has their last address as being in Georgia because that was where they were living when they were discharged from their military duty. He also explained that the data the State had prior to the Public Act 24-46 "*An Act Establishing a Property Tax Exemption for Veterans Who Have a Service-Connected Permanent and Total Disability Rating*" was most likely the data the Bill was based on, noting that data may be different from the current data. He stated as people age that the numbers would be revised, and he stated that it was rare that the number of veterans with disabilities (back pain, sleep apnea, memory loss, joint pain, etc.) would go down, noting that those numbers traditionally increase.

The Town Council and Mayor Allyn, III, continued to discuss the Public Act 24-46 "*An Act Establishing a Property Tax Exemption for Veterans Who Have a Service-Connected Permanent and Total Disability Rating*" relative to the number of variables regarding the law, how the law was being applied; the collaboration of the Connecticut Association of Tax Assessors in working to understand the law, possibly collaborating with other towns, working with Connecticut Conference of Municipalities Lobbyists; Military families who buy homes in Ledyard and then rent them out when they were transferred or they retired in another state or town; the importance to ensure that the law only applied to those who qualify and physically lived in Ledyard; and perhaps requiring an annual reverification process.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry addressed the School Roof Projects noting on Saturday, February 22, 2025 she saw workers at the Gales Ferry School installing the green metal roofing materials. Mayor Allyn stated that the Roof Replacement Project was supposed be completed last August, 2024; however, he stated Contractor has had crews working on the weekends to get the project completed, noting that they cannot work overhead when the students were in the building.

Chairman Rodriguez asked that Mayor Allyn work with her to include a Motion regarding the Motor Vehicle Taxation Calculation on the Town Council's March 12, 2025 Agenda.

RESULT: .

XIII. OLD BUSINESS

None.

XIV. NEW BUSINESS

CONSENT CALENDAR

- *1. MOTION to reappoint the following members to the Permanent Municipal Building Committee to complete a three (3) year term ending March 26, 2028.

· Mr. Gerald Tyminski (U) 58 Partridge Hollow, Gales Ferry

- Mr. Joseph Gush (R) 57 Town Farm Road, Ledyard.

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

MOVER: Kevin Dombrowski

SECONDER: April Brunelle

AYE: 9 Barnes, Brunelle, Buhle, Dombrowski, Garcia-Irizarry, Rodriguez, Ryan, Saccone, and St. Vil

- *2.** Motion to approve four tax refunds in the combined total amount of \$13,146.20 each exceeding \$2,400.00 in accordance with tax collector departmental procedures.

- Patricia Ference \$3,112.39
- Jessica Johnson \$2,619.98
- Law Office Sean Donohue for Amanda Plante \$3,079.65
- Sheela Nerurkar \$4,334.18

Moved by Chairman Dombrowski, seconded by Councilor Brunelle

VOTE: 9 - 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

MOVER: Kevin Dombrowski

SECONDER: April Brunelle

AYE: 9 Barnes, Brunelle, Buhle, Dombrowski, Garcia-Irizarry, Rodriguez, Ryan, Saccone, and St. Vil

Administration Committee

- 3.** MOTION to appoint Ms. Minna DeGaetano (D) 10 Marla Avenue, Ledyard, as a Regular Member to the Retirement Board to complete a three (3) year term ending January 20, 2026 to fill a vacancy left by Mr. Panosky.

Moved by Councilor Brunelle, seconded by Councilor Dombrowski

Discussion: Chairman Rodriguez explained that because President Trump's Administration has called all Federal Workers to return to their offices, Ms. DeGaetano would need to step down from the Retirement Board. However, she stated in the meantime, she would suggest that the Town Council move forward with Ms. DeGaetano's reappointment this evening. She noted that Ms. DeGaetano would continue to serve until she submitted her resignation letter.

