



Chairman Gary St. Vil

TOWN OF LEDYARD
CONNECTICUT
TOWN COUNCIL
HYBRID FORMAT

741 Colonel Ledyard Highway
Ledyard, CT 06339

860 464-3203
Administrative Assistant
Roxanne Maher

MINUTES
SPECIAL JOINT WORK SESSION
FINANCE COMMITTEES
TOWN COUNCIL
AND
BOARD OF EDUCATION

Wednesday, August 20, 2025

5:00 PM

Council Chambers, Annex Building

DRAFT

- I. CALL TO ORDER - The Meeting was called to order by Town Councilor Tony Saccone and Board of Education Finance Committee Chairman Earl (Ty) Lamb at 5:00 p.m. at the Council Chambers Town Hall Annex Building.

Councilor Saccone welcomed all to the Hybrid Meeting. He stated for the Town Council Finance Committee and members of the Public who were participating via video conference that the remote meeting information was available on the Agenda that was posted on the Town's Website – Granicus-Legistar Meeting Portal.

II. ROLL CALL

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Location	Arrived	Departed
Jessica Buhle	Town Council Finance Committee	Present	In-Person	5:00 pm	7:17 pm
Tim Ryan	Town Council Finance Committee	Present	In-Person	5:00 pm	7:17 pm
Tony Saccone	Town Council Finance Committee	Late	In-Person	5:00 pm	7:17 pm
Carmen Garcia-Irizarry	Town Councilor	Present	In-Person	5:00 pm	7:17 pm
Fred Allyn, III	Mayor	Present	Remote	5:00 pm	7:17 pm
Matthew Bonin	General Government Finance Director	Present	In-Person	5:00 pm	7:17 pm
Earl (Ty) Lamb	Board of Education Finance Committee	Present	In-Person	5:00 pm	7:17 pm
Joanne Kelley	Board of Education Finance Committee	Present	In-Person	5:00 pm	7:17 pm
Sarah Treaster	Board of Education Finance Committee	Present	Remote	5:00 pm	7:17 pm
Brandon Graber	Board of Education	Present	In-Person	5:00 pm	7:17 pm
Jason Hartling	Superintendent of Schools	Present	In-Person	5:00 pm	7:17 pm
Kenneth Knight	Board of Education Finance Director	Present	In-Person	5:00 pm	7:17 pm

Board of Education Finance Committee Chairman Earl (Ty) Lamb stated that he would proceed with the Board of Education's Agenda format and with Citizens Comment, noting that their agenda would then dovetail into the discussion items listed on the Town Council Finance Committee's Agenda.

❖ BOARD OF EDUCATION CITIZENS COMMENTS

Board of Education Finance Committee Chairman Earl (Ty) Lamb noted that per the Board of Education's Bylaws that if there were Board of Education Members, who were not on the Finance Committee, that would like to provide comments that this was their opportunity to speak, noting that once they get into discussing the Agenda Items that they would not be recognized to speak at that time.

Board Member Lamb opened the floor for Citizens Comments. Hearing none, he proceeded with the Agenda.

❖ BOARD OF EDUCATION FINANCE COMMITTEE OPENING COMMENTS

Board Member Lamb noted that he was happy the two Finance Committees were coming together, noting that the scheduling of Quarterly Joint Meetings was the result of "*Lessons Learned*" from the past year. He stated that he hoped the overarching meeting would lay some seeds and ground work for the upcoming budget year (fy 26/27). He explained while the Board of Education begins their process for the budget preparation in October; that with the November 4, 2025 Local Election that the current three Board of Education Finance Committee members would not be serving in this capacity, because none of them were on the slate for the Board of Education election. Therefore, he stated although they would be starting the budget process in October that a new Finance Committee would take on the process after they are sworn into Office which would take place the first week of December, 2025. He stated up until his term ends in November that he planned to include the Town Council Finance Committee on the Board of Education Finance Committee's monthly Agendas. He stated that he hoped they could build some bridges as they work to move into the next fiscal year.

Board Member Lamb stated at this point the items on the two Finance Committee Agendas (Board of Education and Town Council) dovetail; and that he would turn the meeting over to Councilor Saccone.

III. BUSINESS OF THE WORK SESSION

Councilor Saccone opened the floor to the Town Council Finance Committee Members to provide opening comments.

Councilor Ryan stated as he has stated at previous meetings that he believed Regular Quarterly Joint Meetings between the Finance Committees of the Town Council and Board of Education were a good idea in terms of communication.

Councilor Buhle noted that she echoed Councilor Ryan's comments. She stated that she believed there was a lot of positives in establishing a plan for Regular Quarterly Meetings between the two Finance Committees. She stated that she was looking forward to hearing suggestions from the Board of Education. She stated that she felt that all of the budgets that were presented to the Town Council's Finance Committee were already essentially pared down. She stated having these conversations would help the Town Council Finance Committee to more fully understand all of the projects that they could collaborate on to save taxpayer money and to better inform them as they work through the process to make

their town a better place to live. She stated that she looked forward to the Regular Quarterly Finance Committee Meetings.

Councilor Saccone stated that he would echo all of the opening comments this evening. He stated by getting an early start on their budget conversations would give them time to mull things over as they bring them up; and give them time to work things out.

Councilor Saccone asked that they try to follow the agenda and stick to the topic of each of the discussion items.

1. Round table discussion to collaborate on initiatives for the preparation of the Fiscal Year 2026/2027 Budget to include the following:

- ***Options to reduce expenses and minimize budget increases***

School Superintendent Jason Hartling stated that his perspective was that both the Town and Board of Education's Budgets were lean. He stated the Board of Education has streamlined every function in the District Business Office; and he noted that every year they look for ways to reduce Administrative Support through the use of technology in areas such as:

- ✓ Secretarial
- ✓ Staffing

Mayor Allyn stated as Superintendent Hartling mentioned, the General Government Staffing was very lean, noting that most Town Hall Departments had 1.5 – 1.8 Full-Time Employees.

- ***Staffing:*** Mayor Allyn noted the following:
 - ✓ Police Department – 24 Staff
 - ✓ Public Works Department – 19 Staff
 - ✓ Library 13 Staff – Most were Part-Time Employees

Mayor Allyn stated that the General Government Staff was almost dangerously lean, explaining that should a staff member need to be out of the office because of a serious illness or accident the Department would need to be closed for some period of time; which the town does not want to do, because it would be counterproductive in providing services to the residents.

Mayor note most recent cost saving measures as follows:

- ***Curbside Collection – Trash Hauling*** – Mayor Allyn stated the Town solicited Bids this year for Curbside Collection and Trash Hauling Services; noting with the new Contractor that the town would save a couple hundred thousands of dollars over the six-year contract period.

Mr. Hartling stated that the Board of Education has worked with Public Works Director Steve Masalin on things such as the Trash Contract, noting that Mr. Masalin has been helpful with other projects to repair asphalt, etc.

Councilor Saccone stated as a member of the Town Council's Finance Committee and as a taxpayer, that he understands both the General Government and the Board of Education had lean budgets. Therefore, he stated what they need to try to address was "*Where do they go from here?*". He stated if the taxpayers would attend their meetings and listen to their discussions as the

Finance Committee reviews the materials, they would understand that Ledyard's budget was very lean.

Councilor Ryan stated tonight's Agenda included "*Budget revenues and process to record and expend additional revenues received*"; noting that there were two sides of the budget those being "*Expenses and Revenues*". However, he stated they often focus on cutting expenses because it seemed to be easier than generating more revenues. Councilor Saccone stated in working to reduce expenses that it gives the appearance that they were trying to do something. Councilor Ryan stated that he agreed with Councilor Saccone that the optics of reducing expenses was more visible than working to increase revenues. He stated that he would like to think that the ultimate arbiter was the tax bill that residents receive.

