



TOWN OF LEDYARD

Finance Committee

Meeting Minutes

741 Colonel Ledyard Highway
Ledyard, Connecticut 06339

Chairman S. Naomi
Rodriguez

Regular Meeting

Wednesday, May 21, 2025

5:00 PM

Town Hall Annex Building - 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/85111726269?](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85111726269?pwd=mhrBwLyZkBK6O0McHMD EoiMExX9It4.1)

pwd=mhrBwLyZkBK6O0McHMD EoiMExX9It4.1

by Audio only: Telephone: +1 646 558 8656; Meeting ID: 851 1172 6269; Passcode: 865973

I CALL TO ORDER

the Meeting was called to order by Committee Chairman Councilor Saccone at 5:00 p.m. at the Council Chambers Town Hall Annex Building.

Councilor Saccone welcomed all to the Hybrid Meeting. He 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

Present: Tony Saccone
Jessica Buhle
Tim Ryan

In addition, the following were present:

Bill Barnes Town Councilor
Carman Garcia-Irizarry Town Councilor
Gary St. Vil Town Councilor
Fred Allyn, II Mayor
Matthew Bonin Finance Director
Scott Johnson, Jr. Parks, Recreation & Senior Citizens Director
Jason Hartling School Superintendent
Earl (Ty) Lamb Board of Education Finance Committee Chairman

Joanne Kelley Board of Education
Brandon Grabner Board of E
Tom Goudreault Resident
Edwin Murray Resident
Roxanne Maher Administrative Assistant

III. RESIDENTS & PROPERTY OWNERS COMMENTS

Mr. Thom Goudreault, 39 Blacksmith Drive, Ledyard, attending remotely via Zoom, stated that he was happy to be here and that he hoped that they could make some progress with the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget because the increased costs were killing them.

Mr. Christopher Jelden, 3 Whalehead Road, Ledyard, stated that he was present this evening to address the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget noting that he was frustrated by yesterday's referendum results with both the Budget and the additional funding to move forward with Juliet W. Long Heating Ventilation and Air Condition (HVAC) not being approved. He stated that he was happy to see the number of people who came out and voted increased significantly from over last year. He stated the budget preparation process he watched was pretty much a bipartisan effort both at the Town Council and the Board of Education, noting that they worked to put together budgets that would work for both the Town and the Board of Education. However, he stated yesterday the budget vote seemed to just fall into what looked like party lines. He stated that he did not like talking about politics and parties, noting that he watched the Finance Committee talk about the town side of the budget, and how they put together a budget that was responsible, thoughtful, included significant sacrifices, and that everyone here seemed to support the town budget. He went on to state the Board of Education, which he was especially interested in, seemed to be unanimously in agreement between the Republicans and the Democrats; commenting that sometimes they could not tell who was affiliated with each party. He stated that they were all in favor of the budget that they put forth, after a lot of diligence and hard work. However, he stated by the time the vote happened all that nuance was lost. He stated that he saw a few Town Councilors and Board of Education Members working tirelessly online to try to answer residents questions who were voicing their opinions and their thoughts on social media because they were desperately trying to get information out there, noting that some people were just never going to be swayed. Mr. Jelden stated that he applauded and appreciated the elected officials who did that heavy lifting on the behalf of the whole town.

Mr. Jelden continued by addressing the additional funding needed to move forward with the Juliet W. Long School Heating Ventilation and Air Condition System (HVAC) Project. He stated when his child came home from school and threw-up because of how hot the Juliet W. Long School was; that he went from the teacher all the way up to the superintendent to voice his concerns. He stated the teachers were doing their best, but they have no Air Conditioning in the school. He stated the unhealthy conditions in the school was the reason he started to attend the Board of Education meetings and Town Council meetings. Therefore, he stated that he was

really disappointed when the townspeople did not approve the request for the additional funding to move forward with the Juliet W. Long School HVAC System at the May 20, 2025 Referendum. He stated they were now left with the following two options: (1) The kids continue to face unhealthy conditions when the school gets hot in the spring, or (2) If the town does not address the HVAC System now that they would have to address it for much more money down the line. He stated that prices were only going up, noting that this was the economic realities of today, and that Ledyard does not have control over those costs. He appealed to the Finance Committee to resubmit the request for the additional funding to move forward with the Juliet W. Long HVAC Project.

Mr. Jelden concluded his comments by stating that the voters clearly want a smaller budget, noting the Budget Advisory Questions “*Was the Board of Education Budget Too High or Too Low; and Was the General Government Budget Too High or Too Low*” showed a general distaste for higher taxes. He stated that what he saw from the Advisory Questions was that more voters responded that the General Government Budget was *Too*

High than those who responded that the Board of Education Budget was *Too High*. Therefore, he stated that the Finance Committee and Town Council were going to have to decide where to make budget cuts. He stated over the next two weeks that he would look further at the proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget and provide feedback.

Mr. Jacob Hurt, 6 Nugget Hill Drive, Gales Ferry, stated that he was speaking for himself this evening. He stated that the town had a great turnout for the May 20, 2025 Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget Referendum. He noted as he stated at the May 19, 2025 Annual Town Meeting that he supported the proposed budget as it was presented to the voters yesterday. He stated the townspeople voting the proposed budget down provided their elected officials a clear signal that the residents desired a lower mil rate influencing cuts on both sides of the budget. He stated that he agreed with Mr. Jelden that during the day there was a lot of effort to try to push information out there and he thanked the three members of the Finance Committee for their work. He noted that he also found Councilor Garcia-Irizarry to be very helpful.