VOTE: 9 - 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

MOVER: April Brunelle

SECONDER: Kevin Dombrowski

AYE: 9 Barnes, Brunelle, Buhle, Dombrowski, Garcia-Irizarry, Rodriguez, Ryan, Saccone, and St. Vil

- 4.** MOTION to appoint Mrs. Karen Parkinson (R) 55 Rose Hill Road, Ledyard, as a Regular Member to the Historic District Commission to complete a five (5) year term ending December 4, 2026 to fill a vacancy left by Mr. Barnes.

Moved by Councilor Dombrowski, seconded by Councilor St. Vil

Discussion: Chairman Rodriguez stated Mrs. Parkinson was an active member of the community, noting that she has been instrumental in the Tri-Town Trail (Bluff Point to Preston Plains Park). She stated that Mrs. Parkinson could out walk her any day. She noted Mrs. Parkinson's background, enthusiasm, and energy, stated that she was an amazing woman for her age; and that she would be a great addition to the Historic District Commission

Administrative Assistant Roxanne Maher explained that Mrs. Parkinson was currently serving as an Alternate Member on the Historic District Commission; and that tonight's action would move her to a Regular Member.

VOTE: 9 - 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

MOVER: Kevin Dombrowski

SECONDER: Gary St. Vil

AYE: 9 Barnes, Brunelle, Buhle, Dombrowski, Garcia-Irizarry, Rodriguez, Ryan, Saccone, and St. Vil

5. MOTION to appoint Ms. Lauren Hawes, (U) 8 Warbler Way, Gales Ferry, as a Regular Member to the Parks, Recreation & Senior Citizens Commission to complete a three (3) year term ending June 28, 2025 to fill a vacancy left by Ms. Cobb.

Moved by Councilor Buhle, seconded by Councilor Dombrowski

Discussion: Councilor Buhle stated that Ms. Hawes was her neighbor, noting the amount of energy she had. She stated that she was pleased Ms. Hawes was interested in being involved in their community.

VOTE: 9 - 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

MOVER: Jessica Buhle

SECONDER: Kevin Dombrowski

AYE: 9 Barnes, Brunelle, Buhle, Dombrowski, Garcia-Irizarry, Rodriguez, Ryan, Saccone, and St. Vil

6. MOTION to appoint Mr. Nathaniel Woody (U) 770 Long Cove Road, Gales Ferry, as an Alternate Member to the Planning & Zoning Commission to complete a three (3) year term ending October 31, 2026 filling, vacancy left by Mr. Miello.

Moved by Councilor Brunelle, seconded by Councilor Dombrowski

Discussion: Councilor Dombrowski noted Mr. Woody's education and background experience, noting that he previously served with Mr. Woody on the Planning & Zoning Commission for many years.

Chairman Rodriguez noted that Resident Eric Treaster raised concerns to her that because Mr. Woody was a registered Unaffiliated Voter that he was not interviewed prior to his Appointment Application moving forward to the Administration Committee and onto the Town Council.

However, she stated that Administrative Assistant Roxane Maher reviewed the Appointment Applications submitted by residents who were registered as Unaffiliated Voters and that she would alert the Administration Committee if there was any question regarding the Applicant's qualifications. She also noted that although Unaffiliated Applicants are not interviewed by one of the town's parties, that the Administration Committee Chairman may also call the candidate to discuss their background to determine if they were a good fit for the Committee they applied for.

Chairman Rodriguez went on to note that she served on the Planning & Zoning Commission for several years, and that she served as Mr. Woody's Vice-Chairman during that time. She stated that Mr. Woody is qualified to serve on the Planning & Zoning Commission; and that the Town Council should move his appointment forward this evening.

VOTE: 9 - 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

MOVER: April Brunelle

SECONDER: Kevin Dombrowski

AYE: 9 Barnes, Brunelle, Buhle, Dombrowski, Garcia-Irizarry, Rodriguez, Ryan, Saccone, and St. Vil

7. MOTION to appoint Ms. Sherry Gruzowski (R) 26 Saw Mill Drive, Ledyard, to the Ledyard Housing Authority Road, Gales Ferry, to complete a five (5) year term ending March 31, 2028 filling a vacancy left by Ms. Crocker.

