



TOWN OF LEDYARD
CONNECTICUT
TOWN COUNCIL

Chairman S. Naomi Rodriguez

MINUTES
LEDYARD TOWN COUNCIL – REGULAR MEETING
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12, 2025; 7:00 PM
HYBRID FORMAT
VIDEO CONFERENCE VIA ZOOM

DRAFT

- I. CALL TO ORDER – Chairman Rodriguez called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. at the Council Chambers, Town Hall Annex Building.

Chairman Rodriguez welcomed all to the Hybrid Meeting. She stated for the members of the Town Council and 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. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

- III. ROLL CALL –

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Location
William Barnes	Town Councilor	Present	In-Person
April Brunelle	Town Councilor	Present	In-Person
Jessica Buhle	Town Councilor	Present	In-Person
Carmen Garcia-Irizarry	Town Councilor	Present	In-Person
Kevin Dombrowski	Town Councilor	Excused	
S. Naomi Rodriguez	Town Councilor	Present	In-Person
Tim Ryan	Town Councilor	Present	In-Person
Tony Saccone	Town Councilor	Present	In-Person
Gary St. Vil	Town Councilor	Present	In-Person

- IV. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS/PRESENTATIONS

• Board of Education proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget

Superintendent of Schools Jason Hartling thanked the Town Council for the opportunity to present the Board of Education proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget this evening. However, he stated that before he gets into the budget he wanted to thank Councilor Buhle for her help with the LEAF Cajun Cookoff that was held on March 2, 2025 at Barkin Barley in Gales Ferry. He also thanked Councilor Garcia-Irizarry and everyone who helped put the event together, noting that it was a great idea, and they had an awesome turn-out.

Superintendent Hartling proceeded by providing an overview of the Board of Education’s proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget, noting that it was in the amount of \$40,667,242. This was an increase of \$2,297,429 or 5.98% over the current Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget.

Mr. Hartling noted in accordance with the Town Charter the Budget was submitted to the Mayor’s Office on Monday, February 24, 2025. He also noted that he forwarded a copy of the Board of Education’s proposed Budget and their Capital Plan to the Town Council to ensure they all had the correct budget numbers that were approved by the Board of Education.

Mr. Hartling explained that the Board of Education went through a Comprehensive Strategic Planning Process, noting that Chairman Rodriguez joined them during their discussions as the Town Council’s Representative.

• Mission Statement

Ledyard Public Schools provides every child with the experiences, supports, and opportunities necessary for life and success in our diverse and evolving world.

- Strategies
 - ✓ Enhancing partnerships within and beyond the schools;
 - ✓ Providing opportunities for all students; and
 - ✓ Ensuring active and engaged learning.

- District Priorities

Mr. Hartling reviewed the School District's Priorities as follows:

- Continuing opportunities for students in alignment with the strategic plan;
- Successful launch of the new literacy program (in compliance with the State of CT mandate) to benefit our students;
- Ongoing professional growth and support of our educators and staff;
- Continue enhancements and evolution of our intervention model;
- Continue to address and ameliorate achievement gaps and the number of students below basic on the Smarter Balanced Achievement Consortium English Language Arts and the Math (SBAC).

- Key Budget Changes

Mr. Hartling provided an overview of Key Changes in the Education Budget as follows:

- \$113,500 Security Enhancements.
- \$710,619 Inflationary Adjustments include the following:
 - ✓ \$68,980 Miscellaneous Adjustments.
 - ✓ \$77,000 Transportation – Ledyard has the lowest Transportation Contract in the region.
 - ✓ \$44,800 Utilities – Due in part to the Public Benefit Charge - Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA).
 - ✓ \$482,569 Special Education - Mr. Hartling explained that Ledyard's Student Services was an ongoing area of challenge, noting that this was a statewide issue. He stated the costs or outplacement services continues to skyrocket for support such as Speech, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy. However, he stated the biggest Special Education driver was transportation. He explained that although transportation was part of their general role, that special education transportation was broken out because it needed to be included their special education total costs. He also addressed new students or students who have been recently identified for special education.
- Increased literacy intervention capacity with High Dosage Tutoring.
- 4.0 FTE Paraeducators to support regular and special education programming - This was actually equivalent to 6 staff personnel, because they do not work a full schedule.
- 3.0 FTE Elementary STEM Teachers & Materials – Mr. Hartling explained that Ledyard had secured about \$1 million dollars in Department of Defense Education Activity Grants (DODEA), which was a springboard that provided a lot of the curriculum work and professional learning that the Board of Education was required to do; and has been doing over the last several years. However, he stated that the DODEA Grants were sunsetting; and now they would have to continue with that curriculum work and materials. He noted that he wanted to be explicitly clear, these were all things that they would have had to do regardless of whether they had received the DODEA Grant funding. He stated that receiving the DODEA Grant provided a savings for their taxpayers over the last several years.

- Budget Prioritization/Recommendations

Mr. Hartling stated as they have in past years, the following budget requests were prioritized and color coded and he reviewed the following:

Board of Education Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget Recommendations:

Green Recommended to be Included in the Budget

\$668,939

REQUEST	ESTIMATED COST	LOCATION	TYPE
3.0 FTE Elementary STEM	\$193,896	Curriculum	Salary
Elementary STEM Materials	\$4,500	Elementary	Equipment
Increase TEAM Mentor Payment to \$750 a year	\$9,983	Curriculum	Salary
General Curriculum Supplies	\$4,700	Curriculum	Supplies
Central Office Surge Capacity	\$3,120	Curriculum	Salary
Intervention Resources	\$15,000	Curriculum	Supplies
Math Learning Center K-5 (student books, manipulatives, intervention resources)	\$17,62	Curriculum	Supplies
Curriculum Associates iReady/Ready Classroom 6-8 (ELA & Math)	\$44,266	Curriculum	Supplies
Textbook – General Instruction (increase over prior year)	\$16,772	Curriculum	Supplies
DreamBox	\$25,728	Curriculum	Supplies
Forefront Platform K-5	\$5,736	Curriculum	Supplies
Ignite -Literacy Intervention Program	\$50,000	Curriculum	Professional Services
Various Athletic Expense Increases	\$31,450	LHS Athletics	Other

Blue Reduction to Budget

-\$139,915

REQUEST	ESTIMATED COST	LOCATION	TYPE
Initial Purchase reduction for Grade 4-5 Teachers & Interventionist Ipads	-\$,6825	Curriculum	Equipment
Reduction from Year 1 cost of mandated Literacy Program	-\$48,000	Curriculum	Supplies
Discontinue Usage of Lexia Software	-\$15,000	Curriculum	Supplies
Reduction in non-dedicated ambulance service	-\$1,350	LHS Athletics	Professional Services
Expected Heating Oil Decrease	-\$25,000	Maintenance	Supplies
Reduction in initial costs for program from prior year	-\$15,000	LMS	Equipment
Reduction in initial supplies- Unified Arts	-\$4,500	LMS	Supplies
Remove/Discontinue CABE	-\$19,000	Districtwide	Other

Yellow Considered for Inclusion in the Budget

\$1,250,384

REQUEST	ESTIMATED COST	LOCATION	TYPE
BMS System Parts GHS & JWL	\$35,000	Maintenance	Supplies
Late Bus LHS & LMS	\$167,582	Transportation	Professional Services
Advanced Email Filtering/Attack Prevention	\$14,400	Technology	Professional Services
Behavior Interventionists (2)	\$72,772	Student Services	Professional Services
BCBA	\$210,000	Student Services	Professional Services
Math Coach (2)	\$190,000	Elementary	Salary
1.0 FTE Instructional Coach LMS	\$86,286	Curriculum	Salary
1.0 FTE ELA Interventionist MS	\$86,286	Curriculum	Salary
1.0 FTE Math Interventionist MS	\$86,286	Curriculum	Salary
Art Display 200 Hallway (Locker Removal)	\$11,000	LHS	Other
1.0 FTE English Teacher	\$64,632	LHS	Salary
1.0 FTE Mathematics Teacher	\$64,632	LHS	Salary
Content Facilitator Stipends	\$6,888	LHS	Salary
Assistant Maintenance Director	\$75,000	Maintenance	Salary
Attendance Home Visitor (2)	\$78,000	Student Services	Salary

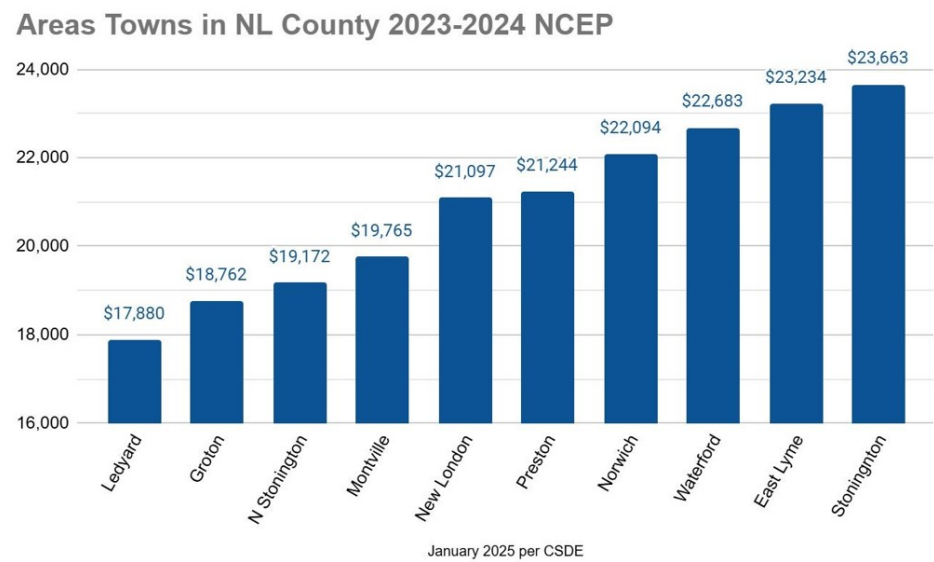
Red Considered for Inclusion in Future Budget