Councilor Ryan stated that the only direction the State was moving toward was pushing more expenses onto Municipalities with unfunded mandates year after year; and reducing some of the town's tax revenue received from the commercial businesses operating at the Mashantucket Pequot Foxwoods Resort & Casino. He noted although the State has indicated that they would provide grant funding to Ledyard for the loss of tax revenues generated by the commercial businesses operating at the Mashantucket Pequot Foxwoods Resort & Casino, that there was no guarantee that the State funding would continue. He stated these were realities that their town was facing and that they would either have to find revenue to replace the revenue losses or look for reductions. He suggested going forward for future budgets that they should all try to strive to not create *new recurring expenses*. He stated although they could all use more staff as a measure to provide coverage should someone experience a serious illness; that adding more staff creates an overhead burden such as retirement expenses, medical expenses, etc., noting that these expenses were not readily visible in the immediate budget when funding additional positions. He provided clarification stating that he was not referring to replacing a current service that was sunseting in which the net expense was not increasing. However, he stated speaking in generalities that what should not be pursued was introducing new expenses, especially expenses that were initially funded by grant opportunities.

Councilor Buhle stated she does not believe that Annual Budget was recklessly spending money. She stated she could sit down with a spreadsheet of the Annual Budget for the next 365 days and try to find a way to cut expenses. However, she stated that it would not fix the fact that Ledyard does not have a Grand List that supports the needs of their town. She stated when they begin working on the Annual Budget in February, they cannot go back and grow the October 1st Grand List that would be funding the next year's budget. Therefore, she stated that they were left with the option to try to cut expenses, because by then it's too late to grow the Grand List. Therefore, she stated that they need a long-term plan to grow Ledyard's Grand List. She stated that a town's budget was a reflection of their values. She stated with Ledyard's School District per pupil spending ranked as 153 of the 165 in the State they were saying they do not value education. She stated that she was not saying that Ledyard does not value education, noting that they provide exceptional education for what they pay for it. She stated the answer to their budget was to seek long-term revenue and not to continue to go at the budget with a chainsaw. She stated the only way for to be heard about the need for revenues was to show up in Hartford and speak loudly; noting that nobody from Ledyard was doing that.

Mayor Allyn addressed Councilor Buhle's comments about appealing to Hartford to increase Ledyard's revenues, stating that all 21 Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (SCCOG) Towns showed up in Hartford to beat the drums. However, he stated they had a group of Legislators that did not listen and disregarded the SCCOG towns concerns.

- ***Veterans Tax Exemption*** – Councilor Buhle stated that Ledyard was hit harder than any other town in the State by the Public Act 24-46 “*An Act Establishing a Property Tax Exemption for Veterans Who Have a Service-Connected Permanent and Total Disability Rating*”; noting that Ledyard's Grand List was impacted more than 1% . Therefore, she stated that although being represented by Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (SCCOG) was a good approach, that Ledyard needed to speak up on the issues that they specifically needed help with.

Councilor Buhle stated that she would rather go to Hartford 10-times in a year and ask for help from the State to make sure their students get what they deserve, than come back with another chainsaw at the budget.

Superintendent Hartling addressed Councilor Buhle's comments stating that he has had more conversations with State Senator Cathy Osten than he could count. He noted that both he and Mayor Allyn, III, sat down with Senator Osten just last week to advocate for things that were important to their community, stating they talked about the unfunded mandates that go through the Implementer Bill and were back doored through the process without a Public Hearing. He noted a recent unfunded mandate required school districts to give per diem substitute teachers sick days. He commented on the unpredictability of the School Budget explaining that every year he could have 200 new faces that come with new demands, expectations, and needs. He stated sometimes a student's needs could be an expense of \$150,000; or the student may not need any additional support, and the cost would be \$16,000 per pupil expense. He stated that he did not think that Southeastern Connecticut was adequately being listened to or respected relative to the State Legislature.

Mr. Hartling noted the following Risk Categories they have to be aware of because they would be driving the overall costs for next year's Budget (Fiscal Year 2026/2027):

- ✓ Special Education Services
- ✓ Healthcare Expenses – Mr. Hartling stated the Board of Education Teachers pay 25% of the cost, which was the largest contributions of any of their labor groups. He noted that most of their non-certified groups and town groups pay 20%.

Mr. Hartling stated the costs drivers he mentioned above do not include the following costs:

- ✓ Student Profile Needs.
- ✓ Strategic Opportunities

Board of Education Finance Committee Member Joanne Kelley addressed Councilor Ryan's suggestion that they try to strive not to create *new recurring expenses*. She stated this suggestion illustrated that there were fundamental differences between the Board of Education - School District and General Government. She noted that Superintendent Hartling noted some of the moving pieces that the School District has to deal with all the time, noting that it was a reality.

Ms. Kelley addressed this Agenda item "*Options to reduce expenses and minimize budget increases*"; stating if the School District does not: (1) Fully fund the basic education services that they need to provide; (2) Do the early assessments; and (3) Do not implement the appropriate interventions to their students, that it would drastically impact their need to spend more money on Special Education as that child goes through the school system. She stated this was something the School District was highly deficient in until recently; and therefore, they were going to begin to see less of an increase in Special Education services; which was the way it was supposed to work, if they have these systems in-place, noting that these services would need to be supported all the time. However, she stated they were not even at baseline yet, because they still had deficiencies, and therefore, they needed to continue to support the Intervention Model, noting that it was going to save the taxpayers money in the long run. She stated failing to fully fund these systems was setting the kids up for failure instead of success.

Superintendent Harting noted Ms. Kelley's comments regarding the importance to conduct early assessments; and implement the appropriate interventions to their students because it would reduce their Special Education costs. He stated in 2016 Ledyard was outplacing 47 students for Special Education Services; and in 2024 they were outplacing 17 students for Special Education Services. He stated Ledyard was able to mitigate their Special Education costs over the last 7 – 8 years by building programs in-District to better serve those students, noting that the children should be in their home-town schools with their friends. He went on to explain that the State was now studying private and special education providers and were setting costs for private providers in the state. He stated that local school districts were not involved in those State conversations; and they were not driving their costs, noting that Ledyard was not seeing the gigantic 5%- 8% increases per year in their Special Education costs that they had seen in past years.

- ***Guidance for negotiation and execution of contracts (labor, services, supplies, utilities)***
- ✓ ***Teacher Contract Negotiations*** – Mr. Hartling stated the Contract Settlements around the State were about 5.25% per year. He noted the following Board of Education Labor Contracts:
 - ❖ Secretary's Contract was currently closed.
 - ❖ Custodian Contract was still open and in negotiations.
 - ❖ Teachers Contract was in negotiations and was their largest group. Mr. Hartling stated by law the negotiations would be closed through an Agreement, Forced Mediation; or Arbitration in October.
- ✓ ***Construction/Building Contracts*** – Board of Education Finance Committee Chairman Lamb commented on the End-to-End Process stating that from defining a *need to the time they close-out a contract* on the town side was a huge issue. He stated they were having delays after delays, incurring additional costs, noting that the town was losing money on their Building Projects. He suggested the Town Council establish another Ad Hoc

Committee to conduct a full End-to-End from the defining a need to the time they close-out a contract, noting that they could save a lot of money.

Councilor Saccone noted the Juliet W. Long Heating Ventilation & Air Conditioning (HVAC) Project was an example of the project being delayed and costing more money. However, he stated that it was not the fault of the Permanent Municipal Building Committee (PMBC), noting that the root cause of the delays and costs increases was because the State changed the HVAC requirements after the COVID-19 Pandemic, which cause the project to be delayed because the HVAC System had to be redesigned causing the cost to increase.

Mayor Allyn, III, stated in October, 2024 the Town Council adopted Amendments to Ordinance #100-015 (rev.1) "*An Ordinance Establishing a Permanent Municipal Building Committee for the Town of Ledyard*". However, he stated that they have had a number of projects that have been a huge challenge, noting that the Gales Ferry School Roof was currently having issues. He stated with the Ordinance Amendments the PMBC was now using Owner Representatives more favorably for the town. He stated it was a mistake not to use an Owner Representative with O&G Industries when they *Renovated as New* the Ledyard Middle School and the Gallup Hill School. He agreed that the process should be looked at.

- ✓ ***Supplies, Services, Fuel, and Utilities*** – Mayor Allyn stated much of these purchases were done through consortiums such as the Capital Region Council of Governments (CRCOG), and other Purchasing Agreements such as: State of Connecticut bids, other states' bids, purchasing cooperatives (i.e. Sourcewell) , and federal government bids. He stated Ledyard was utilizing these opportunities and was saving the town money.
- ✓ ***Solar Projects – Utilities*** – Councilor Saccone noted the Solar Pannels at the Juliet W. Long School and the Gales Ferry School would provide some savings in electrical costs. He also noted that the new Chiller at the Gales Ferry was more efficient and would also provide some savings in electrical costs.