Mr. Hurt continued by stating that he wanted to provide a couple feedback points that may push some people from their position from “*I don’t know - to- Sure why not*”; and from “*No to Yes*” He asked the Town Council to reflect on the reason for the information gap, noting that social media ended up being the forum of preference, noting that they had to fight on the battlefield they were on. He thanked those who used social media to put out information; and to those who were providing explanations, noting that it was very helpful. He went onto state that he would not say that misinformation was provided, but that it was more like information was missing. Therefore, he stated for the next time around that he would ask the Town Council to articulate the budget cuts they decide to make and what the town would be losing so that residents could have a chance to understand the impacts of the budget cuts. He

stated there may be an avenue for people to say “No” to the budget next time around, because it was too low.

Mr. Hurt went on to address the Juliet W. Long Heating Ventilation and Air Condition (HVAC) System Project also being voted down. He stated that he would like to see some information on the effect of voting the HVAC Project down such as: (a) What was the short-term effect; and (b) What was the long-term effect.

Mr. Hurt returned to commenting on the proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget. He stated that he supported the proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget, not because of its magnitude, but because he understood the work that went into it, and he understood with both parties doing their work that the proposed budget was not going to get too much better than what was presented to the voters on May 20, 2025. However, he stated that his fellow residents disagreed with all the work that was already done to prepare the budget. Therefore, he stated that it was now time to try to bridge that disagreement and to try to figure out: (a) What cuts to make; (b) Where to make the cuts; (c) How it would impact residents; and (d) How to get this information out to the community. He stated that these decisions were tough, noting the words of one Town Councilor *“That it was a bare minimum budget”*. Mr. Hurt stated with that bare minimum budget being rejected that any decisions made this evening were going to be difficult, widespread; and long-lasting. He stated if they had an enterprise that they wanted to protect and that they wanted to make sure unintended effects do not occur, that they needed to vocalize those as well.

Mr. Hurt cautioned the Town Council stating that there were legal limits to how low they could go with the budget cuts because there were contractual requirements. He stated that they all have to live in this town together, and not everybody was going to get what they want. Therefore, he suggested that the Town Council not let perfect get in the way of good enough. He stated as of this morning that there were now employees in Town Hall; and educators in the School District; and kids and educators in a couple of schools that are looking at a hot summer, and were not getting everything they want and what they need. Therefore, he asked that the Town Council keep all of this in-mind and that they do not let perfect get in the way of good enough. He thanked the Finance Committee for their work, and he stated that he looked forward to the next round of information, and the next opportunity to vote on the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget.

Mr. Earl (Ty) Lamb, 95 Lambtown Road, Ledyard, Board of Education, stated that he was representing himself this evening. He stated that his comments would dovetail with Mr. Jelden’s comments and Mr. Hurt’s comments this evening. He stated the reason he decided to run to serve on the Board of Education was the incident at the grammar school where they did not have air condition in the building with the children in the building during the summer. He stated that he thought that they needed to communicate a little better on the Budget and the Bonding Process to proceed with the Juliet W. Long Heating Ventilation and Air Condition (HVAC) Project; along with the 61.78% State Grant Reimbursement to town was eligible to

receive for the Project. He explained to qualify to receive the 61.78%; or \$5,282,190 that the town needed to have the project completed by December, 2026. He stated if the townspeople do not approve the request for the additional funding that it would be like canceling the project, explaining that if they do not meet the project completion deadline that the town would be picking up the whole tab for the HVAC Project.

Ms. Wendy Hellkenson, 14-H Lakeside Drive, Ledyard, stated that she was active in the community and that she was a teacher in the School District. She cautioned the Finance Committee to be really careful with the Budget; stating as many know Ledyard had the lowest Per Pupil Expenditure in the area, noting that their Per Pupil Expenditure was within the lowest 10% in the State. She also noted that Ledyard's student success rates in terms of grades, education and standardized test scores. She stated if Ledyard provided more money for their schools, that they would ensure that their students would do better; stating that was a fact. She stated that Ledyard Schools do so much with the budget that they have, noting that it was incredible. She stated that she worked in another school district for almost 20-years, and that she has never seen such a hardworking staff as she has seen here in Ledyard. She stated if the Finance Committee was thinking about making any cuts to the Board of Education Budget that they keep in mind that every cut made would impact an actual child that lives in town. Thank you.

Mr. Edwin Murray, 26 Devonshire Drive, Gales Ferry, stated that nearly three times the number of townspeople that typically vote, turned out to vote at the May 20, 2025 Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget. He stated that this may be the first time in a few years that the town was actually hearing what their residents think. He stated that he has lived in Ledyard for only three- years and that this was the first year that he has seen so much early conversation about coming out and vote, noting in past years the voter turnout was somewhere between 200 - 246 people. He stated the voter turnout this year was a tremendous increase, noting that while this does not speak for the whole town that increasing the voter turnout from 2% to 15 % showed that perhaps people were getting more adapted to the time of year for the budget process. He stated that he knew that it was now late in the budget process and that time was limited and that important decisions were going to have to be made. However, he stated that his takeaway was that as they go forward the townspeople would have to live with whatever was decided, as has been done over the many years. He stated that town officials have been preparing budgets for years; however, he stated going forward, that they need to try to find a way to get the word out more clearly and to touch more people individually to get more residents to vote on the Referendum. Thank you.

Ms. Joanne Kelley, 12 Thames View Pentway, Gales Ferry, Board of Education Member, stated that she was very disappointed with the May 20, 2025 Referendum vote; and she questioned what they gained from the Referendum. She stated that there was a concerted effort by some people to get out the "No Vote"; and that she thought that they were successful. She stated that her biggest issue for those who were working to get the "No Vote" out was that they should have just encourage people to

Vote, noting that there was nothing wrong with that. She stated that she felt that the entire Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget cycle was manipulated to obtain a failure to pass. She stated that it was her opinion that the *Budget Advisory Questions* were odd; however; she stated that the Advisory Questions brought a lot of people out to vote; and she rhetorically questioned “*What they learned ?*” She stated that they learned that a lot of people would do what they were told to do for political reasons; and she questioned “*What do we do with this Budget Advisory Questions information now?*” She stated that they now know that some people think the Board of Education Budget was *Too High*, and quite a few more people thought that Town Budget was *Too High*. She also questioned what they do with the Juliet W. Long School HVAC System Project now that the townspeople did not approve the additional funding requested to move the project forward. She questioned whether they could cancel the project, noting that if they delay the project that it would cost the town much more money.

