

Roxanne Maher

From: Matthew Bonin
Sent: Monday, June 2, 2025 12:11 PM
To: April Brunelle; Carmen Garcia Irizarry; Gary St. Vil; Jessica Buhle; Kevin J. Dombrowski; Naomi Rodriguez; Roxanne Maher; Timothy Ryan; Tony Saccone; William Barnes
Cc: Fred Allyn, III; Patricia A. Riley; Elizabeth Burdick; Christine Dias
Subject: May 27th Special Council meeting

Members of the Town Council,

I have a few comments about the May 27th Special Council meeting that I was going to share at the next finance committee meeting, but I feel they are best shared with the full Council.

First and foremost, I would like to thank Mayor Allyn and Councilor Ryan for their continued support.

Second, I have never felt more unappreciated than I did at that meeting.

The message I heard loud and clear was “we don’t value what our department heads do for the Town of Ledyard”

The fact that none of the Councilors championing these cuts could even look myself or Town Clerk Patricia Riley in the eye was very telling.

It was clear the entire process of undoing the long-overdue salary survey work was pre-orchestrated.

I would like to clarify a glaring error in Councilor St. Vil’s motion in which he claimed he was still pushing forth 4% raises for the department head budget lines he proposed cutting. Town Planner Elizabeth Burdick was hired at a salary of \$105,000 (information that you were provided). The proposed budget reflected a 3% raise to get to a total of \$108,150. Yet you proposed reducing that line to \$102,066 resulting in a pay cut of \$2,934. You are reducing her salary to less than what she is making now. An *actual pay cut*?

Councilor Brunelle’s comment regarding why employees at the BOE are paid more couldn’t be more disingenuous and insulting to all town department heads. Her comment and I quote was “the pay is probably appropriate to what the education and skill level is”. For those of you that don’t recall the comment, it can be found roughly at the thirteen-minute mark. Personally, I will never forget it.

Education and skill level? A little background about myself. I have a Bachelor of Science in Accounting. I have been working in municipal finance for 36 years, since 1989. I became a CPA, Certified Public Accountant, in 1995. For those of you that are not aware, the CPA exam is widely known as one of the most difficult and rigorous professional certifications to obtain. A certification that I am extremely proud of. It is clear that Councilor Brunelle knows nothing about me and what my education and skill set are.

Let’s talk about pay disparity. For comparison purposes, my counterpart at the BOE currently makes \$155,250 annually. My annual salary is \$111,459. Currently he makes almost \$44,000 more a year more than I do. That’s \$850 a week. I remind you that I am a Certified Public Accountant; my counterpart at the BOE is not. Based on Councilor Brunelle’s statement, seems as though I should be making north of \$155,000. Not even close to what was being requested.

I find it ironic that there was no discussion whatsoever on BOE salary increases. Councilor Ryan tried but it fell on deaf ears.

Councilor Buhle and Councilor Saccone sat at the Finance Committee meeting held on May 21, 2025 and clearly stated that they supported the budget that was being passed on to the full Council for approval. Well, based on the way the vote went, that was not true. I do acknowledge that Councilor Saccone did support the department head pay increases which I appreciate.

Let's talk about something that occurred earlier in the budget process.

Council-Chair Rodriguez came up to me after the public hearing that was held on April 21, 2025 and whispered to me that she hoped I didn't take it personally when she spoke out at a previous finance committee meeting regarding the salary increases of certain department heads. She stated, "I had to do that because I am in the public eye and because of the position I am in but I do think you are all worth it". I was dumbfounded and was left speechless. You think we are worth it, but you are not willing to support us in public?

What have I accomplished since I started here in January of 2022? These are just a few examples – more can be provided upon request.