Superintendent Hartling explained that part of the Board of Education's budget calculus for Fiscal Year 2025/2026 was the electrical costs savings at the Juliet W. Long School and the Gales Ferry which would be Base Zero, because of the new Solar Array Pannels on the schools roofs. However, stated with the delays in the roof replacement at the Gales Ferry School that he was now having to figure out was where he was going to find the \$30,000 - \$40,000 for electricity expenses because the Solar Array at the Gales Ferry School cannot be installed and turned on unit the roof has been completed.

Mr. Hartling went on to state that delaying the replacement of the Chiller at the Gales Ferry School was a good example of what happens when they push the replacement of the unit out another year, noting that through the budget process the community approved to replace the Chiller next summer. However, he stated this summer the Chiller had a critical failure, and it had to be replaced this summer, after being in service for 25-years.

Councilor Buhle questioned whether: (1) The Gallup Hill School and Middle School also had Solar Array Systems; (2) Whether the town owned the solar panels; and (3) The length of the contracts. Mr. Hartling stated all of Ledyard's Schools: High School, Middle School, Juliet W. Long School, Gallup Hill School, and the Gales Ferry School all have Solar Array Systems to help offset the electricity expenses. He stated the Town does not own the Solar Array Panels, explaining that they were a *Pay for Use* under a town generated contract. Mayor Allyn stated the term of the Solar Array Contracts were about 20-years.

Councilor Ryan stated tonight's Agenda basically follows the *Committee to Review the Budget Process*' October 31, 2023 Final Report. He noted the Section in the Report titled "*Guidance for Negotiations and Execution of Contracts (labor, services, supplies, utilities)*"

- ***Recording expenses on the appropriate side of the budget ledger for accuracy and transparency.***

Mayor Allyn addressed the importance to record expenses on the side of the budget ledger where the expenses were incurred so the voters could see and know what the actual expenses were.

- ✓ ***Healthcare Expenses*** – Mayor Allyn stated the healthcare cost for the Board of Education Employees and Retirees needed to be displayed on the Board of Education side of the budget ledger in some format, stating that it could be a summary at the front of the budget. He stated the Board of Education Employees and Retirees Healthcare was the largest single expense that resides on the General Government side of the budget ledger. He stated there was a long history as to why the Board of Education's Healthcare Expenses were moved to the General Government side of the budget ledger that goes back to 2001, that he would not get into this evening. However, he stated that this expense needed to be shown appropriately.

Mayor Allyn went on to note at their January 21, 2025 Joint Finance Committee Meeting that Councilor Buhle made a comment to show a similar level of transparency. He stated that Councilor Buhle stated, as an example, "*That it would be helpful if the Board of Education could identify in the budget how many Math Teachers were being paid from a particular budget line, was it one, five, or ten teachers*". He stated identifying how many employees were being paid from each budget line and recording the healthcare expenses on the Board of Education's side of the budget ledger were important to provide transparency for their residents. He stated although they may not have to move the healthcare expenses out of the General Government side of the budget ledger that it needed to appear so when residents read the budget summary they can understand the where the expenses reside.

Board of Education Finance Committee Chairman Lamb stated as the Historic District Commission Chairman that he includes a number of things along with justification in their Operations Budget Line, which may include a variety of expenses such as painting exterior walls, or cutting trees. He questioned whether all of the sub-categories had separate budget lines in the Munis Financial System. Finance Director Matthew Bonin stated there were multiple budget categories in the Munis Financial System. Mr. Lamb

questioned whether they count down to the penny or whether there was a fidelity. He suggested, as a town, they decide what that fidelity should be and then execute it.

Superintendent Hartling stated one of the challenges of a community budget was that the Board of Education's Departments and budget lines were very different from the General Government. He noted as an example that the General Government's Town Clerk budget may have one employee, where the Board of Education has more Math Teachers than the General Government has employees in five departments combined.

Mr. Hartling stated that he had issues fundamentally with making changing during the budget process because people compare expenses year over year. Therefore, he stated when they start shifting large amounts from one year to another that it artificially decreases one side of the budget and increases the other side of the budget in comparison to the previous year. He stated the Board of Education could add a tab for In-Kind Expenses to their budget presentation. Mayor Allyn stated that there was more to it than just adding an In-Kind Expenses tab to the budget, noting that the General Government budget has a tab for In-Kind Expenses; stating that residents question "*What is this In-Kind?*" He stated that he believed that expenses (see below) can and should be shifted over from the General Government side of the budget ledger to the Board of Education side of the budget ledger. He stated that initially he proposed making the changes during the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget process. However, he stated that Mr. Hartling did not like that proposal and that he respected his position; and therefore, has since agreed to Mr. Hartling's request to make the changes during the fiscal year. Mr. Hartling stated that he was pleased that they came to an agreement to make the changes during the fiscal year; and not during the budget preparation process.

Mayor Allyn provided Superintendent a copy of the Town of Colchester's Budget, noting that he was impressed with the layout.

Mayor Allyn continued by addressing the following expenses that could and should be shifted/recorded from the General Government side of the budget ledger to the Board of Education's side of the budget ledger:

- ✓ ***Connecticut Interlocal Risk Management Agency. (CIRMA)*** – Mayor Allyn stated that this Insurance Coverage for executives at the Board of Education should also be recorded on the Board of Education's side of the budget ledger.

Superintendent Hartling questioned whether CIRMA was a Town Policy with the Board of Education as an Addendum to the Policy. Mayor Allyn stated that Mr. Hartling's understanding was correct. However, he stated that CIRMA could bill the Board of Education directly for their cost of the Policy. Mr. Hartling stated as long as they were not making these changes during the budget season. Mayor Allyn stated that he understands that a lot of this seemed like minutia, but in reality they were creating a budget. He stated that he was impressed with Colchester's Budget, which was the reason he provided Mr. Hartling a copy of it, noting that their budget was presented by each school and that it breaks down the costs for each school. He stated this budget format would eliminate a lot of questions regarding the validity of the information.

Mr. Hartling stated that the Colchester Board of Education had about \$5 Million more to spend and their Central Office was double the size of Ledyard's, noting that Colchester's school population was about 2,161 compared to Ledyard school population that was about 2,445.

- ✓ **School Nurses** – Mayor Allyn stated the expenses for the School Nurses can and should be recorded on the Board of Education's side of the budget ledger. He stated that he would like to see the School Nurses Contract be moved over to the Board of Education side of the budget ledger by December 31, 2025, because the Town would no longer have a Nurse Supervisor at that time.

Superintendent Hartling stated that the Town should consult with their Attorney relative to the process to disband a Bargaining Unit; and no longer being the fiduciary and fiscally responsible for the Bargaining Unit. He stated they could coordinate that work noting that there was a set of notices and obligations that have to be done to be sure they were honoring their School Nurses; so he Nurses were fully informed and understand what was going on and that there was an appropriate process in-place.

Councilor Saccone stated that he believed the School Nurses should be recorded on the Board of Education's side of the budget ledger. He stated that he was aware that the Mayor was working on the process. He stated that he understands that currently the Board of Education does not have the School Nurses on their payroll.

Mr. Hartling stated this was the first time that he was hearing that moving the School Nurses to the Board of Education's side of the budget ledger was going to occur this year, noting that he thought it was going to be next year. Mayor Allyn stated that everything he has brought up moving the School Nurses to the Board of Education's budget that Mr. Hartling always has something new. Mr. Hartling stated the last word they had on the School Nurses was that their contract was extended through 2027; and that they would move the School Nurses to the Board of Education Budget in 2027. He stated if the move was going to be this fiscal year that he would ask that they meet, because there were a number of legal requirements that could put the Town in jeopardy; and therefore, he wanted to make sure that they do it right; and that they were respectful to those employees, because they deserve that. He stated if they were going to accelerate the schedule to move the School Nurses to the Board of Education in December, 202; that they need to begin to communicate with the School Nurses, so they do not have that added stress. Mayor Allyn stated this came up two-years ago and that they were not going to blindside the School Nurses, noting that he believed they knew that this change was coming.

