



TOWN OF LEDYARD

741 Colonel Ledyard Highway
Ledyard, Connecticut 06339

Community Relations Committee For Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

Meeting Minutes

Chairman Gary St. Vil

Regular Meeting

Wednesday, September 17, 2024

6:30 PM

Town Hall Annex - Hybrid Format

In -Person: Council Chambers, Town Hall Annex Building

Remote Participation: Information Noted Below:

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

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81326797900?pwd=LB8OHl6eVmus4x2gxOGUODkrzOvGTY.1>
Or by Audio Only: Telephone: +1 646 558 8656; +Meeting ID 813 2679 7900; Passcode: 749729

I CALL TO ORDER

the Meeting was called to order by Councilor Brunelle at 6:32p.m.
at the Annex Meeting Room - Town Hall Annex Building.

Councilor Brunelle welcomed all to the Hybrid Meeting. She stated for the Town Council Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion and members of the Public who were participating via video conference that the remote meeting information was available on the Agenda that was posted on the Town's Website - Granicus-Insite Meeting Portal.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: April Brunelle
William Barnes
Adrienne Parad

In addition, the following were present:
Roxanne Maher, Administrative Assistant

III. RESIDENTS & PROPERTY OWNERS COMMENTS

None.

IV. PRESENTATIONS / INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

None.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION to approve the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Minutes of May 21, 2025

VOTE0- 1 Approved and so declared (Parad abstained)

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

MOVER: William Barnes

SECONDER: Adrienne Parad

VI. OLD BUSINESS

1. Continued discussion and possible action to identify various town venues to host “Informal Conversations in the Park” to engage residents in discussions regarding their concerns and their ideas for potential solutions

- Bush Pond on Lantern Hill Road (Showcase the Lantern Hill Waterfront Park, (2) Provide some history regarding Long Pond; (3) Provide information regarding the importance of preventing invasive plants from being transferred from different bodies of water, and (3) Engage residents)

- Visit Parks in town.

Councilor Brunelle stated the Committee would continue to keep the scheduling of “*Informal Conversations in the Park*” on their Agenda.

- ***Lantern Hill Waterfront Park (Bush Pond)*** - No Update
Councilor Brunelle stated that Parks & Recreation has been continuing their work to make some improvements to the Park that would include picnic benches, etc., before they invited residents to see the new Park. She stated it looks like the new Park will not be ready until next Spring, 2026.
- ***Visit all of the Parks in Town*** - No Update.
- ***Glacier Park - Kettle Hole*** - No Update.

Councilor Parad noted that because she was new to the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion she was hoping to learn about the following:

- Goals for Informal Conversations in the Park.
- Who would be leading the Informal Conversations and who would be participating.
- Objective of Informal Conversations in the Park.

Councilor Brunelle stated that the Informal Conversations could be regarding various topics. She noted that the *Lantern Hill Waterfront Park (Bush Pond)*

would be to:

- ✓ Present to the new *Lantern Hill Waterfront Park (Bush Pond)* to the residents explaining that could be used for passive recreation, such as canoeing and picnicking, etc.
- ✓ To provide educational information regarding the invasive species.
- ✓ Opportunity to bring the neighborhood together to ask questions.

Councilor Brunelle noted as an example that the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion worked with Parks & Recreation to host an Informal Conversation on November 7, 2024 that was held at the Community Center in Gales Ferry to talk about Pickleball Courts, potential locations, etc. She stated that they had a great turnout.

Councilor Parad questioned whether these Informal Conversations would be led by the Town Council or whether a Community Group could initiate and lead the Informal Conversation. Councilor Brunelle replied by stating either, explaining that usually the Informal Conversations were organized/hosted by the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion, however, she stated that it could have ties to the Town Council; or it could be suggested by the community as well.

Councilor Parad questioned whether the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion has put this out to the community to see if someone with a special skill or talent would like to share it with the community. Councilor Brunelle stated the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion has not explored that. Councilor Parad questioned whether anyone had any thoughts on that.

Councilor Barnes explained that the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion operated a little differently than the other Town Council Sub Committees explaining that Earl (Ty) Lamb attended the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion's May 21, 2025 meeting and talked about bringing awareness; and to possibly do some events for individuals with some form of disabilities. He stated that Councilor Brunelle kept a calendar of year, explaining that they have tried to have a theme each month, noting that they have a full calendar. He stated with regard to the Informal Conversations in the Park that they have tried to coordinate those with specific events such as the Pride Event that was held in June. However, he stated that if there was anyone in the community that had a specific interest that they wanted to sponsor, that he thought that the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion would welcome that.

