



Chairman Gary St. Vil

TOWN OF LEDYARD
CONNECTICUT
TOWN COUNCIL
HYBRID FORMAT

741 Colonel Ledyard Highway
Ledyard, CT 06339

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Roxanne Maher
Administrative Assistant

MINUTES
FINANCE COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING

Wednesday, April 1, 2026

5:00 PM

Annex Meeting Room - Video Conference

DRAFT

- I. CALL TO ORDER - The Meeting was called to order by Committee Chairman Councilor Buhle at 5:00 p.m. at the Council Chambers Town Hall Annex Building.

Councilor Buhle welcomed all to the Hybrid Meeting. She stated for the Town Council Finance Committee and members of the Public who were participating via video conference that the remote meeting information was available on the Agenda that was posted on the Town’s Website – Granicus-Legistar Meeting Portal.

II. ROLL CALL

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Location	Arrived	Departed
Jessica Buhle	Town Councilor	Present	In-Person	5:00 pm	5:51 pm
Carmen Garcia-Irizarry	Town Councilor	Excused			
Tim Ryan	Town Councilor	Present	In-Person	5:00 pm	5:51 pm
Gary St. Vil	Town Council Chairman	Present	Remote	5:00 pm	5:51 pm
Matthew Bonin	Finance Director	Present	In-Person	5:00 pm	5:51 pm
Elizabeth Burdick	Land Use Director/Town Planner	Present	In-Person	5:00 pm	5:51 pm
Steve Masalin	Public Works Director/Town Engineer	Present	In-Person	5:00 pm	5:51 pm
Jon Mann	Ledyard Center Fire Chief	Present	In-Person	5:00 pm	5:51 pm
Steve Holyfield	Administrator of Emergency Services	Present	Remote	5:00 pm	5:51 pm
Firefighter Ives	Ledyard Center Fire Company	Present	In-Person	5:00 pm	5:51 pm
Jason Hartling	School Superintendent	Present	Remote	5:00 pm	5:51 pm
Jen Reguin	Board of Education Chairman	Present	Remote	5:00 pm	5:51 pm
Amanda Veneziano	Board of Education Finance Committee Chairman	Present	In-Person	5:00 pm	5:51 pm
Brandon Graber	Board of Education	Present	In-Person	5:00 pm	5:51 pm
Jeff Eilenberger	Resident	Present	In-Person	5:00 pm	5:51 pm
Roxanne Maher	Administrative Assistant	Present	Remote	5:00 pm	5:51 pm

III. RESIDENTS AND PROPERTY OWNERS COMMENTS (Comments limited to Three (3) Minutes)

Mr. Jeff Eilenberger, 2 Village Drive, Ledyard, questioned whether the Town Council would be establishing a line in the upcoming Fiscal Year 2026/2027 Budget for the Ethics Commission.

Mr. Eilenberger questioned whether anyone has gotten the cost breakdown for the following Legal Services:

- Chairman St. Vil regarding Social Media Post Investigation/Interview
- Cost for the town's defense should the Police Union filed for litigation regarding the Social Media Post/Investigation.

Councilor Buhle thanked Mr. Eilenberger for his comments.

IV. PRESENTATIONS/INFORMATIONAL ITEMS – None.

V. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF PRIOR MEETING MINUTES

MOTION to approve the following Finance Committee Minutes

- Finance Committee Minutes of March 4, 2026
- Budget Work Session Minutes of March 5, 2026
- Budget Work Session Minutes of March 9, 2026
- Budget Work Session Minutes of March 12, 2026.
- Finance Committee Minutes of March 18, 2026
- ~~Budget Work Session Minutes of March 19, 2026.~~

Moved by Councilor Ryan, seconded by Councilor Buhle

Discussion: The Finance Committee agreed to remove the Budget Work Session Minutes of March 19, 2026 from the list of minutes for approval this evening, as a "Friendly Amendment" because they were not attached to the Agenda packet.

VOTE: 2– 0 Approved and so declared

VI. FINANCE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Finance Director Matthew Bonin noted that he did not have anything new to report this evening.