\$870,558

REQUEST	ESTIMATED COST	LOCATION	TYPE
1.0 FTE Band Teacher (add .50 JWL & GHS)	\$64,632	Elementary	Salary
Transition Kindergarten Teacher; est MA3	\$57,520	GFS	Salary
Transition Kindergarten Teacher; est MA3	\$57,520	GHS	Salary
General Interventionist; est MA3	\$57,520	LMS	Salary
Director of Curriculum	\$140,000	Curriculum	Salary
Expand Pre-K (3 Teachers; 6 Paraprofessionals)	\$345,000	Student Services	Salary
2 Elementary World Language Teachers	\$127,166	Curriculum	Salary
Grade Level Field Experience	\$15,500	LMS	Professional Services
Disc Golf Course	\$5,700	LHS	Equipment

• Per Pupil Expenditure

Mr. Hartling stated although he did not like to make comparisons that he wanted to present the following chart below regarding other towns in Southeastern Connecticut:



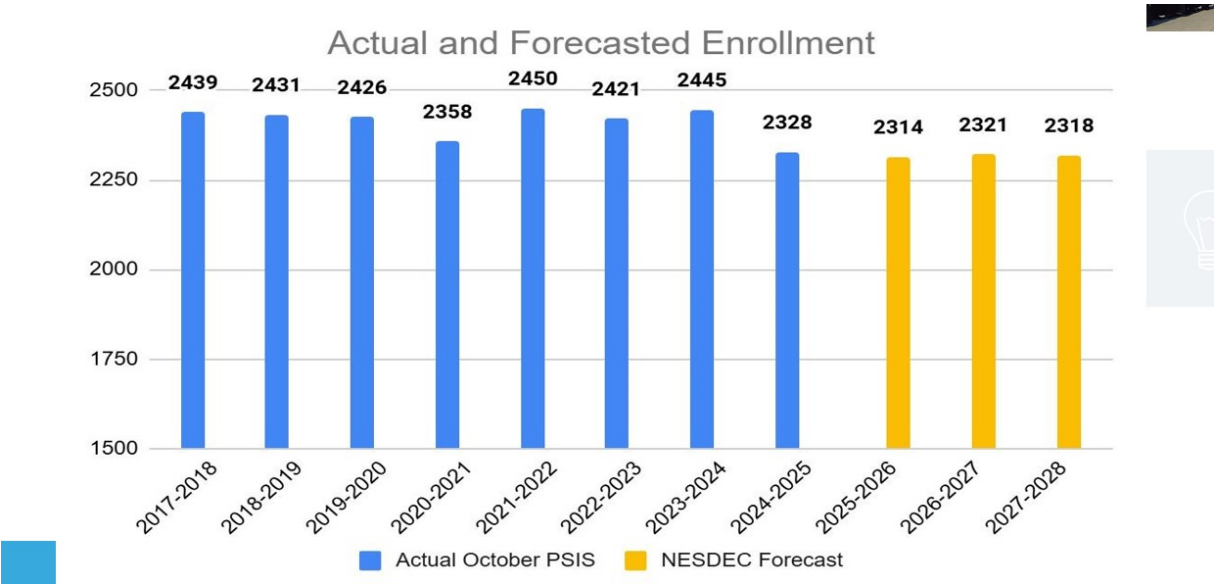
Mr. Hartling stated that their Teachers, Staff, and every Member of the Team were working incredibly hard and incredibly efficient to get the gains that they were getting; noting that they did not have enough funding in Ledyard to do what they needed to do for the student profile and based on the academic needs to keep moving forward. He stated that they were not in a situation where they have a lot of extra cash swinging around, noting that the Teams in the schools were wearing a lot of hats.

Mr. Hartling stated the next lowest Per Pupil expenditure was Groton, who had \$3 million more than Ledyard to support their students. He stated just imagine what Ledyard could do with an extra \$3 million dollars.

• Student Enrollment

Mr. Hartling stated Student Enrollment was projected to stay relatively stable, noting that this was subject to change. He stated if they put 1,000 more housing units in town, that may change the enrollment scenario.

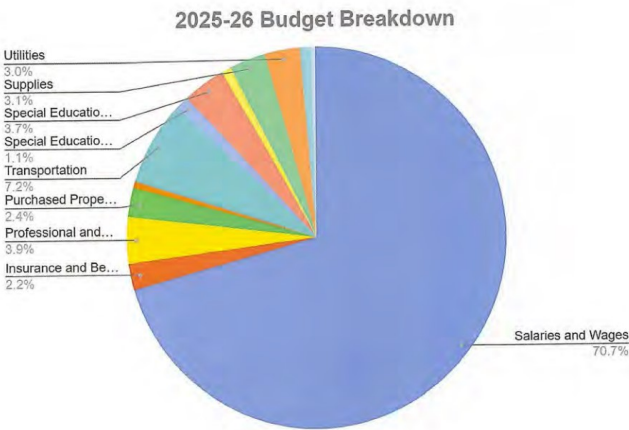
Mr. Hartling went on to explain that they were seeing an ongoing need profile of about 21% of our students being identified as having a disability, which continues to have a strain on the system. He stated that this also impacted their ability to deliver services or the cost of delivering services, noting that this was a statewide trend.



❖ **Budget Expenditures:**

Mr. Hartling explained that \$939,000 of this budget request included increases related to, agreed upon contractual increases for six (6) bargaining units, and non-Union employees.

- 70.7 % Salary and Wages
- 3% Utilities
- 3.1 Supplies
- 3.79% Special Education
- 7.2% Transportation
- 2.4% Other Purchases Services
- 1.9% Purchases Property Services
- 3.9% Professional Technology
- 2.2% Insurance and Benefits (*This does not include Healthcare costs*).

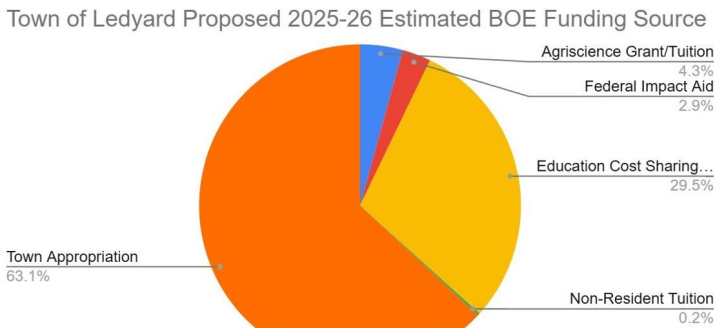


❖ **Projected Revenues:**

Mr. Hartling reviewed the Board of Education’s Funding Sources as follows:

Revenues						
Revenue	Program	Actual 2022/2023	Actual 2023/2025	Town Budget 2024/2025 (Munis)'	Proposed 2025/2026	Difference
State/Federal Revenues						
	FPL 503 (Impact Aid)	\$1,558,207	\$1,804,635	\$1,050,000	\$1,164,411	\$114,441
	Agri-Science- Operating	\$1,051,239	\$1,019,200	\$850,000	\$1,331,385	\$481,385
	Education Cost Sharing (ECS)	\$11,475,245	\$11,547,735	\$11,904,119	\$12,016,278	\$112,079
Sub Total State/Federal Revenue		\$14,084,691	\$14,371,570	\$13,804,199	\$14,512,104	\$707,905
Tuition Revenues						
	Non-Resident Regular Education	\$43,470	\$71,867	\$44,772	\$62,680	\$17,908
	Non-Resident Spec. Education	\$126,736	\$60,559	\$82,086	\$25,500	-\$56,586
	Agri-Science	\$728,355	\$829,361	\$764,176	\$411,563	-\$352,163
Sub Total Tuition		\$898,561	\$961,787	\$891,034	\$499,743	-\$391,291
Total Education Revenues		\$14,983,252	\$15,333,357	\$14,695,233	\$15,011,847	\$316,614

Mr. Hartling stated that Ledyard had some additional sources of revenue that were not typical for most communities, such as the revenue they receive for the Agricultural Science Program and from Impact Aid. He presented the pie chart below showing the breakdown of revenues as follows:



- 63.1% Town Appropriation (Tax Revenue).
- 0.2% Non-Resident Tuition.
- 29.5% Excess Cost Sharing – Mr. Hartling noted the State pushed through \$40 million for Special Education; which the Governor signed off on in during the last two weeks. He stated the State's formula to address high-cost students with disabilities was confusing. He explained that the way it worked was that the Town had to spend 4.5 times your per pupil expenditure and then the State would reimburse the town for the amount over that. He

stated Ledyard's per pupil expenditure of \$17,888 X 4.5= 80,496; noting that they budget 72%. However, he stated that instead of receiving grant funding based on 72% of their per pupil cost, they were only receiving grant reimbursement based on about 64% of their actual costs. He went on to state that this happens statewide; and therefore, the formula adjustment would only bring them back to where they were from a parity standpoint. He stated the other piece of this was that Ledyard had less students. He stated that they work hard to keep their costs down, however, he explained that was part of the risk relative to Special Education, noting that it was complex and that they worked to build all associated costs into their Special Education Per Pupil Expenditure. He stated that State Senator Cathy Osten has been receptive to Ledyard's concerns relative to that. He stated had the Legislature not fixed it; that they would have had to look for other ways to fill that gap within the current fiscal year budget.

