



TOWN OF LEDYARD

741 Colonel Ledyard Highway
Ledyard, Connecticut 06339

Finance Committee Meeting Minutes

Chairman S. Naomi
Rodriguez

Regular Meeting

Wednesday, September 4, 2024

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/85334792325?
pwd=vKUK7qJ9QF3qUBbQ0FFBgHBEmuS2oP.1](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85334792325?pwd=vKUK7qJ9QF3qUBbQ0FFBgHBEmuS2oP.1)**

**by Audio Only: Telephone: +1 646 558 8656; Meeting ID: 853 3479 2325; Passcode:
570414**

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:

S. Naomi Rodrigues, Town Council Chairman
Fred Allyn, III, Mayor
Matthew Bonin, Finance Director
Steve Masalin, Public Works Director/Town Engineer
Elizabeth Burdick, Land Use Director/Town Planner

Tony Capon, Planning & Zoning Commission Chairman
Roxanne Maher, Administrative Assistant

III. RESIDENTS & PROPERTY OWNERS COMMENTS

None.

IV. PRESENTATIONS / INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

None.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION to approve the Finance Committee Special Meeting Minutes of August 14, 2024

Moved by Councilor Buhle, seconded by Councilor Ryan

VOTE: 3 - 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

VI. Finance Director's Report

Finance Director Matthew Bonin stated the Finance Department has been preparing for the June 30, 2024 Annual Audit. He noted CliftonLarsonAllen, LLP Auditors were scheduled to be at Town Hall in early October, 2024 to begin their work.

VII. Financial Reports

Finance Director Matthew Bonin stated the following Financial Reports dated August 31, 2024 were attached to the Agenda on the meeting portal:

- Revenue Year-to Date Report- June 30, 2024

Mr. Bonin stated although all of the revenues for Fiscal Year 2023/2024 have been recorded that there would be a few revenue adjustments to include the following:

- **60-Day Collections** - Mr. Bonin explained that these were taxes that were paid up-to 60-days after the year end, noting that they would be recorded as part of the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024.
- **Transfer-in from the Mill Rate Stabilization Fund** - Mr. Bonin stated for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2024 that some funding would need to be transferred-in from the Mill Rate Stabilization Fund due to expense adjustments and the transfer of the Impact Aid to the Board of Education.

Councilor Ryan noted when the Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Budget was developed that \$1 million from the Mill Rate Stabilization Fund was included. He questioned whether the full \$1 million would be needed. Mr. Bonin stated that the full \$1 million would not be needed.

Councilor Saccone addressed the transfer-in from the Mill Rate Stabilization Fund; and he questioned the amount that would be needed. Mr. Bonin stated at this time he did not know the dollar amount that would be transferred-in from the Mill Rate Stabilization Funding, noting that the transfer has not yet been made.

- ***Connecticut Interlocal Risk Management Agency (CIRMA) Equity Distribution*** - Mayor Allyn stated after June 30, 2024 Ledyard received a \$17,929 distribution check from CIRMA. He explained that 163 of the 169 Connecticut Municipalities were part of CIRMA (Insurance Provider). He stated when they have a good year the Municipalities receive an equity distribution, noting that this year Ledyard received a \$17,929 distribution check from CIRMA. He stated this revenue would be reflected in the next Revenue Report.

- Expenditure Year-to Date Report- June 30, 2024

Mr. Bonin stated nearly all of the Accounts have been closed out, noting that the Finance Department was still working on the following:

- Employee Expenses:
 - ✓ Water Pollution Control Authority Employee Expenses - Mr. Bonin explained that some adjustments to move expenses relative to insurance and other employee benefits for the Water Pollution Control Authority Employees would be made, noting the adjustments would reduce some expenses in the General Government Budget.

 - ✓ Board of Education Health Insurance - Mr. Bonin stated when the Health Insurance was started, at this time last year, that the Employer Deductions had already been set-up for the Board of Education. Therefore, he explained that there would be a significant adjustment to move funding from the *Withholding Account* to the *Employee Expense Account*. He stated that he would be meeting with the Board of Education Director of Finance and Human Capital next week to work through the details.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

1. 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.

RESULT: CONTINUE

- MOTION to remove from the table the MOTION to recommend the Town Council authorize the town to proceed with the engineering design of sewer mains along Fairway/Colby Drives (\$108,000) and Route 117 (\$137,500), respectively, per Weston & Sampson Engineers, Inc. Bid No. 2021-03 Amendments 3 and 4.