Councilor Brunelle stated that the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion has hosted Booths at the Farmers Market to share information such as how to sign up to receive notices from the town, composting, and mental health providers. She stated this year because of the longer budget process the Committee was not able to host as many Booths at the Farmers Market this year. She stated that they try to tie the subject matter to what was going on in town.

Councilor Parad questioned how far out these events were planned. Councilor

Brunelle stated that the schedule was fluid, noting that there were some standing initiatives such as: Black History Month, Woman's History Month, Pride Month. She stated the other initiatives were based on what the town or others wanted to explore.

Councilor Parad stated that it appears that there was room to pull other people in and have them offer their expertise, skills and hobbies.

Councilor Barnes stated a few years ago (2021) the Community Relations Committee invested a good amount of time with the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation. He stated there were a number of instances where Tribal Members did not feel that they were well received by the town in certain engagements. He stated the Tribe expressed concern regarding the Ledyard Police parking at the Spiritual Center for traffic enforcement. He stated that the two Groups used that forum to address what was perceived to not be the most welcoming environment for the residents of both the Town and the residents of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation. He stated they had a series of meetings during which they discussed drafting a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Town and Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation. However, he stated through their conversations they realized that they did not need the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). He stated although this was not the focus during the past year, that he thought that there was still probably an opportunity to do more with the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation, noting that they were their residents and neighbors; and that there could also be other groups in the community. He went on to note that Ledyard would be getting a new Habitat for Humanity Neighborhood, and he stated that the residents who will occupy the homes may not be aware of all the town services that they may be eligible to receive. He stated as these types of things emerge, that this Committee could help make them aware of the town's services. He stated later on tonight's agenda they would go through some of the work that was done before he joined the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion last January, 2025, which was to educate residents about what the town does and how to obtain services. He stated that he would let Councilor Brunelle talk more about that when they get to that item on the Agenda.

Councilor Brunelle stated that the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion was a body to help facilitate conversations between the citizens and the town. She stated that the citizens can come to their Committee, which was a smaller setting rather than going to a Town Council meeting.

RESULT: CONTINUE

Primary Care for All Americans- Framework

Councilor Barnes noted Dr. Michael Fine's *Primary Care for All Americans* Presentation at the Town Council's September 10, 2025 meeting, that Councilor Parad arranged. He stated in thinking about the economics of healthcare that perhaps the town could do something in cooperation with the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation that they have never explored. He stated although he did not know if this would even be possible, that with Councilor Parad's perspective that they would probably be in a better position to have an intelligent and informed conversation

regarding the things they could do as a community to lower healthcare costs for the town; and the citizens of the community.

Councilor Parad stated that it was all about the social determinates of health, noting that the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion was perfectly suited and capable of working on addressing all of those social determinates. She stated that it was making sure they all had clean air, everybody had access to healthy food, making sure that everybody had a safe place to walk outside, etc. She stated *Primary Care for All* was a movement; and that she hoped this Committee could do something.

Councilor Barnes stated until Dr. Fine spoke at the Town Council's September 10, 2025 meeting that he had not considered healthcare as an issue for the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion to address. However, he stated if they wanted to measure belonging, and welcomeness that he thought that a good measurement was for citizens to have the ability to do very basic things in life. He stated if someone was struggling for whatever reason in their life, such as financial, that those individuals would sacrifice the type of things that most people who had financial flexibility would never compromise. He stated this was an area that he did not know much about in terms of what was possible; however, he stated to hear what Scituate, Rhode Island has done was encouraging. He went on to note this Spring Ledyard as a community had a challenging dialogue about the what the Annual Budget should look like for their town. He stated everyone leaves those type of budget discussions they think that they have to be as creative as they can. He stated no matter where folks think the town's spending level should be that they could not ignore that many residents think that the spending level should be lower. He stated to get spending lower they needed to look at areas where there were opportunities, and he commented that the *Primary Care for All Americans Program* sounded promising to him, stating that the center for excellence was less than one hour away in Scituate, Rhode Island.

Councilor Brunelle stated that the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusions could add the *Primary Care for All Americans Program* to their agenda as a discussion topic to continue the conversation, noting that she was behind that.

RESULT: CONTINUE

2. Protocol to develop a relationship with the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Council to help foster communication and mutual points of interest.

Councilor Brunelle stated that Councilor Barnes touched on this during item #1 (see above). She went on to note that former Town Council Chairman Naomi Rodriguez and former Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Member Councilor St. Vil had taken the lead on this topic. Therefore, she stated that she needed to talk with Town Council Chairman St. Vil to see if he wanted another member from the Committee to join him in the discussions with the Mashantucket

Pequot Tribal Council to keep the door of conversation open.

