



TOWN OF LEDYARD

741 Colonel Ledyard Highway
Ledyard, Connecticut 06339

Finance Committee Meeting Minutes

Chairman S. Naomi
Rodriguez

Regular Meeting

Wednesday, May 15, 2024

5:00 PM

Town Hall Annex Building - 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/82115525972?pwd=r6PASxhiix96EjIkLHMMxGADx8t2Ej.1>

by Audio Only: Telephone: +1 646 558 8656; Meeting ID: 821 1552 5972; Passcode: 578108

I CALL TO ORDER

the Meeting was called to order by Committee Chairman Councilor Saccone at 5:00 p.m. at the Council Chambers Town Hall

Councilor Saccone welcomed all to the Hybrid Meeting. He stated for the Town Council Finance Committee 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-Legistar Meeting Portal.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Tony Saccone
Jessica Buhle
Tim Ryan

In addition, the following were present:

S. Naomi Rodriguez Town Council Chairman
Carmen Garcia-Irizarry Town Councilor
Matthew Bonin Finance Director
Ed Lynch Water Pollution Control Authority Chairman
Brandon Graber Board of Education Member
Nicholas Bajdos Ledyard High School Student
Roxanne Maher Administrative Assistant

IV. PRESENTATIONS / INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

None.

III. RESIDENTS & PROPERTY OWNERS COMMENTS

(See Old Business #4 PILOT Composting Program)

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION to approve the Finance Committee Regular Meeting Minutes of April 17, 2024

Moved by Councilor Buhle, seconded by Councilor Ryan

VOTE:3 - 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

VI. Finance Director's Report

Finance Director Matthew Bonin reported on the following: (1) School Roof Projects \$8,550,000 (Central Office, Gales Ferry School, Juliet W. Long School) - Mr. Bonin stated at their May 6, 2024 meeting the Permant Municipal Building Committee (PMBC) reviewed the Bids received and selected/awarded the contract; and (2) School(s) Consolidation/Improvement Projects (Middle School & Gallup Hill School) - Mr. Bonin stated yesterday he met with the State's Department of Administrative Services (DAS) to discuss the release of the Grant Funding owed to the Town. He stated that hopefully within the next couple of weeks the State would release \$6 million of the remaining \$10 million owed to the Town, which would be used to pay down the Short-Term Bonds/Debt. He explained the Town has submitted all the required paperwork for the State to conduct its Project Audit, noting that once the Project Audit was completed the State would release the final Grant Payment to the Town. However, he stated that they do not know when the State would conduct the Project Audit.

RESULT: CONTINUE

VII. Financial Reports

Finance Director Matthew Bonin stated the following Financial Reports were attached to the Agenda on the meeting portal:

- Revenue Year-to Date Report- April 30, 2024

Mr. Bonin provided an overview of Revenues noting the following:

- ✓ Tax Collection Revenues were at 99.4% of budgeted.

- ✓ Education Cost Sharing (ECS) Final Payment was received.
- ✓ Interest on Deposits has earned \$838,000.

- Expenditure Year-to Date Report- April 30, 2024

Mr. Bonin noted the Expenditures were continuing to track as been previously reported.

RESULT: CONTINUE

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

1. MOTION to approve a water rate increase of 5% to become effective on July 1, 2024 as recommended by the WPCA and contained in the water and sewer rate table presented at the WPCA April 23, 2024 Public Hearing; in accordance with Ordinance #400-001 “An Ordinance Creating a Water Pollution Control Authority for the Town of Ledyard”)

Moved by Councilor Buhle, seconded by Councilor Ryan

Discussion: Councilor Saccone explained in accordance with Ordinance #400-001 “*An Ordinance Creating a Water Pollution Control Authority for the Town of Ledyard*” and *CGS Chapter 102, Section 7-239, the Town Council shall set just and equitable rates or charges of the water system that shall be sufficient for the payment of expense of operation, repair, replacement and maintenance and foreseeable capital expenses of such system.* He noted that WPCA Chairman Ed Lynch was present this evening and he asked him to provide additional information regarding the requested 5% water rate increase.