VII. FINANCIAL REPORTS

Finance Director Matthew Bonin noted the following Reports were attached to tonight's Agenda on the meeting portal:

- Budget versus Actual Revenue through February, 28, 2026
 - ✓ Tax Collections were at 98.6%
- Budget versus Actual Expenditures through February 28, 2026
 - ✓ Police Overtime – Mr. Bonin noted there would be an increase in Police Overtime because one of the Police Officers was called for Active Military Duty

VI. NEW BUSINESS

- ❖ MOTION to Amend the Agenda to add the following:
MOTION to recommend the Town Council authorize the Mayor to sign a Commitment to Fund a Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program (LOTICIP) grant in the amount of \$3,224,800.

Moved by Councilor Ryan, seconded by Councilor Buhle

VOTE: 2– 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT: APPROVED TO RECOMMEND 2 – 0

MOVER: Tim Ryan, Town Councilor
SECONDER: Jessica Buhle, Town Councilor
AYES: Jessica Buhle, Tim Ryan
EXCUSED: Carmen Garcia-Irizarry

Councilor Buhle stated this item will be added as Item #3 under New Business this evening.

1. MOTION to recommend the Town Council authorize the purchase of fire apparatus in the amount of \$1,173,066 from Marion Body Works, Inc., with funding from Account #21020401-54325-54325 (Fire Apparatus).

Moved by Councilor Ryan, seconded by Councilor Buhle

Discussion: Ledyard Center Fire Chief Jon Mann explained that the purchase of this piece of Fire Apparatus was to replace Ledyard Center Fire Company's R-13, which was a 2003 American LaFrance Pumper. He stated that it has been a good truck but that it was nearing its end of life, noting that the repairs were getting expensive. He stated the replacement of the Pumper was in accordance with the Apparatus Replacement Schedule that was maintained by Administrator of Emergency Services Steve Holyfield.

Chief Mann went on to explain that the Ledyard Center Fire Company formed a Committee that has been working with Administrator of Emergency Services Steve Holyfield to develop a bid specification for the replacement of R-13. He noted their initial discussions with manufacturers were coming back with estimates in the \$1.2 - \$1.3 million range. He stated the Committee identified a suitable apparatus through the Houston Galveston Area Council (HGAC Buy) Bid Collective; which was in compliance with the Town's purchasing policies.

Administrator of Emergency Services Steve Holyfield stated that he worked closely with Ledyard Center Fire Company to ensure that this piece of apparatus would meet the needs of the town. He stated this truck from Marion Body Works, Inc., would be efficient and effective in meeting their needs without any lavish or unnecessary add-ons.

Mr. Holyfield continued by stating that he supported purchasing this piece of Apparatus through HGAC Buy, explaining that the Apparatus Manufacturers would have a quarterly price increase effective April 1, 2026. However, he stated that Marion Body Works, Inc., has agreed to hold back on the price increase for this Apparatus. He also explained that he anticipated that there would be an additional 3%-5% increase on July 1, 2026. Therefore, he stated by placing their order now, instead of waiting until August, 2026 they would receive a significant savings, noting that the delivery would be April, 2028. He stated if they decided to solicit bids to replace R-13 after July 1st, that they would be looking at an additional \$60,00 - \$80,000.

Mr. Holyfield stated that he talked with Finance Director Matthew Bonin about the following two payment options: (1) Pay in full at time of contract signing; or (2) Pay in installments (see the proposals in the agenda packet). He noted that Mr. Bonin recommended that the Town pay in full at the start of the contract given the current interest rate climate. Mr. Holyfield also noted that their purchase was protected with a Performance Bond at time of signing.

Councilor Ryan stated he appreciated the transparency with the Capital Funds, noting the funds were in-place to purchase this new piece of Apparatus, stating it was good planning.

Councilor Buhle questioned whether there were any features on R-13 that would not be included on the new piece of Apparatus.

Mr. Holyfield responded to Councilor Buhle's question, noting that the new piece of Apparatus would not include the Foam System which would cost about \$50,000, but that it would include a Foam Inductor, for a cost of about \$2,000; which was simpler. He stated Ledyard does not have calls that require Foam. He also noted that they chose not to include a Generator because generators were becoming obsolete in terms of powering equipment, explaining that more things were 12 Volts, LED, etc. He stated although this new piece of Apparatus would not have all the bells and whistles, that they were not going without; and it would not compromise the safety of the community.

