



Chairman S. Naomi Rodriguez

TOWN OF LEDYARD
CONNECTICUT
TOWN COUNCIL

741 Colonel Ledyard Highway

Ledyard, CT 06339

<http://www.ledyardct.org>

Administrative Assistant

Roxanne M. Maher

860 464-3203

HYBRID FORMAT
MINUTES
COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMITTEE
FOR DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION
REGULAR MEETING

Wednesday, April 16, 2025

6:30 PM

Town Hall Annex-Video Conference

DRAFT

- I. CALL TO ORDER – The Meeting was called to order by Councilor Brunelle at 6:30 p.m. at the Annex Meeting Room - Town Hall Annex Building.

Councilor Brunelle welcomed all to the Hybrid Meeting. She stated for the Town Council Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion 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-Insite Meeting Portal.

II. ROLL CALL-

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Location	Arrived	Departed
Willaim Barnes	Town Councilor	Excused			
April Brunelle	Committee Chairman	Present	In-Person	6:30 pm	6:48 pm
Gary St. Vil	Town Councilor	Present	Remote	6:30 pm	6:48 pm
S. Naomi Rodriguez	Town Council Chairman	Present	In-Person	6:30 pm	6:48 pm
John Vincent	Economic Development Commission, Chairman	Present	In-Person	6:30 pm	6:39 pm
Roxanne Maher	Administrative Assistant	Present	Remote	6:30 pm	6:48 pm

III. RESIDENTS & PROPERTY OWNERS COMMENTS – None.

IV. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS/PRESENTATION

Mr. John Vincent, 19 Friar Tuck Drive, Gales Ferry, Economic Development Commission Chairman, thanked the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion for the opportunity to present the EDC's Ledyard Academy Governance Transparency Presentation this evening.

Mr. Vincent began by providing an overview of the Economic Development Commission's Background, Mission Statement, Role and Responsibilities as follows:

- **Background:**

The Economic Development Commission (EDC) was first established in 1979. It is comprised of 7 volunteer members who are appointed to 3- year terms by the Mayor.

- **Role & Responsibilities:**


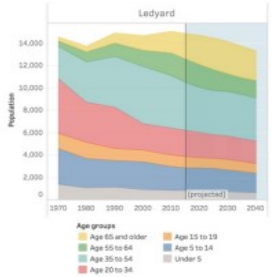

The EDC is responsible for expanding the tax base of the Town of Ledyard and for advocating, facilitating, promoting, and advising on economic development issues within the town through marketing, property tax incentives, and infrastructure improvement.

The role of the EDC is primarily advisory and not regulatory. Therefore, the EDC focuses on fostering a productive and positive relationship with both large and small businesses.

- **EDC Governing Documents:**

- ✓ Connecticut General Statues
 - Sec. 7-136 “*Municipal Economic Development Commissions*”
 - Sec. 7-137 “*Regional Economic Development Commissions*”
 - Sec. 32-7 “*Financial and Technical Assistance to Municipal and Regional Economic Development Agencies*”
 - Chapter 588r “*Small Business*”
- ✓ Ledyard Town Charter
- ✓ Ledyard Ordinance #300-020 – “*An Ordinance to Promote Economic Development In the Town Of Ledyard*”
- ✓ Ledyard EDC Bylaws
- ✓ 2023 EDC Strategic Plan
- ✓ Ledyard 2020 Plan of Conservation and Development

