



TOWN OF LEDYARD
CONNECTICUT
TOWN COUNCIL

741 Colonel Ledyard Highway
Ledyard, CT 06339
<http://www.ledyardct.org>
Roxanne M. Maher
860 464-3203

Chairman Kevin J. Dombrowski

HYBRID FORMAT
MINUTES
COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING

Wednesday, June 15, 2022

6:30 PM

Town Hall Annex-Video Conference

DRAFT

- I. **CALL TO ORDER** – The Meeting was called to order by Councilor Paul at 6:30 p.m. at the Town Hall Annex Building Meeting Room.

Councilor Paul welcomed all to the Hybrid Meeting. He stated for the Town Council Community Relations Committee and members of the Public who were participating via video conference that remote meeting information was available on the Agenda that was posted on the Town’s Website - ICompass Meeting Portal.

II. **ROLL CALL-**

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Location	Arrived	Departed
Gary Paul	Committee Chairman	Present	In-Person	6:30 pm	7:31 pm
John Marshall	Town Councilor	Present	In-Person	6:30 pm	7:31 pm
Bill Saums	Town Council	Excused			
Mary McGrattan	Town Councilor	Present	Remote	6:30 pm	7:31 pm
S. Naomi Rodriguez	Town Councilor	Present	In-Person	6:30 pm	7:31 pm
John Rich	Police Chief	Present	Remote	6:30 pm	7:31 pm
Roxanne Maher	Administrative Assistant	Present	Remote	6:30 pm	7:31 pm

- III. **CITIZENS' COMMENTS** – None.

- IV. **INFORMATIONAL ITEMS** – None.

IV. **REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

MOTION to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of May 18, 2022

Moved by Councilor Marshall, seconded by Councilor Paul

VOTE: 2 – 0 Approved and so declared

V. **OLD BUSINESS**

1. **Black History Month 2023 Activity/Contest.**

Councilor Paul stated he would like the Committee to start working on preparations for next year’s February, 2023 Black History Month Activity.

Councilor Marshall suggested having activities throughout the year instead of just one month. Councilor Paul stated because the county has designed February as “*Black History Month*” that it was his intent to begin planning for their Black History Month activity now so that they would be ready to roll-out the project for February, rather than start in mid-February like they did this year. He stated Councilor Rodriguez was instrumental in this year’s *Black History Essay and Poster Contest* and he hoped to get Councilor Saums’ and Councilor Rodriguez’s input as they work to develop a Black History program for February, 2023.

Councilor Rodriguez responded to Councilor Marshall’s question about doing more things throughout the year instead of just in February; noting that she was working with the Mayor to submit a grant application to obtain funding that would allow them to do more things throughout the upcoming year. She stated they missed the opportunity to submit the Grant Application for the 2022 Black History Month Activities. However, she stated that they planned to submit a Grant Application in preparation for next year. She noted that Councilor Saums reviewed the town’s grant application approval process with her.

RESULT: CONTINUED

Next Meeting; 08/17/2022 6:30 p.m.

2. Develop a “*Community Relations Commission Mission Statement*”.

Councilor Paul stated since this Community Relations Committee began their work that he has also been reviewing the videos from the previous Committee’s meetings to try to get some history on the issues they worked on; noting that during this process he has become more aware/familiar with the subject matters that the community would benefit from. He went on to state that he has been reviewing the draft “*Mission Statement*” Councilor Saums provided noting that it encompassed a lot of what the Community Relations Committee was about. He stated that he planned to present a draft *Mission Statement* at the Community Relations Committee August 17, 2022 meeting for review and discussion.

RESULT: CONTINUED

Next Meeting; 08/17/2022 6:30 p.m.

3. Public Information Forums to present to residents the types of services the town offers; how to access services, and the authority residents should direct concerns regarding services.

Councilor Paul stated the Community Relations Committee reached out to the Farmers’ Market to check on whether there would be space for the Town Council to host a table/booth at the June 29, 2022 Market. He stated the Farmers’ Market Committee has agreed to provide a space for the Town Council, noting that the Farmers’ Market has asked that the booth not be used for political purposes. He stated as the Community

Relations Committee has been discussing right along that the purpose of hosting a booth at the Farmers Market was to engage with residents, similar to what they used to do at the Ledyard Fair. He stated that this would provide an opportunity for the Town Council to learn more about the types of issues residents were interested and to provide information regarding the types of services and programs the town provides/offers to the community.