VOTE: 2- 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT: APPROVED TO RECOMMEND 2 – 0

MOVER: Tim Ryan, Town Councilor
SECONDER: Jessica Buhle, Town Councilor
AYES: Jessica Buhle, Tim Ryan
EXCUSED: Carmen Garcia-Irizarry

2. MOTION to recommend the Town Council appropriate \$73,782.83 of proceeds received from the sale of 528 Colonel Ledyard Highway to Capital Account #21014301-53306 (Land Use - P & Z Document Updates).

Moved by Councilor Ryan, seconded by Councilor Buhle

Discussion: Land Use Director/Town Planner Elizabeth Burdick stated with the sale of 528 Colonel Ledyard Highway, the net proceeds to the Town were in the amount of \$84,011.13; noting that this would close out a longstanding Blight Enforcement Lien. She explained that the Land Use Office incurred \$10,228.30 in Legal Fees regarding this case during the current Fiscal Year 2025/2026, noting that their Legal Fee Account would be reimbursed from the net proceeds leaving a balance of \$73,782.83.

Ms. Burdick went on to explain that the Land Use Department included \$150,000 over the next two budget cycles (\$75,000 in Fiscal Year 2026/2027; and \$75,000 in 2027/2028) to hire a Consultant to assist with the review and rewrite/update of the Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD) and other Land Use Documents. She stated by appropriating the remaining balance in the amount of \$73,782.83 from the proceeds of the Blight Lien (528 Colonel Ledyard Highway) to the Land Use Capital Account #21014301-53306 (Land Use - P & Z Document Updates) that the Town Council could reduce the requested Capital Funding in the upcoming Fiscal Year 2026/2027 Budget for this required work; and that it would lower the impact on the tax levy. She noted that they would be working to update the POCD over the next two fiscal years (fy 26/27 & fy 27/28).

Councilor Ryan noted that during the Land Use Department’s Budget Work Session they discussed the funding needed for the rewrite/update of the Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD) and other Land Use Documents. He stated by allocating these funds received from the Blight Case that they would be able to blunt the expense to the taxpayers.

VOTE: 2– 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT: APPROVED TO RECOMMEND 2 – 0

MOVER: Tim Ryan, Town Councilor
SECONDER: Jessica Buhle, Town Councilor
AYES: Jessica Buhle, Tim Ryan
EXCUSED: Carmen Garcia-Irizarry

3. MOTION to recommend the Town Council authorize the Mayor to sign a Commitment to Fund a Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program (LOTICIP) Grant in the amount of \$3,224,800 for the Replacement of the Lantern Hill Road Bridge #71009.

Moved by Councilor Ryan, seconded by Councilor Buhle

Discussion: Public Works Director/Town Engineer Steve Masalin explained as part of the broader scope of the infrastructure improvement projects in the Whitford Brook watershed area; that the replacement of this Lantern Hill Road Bridge #71009 was part of five infrastructure projects comprised of three bridges, if they included the culverts under Hyde Mill Pentway, two dams; and a dike associated with the Bush Pond Dam.

Mr. Masalin went on to explain in addition to a \$3 million Special Grant that was acquired through efforts of Senator Cathy Osten and the Lantern Hill Valley Alliance; the Town also applied for a Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program (LOTICIP) grant in the amount of \$3,224,800 through Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (SCCOG) for the replacement of the Lantern Hill Bridge over Whitford Brook which was located just below Long Pond, noting the significant gap in funding needed to complete all five of the projects in that area. He stated that this was the second Lantern Hill Road Bridge noting that it was located north of the Bridge that was currently under construction at the Stonington line.

Mr. Masalin went on to explain that this Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program (LOTICIP) Application was given competitive consideration among a number of submittals from SCCOG Member Towns and was among those selected for the submission to Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) for funding. He noted the *Commitment to Fund Letter* represented the consummation of the State’s commitment to this Bridge Replacement project, and was attached to the Agenda Packet on the meeting portal.