Ms. Kelley continued to state that it was her opinion that a lot of misleading information was used to solicit the “*No Vote*”, noting that was what she has seen on social media the last couple of days. She stated that it was unfortunate that after reading the information on social media that people were coming away with incorrect opinions about the impact the proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget would have on their obligation for taxes. Therefore, she stated that yesterday she was on social media all day, because people kept posting questions such as “*Oh, my God! My neighbor's house just sold for 450,000; that means my taxes were going to go up over a thousand dollars*”. Ms. Kelley stated that she spent the day explaining to people the difference between *Assessed Value* and *Market Value*.

Ms. Kelley went on to explain the difference between *Assessed Value* versus *Market Value*. She stated had the proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget passed that people’s taxes would have gone up by about \$300 to \$400 a year. She noted that she was not saying that was negligible, or that it would not be a burden for some people. However, she stated that there was a misconception on social media that people’s taxes would have gone up by thousands of dollars, which was written in this infographic that went around social media, noting that was a quote. She stated for someone’s taxes to increase by thousands of dollars that their house would have to be valued at over \$2 million. She commented that she was not saying that there were no homes in Ledyard that were valued at \$2 million. However, she stated the high end of the graph on social media showed a \$1,200 increase for a home assessed at \$450,000. She stated today a house *Assessed* at \$450,000 would have a *Market Value* of \$1.2 million; however, she stated that was not the typical house. Therefore, she stated that many people’s taxes would not be going up by thousands of dollars noting that was flat-out misinformation.

Ms. Kelley also stated that she had concerns regarding the misinformation that was on social media regarding the 2025 Revaluation; as though there was going to be a second mil rate hit with the Revaluation. She stated the mil rate was adjusted when the Grand List changes. However, she stated that was not the message that was circulating on social media. She stated that there was an attempt to get a message out

to people that it was going to be a double hit. She stated that this type of misinformation on social media really bothered her and that we have to work to educate the residents in good faith; and stop this kind of nonsense before the second Budget Vote.

Ms. Kelley concluded her remarks by stating that she knew for a fact that there was nothing the Board of Education could do without in their Budget, noting that she was not as familiar with the Town side of the Budget. Therefore, she stated that she hoped before the second Budget Vote takes place that they would be able to give people good information. Thank you

Councilor Saccone thanked the residents for their comments this evening.

IV. PRESENTATIONS / INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

None.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION to approve the Finance Committee Minutes of May 7, 2025.

Moved by Councilor Buhle, seconded by Councilor Ryan

VOTE: 3 - 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

MOVER: Jessica Buhle

SECONDER: Tim Ryan

VI. Finance Director's Report

Finance Director Matthew Bonin commented on the Juliet W. Long School Heating Ventilation and Air Condition(HVAC) System Project and the importance of the timing to get the project underway relative to getting it completed by the December, 2026 deadline to be eligible to receive the 61.78% State Grant Funding. He stated completed from his standpoint was physically complete, but not yet fully invoiced because invoices can lag.

School Superintendent Jason Hartling stated the Project would be completed when the Permanent Municipal Building Committee *Accepted the Project as Complete*.

RESULT: CONTINUE

VII. Financial Reports

Finance Director Matthew Bonin stated the following Reports were attached to the agenda on the meeting portal and that he would answer any questions regarding the reports.

- Budget versus Actuals - Revenues - April 30, 2025
- Budget versus Actuals - Expenditures - April 30, 2025

Hearing no questions, Councilor Saccone noted that the Committee would move on to Old Business.

RESULT: CONTINUE

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

1. Discussion regarding potential uses for the funding received from the National Opioid Settlement Payments.

Mayor Allyn, III noted that he reported at the April 9, 2025 Town Council Meeting that Ledyard received a Settlement Payment from Walgreens in the amount of \$2,807. He stated that this was a smaller payment, however, it would help them to continue their drug and overdose prevention programs.

RESULT: CONTINUE

2. Continued discussion regarding the status and possible changes to Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and Capital Non-Recurring (CNR) Fund based on the American Rescue Act Funding (ARPA) and the process to approve ARPA Projects and expend ARPA Funding.

Councilor Ryan noted the last ARPA Projects spreadsheet the Committee received was dated February, 2025. He questioned whether Finance Director Matthew Bonin had a more recent update. Mr. Bonin noted that he would provide the Finance Committee with the an updated spreadsheet.

RESULT: CONTINUE

3. Continued discussion regarding upcoming potential Grant Opportunities.

Councilor Buhle noted the Town's \$1 million 2025 Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) Application to replace five playscapes in town. She stated because of the number of Applications the State received that the STEAP Awards would be announced later this month, which was not as early as she had hoped for.

Councilor Buhle noted at the Finance Committee's May 19, 2025 Special Meeting they forwarded a recommendation for the Town Council to authorize the Mayor to submit a *"2025 Certified Resolution of Application- Small Cities Program - Habitat for Humanity"* to obtain a \$1 million grant. She explained that this would be a pass-through from the Town to the non-profit organization Habitat for Humanity to support infrastructure design and engineering work for lots 8, 9, and 11 Colby Drive for the development by Habitat for Humanity into 16 single family and 11 duplex homes, on Colby Drive. She stated that she was pleased to learn that Habitat for Humanity was also

applying for a Community Investment Fund. Grant (CDF).