- 2.9 % Impact Aid – Mr. Hartling stated Ledyard has been working to maximize their Impact Aid by increasing awareness regarding the value of completing the request forms to identify eligible families.
- 4.3% Agri-Science – Mr. Hartling noted the State has changed the funding stream for Agricultural Science Program explaining they removed them from a Tuition-Based system to relying on State Grant funding. He stated that they were prohibited from charging anything over 58%; or had to charge 58% less for the Agri-Science Tuition this fiscal year, noting that the State tried to subsidize the difference with Grant Funding. He stated that this was going to be an interesting calculus as we move forward because it was not funded in future years. He stated that the Legislature still had some work to do because the language was unclear. He stated right now the language reads that they have to spend any of that extra grant money (about \$800,000) in new spending just for the Agri-Science Program this year; which was not a reasonable situation. Therefore, he stated that the Legislature was supposedly contemplating a fix for that language, noting at this point the Board of Education was suggesting that they would have about \$316,000 in Revenues based on educational activities.

Mr. Hartling stated that this concluded his presentation and that he would be happy to answer questions.

The Town Council and School Superintendent Hartling discussed in further detail the following:

- **State Funding** - Councilor Saccone noted Mr. Hartling's comment regarding the State's budget cuts to save money in Hartford was pushing costs down to Municipalities. He stated that the General Government was experiencing the same types of reductions in state funding.
- **Non Resident Tuition** – Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated the projected revenue for Non-Resident Tuition appeared to be half the amount that was budgeted in the current year's budget (fy 25/26). Mr. Hartling explained for a period of time Ledyard had a lot of non-resident students, including students with special education needs, noting that this number has continued to decline. He stated that Norwich Free Academy convinced the City of Norwich if all their students attended their school that the costs would be less. Therefore, he stated that Ledyard lost Norwich students, who were not Agri-Science students, noting that other school districts were also seeing the same trend.
- **Healthcare Costs** - Mr. Hartling noted that after over 24 years the Mayor made the decision to shift on paper the Board of Education Healthcare Costs from the Town Budget to the Board of Education Budget without any prior discussion. He stated moving the Board of Education Employees Healthcare costs to the Board's side of the ledger does not save taxpayers any money. He stated that it only moves the expense from one part of government to another, making the Board of Education's increase appear larger, while reducing the Mayor's Budget proposal to the Town Council. He stated that this change creates unnecessary division and confusion when looking at our financial picture and it creates a distraction as our community tries to understand the upcoming budget challenges.

Mr. Hartling went on to explain by moving the Board of Education's Employees Healthcare Expenses to the Education side of the ledger that they could anticipate an increased cost of about \$100,000 to take on the fiduciary responsibility of the program, because they do not have a staffing model to handle the work that has been being managed by the General Government Staff for 24 years.

Mr. Hartling went on to state that the Board of Education would have to hire Healthcare Consultants to adequately examine the Healthcare Plan to ensure that they were acting in the most responsible way for both their employees and the Town of Ledyard. He stated that there would also be the legal fees to renegotiate with their labor contracts; and that it would require the addition of one Full-Time Staff person in the Central Office. However, he stated it would be the Town Council's decision and that the Board of Education would do what they needed to do, noting that they would need to increase the Education Budget by \$100,000 to support the change.

Mr. Hartling stated that he was disappointed that the Mayor moved the \$6 million Healthcare Costs for the Board of Education's Employees to the Education side of budget ledger without any discussion, noting that he learned about the change from someone who told him that they saw it on a Facebook posting. He stated at the end of his remarks, that he would like to talk to the Mayor about this change.

- **School Nurses** - Mr. Hartling stated that Ledyard had an amazing group of School Nurses noting the great service they give the kids in our schools each and every day. He asked if the Town Council was going to move the School Nurses over to the Board of Education's budget that they not do it as part of the Annual Budget Process. He stated moving the School Nurses to the Education side of the budget ledger during the budget process would not allow the Board of Education to appropriately negotiate with that bargaining unit. He requested that the School Nurses not be moved to the Board of Education's side of the budget next year (fy 26/27) during the Annual Budget Preparation Process because it would create confusion in the community relative to budgetary numbers.

Councilor Ryan stated at the end of his remarks that he would like to offer the Mayor the opportunity to talk about the change in where the Board of Education Employees Healthcare Expenses would reside in the budget. Councilor Ryan continued by stating just to be clear, the Healthcare Costs for Board of Education Employees and the School Nurses expenses were costs to operate Ledyard Public Schools. Mr. Hartling stated that was correct. However, he stated that these expenses have been carried on the General Government side of the budget ledger as "*In Kind*" expenses. He stated every year the Board of Education gets a full accounting of every dollar the town spends and that they were built to their Public Schools Accounting, including up until this year, a part of the Children's Librarian. He stated all these expenses were factored into Ledyard's Per Pupil Expenditure Accounting.

Councilor Ryan questioned, based on Mr. Hartling's explanation, whether the Board of Education's proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget in the amount of 40,667,000 included the Healthcare Costs for the Board of Education Employees; which provided coverage for the teachers, school staff, etc. Mr. Hartling stated the Board of Education's proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget in the amount of 40,667,000 *does not* include the Healthcare Costs for the Board of Education's Employees; because for the last 24 years it was carried on the General Government side of the budget ledger. He stated recording it on the Board of Education' side of the budget ledger was a net 0 change in terms of the total budget. He stated to bifurcate the healthcare expenses, and move those responsibilities to the Board of Education was in the Town Council's purview. However, he stated that the Board of Education would need to add Full-Time Employees to manage those processes that were currently handled by General Government Staff.

Councilor Ryan stated for the benefit of those who were attending tonight's meeting remotely via Zoom; or watching the video of this meeting later, that for the past 24 years the total Healthcare Costs for the Schools' Employees have been recorded on the General Government side of the budget ledger; and the management of the benefits for Board of Education Employees has been done by General Government Staff. Mr. Hartling stated that was correct.

Councilor Ryan stated that it was his observation that moving the Board of Education Employees Healthcare Costs to the Education side of the budget ledger had nothing to do with the Healthcare Costs; but actually had to do with the Board of Education's Budget Presentation. He stated although he tried to find the Board of Education's proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget on-line, he could not find it.

- ***Excess Cost Sharing (ECS) Grant Funding*** – Councilor Ryan noted the discrepancy in Excess Cost Sharing (ECS) that each municipality receives; and their Per Pupil Expenditures. He noted as an example that New London received more ECS funding than Ledyard does.

Mr. Hartling explained that the Excess Cost Sharing (ECD) formula contemplates a series of factors, which included the poverty level, special education costs, and other factors.

Councilor Ryan noted the Per Pupil Expenditure Graph (page 4 above) that Mr. Hartling presented earlier this evening. He stated that Stonington’s ECS Funding was about \$200,000, and their Per Pupil Expenditure was about \$23,000. He stated that it would be interesting to see the breakout of what was coming out of the tax appropriation versus ECS; versus other revenue sources; and how that compared to other School Districts. He stated a large portion of Ledyard’s School Budget was funded by tax appropriations. Therefore, he stated the hypothesis; or what Mr. Hartling would like them to understand, was the proportion of the School Budget that was being paid by Ledyard’s taxpayers was disproportionately to other towns. He stated that he was not trying to insinuate it was; but that he was curious as to what it was, noting that he would like to see that data.

- ***Bifurcating Healthcare Costs*** – Chairman Rodriguez noted that Mr. Hartling stated that in the proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget the Healthcare Costs would be bifurcated. Therefore, she questioned whether the General Government and the Board of Education would each have their own funds to pay for the Healthcare Benefits for their employees.

Mr. Harting explained that the Board of Education would have to look at the design of the Healthcare Plan; and have conversations between the Board of Education their collective bargaining units. He stated with taking on that new responsibility, that the Board of Education would have a different level of fiduciary responsibility relative to Healthcare. He also stated that he would have to have a conversation with the Mayor about what would happen for the General Government Employees Healthcare. He stated that there would be no obligation for the Board of Education to include the General Government Employees.

Councilor Saccone stated that he would hope that the Board of Education would work to try to save taxpayers money and to include the General Government Employees if they had a better deal on healthcare costs. Mr. Hartling stated the Board of Education had 400 plus employees that they were supporting; and one Human Resources Staff Member, noting that the staffing levels looked the same across town. He stated if they were going to move responsibilities, that he was going to have to provide more support to his Team. He apologized, noting that he was a little frustrated, because these types of conversations happen over months and months of planning to ensure that they have effective collaboration between both sides of government to save taxpayers money. He stated that they already spent more time talking about moving the Healthcare Costs for Board of Education Employees to the Education side of the ledger than they have spent talking about the 40 million dollars of educational programming that they wanted to provide for the kids.