Mr. Masalin stated this Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program (LOTICIP) grant in the amount of \$3,224,800 would cover the entire construction cost for the Replacement of the Lantern Hill Road Bridge #71009, however, he stated the Design-Engineering Costs for the Project were the Town’s responsibility; and he explained those costs were being paid from the \$3 million aforementioned Grant obtained through Senator Osten and the Lantern Hill Valley Alliance.

Mr. Masalin stated because the design of this Lantern Hill Road Bridge #71009 was substantially advanced and *shovel ready* that the construction could possibly start in 2027. He stated for the Town to secure this \$3,224,800 LOTCIP Grant funding; the Town Council was required to authorize the Mayor to sign the *Commitment to Fund a Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program (LOTICIP) Grant* for the Replacement of the Lantern Hill Road Bridge.

Mr. Masalin concluded his remarks by noting that this represented third LOTCIP Grant that Ledyard has secured in the last few years, noting the Multi-Use Pathway along Colonel Ledyard Highway was completely constructed using a LOTCIP Grant; and the town received a LOTCIP Grant that was paying 50% of the cost for Lantern Hill Road Bridge, at the Stonington line, that was currently being replaced.

Councilor Ryan noted that \$2.8 million was included in the Town's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) with the assumption that it would be the Grant value. He stated with the receipt of the \$3,224,800 LOTCIP Grant funding that hopefully the entire cost would be covered. Mr. Masalin stated although they believed this LOTCIP Grant would cover the entire cost, that they had to be mindful that construction costs keep going up.

VOTE: 2- 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT: APPROVED TO RECOMMEND 2 – 0

MOVER: Tim Ryan, Town Councilor
SECONDER: Jessica Buhle, Town Councilor
AYES: Jessica Buhle, Tim Ryan
EXCUSED: Carmen Garcia-Irizarry

4. Any other New Business proper to come before the Committee. – None.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

1. Discussion and possible action regarding the Fiscal Year 2026/2027 Budget.

Councilor Buhle provided a recap of the Finance Committee's work to-date noting at the March 19, 2026 Budget Work Session that she and Councilor Garcia-Irizarry made the following adjustments to solidify the items the Finance Committee had discussed during the Budget Work Sessions:

Expenditure Additions: (Budget Work Session 3/19/2026)

Total General Government Additions: \$8,197

Total Board of Education Additions: \$-0-

Total Expenditure Adjustments: (\$8,197)

Expenditure Reductions: (Budget Work Session 3/19/2026)

Total General Government Reductions; \$191,360

Total Board of Education Reductions : \$-0-

Expenditure Reductions (\$191,161)

Fiscal Year 2026/2027 Proposed Budget With Adjustments 3/19/2026:

General Government: \$31,878,334 \$31,695,171

Board of Education : \$41,932,335 \$41,932,335

TOTAL: \$73,810,669 \$73,627,506

Councilor Ryan noted his March 19, 2026 email, stating that he was on-board with the additions, and that he did not have an issue with the Capital Improvement Plan reductions. He stated that he did have some concern with the reduction of funding for the Police Body-Worn and In-Car Cameras because they were contingent on their Congressionally Directed Spending Grant being approved. However, he noted that Councilor Buhle was involved with the Congressionally Directed Spending Grant and he questioned whether she was comfortable with the reduction. Councilor Buhle explained that the Police Department had requested \$47,000; and after discussions with Chief Rich the Finance Committee intentionally left \$27,000 in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for the camera equipment. She stated this was a responsible way to say that they were hopeful that they would not need this local funding. However, she stated by budgeting \$27,000 it would blunt the funding in future years, should the Town's 2027 Congressionally Directed Spending Grant not be approved. She noted that it would also address the increased expenses during the time between the Grant submission and approval.