- **EDC Strategic Plan:**

 <p>A Town for all Seasons Town of Ledyard</p> <p>Economic Development Commission</p> <p>2023 Strategic Plan</p> <p>EDC Mission</p> <p>To enhance the economic well-being and long-term prosperity of Ledyard by serving as an important catalyst for new business and a critical resource for existing businesses who wish to grow, in a community that values its rich rural heritage, authentic New England character and rare quality of life.</p>	<p>Catalyst for new business...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rt. 12 Corridor Study: Produce an updated study to support State grant applications. • Permit approval process and regulations: Provide adequate staffing and provide Commission training. Keep regulations simple and flexible. • Water and sewer infrastructure: Support both phases of the sewer extension in Ledyard Center. Promote the need for sewer on Rt. 12 corridor. Pursue Federal and State Funding. • Identify prime parcels for development: Maintain a list of parcels along with suggested uses. • Pre-permitted sites: Select 1-2 key parcels per year with no defined plan for future development and have engineers complete a basic site plan – i.e. boundary survey, well, septic, and potential areas for detention basins and other drainage. Partner with PZC on the project. • Funding: Consider a fund for small businesses to help them improve their curb appeal. Provide matching fund for building renovations for key properties. <i>Clearly demonstrate the ROI to ensure community support.</i>
 <p>Population</p> <p>Ledyard</p> <p>Age groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Age 65 and older Age 55 to 64 Age 35 to 54 Age 20 to 34 Age 15 to 19 Age 5 to 14 Under 5 	 <div> <p>Market Character and Quality of Life...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive Marketing and Branding: Create a video to promote our assets to show their value. Build on these assets in a way that promotes business growth. • Create concept drawings for underutilized parcels in our commercial zones. • Pedestrian Friendly: Include sidewalks and bike paths where possible. </div> <div> <p>Critical Resource for existing businesses...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host Networking Events: Solicit feedback. • Business Directory: List all businesses. • Use Social Media: Communicate with the business community and stakeholders. Highlight new & existing local businesses. • Provide Data: Share annual market analysis to help businesses make better decisions. </div>

Challenges and Opportunities...

58.5% of those responding to the 2022 Residents Survey preferred to "Make it easier to have businesses in town, even in your own neighborhood."

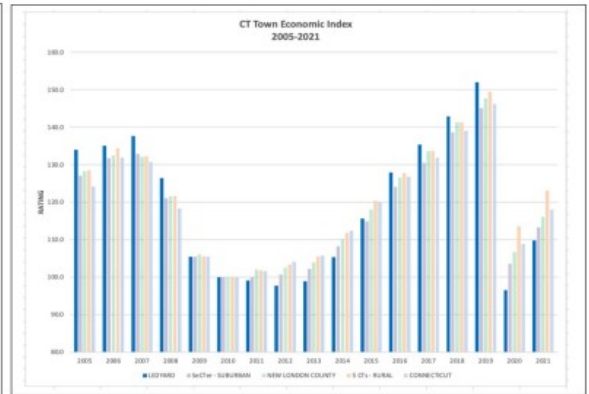
The percentage of the Town's Grand List from Commercial has dropped over 1% since 2015, from 5.57% in 2015 to 4.54% in 2021. (From State of Connecticut OPM.)

Ledyard's Town Economic Index outperformed both the State and New London County from 2016-2019 but then suffered the largest COVID-related drop of all towns in CT in 2020. Its recovery in 2021 leaves it behind other SeCter suburban towns in southeastern CT, New London County, towns rated as "Rural" by the 5 Connecticut's classification system, and the entire State. (Data from Connecticut Economic Digest.)

Ledyard's population is forecast to drop almost 10% from 2020 to 2040. All age groups are projected to decline except the Age 65 and older group. (Data from Connecticut State Data Center.)

Of the 24,000 acres in town, only 1,376.91 acres (5.74%) are zoned non-residential. Of those, 190.87 acres are currently being used residentially, 154.81 acres are dedicated open space, and 298.2 acres are unbuildable, leaving just 239.8 acres (31 parcels representing 1.00% of the total acreage in town) undeveloped.