RESULT: CONTINUE

4. Discussion scheduling Regular Quarterly Joint Finance Committee Meetings between the Town Council and Board of Education.

Councilor Saccone noted that he reached out to Board of Education Finance Committee Chairman Earl (Ty) Lamb to discuss potential dates to schedule Quarterly Joint Meetings between the two Finance Committees. He noted instead of adding more meetings to their schedules they were considering scheduling their Quarterly Meetings in place of one of their Regular Finance Committee bimonthly meetings. He stated that he and Mr. Lamb discussed holding Quarterly Meetings as follows:

- August, 2025 at the Board of Education Central Office
- November, 2025 at the Council Chambers, Town Hall Annex Building
- February, 2026 at the Board of Education Central Office
- May, 2026 at the Council Chambers, Town Hall Annex Building

Councilor Saccone noted that Mr. Lamb would be discussing the Quarterly Meetings with the Board of Education Finance Committee. He also noted that Administrative Assistant Roxanne Maher had suggested all of the Joint Finance Committee Meetings be held in the Council Chambers. Administrative Assistant Roxanne Maher noted the reason she suggested all four Quarterly Meetings be held in the Council Chambers was because they had the OWL and other technology set up to support both in-person and remote meetings via Zoom; and because she did not know what type of equipment the Board of Education Central Office has to support Hybrid Meetings. Board of Education Finance Committee Earl (Ty) Lamb stated that the Board of Education Central Office has a similar set up for technology to support Hybrid Meetings.

RESULT: CONTINUE

5. Any Old Business proper to come before the Committee.

None.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

1. MOTION to grant a Bid Waiver to Building One Facility Services, LLC, of Durham, Connecticut, due to receiving fewer than the required three bids in response to Bid #2025-09 (Janitorial Services), in accordance with Ordinance #200-07 (rev 1) "An Ordinance for Purchasing"

Moved by Councilor Buhle, seconded by Councilor Ryan

Discussion: Mayor Allyn, III, stated that the town had a contract in-place for janitorial

services for the Town Hall, Annex Building, and the Police Department which was at the point where they had two one-year options to extend the contract. However, he stated the town decided to test the market and solicit bids rather than exercise the option years. He stated that only two bids were received; therefore, a bid waiver was being requested. He explained in addition to a new Janitorial Vendor, that as a cost-cutting measure the new contract would clean the Town Hall and the Annex Building once a week and the Police Department five days per week, noting that they have three shifts that operate 24/7. He stated the staff would take out their trash, noting that this was another step for a lean operation at Town Hall. He stated the new Janitorial Services Contract was for four years and would be a savings of \$9,800 per year, which he would discuss later this evening during their review of the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget.

VOTE: 3- 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT: RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL

MOVER: Jessica Buhle

SECONDER: Tim Ryan

2. MOTION to adopt the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget in the amount of \$70,364,977 comprised of:

- General Government: \$29,902,735
- Board of Education: \$40,462,242.

Councilor Saccone stated at the May 20, 2025 Referendum that the townspeople did not approve the proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget in the amount of \$71,062,240 comprised of a General Government Budget of \$30,394,998 and a Board of Education Budget of \$40,667,242; which was a 5.23% increase over the current year's budget and was calling for an estimated 2.76 mil increase for a projected mil rate of 37.97 in the coming year. Therefore, he stated in accordance with Chapter VII; Section 6, of the Town Charter the Annual Budget would come back to the Finance Committee and Town Council to make adjustments to resubmit a proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 on the voting machines on June 10, 2025 (3 weeks after the initial Referendum).

Councilor Saccone continued by stating that although he did not like the outcome that their taxpayers have spoken. He stated while he does not follow social media; that from what he has heard it sounded like there was some misinformation; and therefore, he did not think their residents were not fully and correctly informed.

Councilor Saccone stated starting back in October, November and December, 2024 that he begged residents to please show up to the Finance Committee meetings so that they would be fully informed, and so they could ask questions. He stated when the Finance Committee received the proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget that it was already \$2.4 million dollars in the red because of the following expenses and reductions in revenue:

Expenses:

- Healthcare Expenses for both Town Employees and Board of Education Employees.

Councilor Saccone stated that these were bargained for benefits and the town had no control over the increasing cost.

- ✓ General Government Employee - Increase of \$76,756
- ✓ Board of Education Employees - Increase of \$875,960

- Salary Increases - Board of Education

Councilor Saccone noted that the Board of Education salaries were contractual and increased by \$990,000.

Revenues:

- Public Act 24-46 "*An Act Establishing a Property Tax Exemption for Veterans Who Have a Service-Connected Permanent and Total Disability Rating*" Effective: October 1, 2024.

Councilor Saccone stated that many Ledyard residents were veterans, and we support our veterans. However, he explained the Bill coming out of Hartford would provide a reduction of about \$550,000 in tax revenue for Ledyard; and the State has not provided any funding to help off-set these revenue reductions.

Councilor Saccone continued by addressing the Juliet W. Long School Heating Ventilation and Air Condition(HVAC) System Project and the requested additional funding to move the project forward. He stated with the installation of the air conditioning system in the elementary school that the kids would be much more comfortable; they would have better air to breath, they would learn better, and they would not fall asleep. He stated that he believed voting down the additional funding required to move forward with the Juliet W. Long School HVAC Project was either misinformation; or just a bad decision. He stated that he hoped they could present the funding request back to the voters soon. He stated that he had four kids that went through the Ledyard School System and the buildings were not air conditioned at that time. He noted that there were times that the second floor in the High School would reach 85 degrees in the classrooms. He stated Ladies and Gentlemen while he understands that these projects were costly, at some point they had to fund these projects especially when they have the opportunity to obtain State Grant funding to pay for 61.78% of the cost.