Board of Education Finance Committee Chairman Lamb noted that the expenses the Mayor was referring to were In-Kind Expenses. He stated for clarification that there was no proposal for the Board of Education to take over the healthcare, stating that it would only be for recording purposes. Mayor Allyn stated that Mr. Lamb's understanding was correct. He stated recording the expenses on the Board of Education's side of the budget

ledger would show that this was an expense that the Board of Education does bear; and it was baked into the cost per pupil expenditure calculation. Mr. Lamb stated that he would not mind recording the expenses on the Board of Education's side of the budget ledger and Mayor Allyn noted, because there was some confusion when they talk about the per pupil expenses, noting that some think the per pupil expenditure was a lot more because the In-Kind expenses were not included in the per pupil expenditure calculation, noting that the Board of Education does include these expenses in their per pupil expenditure calculation.

Mr. Lamb suggested they change over the recording of the expenses that were being discussed this evening now, to allow them to become part of their baseline budget, so when they go into their budget preparation season that their budget increases and decreases would be based off the new baseline, as though the expenses were always there. Therefore, he stated by having all of these expenses aligned that it might help residents when discussing the per pupil expenses. Mayor Allyn stated he agreed with Mr. Lamb's suggestion, noting that was the purpose of recording expenses on the appropriate side of the budget ledger. He noted that tonight's Agenda also included a discussion regarding *Misinformation*, explaining when people do not know the facts they jump to conclusions and that generates misinformation.

- ***Employees & Retirees Healthcare expenses.***

Superintendent Hartling stated by recording the Board of Education's Employees and Retirees Healthcare Expenses on the Board of Education side of the budget ledger; that the Board of Education would become fiscally responsible to manage those funds. He stated that the Board of Education would be legally liable for the Healthcare budget line, noting that if they were to over expend that budget line, that the Board of Education would be responsible, noting that this has happened in other Municipalities.

Mayor Allyn addressed Mr. Hartling's comments explaining in years leading up to 2001 that Ledyard's Board of Education over expended their Healthcare budget line, which was the reason the Board of Education's Healthcare was shifted from the Board of Education's side of the budget ledger to the General Government's side of the budget ledger. Mr. Hartling stated at that time Ledyard's Healthcare was self-insured, noting that a self-insured entity was very different from how Ledyard's Healthcare was now being handled. Mayor Allyn stated that he agreed that being self-insured was different from the way they currently handle their employees' Healthcare Insurance. However, he stated prior to the decision to record the Board of Education's Employees and Retirees Healthcare on the General Government side of the budget ledger that the Board of Education over spent their Healthcare budget line by \$500,000.

Councilor Buhle stated about three-years ago the Board of Education changed the way they titled some of their positions; which skewed some of the budget data. She explained the budget history showed that two years prior they had zero people in a position, when they actually had people in those positions, but they were working under a different position title. Therefore, she stated if they only looked at budget lines and percentage

increases or decreases that the data would show that something was increased by 24% when it was just a change in position title, etc. She stated they could put all this data into a 42-page description budget booklet; however, she commented as Councilor Ryan has mentioned, that some people were not going to read budget information presented, and would say “No” because their tax bill increased. Therefore, she stated when they prepared the proposed budget that they use the Healthcare Expenses from prior years to show that it was a reallocation of where these expenses were residing; and not an increase to the Board of Education’s budget.

Mr. Hartling stated that the State of Connecticut dictates how the Board of Education buckets certain things so that they were uniform across the State. He stated the Board of Education spends the month of September imputing data into a separate system that were classifications for every certified employee in the School District. He explained when the State changes those allocations, that the Board of Education has to go back when they do their Education Financial Systems (EFS) Reports and shuffle where the bucketed and classified expenses. He stated about four-years ago the State completely changed how things were bucketed and classified, explaining that the Board of Education received all these things from the State typically in August.

Councilor Buhle stated to be clear that she was not suggesting the Board of Education modify the way they report instructors, etc., to the State. She stated that what she was talking about was how they present housing the Board of Education’s Healthcare Expenses on their side of the budget ledger. She stated by including the Board of Education’s Healthcare Expenses data from Fiscal Year 2023/2024; 2024/2025 that when they put the percentage changes in the budget that it would not look like the General Government budget decreased by 34%; and the Board of Education increased by 20%. She stated that they need to be honest with what this actually means, noting that all they were really doing was moving the numbers from one bucket to another bucket. She stated all of this falls into a number of other things such as the way the budget was presented, etc. She stated that she was not opposed to essentially keeping the Board of Education’s Healthcare on the General Government side of the budget in how it was managed/administrated, but that she also wanted to make sure that it was reflected accurately on the Board of Education side of the budget ledger for taxpayers to understand what their expenses were.

Board of Education Finance Committee Chairman Lamb noted Councilor Buhle’s comments about showing the previous years’ expenses, noting that was the point he made earlier about the baseline.

Finance Director Matthew Bonin stated that he presented all the data Councilor Buhle was talking about to the Finance Committee during the budget preparation process. He stated there were also a number of Board of Education expenses that have been carried in the General Government side of the budget since before he joined the town, noting that he had no idea why these expenses would not be included in the Board of Education budget, such as the Deferred Compensation Contributions.

Councilor Ryan stated the whole point of the Budget Public Hearing and Annual Budget Town Meeting was to talk about the changes to the budget. He stated that this would also fall into “Communication” which they would discuss later this evening. Councilor Saccone noted only seven residents attended the Annual Town Meeting on May 19, 2025.

Board Member Lamb suggested the Board of Education and Town Council Finance Committees keep these type of conversations on their Agendas so that they could come to a joint consensus.

Board Member Kelley stated that she did not have a problem with putting all of the Board of Education’s expenses on their side of the budget ledger, so that it was all inclusive.

- ***Potential areas to share/consolidate/regionalize services, purchasing, contracts, etc., between the General Government and Board of Education and/or for privatization***

- ❖ **Shared Services-** School Superintendent Hartling stated that he and Mayor Allyn have had numerous conversations about ways to share services. However, he stated that both the Board of Education and General Government were very lean. He also stated that because the Board of Education and the General Government function very differently that consolidating departments would not reduce headcount.

Mr. Harting noted the following as examples:

- ✓ ***Human Resources Departments:*** Mr. Harting stated that because of the Department of Children & Family (DCF) requirements that the Board of Education’s hiring and training process was different from the General Government.
- ✓ ***Finance Department:*** Mr. Hartling stated the Board of Education has about 2,500 Purchase Orders each year, noting that they had a much higher volume of Requests than the General Government.
- ✓ ***Optimizing Mowing:*** Mr. Hartling stated in this area that there was also not a lot of excess capacity.
- ❖ ***Regionalization*** - Mayor Allyn stated the General Government has been proactive in seeking regional opportunities to share serviced, which provides revenues to Ledyard. He noted Ledyard provides the following regionalization services:
 - ✓ ***Emergency Dispatch Communications*** : Mayor Allyn stated that Ledyard has been providing Emergency Dispatch for Preston for many years.
 - ✓ ***Assessor Services:*** Mayor Allyn stated that Ledyard’s Tax Assessor Adrianna Hedwall also provides services to Preston.
 - ✓ ***Mechanic Services*** – Mayor Allyn stated that Ledyard provides mechanic services to Preston’s Public Works Fleet.

School Superintendent Hartling stated that the Board of Education has worked with Public Works Director Steve Masalin for the repair of Board of Education vehicles.

- ✓ ***Street Sweeper*** - Mayor Allyn stated this year Ledyard and Preston entered into a Shared Agreement to purchase a Elgin Pelican Street Sweeper. The shared cost would be proportionally based on paved road mileage which would result in 2/3 for Ledyard and 1/3 for Preston. He also explained that Ledyard would be paying for their shared cost using the Beverage (“Nip”) Container Surcharges Revenue received from the State.

Mayor Allyn stated absent a County Form of Government, that he really did not know where else Ledyard could leverage to reduce costs, noting that Connecticut has 169 Municipalities all doing things 169 different ways.