- ***Staffing*** - Councilor Buhle noted during the Finance Committee’s January 21, 2025 Joint Budget Work Session she asked about the number of staff each salary line in the Board of Education’s budget included. She noted “*Recommended to be Included in the Budget*” identified in the Green Box (page 3 above), included 3.0 Full-Time Equivalent STEM Teachers (elementary). She stated that she would assume that this would provide one teacher at Gallup Hill; and two teachers at the Gales Ferry School. Mr. Hartling stated that was correct.
- ***Enrollment & Teacher/Student Ratio*** – Councilor Buhle stated that there was a two to one comparison between the Gallup Hill School and the Gales Ferry School, noting that there was 946 students at Gallup Hill and Gales Ferry School put together; with 46.8% of the students at one school and 45.8% students at the other School. Therefore, she stated it did not seem fair to have two STEM Teacher at Gallup Hill School and one STEM Teachers at the Gales Ferry School.

Mr. Hartling explained that one of the factors that does not come out in those numbers was the added responsibilities for the Pre-K Program. He stated that Gallup Hill School has programming for ages 3, 4, 5, and now 6 year olds; and that they had to provide those children with services. He went on to explain that because they do not have Universal Pre-K that some kids come in the morning and some kids come in the afternoon; and therefore, they had to have staff to absorb that.

Mr. Hartling continued by explaining because the Gallup Hill School was a Title One School they received Federal Funding that also required the School District to allocate more resources for additional coverage with special teachers, which was the reason they had two physical education teachers, and two art teachers. However, he stated when they look at it based on the number of students that it does feel inequitable. He went on to note that the two literacy interventionists at Gales Ferry School, and five literacy interventionists at Gallup Hill School, stating that staff was placed based on needs.

- ***School Lunch Program*** – Councilor Buhle stated that all students should have the opportunity to eat lunch at school, and should not be hungry throughout the day. Whether or not that was because their parents put money on their Lunch Card Account; or if they were unable to put money on their Account. She noted during their Budget Work Sessions that Mr. Hartling stated that a couple of Ledyard's Schools would potentially qualify for Free Lunch. Therefore, she questioned whether it was possible to break that out, or whether it had to be District-Wide; and how far away Ledyard was from being a community that qualified for Free Lunch for all students.

Mr. Hartling stated when they did the equation last year that Ledyard was closer to qualifying for Free Lunch for all students. However, he noted because the State was changing those guidelines that Ledyard was moving farther away from that as a possibility. He went on to address the confusion that happens because many parents have students in multiple schools, stating that it was not uncommon for a family to have an elementary school student, a middle school student, and a high school student.

Councilor Buhle questioned the cost to provide Free Lunch for the District and whether they could provide Free Lunch to just one School; or if they would have to provide it for the whole School District. Mr. Hartling stated that they could look at providing Free Lunch at the Gallup Hill School and Ledyard Middle School, noting that those two schools may qualify for the Free Lunch Program. Councilor Buhle stated although she understood the concerns regarding the confusion for families that have students in more than one school that they should make sure that our students were fed without concern or without worry.

Mr. Hartling stated any student who comes up to the counter with a lunch, whether they had money on their account; or owed \$350 on their account, that the student would receive a lunch, noting that was a State requirement; and there was no alternative lunch for those who do not have money on their lunch account. He stated their School Principals spend time every week calling parents to get them to pay their child's lunch account. He stated that last year they were able to use other funds in the Food Service Account for bad debt, noting that it was a special dispensation by the State, because this was a problem in the State. Therefore, he stated people were receiving Free Lunch when there was no Free Lunch. He stated that their support to encourage parents to fill-out the Free and Reduced Lunch Form would help.

- ***Board of Education Charging the Town to use the School Facilities*** – Councilor Buhle questioned the Board of Education charging the Town to use space at the Schools for things like the Planning & Zoning Commission Meeting at the Middle School and the Parks & Recreation to use the basketball courts. She questioned whether there was a Board of Education Revenue Line that showed the inflow of the money from the Town. Mr. Hartling noted the Board of Education's Policy for Organizations to use space at the Schools, explaining for the Planning & Zoning Commission to use space at the Middle School that they were not paying for the space, but that they were paying for the staff to support the technology needs. He stated that the town was not charged for the custodian because they were already there. He stated there was not a Revenue Line for the money the Town paid to the Board of Education because it would go back to offset the overtime line, noting that it was not a revenue per-se.

- **Healthcare Expenses** – Councilor St. Vil addressed the Healthcare Expenses from a funding and management strategic perspective, noting that what he heard was that moving the Board of Education Employees Healthcare Expenses from the General Government side of the budget ledger to the Education side of the budget ledger was a net zero; and that he also heard that this shift was going to increase costs by \$100,000. Therefore, he stated it was unclear how moving the expense from one side of the ledger to the other side of the ledger would impact the total budget.

Mr. Hartling stated that he apologized if he misspoke when he responded to Councilor Ryan's question regarding the Healthcare Expense line earlier this evening. Mr. Hartling provided clarification, stating that moving the Board of Education Employee's Healthcare expenses from the General Government side of the ledger to the Board of Education side of the ledger would not save the town a single cent, *Period*. However, he stated that it would cost the Town more money, both in the short and the long term, because the Board of Education would: (1) Need to staff up appropriately to manage certain responsibilities that they have not had to do in the past 24-years; (2) The ongoing challenge of what will healthcare look like for the entire town. He stated when the Town Council moves \$6 million to the Board of Education's Budget that State Law was going to expect the Board of Education to do something with that allocation; noting that they would have to look into the Plan design and take on the Fiduciary Responsibility.

- **Gifted Student Programs-** Councilor St. Vil noted that much of their budget conversations involved the costs and the documentation requirements related to Special Education. He questioned whether the Board of Education's proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget included changes to budget line to provide resources or expand services for their Gifted Students, such as advanced placement classes and extracurricular type of activities.

Mr. Hartling explained that State Law required School Districts to identify Gifted Students. He stated funding has remained stable for the Advanced Placement Classes and other pieces for their Gifted Students at the High School, however the Board of Education's Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget does not include a specific line to increase those sections of the Advanced Placement activities.

Mr. Hartling went on to state although it was a long-term goal, that currently the School District does not have a Gifted and Talented Student Program. He noted that there were enhancements explaining that their STEM Activity at the Elementary Schools would be an extension piece in which they would have groups at each of the grade levels to try to address students who were above grade level. He stated Principal Earley has been working to provide extra activities and student focus classrooms at the Middle School, and those activities were reflected in a small budget line in previous years. He stated that he would continue to support activities for their students. K – 8 students noting that a world class education was not only a benefit to the students, but that it was also a benefit to the community as folks compete to come into town to be a part of that world class education.

Mayor Allyn, III, stated that he would like to provide some background regarding the Board of Education Employee's Healthcare Expenses. He explained in 2001 the Board of Education's Healthcare Costs were moved to the General Government side of the budget ledger. He stated at that time the Town was self-insured, but today they had a Healthcare Plan Provider. He stated the decision to move the Board of Education's Employee Healthcare Expenses from the Education side of the ledger to the General Government side of the ledger was made at that time based on several years of poor management and misappropriation of the budgeted Board of Education Employee Healthcare Funding requiring the need to make Special Appropriations to allocate funds from the Undesignated Fund to pay for some large Board of Education medical claims that were incurred during those years, because the money that was budgeted for the Board of Education Employee Healthcare was spent on other non-budgeted things. However, he explained that this method of budgeting was not providing a clear or accurate accounting of the costs to operate the General Government or the Board of Education. Therefore, he stated with the changes in staffing over the past 25-years, and moving to a Healthcare Plan Provider that they were confident that it was now time to move the Board of Education's Healthcare

costs back to their side of the budget ledger. He stated this accounting change would not save the taxpayers any money, but what it would do was: (1) Record the Board of Education's \$5,193,830 Healthcare costs on the side of the budget ledger, where it should reside, and (2) Provide clear accountability, transparency, and clarity for the taxpayers to understand the costs to operate the General Government and the costs to operate Board of Education.

Mayor Allyn went on to state in reaching out to the town's Auditor to ask how other Municipalities record their expenses for their General Government and Board of Education Employees Healthcare that he was told that Ledyard was the only town that carried the Board of Education's Employees Healthcare expenses on their General Government side of the budget ledger. He noted to School Superintendent Hartling's point that moving the expense to the Board of Education side of the ledger does not save taxpayers any money; and he stated that was not the intent of moving the expense. He stated moving the expense was to literally shift on the books the expense from one side to the other side, to provide budgeting transparency.

Mayor Allyn continued by addressing Mr. Hartling's comments regarding the School Nurses. He explained that the General Government side of the budget ledger would continue to include \$2,931,068 of "*In-Kind*" Board of Education expenses for the following: Workers Compensation, Social Security, Property Insurance, Liability and General Liability Insurance, Public Official Liability, and School Nurses and School Health Aides. He stated all of the insurances would continue to flow through the town, as would the Principal and Interest for the School Projects that have been bonded. However, he explained that the School Nurses and School Health Aides expenses which increased by \$32,198 or 6.8% (wages) would remain on the General Government side of the budget ledger until their contract expired at the end of June, 2026.

Mayor Allyn stated with the Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget, the Town discontinued its Visiting Nurses Association; and therefore, the town was out of the business of providing nursing services. He continued to explain the expenses for the School Nurses & Health Aides would be moved to the Board of Education's side of the budget ledger for Fiscal Year 2026/2027 to ensure that both the General Government and Education Budgets were more accurately reflecting their operational costs. He stated Nursing Administrator Karen Goetchius has stayed on-staff to continue to be the Nurse Supervisor until the end of the School Nurses and School Health Aide contract. He stated when their contract ends those expenses would be moved to reside on the Education side of the budget ledger. He stated the town was not in the nursing business, and he noted all the other school districts, as he was sure that Mr. Hartling was aware, have their School Nurses and their School Health Aides residing within their Board of Education Budgets.