Councilor Parad stated with Councilor Tony Saccone taking on the new role/responsibility of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation Fire Chief that perhaps he could be a great asset. Councilor Brunelle stated that she would add this to her list to talk with Councilor Saccone.

Councilor Barnes noted the upcoming local election for Town Council & Board of Education on November 4, 2025. He stated Gary McKeon married into Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation, noting that he lived on the Reservation. He stated whether Mr. McKeon gets elected or not; that he thought Mr. McKeon would be an amazing resource. He stated in reading the 2021 Community Relations Committee Minutes that he did not believe the cost of education was a topic that they addressed at that time. However, he stated as the Town struggled with the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget that he thought that those were topics that could be valuable to have a dialogue on.

Councilor Barnes explained the Town Council Chairman was an ex-officio member of all the Town Council's Sub Committees. He noted that former Town Council Chairman Rodriguez took a special interest in developing a relationship with Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation and she put in a lot of time. He stated in retrospect that he may have been more critical than he should have been regarding that approach. He stated in reading past minutes that he now knows that there were prior discussions between the Community Relations Committee and the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Council, and he commented that he was surprised that there were not more discussions. However, he stated because of challenges to coordinate schedules that more recently there has not been a lot happening. He stated in reviewing the 2021 minutes that some issues were identified and the two groups worked through them and felt that they were in good shape. However, he stated that he thought that this was something that could quickly change. He noted as an example that in 2021 Ledyard had placed a police officer for traffic enforcement at a sensitive location; and probably did not realize it. However, he stated once the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Council made the Town aware of it, they made a change.

Councilor Barnes noted in 2021 the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Council would attend the Community Relations Committee meetings; and that the Community Relations Committee would attend the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Council meetings. He stated that he would like to see that happen again going forward. He stated the dialogue that former Town Council Chairman Rodriguez had started was advancing that, noting that it probably just stalled for a few months.

Councilor Brunelle stated that the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Council invited the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion's to their May 30, 2025 Mental Health Awareness Day, which former Town Council Chairman Rodriguez attended.

Councilor Parad stated that it was all about building community partnerships and sustaining them; and not be reactive. She stated it was great that they were taking that approach and that hopefully they could build upon them.

RESULT: CONTINUE

3. Review status of Department Heads Government Training Presentations.

Councilor Brunelle explained in working to provide transparency to their residents regarding the town's operations the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion launched an initiative "*Ledyard Academey*" to engage both their town staff and residents. She stated in a memo dated October 24, 2024 the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion asked that each Department prepare a presentation that would help residents understand the function of their Department and how they could access the resources their Department's staff provides to their community.

Councilor Brunelle stated as Department's were submitting their Presentations that they were being uploaded to the *Ledyard Academey* link on the towns website. She noted the *Ledyard Academey* link could be found by visiting the town's website at www.ledyardct.org <<http://www.ledyardct.org>>; and clicking on the "*Our Community*" Tab and then clicking on the "*Ledyard Academey*"

Councilor Brunelle stated to-date that not all of the Departments have submitted their presentations. She stated that she was hoping the Committee would receive more presentations by their October 15, 2025 meeting.

The Committee agreed to send a reminder to ask Department's to submit their presentations by the October 15, 2025.

RESULT: CONTINUE

4. Research Community Organizations that provide Opioid and Substance Abuse Disorder, Recovery, and Prevention Programs relative to the use of the Opioid Settlement Funding.

It was noted at the Finance Committee's meeting earlier this evening they moved a recommendation forward to the Town Council to accept the Ledge Light Health District-Ledyard Prevention Coalition proposal; and allocate \$60,000 from Account # 0810201-58206-24206 (National Opioid Settlement Funding) to continue to support programs for opioid abatement; expanding access to opioid use disorder prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery options, etc.

Councilor Brunelle stated to date the Town Council has dispersed the National Opioid Settlement Funding to support local Organizations as follows:

- \$36,100 to the Ledyard Prevention Coalition - September 27, 2023;
- \$10,000 to Community Speaks Out - October 23, 2024;
- \$10,000 to Connecticut Recovery Support - January 15, 2025.
- Up-to \$12,500 to support the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 administration of the DARE Program in Ledyard Public Schools - April 9, 2025

Councilor Brunelle noted that this item would stay on the Committee's Agenda in case something comes along they would like to discuss.

RESULT: CONTINUE

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

Councilor Brunelle noted this item was discussed during Old Business Item # 1 (see above).