Mr. Ed Lynch, 11 Red Brook Lane, Ledyard, WPCA Chairman, attending remotely, explained there were the following two reasons for the Water Rate increase:

- (1) Water Rate Increase - Mr. Lynch stated that Groton Utilities notified the WPCA that they would be increasing the cost of water by 5% to commence on October 1, 2024. He stated in accordance with *CGS Chapter 102, Section 7-239*, and Ordinance #400-001 the WPCA held a Public Hearing on April 24, 2024 to present the proposed water rate increase to the rate payers.
- (2) Lead Survey - Mr. Lynch stated in past years the WPCA did not allocate funding in their Contingency Account. However, he stated because the State Department of Health (DPH) was pressing water providers to conduct a Lead Survey, the WPCA allocated \$35,476.44 in their Contingency Account for the upcoming Fiscal Year 2024/2025. He explained that this would be an on-going process for the next 3-5 years to determine if they had any lead in their system. He stated a Consultant from Boston has been working with DPH and he noted that the WPCA obtained a \$455,000 quote from the Consultant to conduct the Lead Sampling Survey. He stated the WPCA applied for a Grant through the Department of Health; however, he stated because they were not a distressed community, he was not sure if the WPCA would qualify for a 100% Grant,

explaining that they may be able to obtain a No Interest Loan from DPH. He went on to state the WPCA was going to try to appeal to the DPH to perhaps conduct the Lead Survey a different way, such as checking the service line when they replace water meters. He stated the WPCA would need to submit documentation to the DPH by October, 2024 and that they hoped to have a more economical approach by then to determine the presence of lead. He stated at \$455,000 the WPCA did not want to use the Consultant; and that they also did not want to burden the Town with the cost of the Lead Survey.

Councilor Ryan noted the WPCA allocated \$35,476.44 in their Contingency Account for next year. Mr. Lynch stated that was correct, noting that the Contingency Account line went from zero to \$35,476.44, commenting that over the years that the WPCA's Water Operations Budgets have been very lean.. He stated that Groton Utilities has been assisting the WPCA to work through the process with the Department of Public Health (DPH). Councilor Ryan stated because historically the Water Operations Budget only took in the amount of revenues needed to support the expenditures for the year that he wanted the public to be aware that the upcoming year was going to be different because they were going to need to begin to take in a little more than what was planned to go out because there was the expectation that they were going to need the Contingency Funding for the Lead Sampling Survey. Mr. Lynch stated Councilor Ryan's explanation was correct.

Councilor Saccone questioned how the 5% rate increase would impact the ratepayers bills. Mr. Lynch stated ratepayers would see about a \$3 increase in their monthly water bills. He stated the current rate structure was based on a minimum usage of 3,333 gallons of water; whether the household used that amount or not. Therefore, he stated the WPCA was collecting data to consider a more equitable rate structure, such as a Fixed Connection Fee and then charge for per gallon used.

VOTE: 3 - 0 Approved and so declared

The Finance Committee thanked Mr. Lynch for attending tonight's meeting.
Mr. Lynch left the meeting at 5:11 p.m.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL

MOVER: Jessica Buhle

SECONDER: Tim Ryan

2. MOTION to approve two tax refunds in the combined total amount of \$7,321.19 with each exceeding \$2,400.00 in accordance with tax collector departmental procedures.
 - Kineo Properties LLC \$3,602.19
 - Messier, Massad, Burdick & Associates \$3,719.00

Moved by Councilor Buhle, seconded by Councilor Ryan

Discussion: Councilor Buhle stated in accordance with policies established for the Tax Collection Department, refunds to taxpayer exceeding \$2,400 are to be approved by

the Town Council. She stated that tax refunds were typically due to an overpayment or double payment to the taxes.

VOTE: 3 - 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT: RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL

MOVER: Jessica Buhle

SECONDER: Tim Ryan

3. Any other New Business proper to come before the Committee.

None.

IX. OLD BUSINESS

1. Continued discussion regarding the status and possible changes to Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and Capital Non-Recurring (CNR) Fund based on the American Rescue Act Funding (ARPA) and the process to approve ARPA Projects and expend ARPA Funding.

Finance Director Matthew Bonin stated that he provided an updated ARPA Spreadsheet regarding the completed projects, projects in progress, and projects not started.

Councilor Ryan stated that he was interested in the final numbers for Phase I of the Ledyard Center Sewer Line Project.

RESULT: CONTINUE

2. Discussion regarding potential uses for the funding received from the National Opioid Settlement Payments.

Chairman Rodriguez stated the Ledyard Prevention Coalition posted on their facebook page that the Emergency Narcan Kits were installed in Ledyard. She noted that one Emergency Narcan Kit was located near the Gales Ferry Library and that one Kit was located by the Town Green in Ledyard Center. She stated they need to get the word out that the Emergency Kits were available and what was inside the Kits. She noted the location of the Emergency Narcan Kits was based on the Map that identified where overdoses occurred in Ledyard. She stated the Report showed that since January, 2023 to February, 2024 there were 40 overdoses and one fatal overdose in Ledyard/Gales Ferry.