Chairman Rodriguez asked when Mayor Allyn spoke with the Auditor about where the Board of Education Employee Healthcare Expenses should reside in the total overall budget. Mayor Allyn stated he spoke with the Auditors about three weeks ago. He stated their Auditing Firm CliftonAllenLarson, LLC worked throughout New England, noting they audit municipalities all the way up to the state of Maine and down to the state of New York. He noted that CliftonAllenLarson, LLC told him that Ledyard was the only town that included their Board of Education Employee Healthcare on the General Government side of the budget ledger.

School Superintendent Mr. Hartling stated that he would say that moving the Board of Education Employees Healthcare Expenses to the education side of the budget ledger should be a collaborative conversation for the Board of Education and the Town Council; or the Town Government to have, noting that it should not be done via Facebook. He also stated that making these types of changes in the recording of expenses should not be done during the Annual Budget Process, because it creates unnecessary confusion for taxpayers, and it creates a distraction that he did not think the community needed when they were facing significant revenue challenges and other issues across the board.

Mr. Hartling went on to state that they needed to collaborate and figure these types of issues out. He stated without having conversations regarding these issues or the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP); that it was difficult for the Town Council to make quality decisions relative to the financial responsibilities of the community, noting that to make these decisions during the Annual Budget Process was the wrong time to have these type of conversations.

Mayor Allyn stated that he disagreed with Mr. Hartling's comments with regard to the Annual Budget Process was the wrong time to make budgetary decisions. He stated that Budget Season was the only time the town had the public's attention, noting that they were trying to allocate expenses as best they could, understanding that there was still about \$3 million of "*In Kind*" expenses for the Board of Education that reside on the General Government side of the budget ledger.

Councilor Brunelle stated that she was hearing both sides of debate about moving the Board of Education Employees Healthcare Expenses to the education side of the ledger. She stated that there was probably good reasons for and against. However, she stated to put it simply both the General Government Employees and the Board of Education Employees needed healthcare, and it had to be paid out of somewhere. Therefore, she questioned whether it really mattered what side paid it, when it was all coming from the Town. She stated that it was just an allocation. She stated if she moved her water bottle from here over to there it was still the same amount of water. Therefore, she stated that she just did not understand the issue.

Mayor Allyn explained that the intent and goal was to provide transparency to their taxpayers, so they understand what the town's expenses were and how their tax dollars were being spent. He noted as Superintendent Hartling said, moving the Board of Education Employee Healthcare Expenses to the education side of the ledger was not a money saving move; it was being moved to try to get expenses allocated properly; and nothing more.

Councilor Ryan stated as a member of the Committee to Review the Budget Process that one of their recommendations was for the Town Council Finance Committee and Board of Education Finance Committee to have regular joint meetings. Therefore, he encouraged both Finance Committees to work together to schedule regular joint meetings starting immediately. He stated that they do not have to meet every week or every month, but that they should set up a schedule to meet on a regular basis. Mr. Hartling stated although he could not speak for Board of Education Finance Committee Chairman Lamb that he believed that they would be eager to schedule joint meetings with the Town Council Finance Committee on a regular basis. Chairman Rodriguez stated that she concurred, noting as an example that Leadership Meetings between herself, Board of Education Chairman Favry, Superintendent Hartling and Mayor Allyn were scheduled quarterly and that the schedule was agreed upon in advance. Therefore, she suggested that it would be beneficial for the Finance Committees to at least set up a Joint Quarterly Meeting schedule.

Councilor Buhle questioned whether the Board of Education's Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget Presentation included any of their Capital Funding requests. Mr. Hartling stated that the Board of Education submitted their Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to the Town Council on January 25, 2025. He noted the Board of Education revised the Plan based on the feedback they received at the January 21, 2025 Joint Finance Committee meeting. He stated per the Town Charter the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) now lied with the Mayor to develop the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for the town as a whole.

Councilor Saccone stated that he agreed with moving the Board of Education Employee Healthcare Expenses back to the Education side of the budget ledger. He addressed the importance to provide clear and accurate accounting and transparency in presenting the budget to the townspeople. He noted that the School Bus Contract was not recorded on the General Government side of the ledger; therefore, he questioned the reason the Board of Education Employee Healthcare Expenses would reside on the General Government side of the ledger. He stated that he was confident that any savings in Healthcare Costs that the Board of Education may realize that they would offer the General Government the opportunity to participate in the same Healthcare Plan to also receive those same savings.

Mr. Hartling stated that the Board of Education has always acted in the best interest when making big moves. He stated having a conversation as a collaborative team would get much better results, because they could work miracles if they worked together. However, he stated being left in the dark on the Healthcare Expenses has created a lot of unnecessary tension, noting that these conversations can have significant implications on how we do business.

Chairman Rodriguez thanked Superintendent Hartling, the Board of Education, and the Board of Education members who were present at tonight's Town Council meeting. She stated that she would like to thank all of them for their hard work in putting the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Board of Education proposed budget together. She stated that we all want excellent education for our students; and no one wants to see tax increases, but we have to recognize that we are currently facing incredible hardships. She stated that the economy is horrible, residents were losing their employment, and so much in the future was unknown. She stated that they knew at some point they were going to see a bigger increase due to contractual obligations and a rise in prices. She stated adding to that they have unfunded mandates and many other issues that the Town of Ledyard was dealing with right now. She stated with that being said, that she believed that the Board of Education put together a responsible budget for the upcoming year and she thanked them for their hard work. She stated the Town Council accepts the Board of Education Budget as presented.

The Town Council thanked Superintendent Hartling for his presentation of the Board of Education's proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget.

V. RESIDENTS AND PROPERTY OWNERS

Mr. Chris Jelden, 3 Whalehead Road, Ledyard, stated he wrote these comments and read them at last night's Board of Education meeting. He stated after watching and hearing some of the online discourse that it seemed more important to provide his comments now than even just 24-hours ago. He stated that he wanted to begin by expressing his gratitude to everyone on the Board of Education and the Town Council for all the work they do. He stated that you are volunteers giving your time and energy, often sacrificing personal and family commitments to serve their town. He stated that he did not doubt that each of you care deeply about Ledyard, our schools, our students, and our financial wellbeing. He stated being that it was Budget Season that his comments tonight were either going to come at exactly the right time, or they would be tough to hear.

Mr. Jelden stated in December, 2024 he attended his first Board of Education meeting. Afterwards he reached out to both the Board of Education and the Town Council, because he was concerned about how these groups were working together. He stated in response that he was reassured that communication channels were in place, emails were shared, meetings were held, and information was being passed along to all members all the time. But in the months since, things have not appeared to improve. If anything, he stated that he has only seen more missed connections, frustrations on display, and ongoing dysfunction between these two important bodies. He stated that the reality was, it does not matter if all these communication channels were in place, and they should be working, however, he stated they were not always working. He stated that his challenge to each member of the Board of Education and the Town Council was that even if you think you have done all you can, even if you feel like you were at your wits end. He suggested that they just Stop and Try Again. Pick up the phone and make the phone call, send the text, send a follow up text. Assume the best in the others, who have also chosen to step up and serve Ledyard, even when you do not fully understand the decision made, or question being asked; or if you find yourself frustrated with how things have happened in the past. He stated if you are questioning the actions or the intent of the others who have been elected to serve, trust that the person on the other side was acting in what they believed was in Ledyard's best interest. He stated you won't always agree, but you can choose to approach each other in good faith. The truth is, most Ledyard residents do not have the time to dive into the granular details of town governance, but when they do take time to attend a meeting; or watch a video stream, they should not see two groups that were in conflict with each other, pointing fingers. He stated they should see people who were elected to Office fighting the same fight for the best interest of the town. That was how our town would be best served, and how all your efforts would create the very best for Ledyard. Thank you.

Chairman Rodriguez thanked Mr. Jelden for his comments noting they were wise words.

VI. COMMITTEE COMMISSION AND BOARD REPORTS – None.

VII. COMMENTS OF TOWN COUNCILORS

Chairman Rodriguez commented on the following: (1) Black History Month Celebrations – Chairman stated that she wanted to express her gratitude and happiness for the Black History Month celebrations that occurred last month. She stated that they have received many positive comments regarding these events from the Poetry Slam, the Poster/Essay Contest, and the Gospel Concert. She stated the concert was a huge hit, it was well attended, and it personified community; (2) Agricultural Commission Joint Meeting April 15, 2025 – Chairman Rodriguez stated that Agricultural Commission Chairman Bruce Gartska asked that Town Councilors stress to their Liaison Committees to please send a representative from each commission and committee to the Joint Agricultural Meeting on April 15, 2025 at 6:00 pm in the Town Hall Annex. It is important to have continued communication between commissions and committees; (3) Earth Day – Chairman Rodriguez stated that the Beautification Committee will celebrate Earth Day on Saturday, April 26, 2025 from 1:00 – 4:00 p.m. at the Ledyard Senior Center. She stated that the Beautification Committee may need Mayor Allyn’s help again this year as a Judge for the Trash to Treasure Contest. She also noted that Bruce Gartska would bring his two donkeys Olivia and Clarissa, who happen to be the cover girls on the Dime Bank 2025 calendar. She noted that all were invited to attend; (4) Prides Corner Nursery and Farm Charitable Donation – Chairman Rodriguez stated at the Town Council’s February 12, 2025 meeting, Mayor Allyn stated that Prides Corner Nursery and Farm would like to make a donation in the Name of the Town of Ledyard to a charitable organization of the Town’s choosing. She stated after further consideration; the Town Council was not going to act on the request. She stated the owner of Prides Corner Nursery and Farm may make a donation in their name to a charitable organization that they so choose.