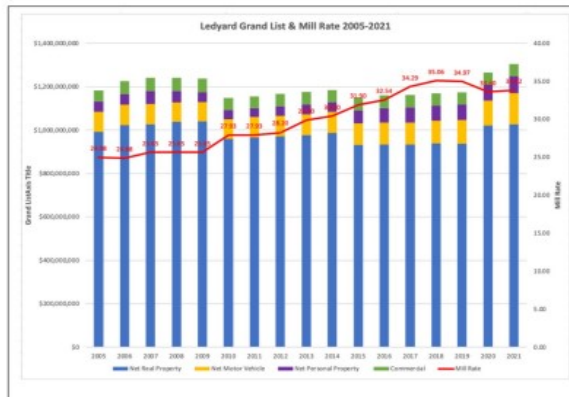
17.1% of the town's office/retail spaces are currently unoccupied.



Quotes from Residents Survey...

- "Collaborate with local businesses to have more Town-sponsored events."
- "Need land to build housing (particularly rental units) and infrastructure necessary to support growth. Water and sewers needed to support more dense housing and business development. Lack 5G service; Town needs sidewalks and bike lanes; EV Charging stations."
- "More opportunities and services needed for the youth; Allow Bill Library to expand; add seating or gazebo to town green area; need a town gathering space like a brew-pub."
- "Ledyard Center gets more attention than Gales Ferry; Rte. 12 corridor needs to be redesigned to be more car and pedestrian friendly; Add more bike and running paths."
- "Need to work to beautify this town; Town should invest in its parks — they need upkeep."

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- **Development Challenges:**
 - ✓ Of the 24,000 acres in town only 1,376 acres were zoned non-residential;
 - ✓ Of the 1,376 acres zoned non-residential that 190 acres were currently being used as residential. Mr. Vincent noted that the town had a lot of commercial space with residential houses on it.
 - ✓ Of the 1,376 acres that 154 acres were dedicated as Open Space.
 - ✓ 298 acres were Unbuildable
 - ✓ All this leaves 239 total acres or approximately 31 parcels that were Undeveloped.
 - ✓ Currently 17% of the town's Professional Office Space and Rental Spaces were currently unoccupied.

Mr. Vincent noted that the Economic Development Commission was working on the following:

- ✓ Who wants to come to the Town of Ledyard?
- ✓ How do we get them here?

Meeting Information

- ✓ The EDC meets at 6:00 pm on the first Tuesday of the month except when that would conflict with a holiday or an election day.
- ✓ EDC meeting schedule, agendas, and minutes can be found on the town's Meeting Portal.
- ✓ You can sign up to receive email updates at the top of the EDC page on the Meeting Portal.

- ✓ Meetings are usually held in the Ledyard Town Hall Annex.
- ✓ Ledyard residents and property owners are welcome to attend the EDC Meetings.
- ✓ Each meeting's agenda includes a "*Residents & Property Owners Comments*" item.
- ✓ Meetings are also accessible online via Zoom. The Zoom link for each meeting can be found at the top of the agenda for that meeting.

- ***Economic Development Commission Activities***

- ✓ Maintain an online Business Directory.
- ✓ Holds Ribbon Cuttings for new businesses.
- ✓ Annual Report that summarizes the work of the EDC as well as other significant economic activity in Ledyard.
- ✓ Contact new businesses to let them know that the EDC is available to provide assistance .
- ✓ Reach out to business to offer support and foster a positive relationship with the Town of Ledyard.
- ✓ Look for opportunities to promote Ledyard businesses.
- ✓ Monitor State of CT Legislation regarding Economic Development

Mr. Vincent provided the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion a copy of the *Economic Development Commission's 2024 Annual Report* and their *Governance Transparency Presentation*. He stated that he would be happy to answer questions.

The Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion thanked Mr. Vincent for attending tonight's meeting and for his presentation. Administrative Assistant Roxanne Maher noted that the Economic Development Governance Transparency Presentation would be added to the ***Ledyard Academy Link*** on the Town's website at www.ledyardct.org under the *Our Community Tab*.

Mr. Vincent left the meeting at 6:39 p.m.

IV. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION to approve the Meeting Minutes of March 19, 2025

Moved by Councilor Brunelle, seconded by Councilor St. Vil

VOTE: 2 - 0 – Approved and so declared

VI. OLD BUSINESS

1. Identify various town venues to host "*Informal Conversations in the Park*" to engage residents in discussions regarding their concerns and their ideas for potential solutions.