Councilor Saccone questioned whether the Ledyard Prevention Coalition would be doing a public campaign to let residents know about the Emergency Narcan Kits. Chairman Rodriguez stated that the Ledyard Prevention Coalition started using Social Media to get the word out, however she stated that she would like to see more public awareness. Councilor Saccone noted that recently the Solar Charging unit at the Town Green was vandalized; therefore, he questioned whether the Emergency Narcan Kit was in a lite area. Chairman Rodriguez stated that she would need to visit

the Town Green to find out the exact location of the Emergency Kit.

RESULT: CONTINUE

3. Continued discussion regarding potential uses of the revenue received from Public Act No.21-58 “An Act Concerning Solid Waste Management” in accordance with “Resolution Regarding Revenues Received from Beverage Container Surcharges” (Nip Bottle Revenue) adopted on June 8, 2022.

Councilor Buhle questioned whether Public Works Director/Town Engineer Steve Masalin provided an update regarding the cost to Lease/Purchase a Street Sweeper and whether Preston was interested in co-sharing the Street Sweeper.

Councilor Saccone stated that he spoke with Public Works Director/Town Engineer Steve Masalin, noting that Mr. Masalin believed that he would have some information to present to the Finance Committee in June. He stated that Mr. Masalin obtained a verbal interest from Preston about sharing the cost of the Street Sweeper. He noted that Ledyard had 110 miles of roadway; and Preston had 55 miles of roadway and, stating that it would be a 2-1 Cost Share of a Street Sweeper.

Councilor Buhle stated because the language of Public Act No.21-58 “*An Act Concerning Solid Waste Management*” was specific in how the funding could be used that she believed that the Composting Program would qualify:

Public Act No.21-58:

- (1) ***Environmental measures intended to reduce the generation of solid waste;***
- (2) Reduce the impact of litter caused by such solid waste, including, but not limited to, the hiring of a recycling coordinator;
- (3) The installation of storm drain filters designed to block solid waste and beverage container debris or
- (4) The purchase of a mechanical street sweeper, vacuum or broom that removes litter, including, but not limited to, such beverage containers and other debris from streets, sidewalks and abutting lawn and turf

Councilor Buhle stated the Composting PILOT Program (Old Business Item #4 below) would reduce waste; and in turn reduce the town’s tipping cost to dispose of household waste, because they would be taking the food scraps out of the household waste stream.

Councilor Ryan questioned whether the Committee was talking about the use of the Nip Bottle Revenue (Item #3) or the Compost PILOT Program (Item #4). Councilor Saccone stated that the two items somewhat roll into one another.

The Committee agreed to move on to Item #4 Compost PILOT Program.

RESULT: CONTINUE

4. Discussion regarding PILOT Food Scrap Composting Program.

Mr. Nicholas Bajdos, 11 Glenwoods Road, Gales Ferry, Ledyard High School Sophomore, stated his class was working on their Civics In Action Projects, that were aimed at trying to make a change in the community. He stated his Project was centered around Food Waste Management, for both the Schools and Town, noting that he thought the System would be effective at reducing landfill trash. He stated earlier this month that he spoke to the Rotary Club at a Conference, and that they seemed to support the idea of a similar Food Waste System. He went on to note in reviewing a brochure that was posted on the town's website that he read about the anaerobic digesters, which could compost basically anything you could eat. He stated that he supported the town participating in Food Waste Compost Program that was being constructed in Preston, noting that he believed that it was a more effective way to compost food scraps opposed to individuals composting in their backyards.

Councilor Saccone questioned whether the Agri-Science Program at the High School was working on a compost program. Mr. Bajdos stated that Agri-Science Program does do some composting using food scraps generated by their program. However, he stated the Agri-Science Program was not doing a Food Waste Compost program for the school itself, such as the food scraps from the cafeteria.

Chairman Rodriguz suggested Mr. Bajdos review the Town Council Meeting Minutes or video of April 10, 2024, noting that Southeastern Connecticut Resource Recovery Recycling Authority (SCRRA) Executive Director David Aldrige gave a thorough presentation regarding the proposed anaerobic digester Food Waste Compost Facility that they would be building in Preston. She noted that it was very informative and may help him with his project.

The Finance Committee thanked Mr. Bajdos for attending their meeting and speaking this evening.

Councilor Buhle noted at the Finance Committee's April 17, 2024 meeting Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated that she would obtain additional information regarding the Compost PILOT Program and she questioned whether she was able to follow-up with Blue Earth Compost and Southeastern Connecticut Resource Recovery Recycling Authority (SCRRA).