Councilor Ryan continued by addressing the following:

- ***2025 Property Revaluation*** – Councilor Ryan stated the revaluation did not result in uniform increases to all housing values (i.e., some home values increased more than others) and shifted a bigger portion of the tax burden onto residential properties, since the commercial valuation was essentially flat. He stated the sad truth was that that even if the town passed a budget with a zero mill increase, that the net result was that homeowners would still see an increase in their tax bill. He stated because of the Revaluation that people do not know what their tax bills were going be; and it was going to be a shock for many people when they receive their tax bills.
- ***Revenues*** - Councilor Ryan stated unfortunately there was no clear path for additional significant revenue at this time.
- ✓ ***PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes)*** – Councilor Ryan stated that Ledyard continues to be short funded by the State when it comes to PILOT funding, recovering only 49% of tax revenue from land that was otherwise non-taxable. He stated that he would remain hopeful that the State Legislature would take up the proposed Bill to fix the PILOT issue related to Tribal Land.

- ✓ *An Act Establishing a Property Tax Exemption for Property Located on Certain Indian Lands*” - Councilor Ryan stated there were also future revenue concerns regarding the Town’s ability to collect personal property tax on business property from third-party private vendors operating at the Mashantucket Pequot Foxwoods Resort Casino, such as the Tanger Outlet, California Pizza Kitchen, Dunkin Donuts, etc. He noted that this Legislation was endorsed and passed by Senator Cathy Osten and created a \$700,000 hole in Ledyard’s revenue. He stated this funding has been temporarily supplanted by State Funding, but that was only guaranteed for the next two budget cycles.
- ✓ *Raise House Bill #5704 “An Act Concerning State Reimbursement to Municipalities for Revenue Lost Due to the Property Tax Exemption for Veterans with a One Hundred Percent Permanent and Total Disability Rating.”* - Councilor Ryan stated that he would remain hopeful that the State Legislature would favorably pass Raised House Bill 5407, which would reimburse Municipalities for 100% Permanently & Totally Disabled Veteran’s Tax Exemptions.
- ✓ *Education Cost Sharing (ECS)* - Councilor Ryan went on to comment that he was also hopeful that the State Legislature would consider revising the ECS Formula, which would increase the amount sent to Municipalities.
- ✓ *Motor Vehicle Taxes* – Councilor Ryan stated that Ledyard has lost some revenue when it comes to motor vehicle taxes, due to the decreased mill rate and revamped assessment method established by the State.

Councilor Ryan stated it was unlikely that any of these issues would be resolved before Ledyard had to finalize their Fiscal Year 2026/2027 Budget. Therefore, he stated that they would need to work with the revenues they know to be true; and do whatever they could to try to control the ever-increasing burden on all their taxpayers. He stated that they also had to respect the negative optics of introducing new, recurring expenses in an environment with so many variables; and do what they could to control recurring expenses.

Councilor Ryan went on to state that he did not consider the General Government; or the Board of Education’s proposed budget increases to be absorbent. He stated the General Government Budget was running lean, with responsible, thoughtful budgets put forward by their Town Department Heads. Unfortunately, he stated that healthcare costs continue to rise, and this year they were incurring a 10.5%, or nearly \$900k increase, in overall healthcare costs compared to last year. He stated while these costs continue to be recorded entirely on the General Government side of the Budget ledger, it was important to note that 75% of the total Healthcare Cost was attributed to the Board of Education.

Councilor Ryan stated in his March 19, 2026 email that he proposed an aggressive reduction to the Board of Education’s proposed Fiscal Year 2026/2027 Budget. He stated since then he took a deep dive into the Board of Education’s proposed Budget, understanding that the Town Council cannot make line item reductions, but that he wanted to understand what was driving the Board of Education’s financial needs.

Councilor Ryan proposed changing the Board of Education Fiscal Year 2026/2027 Budget to \$41,700,000, for a 3% or \$1.24 million increase over the current year's budget (fy 25/26). He stated this would be a \$232,335 reduction to the Board of Education's request for \$41,932,335 in the coming fiscal year. He stated based on his calculations this would be a 16% reduction to the proposed increase to the tax levy; however, he stated that he would let Finance Director Matthew Bonin do the math.