Councilor Buhle noted as she has stated throughout this year's budget preparation process and last year's budget preparation process, which was that Ledyard has an income problem. She stated that they do not have a lot of business in town to help assist and pay for taxes. She stated although they do not know what reduction limit the voters were looking for, that she was willing to discuss it with her two fellow Finance Committee Members. She stated that they had input from the public; and she reminded them that when the Finance Committee started their working on the proposed Fiscal

Year 2025/2026 Budget they already had a \$2.4 million increase which equated to about 1.8 mils. She stated with all of the other increases in expenses that the proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget presented at the May 20, 2025 Referendum was calling for a 2.76 mil increase. Therefore, she questioned how they could reduce 2.76 mil increase when 1.8 mils was to pay for Healthcare Insurance that was mandated by Hartford, and Salary Increases that were contractual.

Councilor Buhle continued by stating that yesterday she spent all day, to the detriment of her mental health, answering questions on the Internet and asking questions for the following reasons: To encourage residents to dive into the budget; and For her to gain an understanding of: (1) Whether they were at the same table; (2) Were they all playing the same game; and (3) Were they all looking at the same budget. She noted when she asked the question on social media *“What number would bring you to a “Yes” in looking at the 2.76 mil increase that someone said “I won’t vote for any budget with an increase at all. I don’t care what party is in power; and that they had not seen a single -0- budget increase the entire time they looked at budget”.*

Councilor Buhle continued by addressing a comment that was made in response to her questions on social media, explaining that she was not asking constituents to do her job. She stated the reason she was asking questions was to encourage residents to look through the town’s expenses and to consider what services they were willing to give up. She stated that someone chastised her for using the word *sacrifice*. She stated that these were *sacrifices* noting that their kids were already *sacrificing*. However, she stated based on some of the responses she was seeing on social media that some residents were not playing in good faith, they were not voting; or having a conversation, and they were not acting realistically, especially when the town was facing 0.51% decrease in the Grand List. She stated without including contractual obligations that the budget amount they started with was a decrease from the current year. She stated even if the budget was flat funded from this year to next year that they would have seen an increase in taxes.

Councilor Buhle stated that she wanted to be respectful and say *“Come to the table. If there was a number that makes sense in your head, and if there was different number that makes sense in her head; then let’s talk about it; let’s make sure we find a budget that works for our town”*. However, she stated when she asked *“What was the budget that would work for you; and she received a response that said cut \$3.5 million”* she stated that \$3.5 million that would be more than all of the Police Department. She stated that they have to be real about what those cuts mean for our town. She stated that \$3.5 million dollars would be every single staff member at the Gales Ferry School and Juliet W. Long School.

Councilor Buhle stated those calling for a -0- mil rate increase and those shouting *“Vote No”* was an extreme disservice to our community. She stated by voting *“No”* for the additional funding needed to move forward with the Juliet W. Long School Heating Ventilation and Air Condition (HVAC) System, that the kids and staff would

be facing another hot summer, noting that Ledyard had the lowest Per Pupil Expenditure in the county. She stated that it was 2025 and Ledyard Public Schools do not have STEM Teachers at the elementary school level, noting that they should have had the STEM Teachers 10-years ago, noting that this was a disservice to our students.

Councilor Buhle stated that she did not want to be disingenuous, and say that the tax increase was not a burden, noting that she understands that there were many taxpayers in their town who were struggling to make ends meet. She noted that she watches the Scholarship Funds for the Parks and Recreation Summer Camp get used up quickly because there were more applicants than there were funds available. She also noted that the Linda C. Davis Food Pantry was also seeing an increase in usage, and that there were a lot of burdens like these happening in town.

Councilor Buhle stated that what she finds most frustrating; and she noted that she has said this before, was that Ledyard does not have low taxes; and if they do not raise the mil rate; that they would still not have low taxes. However, she stated if they do not raise the mil rate now that they would still be paying high taxes and they would have a town that may lose their library services; and they would have a town where their education system would get worse; they would have a town without fire departments, or police officers. Therefore, she questioned what she was paying \$7,200 in taxes a year for, if she was not going to have a library, or good schools, or good police officers, noting that would feel worthless to her. Therefore, she stated that they have to do their best to find which services make sense for our residents, and understand that there were things in our town that they fund; that other towns do not fund. She suggested that the Ledyard strongly look at whether they continue to fund garbage collection as a town. She stated that Montville and Stonington charge/bill their residents for garbage collection. However, she stated Ledyard provides garbage collection and they do not charge/bill their residents for that service, stating that no one recognizes that. She stated that maybe garbage collection services was a bill they need to have in Ledyard, so residents would feel like their taxes were lower.

Councilor Buhle stated that she was extremely disheartened with the unwillingness of those that she spoke to, to come to the table with a realistic number; and with a number that would bring them to a "Yes Vote". She stated while she understands that the Advisory Questions resulted in the taxpayers saying that the General Government Budget was *Too High* by more responses than those who replied that the Board of Education Budget was *Too High*, that to be very forthcoming, that she was not going to continue to hack at a budget that was passed unanimously by this Finance Committee, noting that it was a budget that they thought was reasonable. She stated that she was not going to cut things that she knew were valuable services to our residents, noting for residents to vote that they have to do a better job of explaining the budget, as Councilor Saccone said earlier this evening. She stated that this was going to be an uphill battle and that it was not getting any easier.

Councilor Buhle went on to state that she was grateful to all of the residents that came out to the polls on May 20, 2025, noting that she loved voter participation. She stated that those who know her have seen her campaign. She stated when she knocks on residents doors that she tells them that she does not care if she loses, noting that she would rather have everyone in town vote, and she lose, than see people not vote, because she would rather have a real representation of how the voters feel. She stated that she hoped that they could find a budget number and also provide information that would allow the voters to understand that budget number. She stated that she recognizes that the budget increase was probably not going to be pretty at the end of the day, because she did not see a budget number that would come in at a -0- mil increase; because in her mind that does not exist.