In addition, transfer and appropriate \$245,500 from Account #0210-10-1210-12101-58915 for said purpose.

Moved by Councilor Saccone, seconded by Councilor Ryan

VOTE: 3 - 0 Approved to Remove from the Table

A motion was made by Saccone, seconded by Ryan, that this be Approved and so declared. The motion carried by the following vote:

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

MOVER: Tony Saccone

SECONDER: Tim Ryan

AYE: 3 Saccone, Buhle and Ryan

MOTION to authorize the town to proceed with the engineering design of sewer mains along Fairway/Colby Drives (\$108,000) and Route 117 (\$137,500), respectively, per Weston & Sampson Engineers, Inc. Bid No. 2021-03 Amendments 3 and 4.

In addition, transfer and appropriate ARPA and/or other funding in the total amount of \$245,500 from Account # 0210-10-1210-12101-58915 (CNR Undesignated) for said purpose.

Moved by Councilor Saccone, seconded by Councilor Ryan

Discussion: Public Works Director-Town Engineer Mr. Masalin provided some background noting at their August 14, 2024 meeting the Finance Committee Tabled this funding request in an effort to identify a funding source to conduct the work.

Mr. Masalin went on to provide a recap of the progress/status of the Sewer Extension Projects as follows:

- **Phase I - Sewer Extension Project - \$1.11 million-** Would run from Ledyard Center to the High School (currently under way). - Mr. Masalin stated Phase I was currently under construction, however, he stated the work has come to a halt, pending the results of the geotechnical work pertaining to the retaining stonewall in the area at the intersection of Gallup Hill. He stated once this work was completed, they would proceed to run the sewer line and tie into from where they left off for the geotechnical work, noting the sewer line would run by the school entrances on Gallup Hill Road.
- **Phase II - Sewer Extension Project - Ledyard Center Commercial District -** Mr. Masalin explained ARPA Funding has been earmarked for Phase I (\$1.11 million) and Phase III (\$950,000) of the Sewer Extension Project. He stated the \$245,500 being requested this evening would pay for the engineering services for Phase II, which was needed to meet the ultimate goal of the sewer main extension to Ledyard Center.

Mr. Masalin stated in consultation with Finance Director Matthew Bonin it was

determined that the CNR Undesignated Account was the appropriate and adequate source of funding to proceed with the engineering work for Phase II.

Mr. Masalin continued by addressing the funding for the construction of Phase II, noting that there may be some avenues for contributions from those who would benefit from Phase II of the Sewer Extension Project. He stated Mayor Allyn, III, and Town Planner Elizabeth Burdick have met with interested parties and various Builders who have plans that were in the advanced stages of development. He stated that these interested parties were also working in parallel with the Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA) to seek sewer capacity.

Mr. Masalin went on to explain by having the engineering work done for Phase II that parties could come to the table and would hopefully be willing to help pay for the construction to extend the sewer line. He noted this work included the completion of Colby Drive, which was located off the cul-de-sac past Anderson Oil and around back to Colonel Ledyard Highway by the Salty Heffer Restaurant.

The Finance Committee, Mayor Allyn, III, Finance Director Matthew Bonin, and Public Works Director/Town Engineer continued discussing the following:

✓ ***CNR Undesignated Account:***

- Current Balance: \$775,000
- Funding Source: Transfer Station, Recycling Revenue, and other various revenues that were received for a specific program. CNR Undesignated was not funded by taxpayer dollars. For Fiscal Year 2023/2024 the Transfer Station collected \$296,000; and that the Transfer Station Revenues have been accumulating over the past few years. These funds were not designated for any specific use.

✓ ***Colby Drive/Fairway Drive:***

Habitat for Humanity was paying to build Colby Drive, which was a component of the 40 Habitat for Humanity Housing Units.

Both the Developer for the property that was located behind the former Ledyard Center School and Habitat for Humanity attended the Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA) August 27, 2024 meeting to request a Letter of Intent.

- ***Phase III- Sewer Extension Project -\$950,000*** - High School to Pennywise Lane to the Wastewater Treatment Facility - Mr. Masalin stated the engineering work for Phase III was nearly 90% complete. He stated he would be meeting with the Engineers and Gerber Construction tomorrow (September 5, 2024) at the construction site to review the Plan and to hopefully turn the Plan over to Gerber Construction to provide a quote for the construction work. He stated Phase III would upgrade the existing sewer line that runs from the High School to Pennywise Lane where it tied into the distribution system. He stated the larger sewer line would provide adequate capacity to handle the sewer services in the center of town.