Councilor Barnes thanked all the residents that have been coming to all the different meetings, to speak their mind. He stated although they may not always agree that he appreciated their participation in their local government.

Councilor Ryan stated that he appreciated the Board of Education and their Staff for attending tonight’s Town Council meeting to have a conversation regarding their proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget. He also noted that Saint Patrick's Day was Monday, March 17, 2025 and he reminded everybody to be responsible over the weekend and the following week.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry thanked the Board of Education and Superintendent Hartling for attending tonight’s meeting and presenting their proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget; and for answering all their questions. She stated that it was helpful to review the whole budget presentation.

VIII. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF PRIOR MEETING MINUTES

MOTION to approve the following:

- Special Meeting Minutes of February 19, 2025
- Regular Meeting Minutes of February 26, 2025

Moved by Councilor Barnes, seconded by Councilor Garcia-Irizarry

VOTE: 8 – 0 Approved and so declared

IX. COMMUNICATIONS

Chairman Rodriguez stated a Communications List has been provided on the meeting portal for tonight’s meeting, and she noted referrals were listed.

X. COUNCIL SUB COMMITTEE, LIAISON REPORTS

Administration Committee

Councilor Buhle stated the Administration Committee met earlier this evening and discussed the following: (1) Proposed Ethics Commission; (2) Proposed Ordinance regarding the flying of Third-Party Flags; (3) Moved forward a number of reappointments and new appointments; and (5) Began discussions to establish a Sustainable CT Ad Hoc Committee.

Community Relations Committee for Diversity Equity & Inclusion

Councilor Brunelle stated members of the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion attended the following Black History Month Activities: (1) Poetry Slam that was held at Lucille's Restaurant in Ledyard Center; and (2) Black History Month Celebration and Concert that was held on Friday, February 28, 2025 at 6:30 p.m. at the New Life Christian Church, on Route 117. She noted that singer Lisa Claton performed and that both events were well attended.

Councilor Brunelle went on to note that March was Women's History Month and that the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion was sponsoring a *Linda Davis Woman of the Year Award*. She announced that nominations were being accepted until March 31, 2025 and should be submitted to abru@ledyardct.org.

Councilor Brunelle stated the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion would be meeting on Wednesday, March 19, 2025.

Finance Committee

Councilor Saccone stated although the Finance Committee did not have any items on tonight's agenda that the Committee has begun their work on the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget noting that Budget Work Sessions were held on **Thursday, March 6, 2025**; and **Monday March 10, 2025**. He stated the Committee would be holding their last Budget Work Session on **Tuesday, March 18, 2025**. He stated the Budget Work Sessions were open to the public and he encouraged residents to attend, noting that the Work Sessions would be held in a Hybrid format providing residents the option to attend in-person or remotely via Zoom. He noted that the Budget Work Sessions were a good opportunity for residents to meet the Town's Department Heads and learn about the projected expenses for the coming year. He stated that difficult decisions were going to be made, noting that this was going to be a tough budget to prepare based on the projected decrease in revenues and increase in expense due to inflationary costs. He asked residents to attend their meetings, stating that these were their tax dollars.

Land Use/Planning/Public Works Committee

Councilor St. Vil stated the LUPPW Committee met on March 3, 2025 and were continuing to work with the Historic District Commission to obtain a Historic Designation of the Spicer Homestead Ruins. He explained that there were a number of steps that the Historic District Commission needed to complete before the request would be coming before the Town Council.

Permanent Municipal Building Committee

Councilor Brunelle stated the PMBC met on March 3, 2025 noting that she attended via Zoom. She stated the PMBC was continuing to address the following: (1) School Roof Replacement Projects; and (2) Juliet W. Long School Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning Project (HVAC) – The PMBC was currently seeking new bids for the HVAC Project.

Public Safety Commission

Councilor Saccone stated the Commission met on March 3, 2025 and discussed the following: (1) Juliet W. Long Fire Alarm System; and (2) Statewide Radio System – Ledyard was waiting for the State to issue the town a channel before they could get on the Statewide 800 Megahertz Radio System. Councilor Saccone stated once they receive their channel the town could move forward with using \$208,000 grant they received two-years to upgrade their public safety radios.

Gales Ferry Fire Company

Councilor Saccone stated the Gales Ferry Volunteer Fire Company would be electing new Officers at their meeting tomorrow night (March 13, 2025).

Councilor Saccone went on to note that unfortunately there was a garage fire in the Gales Ferry Village. He stated thankfully no one was hurt, but that the garage was destroyed. He thanked the Firefighters for a job well done, noting that they protected several houses in the area from any additional spread of the fire.

Retirement Board

Chairman Rodriguez stated the Retirement Board would be meeting on March 18, 2025 at 10:00 a.m. in the Council Chambers.

Farmers Market Committee

Chairman Rodriguez stated the Farmers Market Committee met on March 5, 2025 and reviewed contracts.

Board of Education

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated the Board of Education met on March 11, 2025 and discussed the following: (1) Juliet W. Long Solar Panel Installation work was supposed to begin yesterday (March 12, 2025); (2) Juliet W. Long Heating Ventilation Air Conditioning (HVAC) Project – The Permanent Municipal Building Committee has scheduled a special meeting to review Bids for the project. The PMBC was hoping to receive the required three bids this time; (3) Board of Education Vacancy – The Board of Education would be voting to fill the vacancy left by Ms. Hill; (4) Reviewed and resigned several Bylaws related to discrimination and harassment based on guidance from the Federal Government to comply with Title 9.

Inland Wetland and Water Courses Commission

Councilor St. Vil stated the IWWC met on March 4, 2025 and reviewed part of an Application that would result in a site walk at the former Sweet Hill Farm on March 29, 2025; that would be followed by a Public Hearing on April 1, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. at the Ledyard Middle School.

Economic Development Commission

Councilor Buhle stated the EDC met on March 4, 2025 and discussed the following: (1) Route 12 Corridor Study – Councilor Buhle stated the EDC would be holding a Public Engagement Meeting in early April. The location and official date would be determined, however, they were considering the Ledyard Senior Center; (2) Southeastern Connecticut Enterprise Region (seCTer) – Councilor Buhle stated seCTer Executive Director Paul Whitescarver gave a presentation regarding how seCTer could help local business obtain Federal Grants from the Government Agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) or the Department of Transportation, by submitting letters of support. She stated that Mr. Whitescarver also talked about how small business could obtain loans and grants in the amount of \$10,000 to \$25,000; (3) Potential Development – Councilor Buhle stated the EDC discussed water issues for potential upcoming Developments, with regard to which water utility would be able to service the new Developments (Ledyard Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA) or Southeastern Connecticut Water Authority (SCWA)); (4) Business Directory – Councilor Buhle stated that EDC reviewed their Business Directory and Business Directional Signage.

XI. MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Allyn, III, reported on the following: (1) Library Director – Mayor Allyn stated with the departure of Ms. Jennifer Smith to take a Library Director position in her hometown that they received a number of Applications to fill the position. He stated they had eleven candidates and interviewed three candidates. He noted the town hired Ms. Amber LaValley, who comes from Westerly, Rhode Island. He stated Ms. LaValley would be joining Ledyard on March 31, 2025; (2) Curbside Trash Collection – Mayor Allyn stated the Curbside Trash Collection Bid Opening was held on March 6, 2025, noting that he apologized that he had to leave the Budget Work Session early to attend the Bid Opening. He stated because only two bids were received that a Bid Waiver request would be included on the March 19, 2025 Finance Committee Agenda. He stated that the town would have a new Trash Hauler starting on July 1, 2025, noting that this would involve a lot of logistics, because one Trash Hauler would be picking up the current trash containers and the new Trash Hauler would be

distributing the new trash containers, which was about 12,000 containers; (3) New Police Officer – Mayor Allyn stated the Ledyard Police Department welcomed their newest Police Officer, Connor Gleason on March 6, 2025. He stated that Officer Gleason was retired from the US Army noting that he was a sharp young guy and the Department was looking forward to having him join their Police Force; (5) Read Across America – Mayor Allyn stated that he read to the classes at Juliet W. Long School and the Gales Ferry School on March 6, 2025, noting that March 6th was a busy day; (6) America 250 Committee – Mayor Allyn stated their America 250 Ad Hoc Committee met on March 11, 2025 and were developing plans for events and activities that would take place throughout 2026. He stated they were looking at doing a couple larger events, and then a number of smaller events scattered through the year. Therefore, he stated the America 250 Committee would be looking for more volunteers to assist with various groups on projects, as well as soliciting some donations and grant funding, to support some of the activities; (7) Southeastern Connecticut Enterprise Region (seCTer) – Mayor Allyn stated at seCTer’s Economic Development Meeting that *Placer-AI* gave a presentation regarding their company. He noted that *Placer-AI* had Agreements with about 25 million cell phone users throughout the country; which allowed them to track everything that the cell phone users does in terms of where they go, how long they spend there, whether it was at home, or at work, or at Dunkin Donuts, or Starbucks, or wherever. He stated *Placer-AI* gathered all that data in almost real time. He noted the data included all sorts of different overlays, such as traffic counts, etc. He stated the information they reviewed the day of their presentation was from March 8, 2025, noting that it was incredible. He stated that seCTer was considering getting *Placer-AI*, and if they do; it would be available to seCTer Members, noting that Ledyard’s Economic Development Commission could utilize the data collected by *Placer-AI* to attract potential businesses to move into town based on traffic patterns and number of people; (8) Police CALEA Accreditation – Mayor Allyn congratulated Police Chief John Rich and Captain Kenneth Creutz for the Ledyard Police Department passing the CALEA Accreditation with flying colors. He stated not only was Ledyard randomly chosen out of the entire State of Connecticut as the first town to undergo the CALEA Accreditation they were Awarded the Tier 2 and the Tier 3 Accreditation. He stated tomorrow they would be receiving those accolades, and he congratulated both gentlemen for a great job; especially for being the very first Police Department in the State out of the gate; and for doing a Blue Ribbon job.