❖ **Purchasing Supplies:-** Mr. Hartling addressed the purchasing supplies noting the following:

- ✓ ***Paper & Office Supplies*** – Mr. Hartling stated that the Board of Education was already participating in the Capitol Regional Education Council (CREC) and other Collaborative Purchasing Agreements with other schools in the region, to purchase supplies such as paper to obtain a better price. He stated the Board of Education and General Government was not a large enough paper purchaser to negotiation a contract with suppliers such as WB Mason or other suppliers.
- ✓ ***Board of Education Central Purchasing*** - Mr. Hartling stated as a result of the *Committee to Review the Budget Process*’ October 31, 2023 Final Report and recommendation the Board of Education has tried to have Central Purchasing for all of the schools by standardizing pens, folders, etc., and found that it was not cost effective based on the amount of time spent to sort, sift, keep inventory, and distribute materials.
- ✓ ***Purchase of Fuel:*** Mr. Hartling stated that their fuel arrangements have been mutually beneficial for both the Board of Education and the Town.

Board of Education Finance Committee Chairman Lamb noted that the Board of Education and the General Government do not often talk about all of the “Wins” they have had in reducing costs and how staff was being utilized to make them more efficient. He also noted because of the Board of Education freezes their budget each spring they would typically have \$120,000 remaining in their budget that would be transferred to their Capital Non-Recurring Account to address their capital needs.

Mr. Harting provided more context to Mr. Lamb’s comments regarding the Board of Education not spending all of their budget and allocating the remaining budget to their Capital Non-Recurring Account. He explained each April the Central Office freezes the entire District and closes out all the encumbrances and Purchase Orders to ensure by the end of the fiscal year they were not coming to the Town to ask for additional resources. He stated that this process also allowed their School Principals to weigh-in on what they were not going to spend so that the Board of Education could plan for deferred maintenance issues.

Councilor Ryan stated the *Committee to Review the Budget Process*’ Final Report dated October 31, 2023, noting that Appendix B included an exhausting list of the all the General Government and Board of Education services; and the potential to share or regionalize. He stated Appendix B may be a good rubric to use to see whether they have explored those options. He stated because the Report was already two-years old; that some of the recommendations may no longer be valid. However, he stated that it may be a good guide, and it may generate more discussion. He stated

they may want to have a meeting dedicated to review and discuss Appendix B noting there were some good ideas that could potentially help the town save resources. He stated that he was a proponent of regionalization and shared services where it made sense. He stated the *Committee to Review the Budget Process*' Final Report dated October 31, 2023 was available on the Town's Granicus Agendas & Minutes Meeting Portal noting that the Report was attached to the last meeting of the *Committee to Review the Budget Process*.

Board Member Lamb noted that both he and Board Member Joanne Kelley were members of *Committee to Review the Budget Process* and he stated that he agreed with Councilor Ryan's suggestion that the Report it may be worth reviewing because it may generate new ideas.

- ***Long term planning for Capital Improvement Projects (CIP)***

- ✓ ***Funding for Capital Improvements*** - Board of Education Finance Committee Chairman Lamb noted that the *Committee to Review the Budget Process* Final Report dated October 31, 2023 recommended the town look at the benefits of setting aside funding annually for Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) such as the replacement of the school roof projects. He stated the Report suggested by setting funding aside each year to purchase large equipment or for large capital expenses that they could earn about \$300,000 per year in interest while it was sitting in the bank. Councilor Saccone stated last year they attempted to allocate \$200,000 into a Capital Non-Recurring Savings Account. However, he stated because the money was just not available it did not make it through the budget process. However, he stated that he agreed it would be a good idea.

Board of Education Finance Committee Member Joanne Kelley stated the Board of Education has a problem with delaying necessary maintenance and repairs identified in their Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). She stated that it was a misnomer that a lot of the projects contained Capital Improvement Plan were considered *improvements* or thought of as *enhancements*, when most of the work was routine maintenance and repairs, etc. She stated by delaying these repairs that they would wind up spending more. She went on to address the Capital Improvement Plan that Director of Facilities and Grounds Wayne Donaldson and the Board of Education's Facilities Committee spend a lot of time to prioritize every year, which then gets the hatchet when it was presented to the Town side noting that 80% of their maintenance and repairs get wacked away. She stated eliminating 80% of their routine maintenance projects was not fiscally responsible.

Ms. Kelley continued by questioning the reason the Town and the Board of Education's Capital Improvement Plans were submitted as two separate Plans; and then the Board of Education's Capital Improvement Plan becomes part of the General Government Budget when the final budget was presented to the townspeople. Councilor Saccone stated that the school were town facilities, but because they were used by the Board of Education on a daily basis that the Board of Education would know the types of capital improvements that were needed. Mayor Allyn stated per the Town Charter that the all of the Capital Improvement Plans have to be submitted and reviewed by the Planning Commission. Superintendent Hartling stated the Town Charter required the Board of Education to submit a Capital Improvement Plan with their Annual Budget.

Chapter VII; Section 4 of the Town Charter

“The Board of Education shall participate in the review of municipal improvements and capital projects that is conducted by the Mayor and the Planning Commission during the budget preparation process so that the Board’s capital needs are reflected in a unified list of projects for the Town. Such Capital Improvement Plan shall be included in the Board of Education Budget”.

Councilor Ryan provided clarification, noting that the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) was not intended for *routine maintenance work*, noting that the Board of Education should be budgeting *routine maintenance work* within their Operating Budget. Councilor Saccone stated that he believed what Ms. Kelley was referring to as Capital Improvements was something such as the replacement of windows, which would meet the threshold for the Capital Improvement Plan. Councilor Ryan stated by the Board of Education preparing a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) that it would provide accuracy and transparency relative to Capital Expenses similar to the Board of Education’s Healthcare Expenses, which should be reflected in the Board of Education’s Budget. Ms. Kelley addressed the work involved for the Board of Education to include a Capital Improvement Plan in their Annual Budget, noting that the Board of Education had to have a Subcommittee develop a plan and prioritize the projects; do all the work; and then the town decides on what to fund. Councilor Ryan stated if Ms. Kelley wanted to split the Annual Budget and have two separate budgets one for the Board of Education and one for the General Government with two separate mil rates then she was talking to right person, because he was a proponent of having two separate budgets and two separate mil rates. Ms. Kelley questioned what two separate budgets would do for them, noting that she was only talking about the Capital Improvement Plan. Councilor Ryan stated in accordance with the Town Charter that the Board of Education’s Budget goes to the Town Council for approval; which was the reason the Capital Improvement Plan was reviewed and included in the General Government Budget. He stated the only way this would not happen was if they had two distinct separate budgets both operational and capital for each side, and he explained that it would require a Charter Revision and a Town-Wide Referendum and Vote. Ms. Kelley provided clarification stating that her question as to the reason the Board of Education had to prepare their own Capital Improvement Plan was answered, noting that she has learned that it was required in the Town Charter.

Councilor Saccone stated that people were probably tired of hearing him talk about the Fire Department’s Apparatus Replacement Schedule and the funding plan that has been in place for at least 40-years. He stated by allocating about \$365,000 each year during the budget process that Ledyard has been able to pay cash to replace equipment such as fire trucks. He stated Colchester just bonded \$6 Million to purchase 5 new fire trucks, noting that they would end up paying three-times the amount of money that Ledyard pays for their fire trucks because of the bonding/borrowing costs and interest costs. He suggested the Town start a Plan by allocating \$200,000 or \$300,000 every year for facilities, noting that it would cost the taxpayers about \$3 per year. He stated that the *Committee to Review the Budget Process’* Report dated October 31, 2023 included a recommendation to develop a Funding Plan for facilities because it would save the town a lot of money long term.