Moved by Councilor Dombrowski, seconded by Councilor Brunelle

Discussion: None.

VOTE: 9 - 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

MOVER: Kevin Dombrowski

SECONDER: April Brunelle

AYE: 9 Barnes, Brunelle, Buhle, Dombrowski, Garcia-Irizarry, Rodriguez, Ryan, Saccone, and St. Vil

Finance Committee

8. MOTION to authorize overexpenditure of winter operations budget accounts 10140103-51815 (Snow Overtime), 10140103-58300 (Employee Reimbursement), and 10140107-56301 (Salt and Sand) due to higher-than-normal winter operation's needs.

Moved by Councilor Ryan, seconded by Councilor Saccone

Discussion: Councilor Ryan stated that Public Works Director/Town Engineer Steve Masalin attended the Finance Committee's February 19, 2025 meeting. He stated that Mr. Masalin provided data and spreadsheets regarding the Winter Operations expenses to date, as well as historical data. Councilor Ryan stated having the data was helpful, explaining that this year's

winter season started with limited snow and ice management needs; however, he stated the trajectory changed, and the costs were now projected to be very close; and could exceed the budgeted amounts, if we get more snow. He stated although the Winter Operations Budget was not yet over expended that Mr. Masalin wanted to obtain authorization to overspend in case they have another snow event. He stated that Mr. Masalin did not want to find himself in a position where the Town Council would need to call an emergency meeting to enable the Public Works Department to proceed with snow removal/winter operations.

VOTE: 9 - 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

MOVER: Tim Ryan

SECONDER: Tony Saccone

AYE: 9 Barnes, Brunelle, Buhle, Dombrowski, Garcia-Irizarry, Rodriguez, Ryan, Saccone, and St. Vil

9. MOTION to overspend 10120101-51630 (Public Safety Employees) to allow for the hiring of one police officer candidates in FY25 to replace two officers planning retirement in FY26.

Moved by Councilor Buhle, seconded by Councilor Ryan

Discussion: Councilor Ryan explained with the upcoming retirement of two Police Officers the Police Department had two candidates apply. However, he stated in going through the qualifying process one candidate did not make it through; therefore, only one candidate would be moving on to the Police Training Academy. He explained because of the time involved with recruiting and qualifying that the Police Department would not be able to have a second candidate ready to start the Academy in March.

Councilor Ryan suggested the following as a “friendly amendment” “.....hiring of ~~two~~ *one* police officer candidate.....”. The Town Council agreed to the update as a “friendly amendment” as noted above.

Councilor Ryan stated because two Police Officers were retiring and the time involved to go through the Police Training Academy, that the Police Department would be down by one Officer, unless they were able to recruit a Police Officer from another Department which would come in as a lateral move and would not require as much training.

VOTE: 9 - 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

MOVER: Jessica Buhle

SECONDER: Tim Ryan

AYE: 9 Barnes, Brunelle, Buhle, Dombrowski, Garcia-Irizarry, Rodriguez, Ryan, Saccone, and St. Vil

10. MOTION to approve a revised Appendix A- Qualifying Income Schedule in accordance with Ordinance #200-005 (rev. 1) “An Ordinance to Provide Property Tax Relief for Certain Homeowners Age Sixty-Five or Over or Permanently and Totally Disabled (rev.1)” for the filing period of February 1, 2024 - May 15, 2024.

Moved by Councilor Saccone, seconded by Councilor Ryan

Discussion: Mayor Allyn, III, explained in addition to the State, the town provides tax relief to qualifying homeowners thru the adoption of Ordinance #200-005 (rev. 1) *“An Ordinance to Provide Property Tax Relief for Certain Homeowners Age Sixty-Five or Over or Permanently and Totally Disabled.”*

Mayor Allyn noted that provisions of the Ordinance require the town to annually update the *“Qualifying Income Schedule”* to be consistent with the State’s Qualifying Income, (Cost of Living Adjustment) which was based on the United States Social Security Administration Program.

