

TOWN OF LEDYARD CONNECTICUT

741 Colonel Ledyard Highway
Ledyard, Connecticut 06339-1551
(860) 464-3203
towncouncil@ledyardct.org

Chairman S. Naomi Rodriguez

March 12, 2025

Mr. Christopher Jelden
3 Whalehead Road
Ledyard, Connecticut 06339

Dear Mr. Jelden:

Thank you for your February 15, 2025 email regarding your concerns about the delays with the Juliet W. Long Heating Ventilation & Air Condition (HVAC) Project. In responding to your concerns the following information is being provided to help provide some context:

At the February 22, 2022 Referendum the townspeople approved a "*Resolution Appropriating and Authorizing the Issuance of Bonds in the amount of \$6,725,000 for Various School Improvement Projects*". This authorization included the following Board of Education Projects: (1) The replacement of the roofs at the Central Office, Gales Ferry School, and Juliet W. Long School; (2) The installation of solar equipment at Gales Ferry School and Juliet W. Long School; (3) Upgrades to the Building Management Systems (BMS) at Gales Ferry School; and (4) Electrical and *HVAC upgrades at Juliet W. Long School*, which was originally designed as a split system.

However, to meet the State's updated requirements to receive the Grant Funding for the Juliet W. Long School HVAC upgrades, the system had to be redesigned as a full air conditioning system with outdoor CO2 monitoring, outdoor intake, and a Building Maintenance System (BMS) which was the same type of system that was installed at the Gallup Hill School and Middle School.

Because the new HVAC design for the Juliet W. Long School would cost \$1,825,000 more than the amount that was included in the original \$6,725,000 authorization (previously approved in 2022); the Funding Authorization needed to be increased to include an additional \$1,825,000 bringing the total funding authorization to \$8,550,000 to pay for all of these School(s) Improvement Projects.

To increase the Bond Authorization (borrowing amount) the Town had to go back to a Referendum, which was held on October 17, 2023 to ask the townspeople to again vote on these school projects to increase the dollar amount.

In seeking Bids for the HVAC Project only one contractor submitted a proposal which came in nearly \$1.5 Million over budget. Board of Education Director of Buildings and Grounds Wayne Donaldson and Permanent Municipal Building Committee Chairman Joseph Gush met with the sole bidder to review the project and costs to look for potential savings; realizing that the town may need to go back to the townspeople once again to increase the Bond Authorization.

At their February 3, 2025 meeting the Permanent Municipal Building Committee rejected the sole proposal received for the Juliet W. Long HVAC Project due to insufficient authorized funding. In addition, the Committee requested the Architect reconfigure the bid packet to allow for a longer period of time to complete the project, greater flexibility on materials utilized and to include value engineering options. The Project is currently in the re-bid process with bids due on March 17, 2025.

In response to your questions:

- *What are the Town Council's expectations regarding its own representation at PMBC meetings?*

While Town Council Liaisons try to attend their assigned committee meetings, it should be noted that they do not have authorization to make decisions on behalf of the Town Council. Their role is to act as a conduit between the Committee and the Town Council. Also, with recently moving the Permanent Municipal Building Committee (PMBC) meetings from the Board of Education Central Office to the Council Chambers, their meetings were now being held in a hybrid format via zoom, providing transparency for our residents, and enabling Liaisons to attend remotely, or review the meetings at a later date.

- *What are Chairman Gush's expectations for Town Council involvement?*

Mr. Gush was recently elected Committee Chairman at the PMBC January 6, 2025 meeting. I cannot speak for Mr. Gush's expectations; however, I would say that Liaison Councilor April Brunelle makes every effort to attend the PMBC meetings in-person, remotely, viewing the meeting videos, or reading the minutes.

- *If there is a gap between these expectations, what steps are being taken to bridge it?*

Please be assured that the Town Council is aware of the status of the projects that are assigned to the PMBC through the following:

- ✓ *Action Letters* are provided to the Town Council after each PMBC meeting.
- ✓ Mayor Allyn, III, provides updates during his reports at our Town Council meetings.
- ✓ Board of Education Liaison Councilor Carmen Garcia-Irizarry also provides updates during her Reports at our Town Council meetings.
- ✓ Staff communicates and works together to support the needs of the PMBC.

While we are all concerned that the Juliet W. Long School HVAC Project has continued to face setbacks causing delays, that we must ensure that the project is properly engineered and designed, we comply with town procedures and state requirements, and that the \$8,550,000 that the townspeople have entrusted the town to spend on school improvement projects are constructed to specifications; and contractors were not working overhead while children were in the schools.

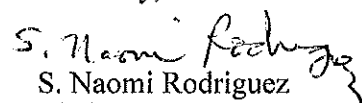
It is essential that the school facilities we send our children to are safe learning environments, that have quality indoor air. Unfortunately, these types of improvements in older buildings can take more time to be sure we get them right.

Please know that we share your frustration since the original project authorization was provided three-years ago; and we are aware of the challenges the Juliet W. Long School HVAC Project has been facing. We are all working to facilitate this project, while complying with state and local requirements.

We understand that in the early summer months the Juliet W. Long School is hot, making for a challenging learning environment; and we ask for your continued patience.

Should you have any additional questions regarding the Juliet W. Long School HVAC Project; or concerns regarding any other issues, please do not hesitate to contact me. Your comments are important to us.

Sincerely,


S. Naomi Rodriguez
Chairman

cc: Permanent Municipal Building Committee
Mayor Fred Allyn, III
Board of Education