Councilor Ryan stated as Councilor Saccone mentioned Appendix C of the *Committee to Review the Budget Process* Report provided examples in which Committee Member Minna DeGaetano created a hypothetical project costing \$10M to calculate and examine different payment options. He stated the examples demonstrated the benefits of planning and budgeting in advance for facility improvements that the town knows they would need to address in the future, which was the same process they have been using for the replacement of fire apparatus. He stated it made sense to start saving today, instead of paying the costs to bond/borrow the funding later. He noted that Ms. DeGaetano and former Town Councilor Bill Saums presented the proposal at the Town Council's January 10, 2024 meeting. He stated the Fire Apparatus Replacement Plan, Public Works Heavy Equipment and the Police Department's vehicle replacement schedules were examples of showing that the process worked. However, he stated getting it started was difficult. Mayor Allyn agreed that planning and budgeting for major expenses made sense. However, he added that determining the threshold for when this type of budgeting to set aside cash versus bonding was challenging, explaining that building a new school was very different from setting aside funding to replace fire apparatus and vehicles or a Heating Ventilation and Air Condition (HVAC) System.

Councilor Buhle stated funding was slashed from the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget for capital projects and the town was currently deferring maintenance because of they cannot afford the capital needs they have. She stated that she would love to see the town start setting aside \$200,000 a year for a \$1 million school projects they would need to do in five-years from now. However, she stated it was difficult to set aside funding for future projects when they cut funding for projects that cost \$200,000 this year; and they cut funding in previous years for \$200,000 projects that now cost \$275,000; and those projects still need to be done. She stated that the town needed to start somewhere, however, she stated setting aside \$200,000 a year would not come close to fulfilling the needs that they were going to have in their schools over the next ten years. Therefore, she stated they were in a position where they were chasing project that have been deferred for decades. She stated they were not going to be able to cross projects off the list one at a time without grant funding, ARPA Funding, and other opportunities that may come their way. She also noted the challenge in working to address capital needs when the State changes the rules during the process resulting in the projects costing an additional \$1 million.

Board Member Lamb addressed the Board of Education's Capital Improvement Plan, noting that he believed the whole process was flawed. He stated the Board of Education prepares a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) that artificially gets pushed out to future years because the town says they cannot afford the projects at this time. He went on to note that the Town Council hacks millions of dollars off the Board of Education's Capital Improvement Plan before it even gets presented to the townspeople to vote on. He went on to state that part of their community was transitory, commenting that it was not fair that some people get to use some of the services and facilities that they do not pay for, while future generations coming into their town end up paying for the huge capital costs.

Mayor Allyn stated that Ledyard has a 37.14 tax rate, and the Gales Ferry Village has a 39.14 tax rate. Mr. Lamb stated that the high tax rate supported his argument that they have to balance operational costs versus capital costs. He stated the Board of Education's Operational Costs was sucking up all the money; and causing them not to address all of their capital needs. He stated that they have to balance how much money they invest in today's operations and also keep their school facilities from falling down.

Superintendent Hartling noted Mr. Lamb's comments, stating that would be a good conversation if they were not underfunding the School District's Operational Budget. Mr. Lamb stated that they have to represent the whole town, noting while they have some residents who could afford to take 2 or 3 vacations a year that they also have to be mindful of the town's senior citizens who were living on a fixed income, and residents who were living from paycheck to paycheck, noting that some were wondering how they were going to feed their kids.

Councilor Saccone noted for last fiscal year the Board of Education submitted a \$22 Million Capital Improvement Plan, noting that some of the schools boilers were installed in 1960; while the bonds for the two Renovate as New Schools (Middle School and Gallup Hil School) would come due in ten-years. Board Member Lamb noted that Councilor Saccone was making his point, questioning what would they do if the boiler fails.

Councilor Ryan stated as he has mentioned this evening, that for many of the discussion items on tonight's agenda, that they review *Committee to Review the Budget Process'* October 31, 2023 Final Report.

- ***Budget format, including the format of budget question presented to voters, (separate General Government and Board of Education)***

- ✓ ***Bifurcating the Budget*** – Superintendent Hartling stated that he believed that people have artificially created a *Bifurcation* between the General Government Budget and the Board of Education-School System Budget. He stated that the Annual Budget was a community issue that transcends the Town Government and the Board of Education - School System. He stated in 2017 they were humming on all cylinders, the Board of Education and Town Council marched together in the Memorial Day Parade, and they had locked in the idea that this was a community effort. He stated he would like to see them take out of their vernacular "*Town and Board of Education*" because they were all in this together, noting that Parks & Recreation Director Scott Johnson, Jr., uses the school facilities all summer long, and other facilities during the school year.

Mayor Allyn stated to bifurcate the Annual Budget and have two separate budgets, both operational and capital for the Board of Education and the General Government that it would require a Charter Revision, as previously discussed this evening (see discussion above regarding Long-term planning for Capital Improvements (CIP)).

- ✓ **Budget Season & Assembly** – Superintendent Hartling stated that assembling the budget was done by himself along with Board of Education Director of Finance & Human Capital Ken Knight and his one staff member running off copies and putting the budget into binders, noting that it was the same on the General Government side. He stated it was interesting to see what towns they compare Ledyard to, noting that many of the community's resource they were being compared to had resource allocations that were much different than Ledyard's.

Mayor Allyn noted the Town of Colchester's Budget Format/Presentation (see *Recording expenses on the appropriate side of the budget ledger for accuracy and transparency* – CIRMA discussion above).

- ✓ **Budget Format** – Mayor Allyn stated per the Town Charter Chapter VII; Section 4 the Budget Format was determined by the Town Council:

Chapter VII; Section 4

*The Board of Education shall require the Superintendent of Schools to prepare a budget proposal for the ensuing fiscal year. **This budget document shall contain the information requested by the Town Council and shall be in a format that is compatible with the budget submission for the general government.***

Mayor Allyn stated the Board of Education's budget presentation which consisted of printouts from the Munis Financial System was a disservice to the general public because they do not know what the object codes, noting that it was not helpful. He stated the General Government captures the data from the Munis Financial System and exports it to an Excel Spreadsheet, which was more legible and readable for the public. He stated that they need to present the budget in a way that was helpful for the residents, which would help to reduce the level of anxiety that he has been seeing with people. He stated Ledyard's taxes were extremely high, which was probably a driver of their anxiety.

Board of Education Finance Committee Chairman Lamb stated they should always consider how to present the budget information better if they can. He noted the Board of Education's Finance Committee has been reviewing the Colchester Budget format and other community's budgets.

Board Member Kelley addressed the Munis Financial Reports and percentage changes noting that it speaks to the fact that there were a lot of moving pieces. She noted as an example; that they recently had to approve 91 separate budget line changes. She stated seeing a number increase by 20% could just mean that two paraprofessionals were moved to another school building, noting that changes in the Munis budget lines did not have anything to do with money. She stated when the Board of Education submits their proposed budget that the request outlines the number of additional employees that were being included in the budget. Therefore, she stated they did not have to go to the Munis Financial Report to figure why the Math Teacher line increased. She stated if there was not an additional Math Teacher in the budget request then they were not adding any Math Teachers. She went on to state that it was almost like if they give the residents too much information that the residents feel like they have to understand it.

Mayor Allyn noted Board Member Kelley's comment about providing too much information to their residents; and he stated that was his reason for advocating to provide the budget in an Excel Spreadsheet because it simplified the data instead of printouts from the Munis Financial System. He stated residents could look at the excel spreadsheet and see that for janitorial services they had X amount of employees at a particular school, noting that they do not have to list the names of the employees. He stated that he did not believe that it would be difficult to break that data down on a school-by-school basis to put into a budget. Board Member Kelley stated that she did not think that level of detailed information was of much value to the average resident. Councilor Saccone noted that the Mayor was suggesting ways to try to simplify the budget for the taxpayers.

Board of Education Finance Committee Chairman Lamb stated the residents that he talked to about the budget was only interested in one number, which was the 2.7% increase. He stated for the residents who were interested in knowing more about the budgets found the Charts and Excel Sheets that were color coded - Green-considered for inclusion; Yellow-considered for future inclusion; and Red-considered for future inclusion were helpful. He stated this brings him back to his earlier question regarding fidelity; and he questioned where they cut off how much budget information they provide to residents, or whether they need to hire more people for the administrative work to service the budget document.

Councilor Buhle stated as a taxpayer that when they see a large budget line such as \$880,000 that it was a fair question to ask how many people were covered by that budget line. She stated that they do not need to get into the minutia of who the people were, noting that she watched residents call out specific salary budget lines, and who was making more than someone else. She stated that she did not want to see the town get into a situation where they feel that they could criticize the value of a teacher who was going above and beyond, noting that Ledyard's teachers were doing more with less every year. She noted as an example that she would be fine with a budget line stating "\$880,000 (27 paraprofessionals)". Board Member Lamb stated these types of details could be worked out in their Joint Finance Committee Meetings.