VOTE: 3 - 0 Approved and so declared

The Finance Committee continued to discuss 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 as follows:

- ***Erickson Park Improvements \$55,000*** - Mayor Allyn stated Parks, Recreation & Senior Citizens Director Scott Johnson, Jr. was on vacation this week. Councilor Ryan stated that he was not as concerned about having a shovel in the ground as he was about having a contract in place by the December 31, 2024 ARPA Deadline.
- ***Mental Health Clinicians \$190,000*** - At the Town Council's August 14, 2024 meeting they approved to allocate \$90,888 to contract with the Child and Family Agency to provide mental health services to the students at the Juliet W. Long School, and Gales Ferry School for one school year.

Finance Director Matthew Bonin stated he has been working on a Subrecipient Agreement to have a contract in place obligating the \$90,888 of ARPA Funding to the Child and Family Agency.

Mr. Bonin went on to state that the Mental Health Clinicians ARPA balance would be almost \$75,000. He stated to spend these funds that they need to have a contract drawn-up for the Clinician that was being used at the High School, Middle School, and Gallup Hill School by December 31, 2024. He stated if all the funds are not spent it would have to be returned the Federal Treasury.

Councilor Buhle stated that she spoke with Child and Family Agency at the Juliet W. Long School/Gales Ferry School. She stated they were excited and grateful that the Town has provided funding to support the Program. She stated they have hired full-time clinicians, and they have expanded their student caseloads, which would help prove the necessity of the Program. Councilor Buhle went on to state in speaking with State Senator Cathy Osten, that she would make sure the need for services at the Juliet W. Long School and Gales Ferry School was noted so the State would continue to provide funding to Ledyard to support these services next year.

- ***Gales Ferry Route 12 Corridor Study \$50,000*** - Mayor Allyn, III, stated the Bids came in at \$75,000, which was more than the \$50,000 that was allocated for this work; therefore, additional funding was needed. However, he stated with removing the following components that the Bid has been reduced to \$65,000:
 - ✓ Engineering Work - The Study would be complete and useful to the Town. However, they would need to have the engineering piece done at a later time.
 - ✓ Traffic Impact Analysis - The Firm would use their general staff to conduct the Traffic Study instead of their Senior Traffic Analysts, who would cost more per hour.
- ***LED Message Sign in Ledyard Center \$35,000*** - Mayor Allyn stated the digital sign and installation was completed. He stated they were working to learn how to program the sign, which included adjusting the brightness, etc. He stated there would be very small amount of funding remaining from this project that could be reallocated to another project.
- ***Options for the Reallocation of ARPA Funding Remaining from Completed Projects:***
 - ✓ Ask Department Heads and the Board of Education if they had projects that they could get a contract in-place by the December 31, 2024 ARPA Deadline.
 - ✓ Surplus Funds could be directed to Road Maintenance. The paving contractor was under a State Contract, and therefore, they could get a contract in-place in a short-time.

Councilor Buhle suggested they not use the ARPA Funding for projects that the town could receive grant funding for. However, she stated that she would not have a problem using ARPA Funding as the town's share to obtain a grant. Mayor Allyn addressed the time involved to apply for and receive notification that the grant was approved, noting that there was not enough time to meet the December 31, 2024 ARPA Deadline.

- ✓ Street Sweeper - ARPA Funds could be used to pay off the Street Sweeper, and would save \$60,000 in interest.
- ✓ Mill Rate Stabilization Fund - ARPA Funding cannot not be used to off-set the budget.
- ✓ Install LED Lights at some of the Parks & Recreation Fields - Mayor Allyn stated replacing the lights at the fields was discussed in 2018. However, he explained because the lights were only used for a couple of hours at a time, the return on investment was going to be about 15 - 18 years, noting that the LED Lights were quite expensive.

RESULT: CONTINUE

Next Meeting: 09/18/2024; 5:00 p.m.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL

MOVER: Tony Saccone

SECONDER: Tim Ryan

AYE: 3 Saccone, Buhle and Ryan

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

RESULT: NO ACTION

3. Continued discussion regarding potential uses of the revenue received from Public Act No.21-58 "An Act Concerning Solid Waste Management" in accordance with "Resolution Regarding Revenues Received from Beverage Container Surcharges" (Nip Bottle Revenue) adopted on June 8, 2022.