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated that she was able to reach Blue Earth Compost Mr. Sam King; however, she was not able to reach SCRRA Executive Director Mr. David Aldridge, however, she stated SCRRA had information on their website. Councilor Garcia-Irizarry provide the following information:

Blue Earth Compost:

- Starter Kit at a cost of \$2,188 would include the following:
 - ✓ 100 - 6 Gallon Container (\$1,738)
 - ✓ 2,500 Compostable Bags (\$450)
 - ✓ 64 Gallon Bin at the Transfer Station - No Container Delivery Fee (If starter Kits and 64-Gallon Bin were delivered the same day)
- One -Year Contract \$7,802; Six-Month Cost \$3,901
 - ✓ \$35 per week service collection
 - ✓ \$12 X 2 per week 64-Gallon Bin Fee
 - ✓ \$2 X 2 per week Cleaning Fee
 Total Weekly Fee: \$63.00
- Early Termination Fee 1-Month charge (\$250)
- Cost Estimate was valid thru May 27, 2024

Southeastern Connecticut Resource Recovery Recycling Authority (SCRRRA)

- 3-Gallon Containers cost \$6.00 each

The Finance Committee discussed the following:

- Pro's & Con's 6-Gallon Containers (Blue Earth) versus 3-Gallon Containers (SCRRRA)
- 6-Month Trial period versus 1-Year Contract (Blue Earth is a One-Year Contract, should the town choose not to proceed after 6-months the town would need to do an Early Termination and pay a 1-Month Fee)
- PILOT Program Low Participation versus High Participation
- Purchase **Compostable Bags** on their own versus purchasing the bags from Blue Earth Compost
- State-wide Composting will be required in 2027- Important to begin to educate residents about food waste and composting. PILOT Composting Program was a good way to ease residents into the Compost Program.
- PILOT Program - 100 Compost Containers available to residents "*First Come First Serve*". Residents would need to bring their food waste to the Transfer Station. Blue Earth Compost would pick-up the food scraps from the Transfer Station weekly.
- Do residents have to use Compostable Bags, could they collect the food waste directly into the Collection Container and bring it to the Transfer Station. It was noted that using the Compostable Bags would be cleaner.

Finance Director Matthew Bonin stated that should the Street Sweeper Lease-Purchase Plan move forward that it would most likely use all of the funding received from *Beverage Container Surcharge Revenues (Nip Bottles)* each year.

Chairman Rodriguez suggested the Finance Committee wait until they hear back

from Public Works Director/Town Engineer Steve Masalin about the Street Sweeper Plan before they move forward with spending money from the *Beverage Container Surcharge Revenues (Nip Bottles)*.

Councilor Ryan stated that he agreed with Chairman Rodriguez's suggestion to wait until they hear back from Public Works Director/Town Engineer Steve Masalin. Therefore, he stated that they would need to obtain a new Cost Estimate/Quote from Blue Earth Compost. Councilor Saccone stated that he agreed that they needed to understand the cost of the Street Sweeper, however, he stated that the Blue Earth Compost Starter Kit would not break the bank relative to the *Beverage Container Surcharge Revenues (Nip Bottles)* or the Street Sweeper.

Chairman Rodriguez questioned the balance of the *Beverage Container Surcharge Revenues (Nip Bottles)* Fund. Finance Director Matthew Bonin stated that the town has been receiving about \$30,000 per year, noting that the Surcharge Revenues were disbursed to Municipalities every six months.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry noted the Nip Bottle Spreadsheet that was attached to the Agenda Packet. Councilor Ryan stated that he began drafting the Nip Bottle Spreadsheet in an attempt to capture potential projects that might be funded by the *Beverage Container Surcharge Revenues (Nip Bottles)*. He stated the draft Nip Bottle Spreadsheet did not constitute appropriations.

- ***Solar Powered Trash Compactors*** -Councilor Buhle stated that she had previously proposed that the town consider purchasing solar powered trash compactors. However, she stated that she would be in-favor of deferring the Solar Powered Trash Compactors for the Food Waste Compost Program.

Councilor Ryan stated that they did not have enough data to move ahead with the Street Sweeper. However, he stated that he believed that the town needed to move ahead with a Food Waste Composting Program. He stated prioritizing expenses such as the Street Sweeper and a Food Waste Compost Program would need to be addressed during their budget preparation for Fiscal Year 2025/2026.

RESULT: CONTINUE

5. Any other Old Business proper to come before the Committee

None.

- X. ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Buhle moved the meeting be adjourned, seconded by Councilor Ryan.

VOTE: 3 - 0 Approved and so declared, the meeting was adjourned at 6:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Anthony Saccone, Sr.

Committee

Committee Chairman

Finance

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