Mayor Allyn noted in accordance with Ordinance #200-005 (rev.1) Paragraph 3 *“Qualifications”*; paragraph (e) *“Persons qualified for tax credit or deferment benefits under this Ordinance are those whose maximum income during the calendar year preceding the year in which application is made for the tax credit does not exceed the Qualifying Income Schedule, as hereby incorporated in the ordinance as though fully set forth herein. A copy of the approved Qualifying Income Schedule shall be filed with the Town Clerk when established and when amended. The income guidelines provided in the Qualifying Income Schedule (Appendix A) shall be adjusted to reflect a cost of living increase issued by the United States Social Security Administration, pending the approval of the Town Council prior to the first of January of the year of application.”*

Mayor Allyn went on to explain that because the *“Qualifying Income Schedule”* was an Appendix to the Ordinance, and because they were not changing the Ordinance itself, a public hearing was not required. He stated that annually updating the *“Qualifying Income Schedule”* for the town’s Tax Relief program was an administrative action.

VOTE: 9 - 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

MOVER: Tony Saccone

SECONDER: Tim Ryan

AYE: 9 Barnes, Brunelle, Buhle, Dombrowski, Garcia-Irizarry, Rodriguez, Ryan, Saccone, and St. Vil

General Business

11. Discussion and possible action on a Resolution Concerning Public Benefits Charges on Electric Bills to Consumers.

Councilor Ryan stated as he was sure that all know that since July of 2024, our electric bills from Eversource have ballooned in cost due to the much maligned *“Combined Public Benefits Charge”*. He stated that this charge has represented a large portion of consumer’s bills, around 30%, forcing many residents to reconsider priorities. It has instigated intense pushback by the public and a petition garnering over 72,000 signatures to remove the charge, developments which have brought the support of many state legislators, manifesting in a number of proposed

state bills.

Councilor Ryan stated with that being said, however onerous the “*Combined Public Benefits Charge*” has been, it is due to sunset at the end of April, 2025. What concerned him as much as the charge, however, was the root cause, which was that a regulating agency (PURA) has detrimentally loosened procedural rules, and the absence of legislation limiting the types of fees that utilities can impose on consumers. Luckily, he stated that there were a number of proposed State Bills, both in the house and senate, that address not only the charge directly, but the aforementioned root causes, including but not limited to:

S.B. 647 - An Act Concerning Protections for Consumer Access to Affordable Electricity

- S.B. 598 - An Act Prohibiting Electric Distribution Companies from Collecting Fees other than Fees for the Purchase or Delivery of Electricity
- H.B. 5923 - An act establishing a task force to study electric distribution company accountability and electric distribution competition and infrastructure
- H.B. 5404 - An act concerning the composition and conduct of the public utilities regulatory authority (PURA)

Councilor Ryan stated that all of these Bills endeavor to protect the consumer and make electricity more affordable for Connecticut residents and businesses by recommending changes to the general statutes and augmenting the way fees are implemented and assessed. It is in that spirit, with the focus on protecting residents from future fees such as the “*Combined Public Benefits Charge*”, that at least one municipality’s town council - The Town of Southington - has introduced a resolution supporting these various bills, many of which are co-sponsored by a majority of Ledyard’s own state house representatives.

Councilor Ryan stated that he believed that it would be worthwhile for the Ledyard Town Council to consider adopting a similar resolution, as it would be an impactful signal that State Legislators have the support of our great town as they pursue these efforts that will not only serve to help Ledyard residents, but residents state-wide.

Councilor Ryan stated to that end, he was volunteering to draft such a resolution for consideration by the Town Council at a future meeting and the intent of this discussion is to simply broach the topic to solicit any input other councilors might have.

