



TOWN OF LEDYARD

741 Colonel Ledyard Highway
Ledyard, Connecticut 06339

Community Relations Committee For Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Meeting Minutes

Chairman Gary St. Vil

Sp. Meeting

Monday, September 29, 2025

6:45 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/87287370502?](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87287370502?pwd=NnQu9OZEPeHN5vQwxPdy3zdNJvPNBC.1)

Or by Audio Only: Telephone: +1 646 558 8656; +Meeting ID 872 8737 0502; Passcode: 203633

I CALL TO ORDER

- the Meeting was called to order by Councilor Brunelle at 6:45p.m. at the Annex Meeting Room - Town Hall Annex Building.

Councilor 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
 Gary St. Vil
 William Barnes

In addition, the following were present:

Carmen Garcia-Irizarry Town Councilor
Allyssa Siegel-Miles Resident
Roxanne Maher Administrative Assistant

III. BUSINESS OF THE MEETING

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

Councilor Brunelle stated during the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion's September 17, 2025 meeting that she proposed that the Committee consider putting together a message that could be printed and posted around town and digitally as well to address and to simmer down the tensions across the county and in their community. She stated that she asked the Committee Members to prepare some phrases or sayings to discuss at tonight's Special Meeting for the flyer.

Councilor Brunelle continued by stating in preparation for tonight's meeting that she made a Sample Digital Flyer for the Committee to review; and she presented the layout as follows:

*"Ledyard Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion
One Community, Many Hearts*

(Graphic- Or- Picture the Committee agreed on)

Stop the Hate, We are Neighbors First"

Councilor Brunelle opened the floor for the Committee to share their ideas, phrases, or sayings for the Flyer.

Councilor Barnes stated that he left the September 17, 2025 meeting thinking about the *Ledyard Academy* and the presentations that the Departments have been working to prepare to help residents navigate the town's operations. He stated that the proposed Flyer may be a chance to launch the *Ledyard Academy* to let their residents know about the resources and services that were available and how to access them and to learn more about their town. Therefore, he stated that it was important for the Committee to have clarity on the general message and what they were trying to do.

Councilor Barnes continued by noting that he and Councilor Parad had a conversation in which she shared some recent US Government Announcements that described reducing the rhetoric. However, he stated that they needed to be careful regarding any message regarding voting, noting that it was one thing to encourage a certain behavior, but that he did not think they could obligate the town to spend money that could be construed as election related. He stated their local Republican Town Committee (RTC) and Democratic Town Committee (DTC) were already doing that.

Councilor Brunelle stated that the Sample Digital Flyer she drafted was a picture of a lot of people in a crowd and the text message was "*Ledyard Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion - One Community Many Hearts - Stop the Hate We are Neighbors First*". Councilor Brunelle stated in the Sample Flyer that she put photos of the three Community Relations Committee Members just as an example. She stated because the message was not about them, it was about the community, that she would be happy to take the Committee Members photos off the Flyer. She stated that she did not think the Sample Message was political, or was about voting, noting that it says they should come together as a community, because they were neighbors first.

Councilor Parad stated that she was brainstorming and that she sent a few possible slogans noting that they were just ideas and the Committee did not have to use them. She stated they were ice breakers and starting points. She noted that after she and Councilor Barnes had the passing conversation that he mentioned, that she thought about their conversation, noting that they really want to tone down the rhetoric. She noted that she had mentioned the *Joint Statement* that was put out by the Connecticut House of Representatives, and that she was thinking about how they could show they were all one community together. She stated that she wanted to get Councilor Barnes' thoughts on that.

Councilor Barnes stated that he was not able to find the *Joint Statement* that was put out by the Connecticut House of Representatives, but that he would like to see it. He stated making a statement was one thing, but he thought that it would go a long way if they could reference the *Joint Statement* that was put out by the Connecticut House of Representatives, noting that it would show that the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion buys into the State's House of Representatives message. He stated by sharing the State's House of Representatives *Joint Statement* that the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion would not be the authors of the concept, explaining that they would only be endorsing the *Joint Statement*.

Councilor Parad stated they saw the State's House of Representatives *Joint Statement* circulating around, noting it started off as a nice idea; however, she stated that people took the *Joint Statement* and went the other way. Councilor Barnes questioned whether Councilor Parad thought that people may have misinterpreted the *Joint Statement*. Councilor Parad stated that it was her opinion that it was confusing because although both the Democrats and Republican House Leaders signed onto the *Joint Statement* the public could only find the Joint Statement on the Democrat's website, noting that the Republicans did not publicize the *Joint Statement* on their website. She stated if the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion were to put out a *Joint Statement Message* that they would need to do better than what the State House Representatives did.

Councilor Barnes stated that although he did not see the State's House of Representatives *Joint Statement* that he did see an on-line discussion regarding "*The*

Release of Joint Statement Calling for a More Civil Tone on Social Media”. He also noted that following the on-line discussion regarding the *Joint Statement*, that there was also a statement regarding the death threats that was sent to a State House of Representative Member. He stated in reading all of this that he did not think the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion should use this.