Councilor Paul went on to note that the Community Relations Committee also asked the Police Department to attend the June 29, 2022 Farmers Market to give a demonstration on their new body-worn and in-car camera system and to talk about how the technology would be a benefit to protect the police officers and the residents as well. The Committee and Chief Rich discussed where the Police Department's body-worn and in-car camera demonstration should be located at the Farmers' Market. They also discussed having a Police Officer at the Town Council's booth to let visitors know about the 20-minute body-worn and in-car camera demonstration that would take place at 6:00 p.m.

Police Chief John Rich stated the Police Department stands ready to engage with the community and to present the types of community outreach programs the Police Department offers. He stated the police Department has given presentations to the Rotary and the Senior Center regarding the types of things the Police Department does in the interest of solving problems outside of the enforcement arenas such as the Department's involvement in Juvenile Review Board, Crisis Intervention Program, Special Needs Family Registry for residents who have cognizant issues such as Dementia, Alzheimer's, Memory Loss, Traumatic Brain Injury, Autism, etc. so that if the Police Department was called because a family member was lost or wandered away from home, they would have the information readily available such as a photograph of the person, the name of their caretaker, medications, the vehicle that may be driving, etc., which would allow the Police Department to better respond to the situation and help the family member.

Councilor Marshall suggested the Police Department give a demonstration of a *Mock-Pull-Over* to help the public understand what they should or should not do if they were pulled over in a traffic stop. He stated this type of information would be of interest and a benefit to the Community. Chief Rich agreed that this information would be helpful for the public to know; however, he suggested the June 29, 2022 only be focused on the body-worn and in-car camera system, noting that other informational presentations, such as the one Councilor Marshall suggested could be done on another day.

Councilor Paul stated that he would stop by the June 22, 2022 Farmers Market to talk with Market Manager/Chairman Lauriann Hary about where the Police Department's body-worn and in-car camera demonstration should be located during the June 29, 2022 Market. He also noted that he had a canopy/tent and table for the Town Council's June 29, 2022 Booth. He stated the Farmers Market was open from 4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. The Committee also agreed to have a flyer available to hand out to residents similar to the "*Meet Your Elected Officials*" flyer that they used for the May 14, 2022 event they hosted at the Nathan Lester House.

Chief Rich stated the June 29, 2022 body-worn and in-car camera demonstration would be about 20-minutes and that the Police Officers would have time for questions and answers. He stated the Police Department also had a table and banner and would have a police cruiser at the demonstration.

RESULT: CONTINUED

Next Meeting: 08/17/2022 6:30 p.m.

4. Identify various town venues to host “*Informal Conversations in the Park*” to engage residents in discussions regarding their concerns and their ideas for potential solutions.

Councilor Paul stated the Land Use/Planning/Public Works Committee has been discussing residents’ concerns regarding security and safety issues at the Park on East Street. He suggested the Community Relations Committee cancel their Regular July 20, 2022 and hold an *informal gathering* at the Park on East Street to talk with residents about their concerns.

The Community Relations Committee agreed by consensus to cancel their Regular July 20, 2022 meeting and to hold an *informal gathering* at the Park on East Street at 6:30 p.m. to talk with residents regarding their concerns. Councilor Paul noted that this informal gathering would not be a meeting, noting that no actions or decisions would be made.

The Committee discussed sending a flyer to the residents in the area of the Park on East Street to inform them that there would be an “*Informal Gathering*” at the Park on July 20, 2022 to hear about their concerns regarding security and safety at the Park.

RESULT: CONTINUED

Next Meeting: 08/17/2022 6:30 p.m.

5. Schedule joint meetings with the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation.

Councilor Paul noted that Councilor Saums was continuing to work with Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Council Member Crystal Whipple on potential dates for the two groups to meet to discuss ideas and items of mutual concerns. He stated that Councilor Saums also let Ms. Whipple know that the Town Council would be at the Farmers Market on June 29, 2022 and he invited the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Council Members to stop by their table.