Councilor Ryan stated that based on his math that a \$41,700,000 was a 3% or \$1.24 million increase to the Board of Education's Budget would allow them to maintain operations with their current staffing levels, and introduce some operational improvements that he believed were good student facing services. He stated based on the Board of Education's Fiscal Year 2026/2027 Budget Presentation they were projecting a 10% reduction in enrollment over the next ten years. He stated adding new staff at this time would probably not be the right answer, because as enrollment declines the Student-Teacher Ratio would increase, and the Per Pupil Expenditure would also naturally increase because of the reduced enrollment, even if their budget does not increase. However, he stated because of Contractual Increases and Inflationary Increases that they knew their Budget would also increase. He stated if the State Legislature revised the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) Grant Formula that it could be advantageous for Ledyard in the following budget year (fy 27/28). He stated that he did not want to make any cuts to the Board of Education's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) noting as he has gone on record at previous meetings that he would support trying to establish the necessary Capital Funds for the Board of Education to keep the school buildings operating. He stated with the taxpayers shouldering large tax increases during the past two years (FY 24/25 6.5%; and FY 25/26 6%) , that he did not think it was wise to introduce new recurring expenses and a new *Minimum Level* Education Budget when they have a lot of unknowns.

Councilor Buhle stated that she did not agree with reducing the Board of Education's Proposed Fiscal Year 2026/2027 by \$232,335; for a revised total of \$41,700,000; because the Finance Committee worked hard to develop a Budget Letter of Directive that asked for the Board of Education and the General Government proposed Budgets to provide specific criteria. She noted the proposed Fiscal Year Budgets that were presented to the Finance Committee met those expectations stating that they included: (1) What they needed; (2) What their *Bridge to Excellence* looked like; which were the Red and Yellow Categories; and (3) New Expenses should be offset by Reductions. She stated that they saw a reduction of \$297,000; and additions of \$304,000. She stated the Town's Department Heads and the Board of Education followed the guidance the Finance Committee provided, noting that they have a responsible budget; and they were finally bridging the gap; therefore, she fully supported the proposed Fiscal Year 2026/2027.

Councilor Ryan provided a correction, noting that the Board of Education also a \$326,000 increase for inflationary adjustments that were outside of the Bargaining Agreements; which he included in his reduction calculation.

Councilor Buhle stated that while the Town Council cannot pick and choose which Board of Education budget lines to reduce, that she would say that a \$232,335 reduction was a lower number than the new inclusions of \$304,000; noting that she would assume that was where the \$232,335 would come from. She stated families move to Ledyard because they have a robust excellent education. She noted that the Board of Education's Budget request was to continue their steps forward to maintain the level of excellence their students have

come to expect. She stated families do not move to Ledyard because they have mediocre schools, and she commented that they would not have robust and excellent education if they do not fund the things the schools needed. She stated that they were finally clawing their Per Pupil Expenditure from being in the bottom ten school districts in the State. She stated that she thought the Board of Education's proposed Fiscal Year 2026/2027 Budget in the amount of \$41,932,335 was responsible; and the Board of Education unanimously supported it.

Councilor Ryan stated that they were the Town Council's Finance Committee, noting that they were not the Board of Education. Therefore, he stated that the Town Council had to consider everybody in town. He stated that he understands what Councilor Buhle was saying and he agreed that the Board of Education did their due diligence in putting forward a budget to support their needs. However, he stated in the end the Board of Education comes to the Town Council to make the decision for everybody in town. He stated with the a \$232,335 reduction that the Board of Education's proposed Fiscal Year 2026/2027 Budget was still receiving a 3% increase over the current year's budget (fy 25/26); which was more than the General Government's 2.4% budget increase.

Councilor Ryan stated that he agreed with Councilor Buhle in that people move into towns because of their Education System. However, he stated that people also move out of towns because they were pricing them out of housing; which was what Ledyard was going to continue to do.

Councilor Ryan noted the following Board of Education Budget Increases:

- 6.5% Increase in Fiscal Year 2024/2025
- 6% Increase in Fiscal Year 2025/2026

Councilor Ryan stated that they have been pushing the needle for the Board of Education's Budget. However, he stated for the upcoming fiscal year that they do not know what their tax bills were going to be with the 2025 Property Revaluation; and other revenue factors he previously mentioned this evening. He stated in his line of business that optics was huge, noting that if they were able to say we put forward a budget that has an increase, but they did it smartly because they realized they should not be adding new recurring expenses. He stated he agreed that the new recurring expenses may be part of their *Path to Excellence*; and he could appreciate that. However, he stated if those were new recurring expenses this year, why should they create a *New Minimum Budget Level* higher than what they needed to do.

