

2 Winfield Way
Ledyard, CT 06339

April 22, 2024

Town of Ledyard, Town Council
741 Colonel Ledyard Hwy
Ledyard, CT 06339-1511

To the Town Council of Ledyard:

I have nearly four years of experience publicly serving the Town of Ledyard on both the Board of Education and the Town Council. During this time, and in the 19 years I have lived here, I have neither heard of nor seen a Chair gavel another board or Council member to silence them prior to April 15th, where I saw it happen twice in one evening ... for no other reason than the Council Chair did not want another Councilor to be heard. Relatively early in the Town Hall meeting on the FY25 budget, Councilor Ryan attempted to ensure a misrepresentation was expressed in context, and Chairwoman Rodriguez pounded the gavel declaring "Point of Order!!" until Councilor Ryan stopped talking. And later in the meeting, Councilor Ryan attempted to make another point in which Chairwoman Rodriguez both talked over him and pounded the gavel, again to silence Councilor Ryan.

Firstly, Point of Order is a statement to address a procedural misapplication or a breach of rules. It is not intended to silence another Councilor, and Councilor Ryan broke no town meeting rules in the meeting when he attempted to provide further context to statements being made. There is nothing in either the Town Charter or the meeting's Agenda which prevents a Councilor from speaking during the meeting. Councilor Rodriguez had no reason to gavel Councilor Ryan down other than she did not want to hear his statements. This is a dictatorial action, a model of authoritarianism, and a direct deprivation of the townspeople's duly elected representative, an action more associated with Nikita Khrushchev and the Soviet Union than any western democracy.

Secondly, the gavel's repetitive use against Councilor Ryan last Monday was chilling. It gives the townspeople little assurance that the Chair can effectively listen to and consider different viewpoints proffered by the various Councilors, much less incorporate their opinions into the management of town business. I laud Councilor Ryan in his actions to bring further clarity to ambiguous statements and apparent misrepresentations, and implore him and the other Councilors to ensure the fullest of information is presented to the public. And I hereby publicly admonish the Council Chair, to ensure the presentation of information more completely and

more fully understandable, without partisan shading. It is early in this Council's tenure, which already appears to be riddled with fractious dissension and garbled communication, not present in the previous two years. I hope this is not the legacy you wish to leave. This town deserves better.

Get well soon,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Whit Irwin". The signature is stylized and cursive, with a prominent initial "W" and a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right. A period is visible at the end of the signature.

Whit Irwin