RESULT: CONTINUED

Next Meeting: 08/17/2022 6:30 p.m.

6. Present information to bring awareness to October being “*Depression and Mental Health Month*”

Councilor Paul stated during the Community Relations Committee’s Booth at the Farmers’ Market in late August or September that he would like to highlight Mental Health Awareness. He stated during the winter months it gets darker earlier and there tends to be more isolation with the colder weather. He stated whether it was kids or adults that were suffering from mental health (depression, anxiety, suicide, etc.) that the person, or their parent/caretaker, may not know where they could get help. He stated during that week that he would like to invite Youth Service Coordinator Kate Sikorski-Maynard, a CIT Officer (Crisis Intervention Trained) and the Ledyard Visiting Nurse Association to talk with residents and to provide information regarding the many resources that were available.

Councilor Paul noted the importance to let residents that they were being represented and that their needs were being thought about and that their community was here for them. He stated there were a lot of racially charged issues currently going on, noting the incident that happened at the Ledyard High School Girls Basketball game on February 5, 2022. He went on to state with technology the bullying in school today was different from the bullying they grew up with. He stated that much of this behavior stemmed from mental health issues and noted the importance to talk about these types of issues and to provide information regarding the resources that were available to the community. He stated Ledyard was a town that cared about everyone; and he stated that they were not going to leave anyone behind.

Councilor Marshall suggested the Committee also invite someone from the Suicide Prevention Hotline to be at their Farmers’ Market Booth in August/September. He stated when a family member takes their life it often seemed like there was no indication that the person was struggling. However, he stated looking back there were often times signs that family and friends did not see, because they did not know what to look for. He stated that once people know what types of behaviors or signs to look for that they may be able to help save that person’s life. He stated years ago mental health was not talked about, noting it was always hush-hush. He stated today society was more comfortable with discussing mental health and depression issues and were now better able to identify the signs to help people.

Councilor Rodriguez noted the *Brian Dage Foundation -Brian’s Healing Hearts* was a Family Suicide Prevention Group located at 461 Main Street in Niantic. She stated it was a great program and she offered to reach out them. The Community Relations Committee agreed to have Councilor Rodriguez to contact Brian’s Healing Hearts.

Councilor Paul went on to note that depression could also be exasperated because individuals could not finically keep up with providing for their family due to inflation, etc. Therefore, he also noted the importance for residents to know that there were programs to help such as:

- Home heating fuel through Thames Valley Council for Community Action (TVCCA) and other assistance programs.
- Utilities – Electric/Water Assistance.
- Homeowners Assistance program that provided no interest loans to help people replace their furnace, roof or septic system, etc.
- Home meal delivery available for those who cannot get out to grocery shop through Thames Valley Council for Community Action (TVCCA)
- The Linda C. Davis Food Pantry located in Ledyard Center.
- United Way located in Gales Ferry was a great resource.
- Connecticut’s Paid Family Medical Leave Program.

Councilor Paul noted that inflation and energy costs have increased so quickly as a result of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the sanctions that were put in place. Therefore, he stated that he wanted to make sure they were all doing their part to get information out to the residents about the energy assistance program that were available. He stated some people just do not know about the available assistance programs and some people were too proud to ask for help. He stated as they move into next fall that he would like the Community Relations Committee to discuss the energy assistance programs and other programs that were available in an effort to get the information out to residents to and make people aware of the confidential application process. He stated Ledyard does a great job in helping their residents in-need.

Councilor Paul stated over the next couple of months he would like the Community Relations Committee to put this type of information together to provide to residents at their Farmers’ Market Booth in late August or September as they move into the fall.

Police Chief John Rich stated the Police Department partners with the United Way located in Gales Ferry. He explained in working with United Way the Police Department has a number of resources (telephone numbers and contact information) programed into their Dispatch System to help residents after hours. He stated as an example of those resources, if someone runs out of heating oil at 11:00 p.m. the Police Department could help residents. He stated the Police Department was not trying to be 211 but as the Emergency 911 Call Center they have a resource directory to assist residents.