Councilor Buhle stated that she hoped that they could find a number that makes sense for our town, our residents and our education system that would answer their call. She stated that they need to make sure our residents understand that we have done everything we can, and we are challenging the budget where they could. She stated that she knows that Councilor Ryan's definition "*of everything we can do*" and her definition "*of everything we can do*" were two different definitions, and that was fine because they were different people. However, she stated that she wanted to make sure that they were educating and providing more information about the budget to their residents.

Councilor Buhle continued by stating when they speak about Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget that she would also echo the comments about the Juliet W. Long Heating Ventilation and Air Condition System (HVAC) Project. She stated that those who promoted a "*No Vote*" without taking the time to explain the importance of that HVAC question on the May 20, 2025 Referendum was extremely detrimental for our town. She stated the Finance Committee and the Town Council held meetings on April 16, 2025 and talked about how important it was for the request for the additional funding to pass. She stated that they also talked about the opportunity to lose the State's \$5,282,190 Grant Reimbursement funding if the HVAC Project was not completed on time (December, 2026). She stated by "*Voting No*" for the request for the additional funding to move forward with the Juliet W. Long School HVAC Project that they just potentially cost their Town \$5 million; because some people said "*Vote No*" and did not explain. She stated that those who were advising that residents "*Vote No*" needed to provide an explanation but no one did. She stated that this was an extreme disservice to our taxpayers, and it was an extreme disservice to our residents. Thank you.

Councilor Ryan stated that he wanted to clarify some comments regarding the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget being unanimously approved by the Finance Committee. He stated during the April 23, 2025 Special Finance Committee Meeting and the April 23, 2025 Town Council Meeting he "*Voted No*" stating that he was not in-favor to forward the proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget in the amount of \$71,062,240 comprised of a General Government Budget of \$30,394,998 and a Board of Education Budget of \$40,667,242; which was a 5.23% increase over the current year's budget and was calling for an estimated 2.76 mil increase for a projected mil rate of 37.97 in the

coming year. He stated that he also “*Voted No*” at the May 20, 2025 Referendum, stating that this should not be a surprise, noting that he has made his position clear throughout this year’s budget preparation process.

Councilor Ryan continued by stating that the Finance Committee talked about the General Government’s proposed Budget, and they all agreed that it was very lean. He noted that there were some observations which he made as well, that the Budget Advisory Questions and the results were thoroughly confusing. He stated that the Voters responded that they thought the General Government budget was too high. He stated in thinking about the responses received that he then realized the one glaring fact was that the General Government Budget was carrying the Board of Education Employees \$6,069,790 Healthcare Expenses on the town side of the budget ledger and not on the Board of Education side of the budget ledger. He stated although the Finance Committee and the Town Council talked about the proper recording of the Board of Education Employee’s Healthcare expenses at length, and they made it known to the residents, that people were saying on social media and what he has heard in-person was that residents did not know this fact; and they were saying that there was misleading information, misguided information, and scare tactics were used by everybody for this vote.

Councilor Ryan stated that he was disappointed with the results of the May 20, 2025 Referendum for the Juliet W. Long School Heating Ventilation and Air Condition System (HVAC) Project. He stated that he “*Voted Yes*” to authorize the additional \$1,250,000 to continue to move the HVAC Project forward; explaining that the bonding was needed. Therefore, he stated that they need to find a path forward to facilitate this Project, noting that he was on-board with taking the necessary steps to make the Juliet W. Long HVAC Project happen.

Councilor Ryan stated while he understood people’s frustration of not getting their desired outcome on the Referendum, that the blame game by one group of people versus the other group of people was not productive or fruitful. Therefore, he stated that they have to figure out a path forward. He stated when we have a vote where 1,300 people turned out to vote, which was three- times more than the last referendum, which was a 2-1 ratio that it was a mandate, stating that they had to do something with the budget. He stated that he agreed with Councilor Buhle that he also did not think there was a viable path forward for a -0- mil increase because there were *critical functions* that need to be maintained, as Councilor Saccone mentioned earlier this evening. Councilor Ryan stated a “*critical*” was not a subjective term.

Councilor Ryan stated Healthcare and Salaries were critical because they were contractual obligations that the town was legally obligated to honor. However, he stated there were some expenses that were not necessarily obligated; but should be on the table and that they need to talk about. He noted multiple times during their Finance Committee meetings that he offered to talk about these expenses. However, he stated not one other Councilor on the Finance Committee wanted to entertain that discussion. He stated when he started to talk about a proposal for a reduction to the

budget that there was a lot of back and forth; and after he asked if they were willing to entertain any cuts the answer he got was “No” and he stated that he hoped they remembered that conversation. He stated that was frustrating to him at the time; however, he stated that they now have a clear direction from the public right that something needs to be done to the proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget. He stated that the members of the Finance Committee would each have their opinions as to where they should start; however, he stated that the budget adjustments would not be entirely up to the Finance Committee, noting that the Town Council would also have input and finally the voters would have a say.