Councilor Brunelle stated the Committee would continue to keep the scheduling of "*Informal Conversations in the Park*" on their Agenda, noting that as the weather warms up they would work to help to facilitate programs such as:

- ***Lantern Hill Waterfront Park (Bush Pond)***

Councilor Brunelle stated the Committee was working with Ms. Betsy Graham and Parks & Recreation to engage residents and showcase the Lantern Hill Waterfront Park. She noted that Ms. Graham would provide some history regarding Pond and information regarding the importance of preventing invasive plants from being transferred from different bodies of water.

Councilor Brunelle went on to note that Parks, Recreation, & Senior Citizens Director Scott Johnson, Jr., was working to make some improvements to the Park that would include picnic benches, etc., before they invited residents to see the new Park.

- ***Visit all of the Parks in Town*** – No Update.

RESULT: CONTINUED

Next Meeting: 05/21/2025- 6:30 p.m.

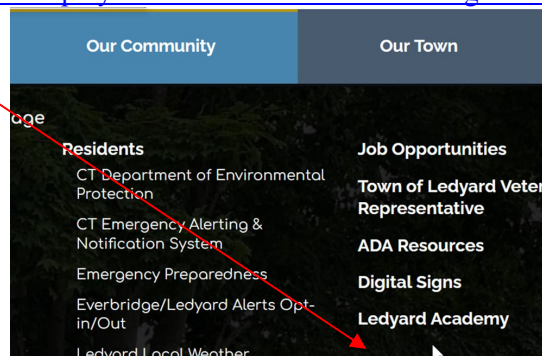
2. Review the status of Department Heads Government Training Presentations.

Councilor Brunelle noted that Economic Development Commission Chairman John Vincent presented the EDC's Governance Transparency Presentation earlier this evening (see above IV. Informational Items/Presentations)

Chairman Rodriguez stated that Administrative Assistant Roxanne Maher has been working on the Town Council's Governance Transparency Presentation to be included in the *Ledyard Academy* Tab on the Town 's website. She stated that it was a work in progress and should be ready soon.

The ***Ledyard Academy Link*** was located under the *Our Community Tab*. The link is noted below:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLsJAGmKziDMTXgiAUdDzirHQDuGWusk6Q>



RESULT: CONTINUED

Next Meeting: 05/21/2025 - 6:30 p.m.

3. Start a relationship with the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Council to help foster communication and mutual points of interest.

Chairman Rodriguez stated that she and Mayor Allyn, III, would be meeting with Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation Chairman Rodney Butler and Councilwoman Crystal Whipple tomorrow (April 17, 2025).

RESULT: CONTINUED

Next Meeting: 05/21/2025 6:30 p.m.

4. Research Community Organizations that provide Opioid and Substance Abuse Disorder, Recovery, and Prevention Programs for the use of the Opioid Settlement Funding.

Councilor Brunelle stated although this item was on the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion's agenda that they were not currently working on it, because some of their other Committees have been taking the lead. She noted the town was working with Organizations to provide opioid and substance abuse and recovery programs.

Chairman Rodriguez stated at their April 9, 2025 meeting the Town Council allocated \$12,500 from the National Opioid Settlement Funding (Account #20810201-58206-24206) to support the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 administration of the DARE Program in Ledyard Public Schools.

Chairman Rodriguez went on to note that both she and Mayor Allyn attended the Ledyard Prevention Coalition Meeting, and she reported that Ledyard had a fatal overdose on February 21, 2025; a fatal overdose on March 8, 2025; and a non-fatal overdose on March 14, 2025. She noted that Police Chief John Rich and Ledyard Middle School Principal Ryan Earley also attend the Ledyard Prevention Coalition Monthly meetings. She stated that a Prescription Drug Take Back Day has been scheduled for April 26, 2025 at the Senior Citizens Center on Van Tassel Drive, Gales Ferry.