RESULT: CONTINUED	Next Meeting: 08/17/2022 6:30 p.m.
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7. Any other Old Business proper to come before the Committee – None.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

1. Any new business proper to come before the Committee

Councilor Rodriguez stated she attended a meeting at the Police Department that was hosted by Parents of Autistic Children Group on Friday, June 10, 2022. She noted one of the parents mentioned the “*The Blue Envelope*” and “*The Green Envelope*” program and

suggested they have a “*Mock Pull-Over*” noting that people functioning with autism, with a brain injury or with anxiety issues may react differently at a routine traffic stop; or they may take off because they do not know what to do. She asked the Community Relations Committee for permission to work in conjunction with the Police Department and the Parents of Autistic Children to arrange a Mock-Pull-Over Demonstration at Ledyard High School that would be open for anyone from the public to attend, with a date to be determined. She stated that she has already spoken with the Parents of Autistic Children Group about the demonstration and that they were on-board. The Community Relations Committee agreed to Councilor Rodriguez’s request to work in conjunction with the High School; the Police Department and Parents of Autistic Children to schedule the “*Mock Pull-Over*” demonstration.

Chief Rich provided an overview of the of *The Blue Envelope Program*:

- ***The Blue Envelope Program*** – Individuals functioning with Autism – Chief Rich stated the Police Association and the Department of Transportation have formed a partnership which allowed Police Officers to better identify individuals within the autism spectrum disorder during traffic stops. He stated “*The Blue Envelope*” was created by the State Legislature and went into effect on January 1, 2020. He stated the *Envelopes* were available at all Police Stations, Department of Motor Vehicle locations, driving schools and through autism advocacy groups and he noted they could obtain multiple envelopes. He stated the purpose of *The Blue Envelope* was:
 - ✓ To hold the driver’s license, registration and insurance card so they can hand it to the Police Officer during a traffic stop,
 - ✓ The outside of the *Blue Envelope* included tips and instructions for both the Police Officer and Driver on how to successfully communicate with each other during a traffic stop.

Chief Rich explained that drivers should keep the *Envelope* in the glove box or visor of their car so they can easily find it and hand it to a Police Officer, who has been trained on the envelope’s meaning. He also noted that “*Green Envelopes*” were available for the hearing impaired.

Chief Rich stated Southern Connecticut State University has an Autism Center; and he noted that their Police Department has worked with the Autism Center, and they have hosted two separate exercises for *Mock Pull-Overs* that were directed toward individuals with Autism. He stated as Councilor Marshall brought up earlier this evening (Old Business Item #3), that they could have an informational demonstration during which they could highlight *The Blue Envelope* for those with autism and *The Green Envelope* for the hearing impaired. He stated he would contact Southern Connecticut State University and their Police Department to obtain a copy of their lesson plan to use for a demonstration/presentation in Ledyard, noting that practice makes perfect.

Councilor Marshall questioned whether there was something that could be located on the outside the car to alert Police Officers that the driver had special needs, such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) before they approached the vehicle noting that flashing lights and the siren may trigger a certain behavior. Chief Rich stated the Police Department's Special Needs Family Registry - Special Needs Profile was used for various cognizant issues, such as Alzheimer's, Traumatic Brain Injury, Autism, and other things they would like the Police Department to know as it related to potential behavior health issues in advance. He stated families could fill out the form which included a picture of their loved one, medications, primary care giver, physicians, vehicle that they had access to, which would provide information regarding the individual's disability on the way to the call.

Councilor Marshall stated he has been at the Gales Ferry Fire Department when a 911-Call has come in with instructions not to use lights or the siren because there was an indivial with special needs and the flashing lights and the siren may trigger a certain behavior. He suggested they think about placing something on the outside of the car that would alert the Police Officer ahead of time not to use the flashing lights or the siren in a traffic stop.

Councilor Rodriguez stated during the Parents with Autistic Children June 10, 2022 meeting a parent noted that the Special Needs Family Registry was very helpful. She stated the Parents with Autistic Children Group would like to have another meeting with the hope that more families attend to learn about the programs available.

RESULT: CONTINUED	Next Meeting: 08/17/2022 6:30 p.m.
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VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Marshall moved the meeting be adjourned, seconded by Councilor Paul.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gary Paul
Committee Chairman
Community Relations Committee