At their August 14, 2024 meeting the Town Council approved to use the *Beverage Container Surcharge Revenues (Nip Bottles)* for the Five-Year Lease/ Purchase to buy a new Elgin Pelican Street Sweeper. By consensus the Finance Committee agreed to remove this from the Agenda, noting that should the need arise they could add it back to their agenda.

RESULT: COMPLETED

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

IX. NEW BUSINESS

1. MOTION to approve a special appropriation in the amount of \$75,000 from Undesignated Fund Balance to Land Use Professional/Tech Services account # 10114301-53300 in order

engage project specific consultants to support the Land Use Department for the remainder of the fiscal year (2024/2025).

Moved by Councilor Buhle, seconded by Councilor Ryan

Discussion: Mayor Allyn, III, stated the Land Use Department was essentially a one-woman show, noting that although there was support staff that Ms. Elizabeth Burdick was the only Town Planner in the Department. He stated currently there were five active or pending Land Use Applications, which were probably the biggest Applications Ledyard has ever had. He stated all the Applications required a lot of work, time, and responding to telephone calls and emails; as well as a multitude of exhibits. He stated should any of these Projects get to the proverbial finish line that the new tax revenue would more than make-up the requested \$75,000 to engage consultants to support the Land Use Office. However, he stated that it was going to take a lot of work to get there, noting that this \$75,000 would be for this fiscal year; and that additional funding would be requested as part of the budget for next year.

Land Use Director/Town Planner Elizabeth Burdick stated the Land Use Office supports the Planning & Zoning Commission, Inland Wetland & Watercourses Commission, Economic Development Commission, the Zoning Board of Appeals, the Housing Rehabilitation Loan Program, and the Local Transportation Capital Improvement Plan (LoTCIP) Report. She stated that she has also been working with Public Works Director/Town Engineer Steve Masalin and with the Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA) on the Sewer Extension Project. She stated in addition, the public was in and out of the Land Use Office all day to obtain Building Permits, Zoning Permits, Wetlands Permits, and to ask questions about development.

Ms. Burdick went on to state that currently both the Planning & Zoning Commission and the Inland Wetland and Watercourses Commission had four complex (technically and legally) Applications on their Agendas. She stated that the Applications had multiple parties, multiple attorneys, multiple interveners, and a lot of public participation at the Public Hearings, noting the meetings were going to as late as 11:00 p.m. and that she has scheduled the Middle School for every two weeks to hold Public Hearings in September and October.

Ms. Burdick continued by noting that she has also met with people to talk about six potential development projects for Ledyard. She stated two of the projects already had the engineering work started. She stated they were seeing a number of Applications coming in for development for multiple areas of town. She stated that currently she was working as a high-level Project Manager, noting that everything that comes into the office has to be read and has to be noted as an exhibit, etc. She noted the additional time she has been working, stating that she still could not catch up on the workload.

Ms. Burdick stated that she obtained an estimate of \$1,000 per week from a consultant to help the Land Use Office. She stated although this would not equate to \$75,000 for services through the end of this fiscal year (24/25) that there were going to be other experts that they were going to need to hire, who were above and beyond

a regular planner. Therefore, she stated that she believed \$75,000 would be a good place to start, noting that they would track the hours and usage of the funds.

Ms. Burdick stated Zoning and Wetlands Enforcement Officer Alex Samalot would be leaving Ledyard, noting that he took a job closer to home. She stated that she was qualified to do Enforcement work and that she may have to do that work as well until a new person can be hired. She stated the volume of work at this time cannot be addressed by one person, noting that the Land Use Office was staffed by herself and the Land Use Clerical Assistant. She stated Building Official Seumas Quinn and the Fiscal Assistant only handled the building aspect of the Land Use Department.

Mr. J.A. (Tony) Capon, 37 Silas Deane Road, Ledyard, Planning & Zoning Commission Chairman, stated as Ms. Burdick explained the Land Use Office was getting slammed. He stated in a town such as Ledyard that the Planner had to be like a Generalist, noting that they had to be good at everything. However, he stated that did not necessarily mean that the Planner had the expertise in highly specializes areas. He stated the Applications before them were going to require an expert to give their opinions, because the Applicants had their experts that were providing opinions. He stated that Ms. Burdick does not only handle Planning & Zoning, noting that she has a lot of other things on the table as well. He stated perhaps in a year from now, they might not have any large Applications. However, he stated the way economic development was going in Ledyard, that they could be seeing this level of work for the foreseeable future. He stated this \$75,000 was a good investment, noting as the Mayor mentioned, should these Applications be approved that they would generate tax revenue. He stated because of the workload the Planning & Zoning Commission has scheduled two meetings a month, those being on second and fourth Thursdays for September and October; and that he believed that they would need to do that for the foreseeable future.