RESULT: CONTINUE

6. Designated Youth Fishing Waterway

Councilor Barnes provided some background, explaining because signs were going to be replaced at the Historic Up-Down Sawmill; they were asked if they could also add a sign and designate an area for Youth Fishing so that someone larger would not be casting over

the kids. He stated in speaking with Parks & Recreation that they thought a designated Youth Fishing Area was a great idea, noting that the pond was not owned by the Sawmill; but that it was adjacent to the Sawmill. He stated that the youth could fish anywhere on the Pond, however, he stated by providing a Youth Fishing Area that they would not have to worry about getting their fishing line tangled up in the weeds, etc. He stated the replacement signs have not been made or installed yet.

Councilor Brunelle stated that once the signs have been installed that they could have a Ribbon Cutting Party for the Youth Fishing Area.

RESULT: CONTINUE

7. Recognition of Colonel William Ledyard

Councilor Barnes stated that he has been looking for the right time and venue to commemorate the Anniversary of the Groton Height's Battle and Colonel William Ledyard; the town's namesake. He went on to state that the Anniversary of the Groton Heights Battle was in September. However, he stated with all of the events that come with the starting of a new school year that he recognized that they were not going to be able to coordinate something for September.

Councilor Barnes continued by noting in the coming year the country would be celebrating the 250th Anniversary of the Signing of the Declaration of Independence. He stated although July was not the anniversary of the Groton Height's Battle, which occurred in September, that it was symbolic event. He stated as a town that was named after a fallen soldier that Ledyard should find a way to recognize him.

Councilor Barnes went on to explain that the actual sword that Colonel William Ledyard was killed by was on display at the Bill Library in Groton, which was adjacent to the museum. He stated he has spoken with Groton Library Director Ms. Wendy Connell about loaning Colonel Ledyard's Sword to Ledyard for a Ceremony. However, he stated that Ms. Connell stated that she did not believe that she could just relinquish this piece of historic artifact. He went on to explain that Ms. Connell stated that if Ledyard was doing some type of Ceremony that she thought that she may be able to bring the Sword in its case to the event. He stated that he did not think that the Committee would be able to do something this year. He stated when he got on the Town Council it was his intention to recognize Colonel William Ledyard at the Memorial Day Parade, however, he stated because there was so much happening on Memorial Day, they were not able to find a way to recognize Colonel William Ledyard on Memorial Day.

However, he stated that he would like to find a time when they could organize an event to commemorate the Anniversary and Colonel William Ledyard. He stated although they did not have a "*Metal of Honor*" in the 1700's that Colonel Ledyard would have been the first recipient from their community to receive the Honor for his sacrifice. He stated in the Battle of Groton Heights there were a number of special people of varying ethnic backgrounds that were present at the Battle, noting that the Aide to Colonel Ledyard, who was a freed black man, also lost his life that day. He stated not only would the Battle of Groton Height's Anniversary celebrate Colonel Ledyard who was a white man, but that there were a lot of other people that could be celebrated as well. He stated in the coming year that there would be a series of events for the Celebration of the 250th Anniversary of their Country's Independence, and that he thought there may be a way to tie this into those events.

Councilor Barnes continued by noting that the Ledyard Congregational Church would be Celebrating its 300th Anniversary, noting that the church predates the town by about 10 - 15 years. He stated that he was actively involved in the Church, noting that the Church was painted this year and they had a series of events planned. He stated the Chowder Dinner at the Bill Library was a collaboration between the Church and Library, noting that it would be the first event in the Church's 300 Anniversary Celebration. He stated that the Annual Town Event was Chowder Dinner, until the Ledyard Fair became the dominate event. He went on to state that the Church has planned a series of events throughout the year to celebrate the history of the Church and the Community. He stated if this year's events go well that the Church planned to hold the Chowder Dinner again at the end of the Anniversary Year.

Councilor Parad suggested rather than honor Colonel William Ledyard in September which was the time of his death that perhaps they could recognize him during the month of his birthday. It was noted that Colonel Ledyard was born in Groton on December 6, 1738; and died at the age of 42 on September 6, 1781.

RESULT: CONTINUE

8. Any other Old Business proper to come before the Committee

VII. NEW BUSINESS

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

Jewish Community

Councilor Parad stated that the Jewish High Holidays start next week with Rosh Hashanah on October 2, 2025 and that they run for about a month. She stated that the community does a lot for the Christmas Holiday Season, and she questioned how they could make their Jewish residents feel more part of the community.