Councilor Ryan continued by reviewing the Annual Budget Process noting that they had a limited timetable in front of them. He stated that he requested that the Town Council move the special meeting that was scheduled for next week up to this week because they only have three-weeks to the next Referendum (June 10, 2025). He stated the three weeks was not only for the Finance Committee and Town Council to deliberate on the budget, noting that there were a number of wheels in motion that were all waiting for the Town Council to complete their work. He stated that the Town Clerk had to get the ballots ordered, printed and delivered, the Registrars had to recalibrate and test voting machines, noting all this cannot be done until the ballots were delivered, noting that things need to be set up and scheduled and that announcements need to be made. He stated that there were timetables for all that needed to happen, therefore, he stated that it was frustrating to him that the Special Town Council Meeting was being delayed to next week. He stated that he was not going to speculate on the reason for that; however, he stated that it was irresponsible that the Town Council was being delayed to next week to even have a conversation about the budget, noting that it puts them in a tight spot schedule wise to get things set for the next Referendum that was scheduled for June 10, 2025; noting that by delaying they have eaten up a week.

Councilor Ryan went on to state if the Second Revised Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget Referendum passes that they would be free to move on with next fiscal year (25/26). However, he stated if the Second Referendum does not pass, the taxpayers would no longer have a say, because it would be up to the Town Council to decide what the budget would be. He stated that this scared him because the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget could go up or it could go down. Therefore, he stated that the Finance Committee had the opportunity this evening to do what was right. He stated that he hoped that they would come to a resolution on the budget that honored the wishes of the 1,300 voters that came out yesterday. He stated that he was not pointing at any specific budget, noting that overall the taxpayers desired a lower budget. He stated that he was open to discussing how to get to a lower budget, noting that he had empirical objective evidence, which was not nefarious, noting that they were just numbers, that he would talk about this evening to make sure everything was on the table.

Councilor Buhle stated that she understood that she and Councilor Ryan have

differing opinions and that he was implying that something nefarious was happening so that the Town Council does not meet tomorrow. She stated when Administrative Assistant Roxanne Maher called today she mentioned that Councilor Ryan had requested a Special Town Council Meeting for tomorrow because he was not available next week. Councilor Buhle stated that she worked on Thursday nights, which was the reason she was not available for a meeting tomorrow night.

Councilor Buhle went on to state when she posted her comments online, and what she has said in- person, was that she would love for them to come to an agreement that they could all work on together and agree on. She noted Mr. Steve Munger's comments that this was the first time that he noticed which political parties were on the Town Council. Councilor Buhle stated although she was not being partisan, that she felt there was partisan behavior during the last month and a half; and that she felt that this was to divide them. She stated that she did not want to imply that this Town Council does not want to work together, noting that they were all looking at the budget numbers and trying to make decisions that benefit every resident in our town, and not just her or the residents who spoke this evening like Mr. Christopher Jalen or Mr. Jacob Hurt. However, she stated that she thought that there were Town Councilors who were not coming to the table and being a part of a team. She stated that she thought that this was disingenuous, and that it was distasteful in her opinion.

Councilor Ryan stated that he did not say a single word personally about Councilor Buhle, however, she chose to make a personal comment about him; and that he wanted to address her comments. He noted that Councilor Buhle stated that she was told that he was not available on Tuesday; and she said that she was not available on Thursday because she had to work. He stated that we all have jobs, that he had kids and that Councilor Buhle had kids. He stated to put it in Councilor Buhle's words, that he was willing to sacrifice his time with his kids to be here tonight, noting that he only had his kids twice a week; and that he also offered to sacrifice tomorrow with his kids as well, so the Town Council could get things moving, because it was important to make all of this work for the town, noting that his May 22, 2025 email was clear and concise as his reasons for having a meeting this week instead of waiting to next week which were: (1) The tight schedule/timeline they had to come through budget revision, (2) Subsequent ballot ordering, absentee ballot mailings, and (3) Other requirements that warranted taking advantage of an earlier meeting, rather than waiting to next week. He noted that his email and reasons for the requesting a meeting this week would be part of the public record. He stated if Councilor Buhle could not make the meeting for Thursday, that was fine, noting that all they needed was a quorum. He stated that he understood that Councilor Buhle works; and that he understands that they all have obligations, noting that sometimes he cannot make a meeting; or that Councilor Buhle or Councilor Saccone cannot make a meeting. He stated that they all have lives and that serving on the Town Council was a volunteer job, noting that none of them get paid to serve the town. He stated if Councilor Buhle could not make a meeting that was fine; however, he stated if they could not honor the fact that they had a really tight timetable; which was his reason for requesting a meeting on Thursday; and that it was not for personal reasons, that he would have

appreciated if she had talked to him privately first to clarify his reason, before she brought it up at a public meeting.

Councilor Buhle commented on a 24-hour notice for a meeting. Councilor Ryan stated that the Town Council knew that if the budget was not approved they would have to hold a special meeting. He stated that he would be in attendance at the Special Meeting on Tuesday, May 27, 2025.

Councilor Saccone stated that he would like to move on to work on the budget noting that this exchange was not constructive on either part. He asked Mayor Allyn, III, if he would like to provide any comments.

Mayor Allyn, III, began his comments by stating that he also supported the request to increase the town's Bond Authorization by \$1,250,000 to move the Juliet W. Long School Heating Ventilation and Air Condition System (HVAC) Project forward. He stated Staff was currently working with Bond Counsel on the path forward which they hoped would get the Project to the finish line.

Mayor Allyn continued by addressing the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget noting that it was extremely lean. He stated the Finance Committee has combed through every one of the General Government Budget Lines. He stated in response to the voters rejecting the proposed budget that he worked with Department Heads today to make some further reductions. He explained that some of the suggested reductions were for fuels; however, he stated if the prices were to change that they would be behind the eight-ball.

Mayor Allyn went on to note that as he has said throughout this budget preparation, that 31% of Ledyard's population had their proverbial nose just above the waterline; and that they need to be concerned for those residents. He questioned by adding a 2.76 mil increase whether Ledyard's financially hardship families would increase from 31% to 41%; and he noted that he thought that this was entirely possible. He stated increasing the tax bill on a home in the Highlands by \$300 or \$500 was a challenge for some people. Therefore, he stated that this was not about whether each of them individually, who were making these decisions, could or could not afford the projected tax increase; he stated that it was about the residents that they represent; and that they needed to think about that.