Councilor Parad stated that if the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion was going to do something like a *Joint Statement Message* that they would have to see what went well with the State’s House Leaders *Joint Statement*; and what did not go well, and what they might not want to repeat.

Councilor Brunelle stated because they were looking to put out a message for Ledyard, that Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion would not have to necessarily piggyback on someone else’s *Joint Statement*. She stated that it was the Communication’s Relations Committee’s job to communicate with the town. She stated that the *Joint Statement Message* needed to be simple so they could put it out in a digital form, and they could put it out in print as well. She stated that they could put printed posters of their *Joint Statement Message* around town at places such as the Senior Center, Parks & Recreation facility, Town Hall, and perhaps in business. She stated that they would be basically sharing a message for “*Less Hate*”, and “*To Be Neighbors First*”. Councilor Barnes questioned whether it was necessary to use the word “*Hate*” in the *Joint Statement Message*. Councilor Brunelle and Councilor Parad replied stating “*No*”. Councilor Brunelle stated the sample digital flyer she provided was just an example and that the *Joint Statement Message* could be changed. Councilor Barnes noted that “*Community First*” was all true, however, he stated he was uncomfortable with using the word “*Hate*” in the *Joint Statement Message*. He explained that he believed it was like the expectant theory, noting that if they describe *Hate* then they might get *Hate*.

- **Photograph -Graphics**- Councilor Barnes questioned whether the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion had any photographs from any of the events they did this year, noting that the graphic could be photo of an event where they were a community. Councilor Brunelle stated that they had photographs from the Town Council’s March 12, 2025 meeting when they announced the winners of the Black History Month Contest. Councilor Barnes stated the photographs of the Black History Month Contest were awesome, however, he stated the photographs would only have the three winners of the contest, noting that he thought a photograph where they could show everyone who was there would show “*Community*”. Councilor Parad questioned whether they had any photographs of all those who came out to discuss the Pickleball Courts on November 7, 2024. Councilor Brunelle suggested they use a photograph of the Farmers Market and she stated that she would contact Farmers Market Committee Chairman Pam Ball to see if they could use a photograph on the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion’s *Joint Statement Message*. Councilor Barnes suggesting a photograph from the Memorial Day Parade. He stated the Ledyard Congregational Church did a lot with the Ledyard Fair; and he noted it was a significant loss when the Ledyard Fair

went away. However, he stated that the Ledyard Farmers' Market is held in the community every week throughout the summer months, noting that he liked the idea of using a photograph of the Farmers Market to show their community. Councilor Brunelle stated the Ledyard Farmers Market was the Top Rated Farmers Market in the State by Connecticut Magazine.

- ***Approval of Joint Statement*** -Councilor Barnes questioned whether the *Joint Statement Message* was going to be from the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion or from the Town Council. Councilor Brunelle stated the *Joint Statement Message* would be from the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, because they were the Communications Relations Committee. Councilor Barnes stated whatever message this Committee agreed on; that they would need to bring it to the Town Council to approve; just the same as the Finance Committee brings their items to the Town Council.
- ***Costs*** - Councilor Barnes noted the on-line digital flyer transaction costs would be minimal. However, he questioned the cost to print the flyers. Councilor Brunelle stated she did not know the cost to print the Flyers/Posters noting that she would have to get those costs from the printer. She stated that she did not have a problem with paying for the cost to print the flyers/posters herself.
- ***Joint Statement Message***- Councilor Barnes suggested the Joint Statement Message include something that would make the residents want to find out more. He stated that perhaps the residents may want to find out more about the *Ledyard Academey* presentations on the town's website, or things that they were doing to make residents feel more like they belong in Ledyard.

Councilor Parad stated the urgency for the *Joint Statement Message* was the upcoming November 4, 2025 Election and the Rhetoric. Councilor Brunelle agreed with Councilor Parad's comment, stating that they were looking to tone down the hate and to bring the tensions in town down; and to remind people that they were neighbors first. She stated the push to have tonight's Special Community Relations Committee for Diversity; Equity & Inclusion was to get the *Joint Statement Message* out in a timely fashion. Therefore she stated for tonight's meeting that they need to focus on the wording of the *Joint Statement Message*.

Councilor Parad stated that it pained her to bring the "*Elephant in the Room of Ledyard*" up this evening to a group of people that she respected, but that something was going on out there. She stated noted the messages and videos that were going out to the community that were publicly approved by the members of the Republican Town Committee (RTC), and therefore, had Councilor Barnes' name was on everything. She stated that she was highly concerned because the messages were not consistent with what she knew of Councilor Barnes. She proceeded to read a written statement that she prepared which also addressed the budget process.