Councilor Ryan explained as soon as they increase the Board of Education Budget and tax levy that it becomes the School District's new *Minimum Budget Level*; and the Town could never reduce that amount in future years. Therefore, he stated every time they increase the Board of Education's Budget they create a new *Minimum Budget Level*, noting that it was unfair to their taxpayers; especially in an environment where projected enrollment was expected to decrease. He stated that Councilor Buhle was here to fight for everybody not the Board of Education. He stated the Board of Education could fight for themselves, noting they proposed a Fiscal Year 2026/2027 Budget. He stated that

Councilor Buhle was here on the Town Council to fight for everybody; not just students, noting that the students were an important factor in their community. He stated the Town Council was here to fight for the retirees, their low income residents who may not have students in the school system and they were just getting by, stating that they may have a problem with a huge tax increase. He stated it was irresponsible to say, “*Well it was what the Board of Education said they needed; so let’s just pass it on*”. He stated the Town Council was the Gate Keepers; and they needed to make sure that what they put forward, they could say they did not introduce any unnecessary expenses; or expenses they thought might not be needed.

Councilor Ryan stated in proposing the \$232,335 reduction to the Board of Education’s proposed Fiscal Year 2026/2027 Budget he considered a lot of the Board of Education’s desired improvements in terms of Student Facing Services. He stated that he would not consider a zero reduction to the Board of Education; and therefore, he questioned whether there was a number that Councilor Buhle would consider.

Councilor Buhle responded to Councilor Ryan’s question as to whether there was a reduction number that she would consider stating “*No*”. She stated that the Town Council sent the Board of Education a *Budget Letter of Directive* of what she wanted to see; and the Board of Education delivered a proposed Budget meeting the criteria that she asked for. She stated the following two new staff positions were added in their “*Inclusions*”:

- ✓ One Full-time Elementary School Math Coach
- ✓ One Additional Staff for Facilities Buildings and Grounds Maintenance Department

Councilor Buhle stated beyond these two new positions that remainder of the increases were not recurring expenses, noting that they were for things such as graphing calculators, text books for curriculum opportunities, supplies, marching band equipment, etc. She stated that she did not see things that would create burdens in the years to come that cutting \$232,335 would eliminate. Councilor Ryan stated when he considered proposing a \$232,335 reduction that it included a lot of those one time improvement expenses such as graphing calculators and text books, etc. However, he stated when they bring on recurring expenses such as additional staff that the benefits portion, which was about a 35% burden on top of the salary; which has not been included in the Board of Education’s budget numbers. He stated that it appeared that there was no room for compromise this evening, therefore, he stated there was no point in continuing to discuss this.

Councilor Ryan requested clarification regarding the Board of Education’s Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Budget for the Middle School Cafeteria Expansion. He noted the Projected Estimated Project Cost was \$600,000 which was listed under “*Bonding*”; however, it was showing the Net Cost to Ledyard as \$227,000. Therefore, he questioned the interest costs for Bonding (borrowing) until the State Grant Reimbursement Funding was received. Finance Director Matthew Bonin explained that while the Middle School

Cafeteria Expansion Project was underway that the Town would obtain Bond Anticipation Notes (BAN), which was temporary financing to pay for the project as it was being done. He stated once the Project was completed, the town would receive the State Grant Reimbursement Funding and then the Town would obtain the Permanent Financing (Bonding). Councilor Ryan stated during the first year the Town could be assuming the interest costs on the full \$600,000. Mr. Bonin stated assuming they had to borrowing the full \$600,000 that Councilor Ryan was correct; however, he stated that they may not need to obtain BAN's for the full amount. Superintendent of Schools Jason Hartling stated the Middle School Cafeteria Expansion was predicated on the State Legislature approving the Project because it would need to meet the State's Space Standards, etc., and the Legislature doing a carve out because Ledyard would need to have some exemptions. He stated that State Senator Cathy Osten was actively working on that. He stated as a Bond Project that it was not included in the Tax Levy. Finance Director Matthew Bonin stated eventually the Middle School Cafeteria Expansion Project would be included in the Tax Levy for the interest and the repayment of the debt. Mr. Hartling stated that he agreed, but that he wanted to make it clear that the Middle School Cafeteria Expansion Project was not *shovel ready* to kick off in June, 2026. He explained that once the Town Council gave them the Green Light, there were a lot of pieces that they needed to move forward; along with working with the Permanent Municipal Building Committee (PMBC), to begin the process; and most importantly to begin the process to obtain State Grant Reimbursement Funding.