Chairman Rodriguez stated at the February 12, 2025 Town Council meeting a resident was in attendance and talked about the Public Benefit Charge that was on her electric bill. However, she stated that she explained to the resident that the Town Council would be deferring their discussion to tonight’s meeting because Councilor Ryan was taking the lead on the subject.

Chairman Rodriguez stated that her home has electric heat and with the Public Benefit Charge (PBC) her electric bill this month was \$1,500 and that with the colder temperatures the month before it was \$1,700. She stated this was not sustainable, especially when your electric bill was as much as your mortgage, and you have a son in college. She stated that she appreciated that Councilor Ryan has taken this on.

Councilor St. Vil stated that he echoed Chairman Rodriguez's comments in that he appreciated Councilor Ryan taking the lead on the Public Benefit Charges. He stated that it was good to put in writing the Town Council's position and their concerns. He questioned whether the Resolution would focus on the sunseting of Public Benefit Charge (PBC) or the way that it became effective.

Councilor Ryan stated the Resolution would include all of the factual intakes of the Public Benefit Charges. He went on to explain that the Resolution would state the Town Council support, noting that he has not thought about how he wanted to craft a section of the Resolution, but that it would be under the guise to address all of the Bills that address Public Benefits Charge(PBC) as well as their root causes.

Councilor Dombrowski stated that it was his understanding that the Resolution was going to say that if a Public Benefit Charge was going to be added that it should be proposed, debated, and approved through the Legislature, with the proper votes, stating that it should be approved by the Legislature and not only by a Regulatory Body.

Councilor Buhle stated that the Public Benefit Charge (PBC) was not just a charge, noting that there were a lot of things baked into it. She stated what was concerning was the manner in which the Public Benefit Charge (PBC) was implemented. Fees such as the Public Benefit Charge (PBC) should be implemented by a State Statue, instead of a Regulating Agency voting to pass it. The Public Benefit Charge (PBC) was supposed to be sunseting; therefore, she stated that they need to focus on how they could prevent this from happening again.

Councilor Ryan encouraged the Councilors to provide him with their feedback, and specific bills that they would like to see called out, as he worked to draft the Resolution, noting that the Town Council would review and make changes to the Resolution once it has been drafted to develop the final Resolution for adoption by the Town Council.

Councilor Buhle stated that she agreed with calling out the planned sunseting of the Public Benefits Charges (PBC). She noted during the February 12, 2025 Town Council meeting that she talked about the Public Benefit Charge (PBC) sunseting. She stated that she also mentioned that the Public Benefits Charge (PBC) went to a multitude of different programs. She stated the reason she wanted to make these comments again this evening was because they consistently see on the Internet and on Social Media, and even hear in public conversations that people were tired of paying higher electric bills to pay for people who did not pay their bills. However, she stated that they have to recognize that 77% of the Public Benefits Charge (PBC) pays to keep the Millstone/Dominion Nuclear Power Facility open. She noted that we all have neighbors and residents who work at the Millstone/Dominion Facility; therefore, she stated that it was important that we continue to have a nuclear power plant in our community. She stated part of the Public Benefits Charge (PBC) was supposed to be a 10-month plan which started in July, 2024, noting that this should be the last month for a portion of the Public Benefit Charge (PBC). She stated that she agreed that they should have a better plan for implementing things such as Public Benefit Charges, than the way this electric Public Benefit Charge was implemented.

RESULT: CONTINUE

XV. ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Buhle, moved to adjourn, seconded by Councilor Garcia-Irizarry.

VOTE: 9 - 0 Approved and so declared. The meeting adjourned at 8:36 p.m.

Transcribed by Roxanne M. Maher
Administrative Assistant to the Town Council

I, S. Naomi Rodriguez, Chairman of the Ledyard Town Council,
hereby certify that the above and foregoing is a true and
correct copy of the minutes of the Regular Town Council
Meeting held on February 26, 2025.

S. Naomi Rodriguez, Chairman

DISCLAIMER:

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

The Town Council's Official Agenda and final Minutes will be on file in the Town Clerk's Office.