Questions for the Mayor

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry addressed the Curbside Trash Collection March 6, 2025 Bid Opening and she requested clarification regarding the number of bids the town received. Mayor Allyn stated the town received two bids, one from their current Curbside Trash Collection Contractor, and one from another Contractor. However, he noted that per Ordinance #200-001 “*An Ordinance for Purchasing*” they needed to receive three bids; therefore, a bid waiver would be required.

Councilor Buhle noted that some residents had more than one trash container, therefore, she questioned how residents could obtain an additional trash container from the new hauler. Mayor Allyn explained that they met with low bidder, CWPM, today, noting that they discussed following items: residents requesting additional trash or recyclable containers; and residents were each allowed two bulky trash pick-ups a year. He stated that CWPM was currently providing services for Stonington, Bozrah, Franklin, and Groton.

Chairman Rodriguez questioned whether CWPM was Casella. Mayor Allyn stated “*No*” and he reviewed the process to pick-up the current the trash containers and to distribute the new trash containers, noting that there were about 12,000 trash containers that had to be picked-up and 12,000 trash containers that had to be distributed. He explained that CWPM would notify each household that they would be providing services beginning on July 1st and that they would be delivering new trash and recycling containers; and that the current Contractor would also notify all households about the pick-up of their trash containers.

Councilor Barnes stated residents had to pay a deposit to obtain a second trash or recycling container and he questioned how the deposits would be handled. Mayor Allyn stated the deposits that residents paid for a second trash or recycling container were being held by the

town and not the trash contractor. He also stated that each trash container would have a serial number and would be scanned when delivered to each house, so that they would know where each trash or recycling container was located. He also noted the Curbside Trash Collection

was a three-year contract; with three option years, noting that it could be a total of six-years. He stated because the process to change Contractors was still in the infancy, that they were still working out the details with regard to deposits for second trash or recycling containers, etc.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry questioned whether CWPM could put the Southeastern Connecticut Regional Resource Recovery Authority (SCRRRA) sticker on the recycling containers so residents would know what they can and cannot put in the recycling container. She stated having the information accessible for residents would be helpful, noting that she sees all kinds of stuff sticking out of the containers that should not be in the recycling bins when she drives around town. Mayor Allyn stated that he would ask CWPM if they could put recycling stickers on the containers. He went on to state that bagging the recyclables before putting them in the container was a problem.

Councilor Saccone questioned whether CWPM would provide smaller trash and recycling containers for elderly and disabled residents. Mayor Allyn stated that CWPM does have smaller carts that they could provide to some households.

XII. OLD BUSINESS

General Items

1. Discussion and possible action on a *Resolution Concerning Public Benefits Charges on Electric Bills to Consumers*.

Councilor Ryan presented and read the following Resolution for discussion this evening:
[DRAFT: 3/11/2025](#)

003-2025/Mar_____

A RESOLUTION

TO CALL ON THE CONNECTICUT STATE LEGISLATURE TO SUPPORT
LEGISLATION WHICH AIMS TO ELIMINATE THE PUBLIC BENEFITS CHARGES ON
ELECTRIC BILLS FOR CONNECTICUT RESIDENTS AND TO FIX SYSTEMIC ISSUES
WHICH ENABLES SUCH FEES AND CHARGES.

WHEREAS: The Ledyard Town Council recognizes the significant financial burden that "public benefit" charges on electric bills place on the residents and businesses of our town; and

WHEREAS: These charges, often included as line items on electric bills, are imposed on consumers without sufficient transparency or direct accountability, resulting in increased energy costs for households and businesses; and

WHEREAS: These charges also circumvent the legislative process regarding decisions causing these fees, effectively allowing utilities to impose costs without direct legislative oversight; and

WHEREAS: All public benefit-related initiatives should be proposed, debated, and approved through the legislature with proper votes on their funding via the state budget process, rather than being implemented by the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) board; and

WHEREAS: The Ledyard Town Council is committed to advocating for measures that ensure affordability, fairness, and accountability in utility billing for our residents; and

WHEREAS: The Ledyard Town Council supports legislative measures that align with our commitment to fiscal responsibility, transparency, and the well-being of our residents; and

WHEREAS: The Ledyard Town Council supports the following proposed legislation that endeavor to protect the consumer and make electricity more affordable for Connecticut residents and businesses by recommending changes to the general statutes and augmenting the way fees are implemented and assessed:

- S.B. 647 - An Act Concerning Protections for Consumer Access to Affordable Electricity
- S.B. 598 - An Act Prohibiting Electric Distribution Companies from Collecting Fees other than Fees for the Purchase or Delivery of Electricity
- H.B. 5923 - An act establishing a task force to study electric distribution company accountability and electric distribution competition and infrastructure
- H.B. 5404 – An act concerning the composition and conduct of the public utilities regulatory authority (PURA)

NOW, THEREFORE; BE IT RESOLVED; That the Ledyard Town Council hereby expresses its strong support for Connecticut Senate Bills #598 and #647, as well as Connecticut House Bills #5923 and #5404, all proposed during the 2025 session, and urges the Connecticut General Assembly to take swift and decisive action to pass this legislation during the current legislative session.

That the Town Council calls upon Governor Ned Lamont and the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to support the aforementioned legislation and work collaboratively with the legislature to implement policies that promote transparency and affordability in utility billing.

That the Town Clerk is directed to transmit a copy of this resolution to Senator Catherine Osten, Representative Greg Howard, Representative Brian Lanoue, Representative Kevin Ryan, Governor Ned Lamont, the Connecticut General Assembly Committee on Energy and Technology, the Connecticut General Assembly leadership and the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to convey the Town Council's position on this matter.

That this resolution shall take effect immediately upon adoption.

Adopted by the Ledyard Town Council on: _____

S. Naomi Rodriguez, Chairman

Councilor Ryan noted in reviewing the Town of Southington's Resolution, which he used as an example, that it included a number of statements that made sense to include in Ledyard's Resolution. However, he stated that there were statements that he did not think conveyed Ledyard's goal which was to address the process that allowed the Public Benefit Charge to be implemented without action by the State Legislature. He stated that this was the first draft and that they could discuss other statements or Bills that the Town Council would like to include.

Councilor Ryan went on to note that Southington limited their endorsement to only one Bill. However, he stated because there were a number of Bills that had common goals and were currently circulating in the State Legislature that he included several Bills in the draft Resolution, explaining that he wanted the document to come across to not only help to fix the current Public Benefits Charge, which would sunset in April anyway, but more importantly, to start to address the *root cause* that allowed the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) to implement the Fee in the first place.

Chairman Rodriguez stated that she read the draft "*Resolution to Call on the Connecticut State Legislature to Support Legislation Which Aims to Eliminate The Public Benefits Charges On Electric Bills for Connecticut Residents And to Fix Systemic Issues Which Enables Such Fees And Charges*" when it came in this morning. She noted in looking up the Bills listed in the proposed Resolution that they directed her to other similar Bills. Therefore, she stated that she would need more time to review the proposal. She thanked Councilor Ryan for his work in drafting the proposed Resolution, noting that it was well done.

Councilor Buhle stated the proposed Resolution was well written and that she was happy to discuss any Bills that the Town Council would like to call out in the proposed Resolution. Councilor Ryan stated that he wanted to be clear that the proposed Resolution was not intended to be exclusive to only the Bills he listed. Councilor Buhle stated that she

understood, and that she wanted to clarify a comment that she made at the Town Council’s February 26, 2025 meeting regarding the Public Benefit Charge sunset in April, 2025 because she did not want the public to think that because the Town Council signed a Resolution that the Public Benefit Charge they were seeing on the electric bills was discontinued, when it was already going to sunset as it was scheduled to do. She stated that it was her personal opinion that Eversource was capitalist when they were making a profit and it benefited them, and Socialist when they take a loss that benefits them.

Councilor Buhle went on to state that she understood that the goal of the proposed Resolution was to prevent the implementation of these types of Fees in the future; without due process. Therefore, she stated that she supported the proposed Resolution; however, she stated that she also needed time to read through the Bills that were listed in the draft Resolution noting that they needed to address the underlying systemic problem. She went on to state that if they read all of the Bills that some of them are targeted toward charges that exist today; noting House Bill #54 as an example.

Councilor Ryan stated that he agreed with Councilor Buhle’s comments, however, he stated the objective was to address the *root cause*. He stated as they all know the Public Benefits Charge on their electric bills would be ending in April, 2025. Therefore, he stated the most important thing to do in the State Legislature was to get them to address the *root cause*; and as the Town’s Legislative Body the Town Council should do whatever they could to get this message to the State Legislature.