Councilor Buhle addressed possible changes to the following Revenue Programs that Councilor Ryan mentioned earlier this evening (see pages 7 & 8) as follows:

- *Mashantucket Pequot & Mohegan Fund (Pequot Fund)* – Councilor Buhle noted the State's Appropriations Committee was considering increasing the Pequot Fund from \$54 million to \$154 million. Councilor Ryan questioned how much of that would Ledyard see, noting that the Pequot Fund was distributed state-wide.
- *An Act Establishing a Property Tax Exemption for Property Located on Certain Indian Lands*” - Councilor Buhle stated that she spoke with State Senator Cathy Osten to make sure if the Bill was to pass, whether it would prohibit the Ledyard from receiving the additional increase. She noted that Senator Osten stated if the Bill were to pass that Ledyard's corresponding funding would increase. Councilor Ryan noted because there were so many “*If's*” that Ledyard needed to be cautious; and had to work with what they know.
- ❖ MOTION to reduce the Board of Education's Proposed Fiscal Year 2026/2027 Budget by \$232,335; for a revised total of \$41,700,000.
Moved by Councilor Ryan, seconded by Councilor Buhle
Discussion: See above.

VOTE: 1– 1 Motion Failed (Buhle not in favor)

RESULT: FAILED 1 – 1
MOVER: Tim Ryan, Town Councilor
SECONDER: Jessica Buhle, Town Councilor
AYES: Tim Ryan
NAYES: Jessica Buhle
EXCUSED: Carmen Garcia-Irizarry

The Finance Committee agreed to have a Special Meeting on Wednesday, April 8, 2026 prior to the Town Council Meeting to address the proposed Fiscal Year 2026/2027 Budget.

2. Continued discussion regarding potential uses for the funding received from the National Opioid Settlement Payments. – No Update

RESULT: NO ACTION **Next Meeting 5/06/2026 : 5:00 p.m.**

3. Schedule for Joint Meetings between the Finance Committees of the Town Council & Board of Education.

Councilor Buhle stated that she anticipated they would have a Joint Meeting between the Town Council Finance Committee and the Board of Education Finance Committee in late May, 2026. However, she stated a meeting date has not yet been determined.

RESULT: NO ACTION **Next Meeting 5/06/2026 : 5:00 p.m.**

4. Continued discussion regarding potential grant opportunities.

Councilor Buhle noted the 2027 Federal Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS) Grant Program Applications would be submitted on Thursday or Friday of this week, noting that it was due on Sunday, April 5, 2026.

Councilor Buhle went on to state that she contacted Congressman Courtney's Office to discuss other potential Community Project Grant Funding, for upcoming years in terms of Public Works opportunities, etc. She stated that she would bring the information to Public Works Director/Town Engineer Steve Masalin for future consideration.

RESULT: CONTINUED **Next Meeting 5/06/2026 : 5:00 p.m.**

5. Review and discuss the following Reports:

- Committee to Review the Budget Process Report dated October 31, 2023
- Committee To Transform The Budget Process Report dated October 3, 2016

The Finance Committee agreed to defer this discussion to their May 6, 2026 so that Councilor Garica-Irizarry could participate in the discussion.

RESULT: DEFERRED

Next Meeting 5/06/2026 : 5:00 p.m.

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

X. ADJOURNMENT

VOTE: Councilor Buhle moved the meeting be adjourned, seconded by Councilor Ryan
2 - 0 Approved and so declared, the meeting was adjourned at 5:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica Buhle.
Committee Chairman
Finance Committee