Ms. Burdick stated that she previously worked as Ledyard's Land Use Director/Town Planner for 3.5 years noting that during that time the Town had development, but that she was able to do everything, noting that what was happening in Ledyard right now was not the norm. She also commented on the amount of work involved should these Applications be approved.

Councilor Ryan stated based on the development work and public facing that was going on that he supported the request for additional funding. However, he questioned whether the \$1,000 per week be for more than one consultant. Ms. Burdick responded stating that the Tyche Planning and Policy Group provided an hourly rate, not to exceed \$1,000 per week. She stated the Group had planners, zoning enforcement officers, wetland agents, and others who were all very experienced, and certified. She stated that she could send them a variety of things which would be addressed by their professional in that area; and that they would also be able to attend meetings if needed

Ms. Burdick went on to state that she also obtained quotes from Goman + York, and

CLA Engineers, who the Public Works Department uses, for when the Land Use Department may need other types of consultant work.

Councilor Ryan noted that \$1,000 per week for the remainder of this fiscal year (24/25) was about \$48,000, therefore, he questioned whether the Land Use Department would use the remaining balance of \$27,000 to contract with other specialists that might be needed to support the Land Use Department; and whether Ms. Burdick thought that more funding would be needed or if this was a *Not to Exceed \$75,000*. Ms. Burdick stated the request would be *Not to Exceed \$75,000* stating that she thought this was a good place to start, noting that they really did not know at this time what would be needed. She stated this option would allow the Land Use Department to have funding to choose from consultants for various things for less than what it would cost to hire another employee, noting that a Planner would cost about \$80,000 a year plus benefits.

Councilor Ryan stated economic development was good to have, therefore, he questioned whether it would be advantageous to continue the practice of contracting with professionals and consultants; or would the town need to consider bringing more staff on if this trend does not subside. Ms. Burdick stated that she and the Mayor have talked about this, noting that it would be beneficial to have another staff person in the Land Use Office, however, she stated for right now they needed immediate help; and she did not have time to draft a job description.

Councilor Buhle questioned whether Ms. Burdick planned to ask for funding in the upcoming Fiscal Year 2025/2025 Budget to hire additional staff. She stated in watching Departments become overwhelmed with applications or other duties, that it limits their time to talk about and/or consider opportunities for the town such grants. Therefore, she stated by not having enough staff that it costs the town more because they may have missed out on grants that could have helped to pay for projects or to purchase needed equipment that would have benefited the town in terms of growth and their taxpayers.

Ms. Burdick agreed with Councilor Buhle's comments regarding grant opportunities. She noted when she was previously in Ledyard that she worked with Mayor Allyn, III, Public Works Director/Town Engineer Steve Masalin, and other staff to successfully apply for and receive a number of grants which included the \$1.87 Local Transportation Capital Improvement Plan (LoTCIP) Grant for the Multi-Use Pathway and Sidewalk Extension Project that was currently being constructed from the High School to Ledyard Center; a \$129,000 Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) for the Town Green Improvements; and two other grants totaling \$2.3 million from Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) and the Connecticut Financing Housing Assistance (CHFA) for the significant renovation work that was recently completed at the Kings Corner Senior Citizens Housing Facility in Gales Ferry. However, she stated with the current workload that she did not even have time to draft a job description to bring on more staff.

Councilor Saccone stated the hiring of consultants was a great solution for right now, because the Land Use Department was short-handed for the amount work that they currently have. He stated long-term that they would need to assess where they were and the Department’s needs going forward.

VOTE: 3 - 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT: RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL

MOVER: Jessica Buhle

SECONDER: Tim Ryan

AYE: 3 Saccone, Buhle and Ryan

- 2. MOTION to approve a tax refund to June Munch, 119 Whalehead Rd., Gales Ferry, CT 06335 in the amount of \$3,817.82.

Moved by Councilor Ryan, seconded by Councilor Buhle
Discussion: Councilor Saccone stated this was a refund for a triple payment of taxes. He noted in accordance with Tax Collection Procedures, that tax refunds over \$2,400 were required to be approved by the Town Council.

VOTE: 3 - 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT: RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL

MOVER: Tim Ryan

SECONDER: Jessica Buhle

AYE: 3 Saccone, Buhle and Ryan

- 3. Any other 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 5:45 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.