Superintendent Hartling stated that he believed it was a poor choice for the General Government to list the salary increases in the budget by individuals. He stated that the Board of Education does not do that with their negotiated contracts; and that they should not do that for individuals employees either, noting that this was their choice. He stated the Central Office provides detail at the direction of the Board of Education.

Mr. Hartling stated when he joined Ledyard in 2016 that they were recovering from Excel Spreadsheet Management for the Budget. He stated the problem with using Excel Spreadsheets was that the documents were manipulated and it was a problem if the data did not tie back to the Munis Financial System. Therefore, he stated with the 2017/2018 Budget they were forced to used Munis; and they did not want any other formats. He stated it was okay if they want to talk about shifting, as long as there were no inferences that detail was not provided. He stated the Board of Education could provide detail from Munis, or they could export data to Excel Spreadsheets. However, he stated that they have to be intellectually honest about where they have gone; and where they were.

Mayor Allyn stated that the General Government's Excel Spreadsheets for the budget provided a format that was readable and comprehensible for the general public. He stated that he was not saying they should provide unlocked spreadsheets that others could manipulate. He stated for the Town Council's Finance Committee that Finance Director Matthew Bonin provided locked spreadsheets that they could view; and that Mr. Bonin was the only person who could make changes to the Excel Spreadsheets. He stated there was a way to do it, and that they have to be open-minded about how they could deliver the information to their residents.

Board Member Lamb stated they have identified a need and some suggestions. However, he stated that they were not going to resolve these important matters this evening.

- ✓ **Budget Question** – Councilor Ryan stated for the Annual Budget Question in the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget that although they had one Budget Question they delineated that the Budget was comprised of two Budget Values (Board of Education; and General Government). He went on to state that he believed that this discussion was more toward having two separate budgets as he mentioned earlier this evening (see discussion above regarding Long-term planning for Capital Improvements (CIP)); which would require a Charter Revision and a Town-Wide Referendum Vote.

Ms. Kelley and Mr. Lamb questioned the intent of this discussion item.

Councilor Ryan stated that he believed this discussion item was a holdover from the *Committee to Review the Budget Process* October 31, 2023 Final Report noting that Working Group D addressed “*Budget Format Development and Communication*”. He stated that Working Group D also discussed separating the General Government and Board of Education's budgets.

Mr. Lamb questioned whether the Town Council's Finance Committee was suggesting the town separate the two budgets (General Government from the Board of Education).

Councilor Saccone provided clarification stating that this discussion item was about how they format and present the budget to the townspeople. Councilor Ryan stated in the near term he believed this discussion item was about how they format and how each side presented their budget to the townspeople and that it was not about separating the two budgets.

Board Member Kelley stated the *Committee to Review the Budget Process* Working Group D recommended adding a lot of additional information to the budget format and presentation to the townspeople. Councilor Ryan stated the Budget Presentation should be viewed as organic; in how best to present the data and to make it consumable by the taxpayers.

Councilor Buhle addressed how they present the Budget to the townspeople stating that she did not believe their only choices were:

- Follow the Town Charter exactly as it was written, right now; or
- Bifurcate the Budget.

Councilor Buhle noted their discussion to record the Board of Education's Employees and Retirees Healthcare Expenses on the Board of Education's side of the budget ledger, and she suggested that they should similarly record the Board of Education's Capital Improvement Projects on their side of the budget ledger to accurately represent the Board of Education's spending versus the General Government spending.

Councilor Buhle went on to state after the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget failed at the May 20, 2025 Referendum, the Town Council chose to reduce the Board of Education Capital Improvement Expenses instead of their Operational Expenses, because of the immediate benefits of the Operational Expenses, versus the long-term benefits of their Capital Expenses. She stated when the townspeople looked at the Board of Education's Budget it did not look like the Town Council reduced the Board of Education's budget at all because they did not make reductions to their Operational Expenses, noting that the Board of Education's Capital Expenses resided on the General Government side of the budget ledger. Therefore, she stated by presenting all of the Board of Education expenses on their side of the budget ledger the townspeople would have a more accurate view of the School District's expenses. However, she questioned if they moved the Board of Education's Capital Expenses to the Board of Education's side of the budget ledger, whether the Town Council would be limited to only cutting a dollar amount from the Board of Education's Capital Budget and they would not have any oversight as to what projects would be delayed, etc., noting that she did not know if this would fall into what the Town Charter allowed. She stated by recording all of the Board of Education's Expenses on their side of the budget ledger that it would more accurately report both the General Government's spending and the Board of Education spending.

Superintendent Hartling stated any funds that the Town Council allocated to the Board of Education regardless of the deal would become the sole purview of the Board of Education. He stated if they move accounts to the Board of Education, as Councilor Buhle suggested, that those accounts then become under the Board of Education and the Town Council would no longer have the ability to address them. He stated with the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget preparation the Town Council cut funds that were incorrectly presented as Capital Spending when they were actually in the Board of Education's Capital Non-Recurring Fund (CNR). However, he stated that he thought that they could make the Capital Improvement Plan work, if there was a benefit to doing the way Councilor Buhle suggested. However, he stated the Town Council would need to understand that those funds would then become under the purview of the Board of Education and how the Board of Education chose to utilize those funds.

Councilor Buhle stated that she did not think the Town Council Finance Committee should be the body that decided whether locker room improvements was more important than classroom improvements, noting that the Board of Education should make those decisions. She stated by reporting the Capital Expenses on the Board of Education side of the budget ledger in their budget presentation to the townspeople that should they reduce the Board of Education's Capital Improvement Plan that those cuts would be reflected in the Board of Education's budget rather than be reflected as a reduction to the General

Government budget. Mr. Hartling stated reporting those expenses in the budget presentation to the townspeople was not a problem, and he explained that most of the School District's Annual Capital Expenses were being funded through the Board of Education's Capital Non-Recurring Account (CNR) which were now on the Board of the Education's side of the budget ledger, explaining that they were not a new tax levy; and that this was where they got into a pickle this year when the Town Council cut what they thought was a Board of Education Capital Improvement Project. He stated funding the Board of Education's Annual Capital Expenses through their Capital Non-Recurring Account (CNR) from Reserve Funds would be more transparent.

Mr. Hartling stated that Ledyard needed to talk about the Annual Budget as a community and stop the division between the General Government and Board of Education. He stated all the resources, and the mil rate go to the same group of people. He stated the conversation to pit one side against the other was not the best angle for the residents. He went on to state that because this was a challenging budget year that the Town Council asked the Board of Education *which was the best bad choices* to make with the situation they were all in. He stated that this was the type of collaboration that should be happening between the two elected bodies to best serve the community.

- ✓ ***Potential ways to improve publicizing the Annual Budget and communication to avoid mis-communications and to engage residents throughout the process.***
- ✓ ***Social Media*** – Councilor Saccone stated that he believed Social Media destroyed the Budget this year. He stated from what he was told from fellow firefighters and residents that there was a lot of misinformation, noting that he did not read the Social Media posts.

Councilor Saccone went on to state that the Finance Committee and the Town Council begged residents to attend their meetings, noting that the meeting minutes and videos were published on the Town's Meeting Portal by visiting the Town's Web Page [Ledyard, CT - Official Website | Official Website](#) ; and clicking on the Agendas & Minutes Tab. He stated other than elected officials that only seven taxpayers attended the Budget April 21, 2025 Public Hearing that was held at the Middle School Auditorium. He stated the Budget Public Hearing and Annual Town Meeting was published on the Digital Message Signs on both sides of town, in the newspaper, and on the Town's website. He stated the attendance was a reflection of the lack of resident's engagement in their community, which was unfortunate. He stated that he did not know the answer on how to get more residents involved in the budget process.