Mayor Allyn stated after backing out the Healthcare costs and Salaries that the General Government only had about \$381,000 left; noting that the budget was very lean. However, he stated that voters have spoken; and the Town Council had to make some budget changes to try to make it palatable.

Mayor Allyn explained that the General Government was at the point where the "Nice to Have" things such as Libraries and the Parks, Recreation & Senior Citizens Cetner were the only things left on the on the table, if they get to the point where they

had to close something for budgetary purposes. He stated alternatively some have suggested the following:

- Eliminate 5 Police Officers - Mayor Allyn stated for public safety reasons that was probably not a great idea.
- Eliminate half the Public Works Department - Mayor Allyn stated the Public Works Department only had 17 employees now; questioning what they would do when they have a snowstorm and it took 12-hours to get the roads plowed.

Mayor Allyn addressed revenues, and he stated with the State Legislation approving Public Act 24-46 "*An Act Establishing a Property Tax Exemption for Veterans Who Have a Service-Connected Permanent and Total Disability Rating*" Effective: October 1, 2024 that Ledyard's estimated loss in tax revenue was about \$550,000. He stated that this was another expense that the residents would have to absorb.

Mayor Allyn continued to note that he along with eight other Municipal Leaders from Southeastern Connecticut went to the State Capitol last week. He explained that the State of Connecticut has placed more than 1,400+ Unfunded Mandates on Municipalities; noting that it was crushing them. Therefore, he stated they lobbied hard asking for relief, and to say "*Stop with the unfunded mandates; until the State understands what now have in place and they were doing to the 169 municipalities in the State*".

Mayor Allyn presented the following budget adjustments, noting that while most were within the General Government's Operational Budget and that he was also suggesting a decrease to the Capital Budget; as well as an increase to the revenue side of the budget.

General Government Reductions:

Account #	Title	Reduction	New Amount
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Town Council

10110101-5879	Contingency	\$7,000	\$7,000
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Reason: Funding for unanticipated expenses

Mayor's Office

10110201-58790	Contingency	\$1,500	\$6,000
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Reason: Funding for unanticipated expenses

10110203-53700	Contract Maint/Leases	\$8,900	\$57,700
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Reason: New Janitorial Services - Reduced cleaning of Town Hall & Annex Building to once a week - Staff will take out trash.

Human Resources

10110253-52400	Salary Benefit Adjustments	\$25,000	\$50,000
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Reason: Line used for contract retro pay, etc.

10110253-52310 Defined Benefit Plan \$20,00 \$780,000

Reason: Remains \$30,105 above USI actuarial determined contribution.

Public Works

Acct #101401-53300 Engineering/MS4 \$10,000 \$70,000

Reason: MS4 costs have remained lower than anticipated. Discretionary engineering lowered as well.

10140103-56260 Gasoline/Oil \$7,500 \$37,500

Reason: Unleaded and Diesel pricing stabilized. Will project continued lower avg. prices.

10140103-56265 Diesel Fuel \$5,000 \$60,000

Reason: Unleaded and Diesel pricing stabilized. Will project continued lower avg. prices.

10140107-56301 Sand and Salt \$10,000 \$135,000

Reason: Cascading inventory and lower demand have end of year maximum inventory. Will assume stable pricing.

10140113-54210 Solid Waste Disposal \$5,000 \$706,300

Reason: Solid waste removal of food scrap diversion program. Cost is 7 times normal disposal. Seek onsite option.

10140113-58790 Bulky Waste Removal \$10,000 \$90,000

Reason: Bid results returned after budget set. Bid result cost was less than projected.

Police/Dispatch

10120101-5626 Diesel/Gasoline \$8,000 \$62,000

Reason: Reflects continued stable pricing.

Police/Dispatch (Continued)

10120101-53645 Training Salary \$5,000 \$80,000

Reason: None provided

10120101-57300 New Equip-Fire Arms \$2,800 \$4,200

Reason: Will stagger patrol rifle replacement over three fiscal years.

Revenues

Account #	Title	Increase	New Amount
1010502-49002	Mil Rate Stabilization	\$200,000	\$1,504,675

• Mil Rate Stabilization- Other Transfer-In

Councilor Ryan noted that the Town has budgeted to use funding from the Mil Rate Stabilization Fund in past budgets and he questioned: (1) How often the town has had to use the Mil Rate Stabilization Fund; and (2) Current Mil Rate Stabilization Fund Balance.

Finance Director Matthew Bonin stated that the Mil Rate Stabilization Fund current

balance was slightly under \$3.5 Million. He explained for the current fiscal year (fy 24/25) that \$1 million was committed. He stated although they have not had to use the Mil Rate Stabilization allocation in past years, that he would not know until the end of this current budget year if the \$1 million would be needed.

Councilor Ryan stated that based on the funding that has already been committed from the Mil Rate Stabilization Fund that the balance was about \$2.5 million. Mr. Bonin stated that was correct.

- **Salaries**

Councilor Buhle stated that she wanted to call out the elephant in the room; which was the salary increases for certain General Government Administrators/Department Heads. She stated in talking to voters who said the General Government Budget was *Too High* that they called out the Administrators/Department Head increases. She stated if they do not change the Administrators/Department Head Salary increases those residents would not approve the Adjusted Budget at the Second Referendum. She stated that she understood that Ledyard was not adequately paying these professionals compared to other towns and that they were correcting the salaries. However, s

3. Any New Business proper to come before the Committee

None

X. ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Buhle moved the meeting be adjourned, seconded by Councilor Ryan
VOTE: 3 - 0 Approved and so declared, the meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Anthony Saccone, Sr.
Committee Chairman
Committee
Finance

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