Councilor Brunelle stated that they start by talking about it here in the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion meetings. She stated as they did with the Black History Month and Woman's History Month, noting that they could think about ideas of how to tie these ideas in. She stated for Pride Month they partnered with a Ledyard Congregational Church and had a Pizza Picnic in the Park. She stated that the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion could partner with the Jewish Community to see what they would like to do. She stated members of the Jewish Committee were welcome to attend a Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion to talk about what they would like to see in the community.

Councilor Barnes stated as an example, for Black History Month that Chairman St. Vil did most of the planning explaining that it was not in a town setting, stating the event was held at the Church on Route 117. He stated the forum was to educate and inform, noting that they had an amazing music program stating that one of groups that performed have also performed at the High School. He stated that the Church also had a great dinner after the event. He stated because there were a series of Jewish Holidays that perhaps there was one holiday they could focus on and hold an educational and informational event.

RESULT: CONTINUE

Joint Statement Message

Discussion and possible action to develop and options to distribute a Digital Flyer /Information regarding Teamwork and Collaboration.

- Councilor Brunelle stated that she hoped that the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion could work together to develop a statement to share with the community. She stated that she thought it would mean a lot of the three of them could come together to put out a kind message, saying that they were a community first. She stated that she was open to suggestions, noting that she did not mind making a video. However, she stated that if Councilor Parad and Councilor Barnes did not like the idea of

a video that perhaps they could put together a Digital Flyer that could be distributed both on-line and off-line in the form of a Printed Flyer.

Councilor Barnes stated although he did not like it, that he understands the national political climate; however, he stated when it comes to Ledyard that he has trouble understanding the political affiliation beyond the basic. He stated if someone were to ask him what his political party that was he would say “*Ledyard*” and as former Town Council Chairman Linda Davis used to say “*Gales Ferry is the Capital of Ledyard*”. He stated that he would support putting together a *Joint Statement Message*.

Councilor Parad requested clarification, noting that the *Joint Statement Message* would not appear on either the Democratic Town Committee (DTC) Page or the Republican Town Committee (RTC) Page. She stated that the *Joint Statement Message* would be something completely different in that it would be coming from the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion. Councilor Brunelle stated that Councilor Parad’s understanding was correct. Councilor Parad stated as the newest member of the Town Council that she did not understand why the townspeople get so angry with the Volunteers who were giving tens of hours every week to help make their town better. She stated that the volunteers were not serving for personal gain and that was the message they needed to get out to community. She stated that she would like to say “*That they were here to listen, to find out what was going on in the community, and to bring everyone together, to make Ledyard a real community.*”

Councilor Barnes noted the Department’s Presentations that were being posted to the *Ledyard Academy* link on the town’s website and he questioned whether they could use that as a starting point for their *Joint Message Statement*.

Councilor Brunelle asked the Committee Members to think about: (1)What they would like the *Joint Statement Message* to convey and (2) Think of some tag lines. She asked that they send their ideas to the Administrative Assistant Roxanne Maher in the Town Council Office to compile for the Committee to discuss at their next meeting so they could come up with a *Joint Statement Message*.

Councilor Parad stated that she thought that the Committee would like to get their Joint Statement Message out soon, because there was already a lot the rhetoric out there. Councilor Barnes stated that he thought that they would want to get the *Joint Statement Message* out by next month. Councilor Parad stated that people were already talking about putting campaign signs up. Councilor Barnes commented on the Early Voting Requirements, and therefore, he stated that he agreed with Councilor Parad’s comments regarding the timing to get the *Joint Statement Message* out.

The Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion agreed to schedule a Special Meeting on Monday, September 29, 2025 at 6:45 p.m.

RESULT: CONTINUE

· Veterans Breakfast

- Councilor Parad stated a Veterans Monthly Breakfast was being held on the fourth Tuesday of each month at Fireside Pizza in Gales Ferry at 9:00 a.m. She stated it was a wonderful get together, noting that each month they have a Topic of Discussion, noting that their Veterans were a significant part of their community. She stated that she recently partnered with the Veterans to promote their Essay Contest. She stated that she was hearing feedback from the Schools noting that some were saying: “*They were pushing this Veterans Essay really hard, but they did not push the Black History Month Essay Contest*”. Therefore, Councilor Parad stated when they have the Black History Month Essay Contest that they would need to be sure to push that program really hard as well.

RESULT: COMPLETED

IV ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Parad moved the meeting be adjourned, seconded by Councilor Barnes.

VOTE: 3 - 0 Approved and so declared. The meeting was adjourned at 7:19 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

April Brunelle

C o m m i t t e e

C h a i r m a n

Community Relations Committee

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