Councilor Brunelle noted Councilor Parad's statement, explaining that the Community Relations Committee was created before her time on the Town Council, explaining that in years past there was an upheaval in Ledyard because people felt that they were not being heard. Therefore, she stated the Community Relations Committee was developed for the residents to have a place, if they needed, to come and speak their mind. She stated that she wanted to keep this Committee going so people feel that there was a place to come and speak, and that someone was listening, even if people do not come to their meetings, that they were still listening to what was going on in the community. Therefore, she stated that she would like to see this Committee develop the language for the *Joint Statement Message* to present at the Town Council's October 8, 2025 meeting; stating that she hoped the Town Council would approve the *Joint Statement Message* for the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion to get the *Joint Statement Message* out to the public. She stated the *Joint Statement Message* would let the people know that they were here, they were working together, that they were one community, and that they were neighbors first. She stated that she understands that they were not going to all agree; and that they were not going to all like everybody; and that was okay. However, she stated there was no reason for Ledyard to have the heated extent that was going on right now. She stated if there was something that she could do to lower the temperature, that she was going to do that, because they were community first. She noted a good example of being "Community First" was the "Autum Night Dance" at the Senior Center, stating that many people from the community came together to help support the event, by donating things, and showing up to help. She stated that they needed more community events, to help each other, and not to tear everybody apart. Councilor Parad stated that she just wanted to know how they could fix this.

Councilor Barnes responded to Councilor Parad's statement, commenting that he would not speak for those involved in the videos, noting the positions they make were theirs. He stated although the Republican Town Committee (RTC) sanctioned the videos and messages that there was not a vote to review each video. He proceeded to address Councilor Parad's comments regarding the budget, and he noted the voters perspective, and the concerns regarding the taxes that he has been hearing when knocking on doors. Councilor Brunelle injected by stating that Councilor Parad was talking about the transparency of the budget process, and she stated that there was transparency, noting that all of the Town Council's meeting videos were available on the meeting portal for residents to review. She asked that this Committee stay focused on the *Joint Statement Message* this evening.

The Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion continued by reviewing a number of statements that were suggested by Councilor Pard as follows: following:

- *"When we put aside partisan politics and focus on people, incredible things happen. I'm proud to work with colleagues and neighbors who share a commitment to building a healthier, stronger Ledyard-together".*

- *“Progress doesn’t come from division-it comes from teamwork. I believe in listening, collaborating, and finding common ground to move our community forward.”*

 On Health, Wellness, and Social Determinants

- *“Health isn’t just about healthcare-it’s about housing, education, transportation, and opportunity. I’m committed to improving the social determinants of health that shape life in Ledyard.”*
- *“Wellness starts in our neighborhoods, our schools, and our town policies. Every decision we make is a chance to support healthier lives for all.”*

 On Community Engagement and Partnership

- *“I’m grateful to serve alongside passionate committee members and residents who step up, speak out, and help make Ledyard better. This work is only possible because of you.”*
- *“Local government works best when it’s powered by community voices. If you care about Ledyard, there’s a place for you at the table-and We would love to work with you.”*
- *“We Encourage all Ledyard Residents to Listen, Collaborate, and Find Common Ground. Progress comes from Teamwork”*

The Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion noted that although they liked all of the statements, that some of the statements sounded more like recruiting or health statements rather than “Committee First”. They also agreed that the

Joint Statement Message needed to be written in a positive format rather than a negative behavior format. The Committee agreed on the following *Joint Statement Message*:

“We Encourage all Ledyard Residents to Listen, Collaborate, and Find Common Ground. Progress comes from Teamwork”

- MOTION to recommend the Town Council endorse the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion’s Joint Statement Message to be distributed in the form of a Digital and possibly a Printed Flyer *“We Encourage all Ledyard Residents to Listen, Collaborate, and Find Common Ground. Progress comes from Teamwork”* as presented in the draft dated September 29, 2025

Moved by Councilor Barnes, seconded by Councilor Brunelle

Discussion: Councilor Brunelle stated that she would contact Farmers' Market Committee Chairman Pam Ball to obtain permission to use a photograph from the Farmers Market. She stated that should Chairman Ball not agree for the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion to use a Farmers Market photograph that she would look for another graphic and put the digital flyer together to be included on the Town Council's October 8, 2025 Agenda for their endorsement. She also stated that the Committee would not ask for town funds to print the flyers/posters, noting that she would fund what she could.

VOTE: 3 - 0 Approved and so declared

IV ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Parad stated that because she would be attending a Family Medicine Conference, she would not be able to attend the October 8, 2025 Town Council Meeting. She stated that she would be doing a lot of research on all of the things they were trying to accomplish, noting that she would like to have that on the Agenda at some point.

Councilor Brunelle stated that Councilor Parad could write a letter to submit her comments on the proposed *Joint Statement Message*.

Councilor Parad questioned whether she had the authority to continue her outreach efforts with the *Primary Care for All Americans*. Administrative Assistant Roxanne Maher explained that because tonight's meeting was a Special Meeting they could only discuss the item on the agenda.

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

VOTE: 3 - 0 Approved and so declared. The meeting was adjourned at 7:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
April Brunelle
Committee Chairman

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