Councilor Barnes stated that the draft Resolution was well written, noting that he read through the titles of the Bills listed in document, and stated that he thought he would support most of them. He noted Councilor Buhle’s point about the timing of the Resolution relative to the Public Benefit Charge on their electric bills sunset in April, 2025. Therefore, he suggested that the Town Council move quickly in approving the proposed “*Resolution to Call on the Connecticut State Legislature to Support Legislation Which Aims to Eliminate The Public Benefits Charges On Electric Bills for Connecticut Residents And to Fix Systemic Issues Which Enables Such Fees And Charges*” because if they send it to the State after the Public Benefit Charges has sunset that their action may be less impactful. He went on to note the importance to submit the Resolution to the State Legislature to try to prevent other Fees from being implemented the same way the Public Benefits Charge was.

Councilor Ryan stated that Councilor Buhle and Councilor Barnes made an excellent point, noting that there was a lot of momentum at the State level and a lot of public interest regarding these initiatives that they should capitalize on, if the majority of the Town Council was comfortable supporting the proposed Resolution.

Chairman Rodriguez stated the proposed “*Resolution to Call on the Connecticut State Legislature to Support Legislation Which Aims to Eliminate the Public Benefits Charges on Electric Bills for Connecticut Residents And to Fix Systemic Issues Which Enables Such Fees And Charges*” would remain on the Agenda for action at their March 26, 2025 meeting.

Councilor Ryan asked Town Councilors to email or call him if they had any questions or suggested changes to the draft Resolutions, noting that he would incorporate them for discussion at the Town Council’s March 26, 2025 meeting.

Councilor Barnes addressed the State’s new formula to calculate personal property tax for motor vehicles to commence with the October 2024 Grand List; and he questioned the process for the Town Council to address that. Chairman Rodriguez stated that a proposed Resolution to adopt a *Modified Formula* would be included on the Finance Committee’s March 19, 2025 Agenda. She stated once the Finance Committee reviewed the proposal they would forward to the Town Council for action.

XIII. NEW BUSINESS

1. MOTION to approve a proposed “*Resolution Authorizing A Lease Agreement Between The Town of Ledyard And Lease Servicing Center for a Pelican Three Wheel Mechanical Sweeper*” as presented in the draft dated March 10, 2025.

DRAFT 3/11/2025

Res. 003-2025/Mar 12

RESOLUTION
AUTHORIZING A LEASE AGREEMENT BETWEEN
THE TOWN OF LEDYARD AND
LEASE SERVICING CENTER; INC FOR A
PELICAN THREE WHEEL MECHANICAL SWEEPER

Master Lease Purchase Agreement dated as of 3/3/2025; between Lease Servicing Center, Inc. dba NCL Government Capital (Lessor) and Town of Ledyard (Lessee) and Schedule No. 001 thereto dated as of March 3, 2025.

BE IT RESOLVED by the Ledyard Town Council of Lessee as follows:

1. Determination of Need: The Ledyard Town Council, the governing body of Lessee (Town of Ledyard), has determined that a true and very real need exists for the acquisition of the Equipment described on Exhibit A of Schedule No. 001 to the Master Lease Purchase Agreement dated as of 3/3/2025; between Town of Ledyard (Lessee) and Lease Servicing Center, Inc. dba NCL Government Capital (Lessor).
2. Approval and Authorization: The Ledyard Town Council, the governing body of Lessee (Town of Ledyard), has determined that the Agreement and Schedule, substantially in the form presented to this meeting, are in the best interests of the Lessee for the acquisition of such Equipment, and the Ledyard Town Council hereby approves the entering into of the Agreement and Schedule by the Lessee and hereby designates and authorizes the following person(s) to execute and deliver the Agreement and Schedule on Lessee’s behalf with such changes thereto as such person(s) deem(s) appropriate, and any related documents, including any Escrow Agreement, necessary to the consummation of the transaction contemplated by the Agreement and Schedule.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVD: that the Ledyard Town Council, the governing body of the Town of Ledyard, authorizes the Mayor, Fred B. Allyn III, to enter into the Lease/Purchase Financing with Lease Servicing Center, Inc. dba NCL Government Capital to finance their one (1) Pelican Three-Wheel Mechanical Sweeper from C.N. Wood Enviro LLC in the amount of \$289,990.00 with five (5) annual payments of \$66,414.63.

- The Town of Ledyard has entered into a five-year Lease/Purchase Agreement with ***Lease Servicing Center, Inc. dba NCL Government Capital to purchase a Pelican Three-Wheel Mechanical Sweeper (“Lease”)***.
- On January 24, 2025, the Town of Ledyard and the Town of Preston entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (“MOA”) that outlines the responsibilities for both towns to share the use, expenses and storage of the sweeper.
- The Town of Ledyard hereby acknowledges and agrees to the full financial responsibility for all Payments due under the Lease regardless if the Town of Preston makes their portion of payments to the Town of Ledyard per the MOA.

Fred B. Allyn, III, Mayor
Town of Ledyard

ADOPTION OF RESOLUTION: The signature below from the designated individual from the Ledyard Town Council, the governing body of the Lessee is evidence the adoption of this Resolution.

Adopted by the Ledyard Town Council on: _____

S. Naomi Rodriguez, Chairman
Ledyard Town Council

I CERTIFY that the above resolution has in no way been altered, amended or revoked, and is in full force and effect.

AND I DO FURTHER CERTIFY that Mayor Fred B. Allyn, III is the Mayor of the Town of Ledyard, and has been since May 1, 2017.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the seal of the Town of Ledyard this _____ day of _____, 2025.

(Seal)

Patricia A. Riley, Town Clerk
Town of Ledyard

Moved by Councilor Buhle, seconded by Councilor Ryan
Discussion: Mayor Allyn, III, stated at their August 14, 2024 meeting the Town Council approved to purchase a new Elgin Pelican Sweeper through the Sourcewell Lease/Purchase provider over a term of five (5) years at \$66,467.49 per year. He noted that during that meeting Public Works Director/Town Engineer Steve Masalin explained that this would be a shared Agreement with the Town of Preston, noting that Preston First Selectwoman Sandra Allen-Gothier had confirmed that Preston was on-board with the shared arrangement.

Mayor Allyn went on to note that Mr. Masalin explained that the Five-Year Lease/Purchase Annual Payment would be \$66,000 a year, which included about a 4.7% annual interest rate. He stated the Town of Preston would pay approximately \$22,000 toward the annual lease payment; and Ledyard would pay about \$44,000. He stated that Mr. Masalin planned to use the Beverage (“Nip”) Container Surcharge Account for this Lease/Purchase. He stated at the time the Street Sweeper was being delivered later this month (March, 2025) that the Beverage (“Nip”) Container Surcharges Account would have an approximate balance of \$75,000; which would most likely cover their payment for the first two years.

Mayor Allyn continued by stating in parallel with the Lease/Purchase of the Street Sweeper that Mr. Masalin secured a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Town of Preston that outlined the details of the shared arrangement and was available on the meeting portal with tonight’s Agenda packet. He stated the manufacturer stated that the Street Sweeper would last about 10-years; however, he stated the town kept the last Street Sweeper in-service for 22-years. Therefore, he stated that Ledyard would then have about ten years during which time the town could accumulate funding from the Beverage (“Nip”) Container Surcharge Revenues in anticipation of having to replace the piece of equipment, noting that they received the Nip Bottle Revenue disbursements from the State twice a year. He explained when the Street Sweeper was disposed of that the proceeds would be shared based on each town’s purchasing contribution. He noted as an example if they sell the Street Sweeper for \$10,000 that 33% of that would go back to Preston and the other 67% would come back to Ledyard.

Councilor Ryan questioned how the maintenance and repairs on the Street Sweeper would be handled in the Shared Agreement. Mayor Allyn stated that Ledyard would garage the Street Sweeper and handle the maintenance and repairs, noting that Preston would reimburse Ledyard for time, material, and preventative maintenance on a pro-rated basis.

Councilor Saccone stated that during the five-year lease that Ledyard would be paying about \$44,000 a year and Preston would be paying about \$22,000 a year to purchase the Street Sweeper. Mayor Allyn stated Councilor Saccone was correct, and he noted as he previously explained that Ledyard would be using their Nip Bottle Revenue to pay their share of the cost for the Street Sweeper.

Councilor Buhle stated that initially she did not want to use the Nip Bottle Revenue for the Street Sweeper. However, she stated that she has learned that to maintain its MS4 (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System) Permit Certifications, that the town had to sweep the streets, even if they did not own a Street Sweeper. Therefore, she stated because it was not optional that she now agreed that purchasing the Street Sweeper was a responsible and good use of the Nip Bottle Revenue funds.

VOTE: 8 – 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT:	APPROVED 8- 0
MOVER:	Jessica Buhle, Town Councilor
SECONDER:	Tim Ryan, Town Councilor
AYES:	Barnes, Brunelle, Buhle, Garcia-Irizarry, Rodriguez, Ryan, Saccone, St. Vil
EXCUSED:	Dombrowski

XV. ADJOURNMENT

VOTE: Councilor Buhle moved to adjourn, seconded by Councilor Garcia-Irizarry.
8 - 0 Approved and so declared. The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Transcribed by Roxanne M. Maher
Administrative Assistant to the Town Council

I, S. Naomi Rodriguez, Chairman of the Ledyard Town Council,
hereby certify that the above and foregoing is a true and
correct copy of the minutes of the Regular Town Council
Meeting held on March 12, 2025.

S. Naomi Rodriguez, Chairman