Mayor Allyn stated in addition to the publication locations that Councilor Saccone mentioned that the Budget Meetings were also advertised in the Events Magazine, the Budget Banners were hung on both sides of town, Legal Notices were in the New London Day Newspaper, they were on the town's website and the meeting portal; and that he was sure the Board of Education also put information on their website. He went on to state that the Hundred Thousand Question was "*How to Engage the Voters to Care?*" noting that he did not think they would be able to figure that out this evening.

Mayor Allyn went on to state for the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget they had a 13% voter turnout which was higher than previous years; however, he stated that 13% was still a small amount of residents to make a decision for the entire town. He stated that some have suggested the town send postcards to every household when there was a town-wide referendum, and he noted the printing and postage cost when the budget was already going up.

Mr. Hartling stated as Elected Officials that he thought they all do an amazing job, noting as the School Superintendent he could not advocate for the budget, by law. He stated as mentioned this evening that the mil rate increase was a big topic of conversation. However, he stated the real story was the loss of revenue, noting that Ledyard got clobbered this year.

Mayor Allyn stated he agreed that they knew going into the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget Preparation that the loss of revenues was going to be an issue; and he noted the following:

- **Public Act 24-46** “An Act Establishing a Property Tax Exemption for Veterans Who Have a Service-Connected Permanent and Total Disability Rating” . Mayor Allyn stated that the Veterans Exemption Bill that became effective on July 1, 2025 with the new budget year was expanded for the tax exemption to include the land, any outbuildings, and accessory structures.
- **Motor Vehicle Taxes** –Mayor Allyn stated the Motor Vehicle Grand List Value saw a 13% decrease based on the State’s new formula for Motor Vehicles. He stated the formula was previously based on Blue Book Value. However, he stated they now have to follow MSRP which was sticker price minus a percentage, stating it was a straight line across based on the number of years of the vehicle. He stated the motor vehicle tax bill would depend on the age of the vehicle, explaining that if the vehicle was new the taxes would be based on the MSRP, noting they would probably see an increase in their motor vehicle taxes. However, he stated if the vehicle was older they would most likely see a decrease in their motor vehicle tax bill.

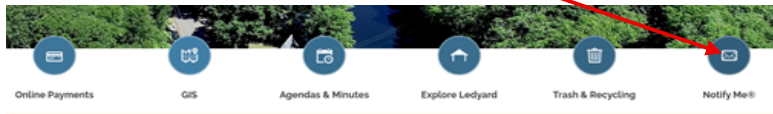
Councilor Buhle stated because Ledyard’s revenues were already on a tightrope that even a small change in the personal property valuation for a large business was enough to be a major factor in their budget.

Mayor Allyn noted Councilor Buhle’s comments stating that Ledyard was also in the midst of a Property Revaluation this year, explaining that the Revaluation was going to be a factor for the upcoming Fiscal Year 2026/2027 Budget.

Board of Education Finance Committee Chairman Lamb stated that he does not go onto Social Media, noting that he believed that this Board of Education worked as a Body of the Whole. He stated if both the Town Council and Board of Education could work as a Team that he believed the same stories would come out in the community; and would hopefully minimize misinformation.

Administrative Assistant Roxanne Maher suggested to reduce misinformation that Elected Officials urge residents who have questions, whether in-person or on social media, to sign up for “*Notify Me*” and direct them to the Town’s Website at [Ledyard, CT - Official Website | Official Website](#) noting that all the information detailing the Annual Town Budget including the Process and Milestone Dates, the Legal Notices Advertising the Budget Meetings as well as the entire Budget Booklet for the April 21, 2025 Public Hearing and Annual Town Meeting/Referendum May 19 & 20, 2025 were right on the front page of the website. She also noted that the history and detailed description for the need to increase the Bonding for the Various School Improvement Projects was available on the Town’s website; and that it clearly explained that the additional funding was needed to move forward with the Juliet W. Long School Heating Ventilation & Air Condition System (HVAC). She stated the Town’s website was a valuable resource for residents, noting that information regarding upcoming Town-Wide Referendums and many other important events were posted to the Town’s Website.

Ms. Maher stated it was easy to sign up for “Notify Me” stating that residents could receive email notifications and that they could select which meetings/events/and other notices they wanted to notified about. She stated residents could sign up by visiting the town’s website and clicking on the *Notify Me* tab and also select *Alert Center, Calendar, and News Flash*.



Councilor Buhle stated in talking about Social Media that it was important for the Town to put out accurate, understandable posts for the residents. She stated some of the misinformation she saw on Social Media was not coming from Elected Officials. She stated that she thought the most complicated information for residents to understand was the public comments regarding the looming Property Revaluation, how it would impact their property value and taxes. She stated that it was difficult for the residents to understand that the Property Revaluation was not going to take effect until the Fiscal Year 2026/2027 Budget year; and would not impact their taxes for the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget year. She stated in responding to posts on Social Media that she tried to explain that the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 tax bills would be based on their current property value’ and she directed residents to the Geographic Information System (GIS) Page to calculate their taxes, noting that some residents may have been interested in learning how to use the GIS System. She stated for her mental health that she no longer comments to posts on Social Media.

2. Budget revenues and process to record and expend additional revenues received. –

Councilor Buhle stated because the State changed the funding stream for Agricultural Science Program by removing the town’s tuition-based system to relying on State Grant funding the Town would be receiving an increase \$481,385 in the Agri-Science Grant Revenue from the State. Therefore, she stated after speaking with School Superintendent Hartling that she suggested they increase the Agri-Science Grant Revenue by \$481,385 in the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget.

Councilor Buhle continued by explaining if they do not accurately report their revenue when they develop the Annual Budget that the taxpayers would be paying money for Grant Revenues they were expecting to receive; which then resulted in a budget surplus. However, she also stated that they also do not want to overstate their expected revenues.

Mayor Allyn addressed the challenge to plan for State Revenues because for most years the State does not approve their budget until after Ledyard has completed their Budget process and has presented the budget at the Referendums. Therefore, he stated that State Revenues were always somewhat unpredictable and a challenge to project in the Annual Budget.

The Group agreed to take the topic of the recording of additional revenues received and how they were expended up at their next Quarterly Meeting.

3. Joint Quarterly Meeting Dates

Board of Education Finance Committee Chairman Lamb noted all the topics discussed this evening were the reasons that prompted him and Councilor Saccone to strategize the need for the two bodies to schedule Quarterly Meetings. He addressed the importance for the Board of Education and Town Council to work together as a partnership for the preparation of the upcoming Fiscal Year 2026/2027 Budget.

Mr. Lamb went on to state that the Town Council and Board of Education was the leadership of their community; and he commented that if they attend each other's meetings and worked as a Team that perhaps the small arguments they saw during the current fiscal year's budget process could be cleaned-up during their Finance Committee Meetings and before they present a Budget to the community. He stated if they were all on the same page that it would eliminate misinformation.

Councilor Saccone stated that he thought they had a great discussion for their First Quarterly Meeting of the Finance Committees and that it was a good step forward. He stated he decided not to seek reelection to the Town Council because his new job was more demanding; and because he would be returning to serve as a volunteer at the Gales Ferry Fire Department. Therefore, he stated that he would not be participating at this same level with regard to the Annual Budget and financial needs of the town. However, he stated that they had a great conversation this evening; and that the next Town Council and Board of Education would have their work cut out for them with the Property Revaluation and in making decisions with regard to the optics as to where budget expenditure lines would reside within the budget.

Councilor Saccone continued by noting School Superintendent Hartling's comments about pitting the two groups (Town Council and Board of Education) against each other. He stated although some might seem to think that was the case, that the Town Council and the Mayor was not doing that at all. He stated they were just trying to show different ways of presenting the budget for both the General Government and the Board of Education.

The Group noted with the upcoming November 4, 2025 Local Election that there would be changes to both the Town Council and Board of Education Finance Committees. Therefore, they agreed that the incoming Elected Officials should determine the dates for their Quarterly Meetings.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Buhle , moved the meeting be adjourned, seconded by Councilor Ryan.
Board Member Lamb moved the be adjourned, seconded by Board Member Kelley.

VOTE: 3 - 0 Approved and so declared, (Town Council Finance Committee)

VOTE: 3 - 0 Approved and so declared (Board of Education Finance Committee)

The meeting was adjourned at 7:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Anthony Saccone, Sr.
Finance Committee Chairman