1. Shortly after I started here, I identified several Town of Ledyard items on the state's list of Unclaimed Property. The bulk of it was \$60,000 tied to the demutualization of Anthem back in 2001 for which the Town of Ledyard was to receive shares of Wellpoint stock. The shares went unclaimed by the town and were turned over to the State of CT. The state sold those shares and the proceeds went into unclaimed property where they have sat for twenty plus years. It was a long process, but I was eventually able to reclaim those funds for the Town. Almost enough to pay for the salary increases twice over.
2. Upon my start here, I inherited the remnants of two large school construction projects. While the projects were completed in 2019, the town was still waiting to receive in excess of \$9 million dollars of reimbursement from the state. The filing of the reimbursement forms is the responsibility of the Board of Education, *not* the Town. Because the town was waiting for reimbursement, a \$9,700,000 short term loan was on the books when I got here. Working with an outside consultant and staff from my office, we were able to supply the necessary documentation to the State of Connecticut to secure almost \$8 million in grant reimbursement owed to the Town. By securing these proceeds, it put an end to roughly \$300,000 of annual interest expense on the temporary financing. I am still working with the state on the closeout audit of this project which will hopefully lead to additional grant reimbursement.
3. A few years ago, while not part of my responsibility as I am not paid to be the Town Treasurer, I took it upon myself to look at how the town surplus was being invested. Much of it was sitting idle in low interest-bearing accounts as interest rates were beginning to climb. It became clear that we were not fully utilizing available investment vehicles. Mind you state statutes dictate how town dollars can be invested. I spearheaded the realignment of our surplus cash into higher interest-bearing accounts. In fiscal year 2022, the Town earned a total of \$43,000 of interest income. In fiscal year 2023 through April of this year, the town has earned almost \$2,500,000. Again, while I am not being paid to be the town treasurer, I am constantly analyzing cash balances to see where the town can maximize the earning potential of cash on hand.

I am on the tail end of my career. I am not working here for the money. In the private sector, I was making almost twice what I am making now. I am quite certain most of you are not aware of the demand for municipal finance directors these days. Do you know how difficult it is to find a quality finance director? Councilor Garcia-Irizarry referenced Colchester in her pre-orchestrated comments. Do any of you know the history of the finance director position in Colchester. I would suggest Googling it – they can't keep one. Part of the reason behind the request to bump my salary is to prepare for my successor. You are not getting a qualified candidate to sit in my chair for my current wage. The Town of Coventry reached out to me two weeks ago regarding their open finance director position. I would be happy to share that email upon request. Coventry has an annual budget of less than \$50,000,000. Significantly less than the Town of Ledyard's budget. The starting salary in the email they sent me was \$133,000 to \$153,000. Let that sink in. That is where I should be at, that is where my counterpart is already at. Actually, he is north of that. The ask in this budget was getting me to the low end of that range.

During my career as an auditor, I have been in more town halls than I can count. I have witnessed some pretty miserable municipal employees trying to get through the day. That is not what I see here. I see a dedicated Mayor and dedicated department heads that work hard, enjoy the work they do and take great pride in what they do. While he was not part of

the cut, you will not find a better Public Works Director than Steve Masalin. I am truly amazed at the work he does. Patricia Riley is an amazing Town Clerk, highly dedicated to the work that she does. She is more often than not, still here working when I am leaving. Our new Human Resources Director Christine Dias has done great things in her short time here. Ask any of the other department heads, they will tell you. Town Planner Elizabeth Burdick has put in countless hours of her time lately with all the various ongoing projects. I would challenge any of you to spend a day with one of us. We all wear many hats.

It is just astonishing to me that this Council is willing to destroy that over \$30,000. While I can't speak for others, I do believe this will cause some to seek employment elsewhere. I will certainly be weighing my options, of which there are plenty. I planned on getting into municipal finance consulting and assisting towns with finance role gaps upon my retirement from the Town of Ledyard. That may happen much sooner than I anticipated, and my first client just might be the Town of Ledyard. This Council action is personal, and a message has been sent to all department heads. I don't have to tell you what that message is.

Thank you



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