RESULT: CONTINUED

Next Meeting: 5/21/2025 6:30 p.m.

5. 2025 Black History Month Program

Chairman Rodriguez stated at the Town Council's March 26, 2025 meeting prizes were awarded to students for their participation in the Fourth Black History Month Essay and Poster Contest, noting they had a great turnout. She stated that she, Mayor Allyn, III, and School Superintendent Hartling were working to schedule a date that they could all go the Elementary Schools to give the students back their Posters and to take pictures with the winners. She stated once they secure a date that she would let Councilor St. Vil know so that he could also participate in the event.

RESULT: COMPLETED

6. Schedule for Informal Conversation Forums and for Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Initiatives.
 - Mr. Lamb's email dated 2/17/2025 re: Topics for the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion.

Councilor Brunelle noted that she reached out to Mr. Lamb to invite him to attend their meeting to further discuss the topics he suggested; however, she has not heard back from him. She stated that she would try to contact him again.

RESULT: NO ACTION

Next Meeting: 5/21/2025 6:30 p.m.

7. Continued discussion regarding Recognition of Colonel William Ledyard.

Councilor Brunelle stated that Councilor Barnes was working on the Recognition of Colonel William Ledyard, noting that he was trying to include some type of ceremony during the 205th Celebration of the Signing of the Declaration of Independence Events planned for the July, 2026. She stated the Committee would keep this item on their agenda.

RESULT: NO ACTION

Next Meeting: 5/21/2025 6:30 p.m.

8. Continued discussion regarding a possible designated Youth Fishing Waterway.

Councilor Brunelle stated that Councilor Barnes was working on the Youth Fishing Waterway idea. She stated the Committee would keep this item on their agenda.

RESULT: NO ACTION

Next Meeting: 5/21/2025 6:30 p.m.

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

Councilor Brunelle addressed the scheduling of the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion's Booth at this Summer's Farmers Market. She stated that she submitted a request for space at the Farmers Market for three dates. However, she stated that Farmers Market Committee Chairman Pam Ball has not gotten back to her yet. Therefore, she stated that she would follow up the Ms. Ball regarding the dates.

Chairman Rodriguez noted that she was trying to coordinate with Mental Health Organizations to join them at a Farmers Market. However, she stated that she needed to have the dates to finalize with organizations such as Brian's Healing Hearts, and others, noting that these Organizations get booked up early.

RESULT: CONTINUED

Next Meeting: 5/21/2025 6:30 p.m.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

1. The First Annual Linda C. Davis Woman of the Year Award.

Councilor Brunelle stated that she was happy to announce that they had a Winner of the First Annual *Linda C. Davis Woman of the Year Award*. She proceed by announcing the Nominees, noting that they were not in any particular order, as follows:

- Tricia Mark
- Nancy Chapman
- Mary Casabria
- Kathryn Strout
- Jessica Buhle
- Paula Crocker
- Ellen Granger
- Juliet Hodge
- Sheila Downs

Councilor Brunelle stated that 2025 was the First Linda C. Davis Woman of the Year Award; and that the Winner would be announced at the Town Council's April 23, 2025 Meeting. She noted that she would contact the winner stating that she hoped they would be available to attend the Town Council's Meeting, because the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion would announce the winner and present the Award.

Councilor Brunelle stated that she was also thinking to be fair, that perhaps during another time of the year that they have a *Man of the Year Award* so they were not leaving the men out. Therefore, she stated that they could plan ahead; and she asked that the Committee provide suggestions on the appropriate month or other ideas regarding the *Man of the Year Award*.

RESULT: CONTINUED

Next Meeting: 5/21/2025 6:30 p.m.

2. Any New Business proper to come before the Committee – None.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

VOTE: Councilor Brunelle moved the meeting be adjourned, seconded by Councilor St. Vil
2 – 0 Approved and so declared. The meeting was adjourned at 6:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

April Brunelle
Committee Chairman
Community Relations Committee