

Good evening, I am Scott Johnson the Parks, Recreation and Senior Citizens Director for the Town of Ledyard. As a P&R professional, equity and inclusion are at the fore front of every decision we make. Whether it's ensuring fair play in sports or equal opportunities in programming, ethics plays a vital role in our profession and is something we take very seriously.

I have been with ledyard for 6 years now and every council except the current one has consulted department heads on various ordinances and decisions being made, especially when it affects the department they oversee. Your directors are experts in their respective fields, we are versed in laws, regulations, and industry standards within our discipline. We are one of the greatest tools at your disposal and I urge you going forward to utilize this tool to ensure you are making informed decisions.

Previous councils would have emailed a draft of this ordinance to all department heads for input or concerns long before a public hearing. This is not only a professional courtesy but ensures taxpayer dollars are not being wasted like they were in this situation. This dialog would have allowed councilors and department heads to work together to develop an ordinance draft that would have been worthy of being sent to the town attorney. As we say in Parks & Rec "teamwork makes the dream work".

I am here tonight to strongly oppose this ordinance. There are already measures in place through the town charter, employee handbook, policies & procedures, and most importantly CT state General Statutes. These measures have proven to protect the town in the past without affecting town operations or eliminating services for residents.

As mentioned earlier, if a simple email was sent, I would have provided all these concerns prior to the town wasting over \$4,000 in attorney fees. I would like to believe that no one wrote this ordinance with the intention of eliminating recreational programs, raising summer camp fees, or creating a significant loss of revenue for the Parks, Rec and Senior Citizens Department. However, signing this ordinance will instantly eliminate more than 15 programs that are enjoyed by over 500 residents. Those programs generated \$30,690 in program fees last year equaling \$6,138 in revenue into our department's special revenue account.

This is revenue that's used to help keep summer camp costs down for parents who are already struggling to make ends meet. This is the same revenue that allowed me as the director to pull \$10,000 that was used to subsidize senior programs out of the general fund. In addition, a commission was eliminated during that merger that saved the town money that this ordinance will add right back. This ordinance will undo 3 years of hard work I have put in to save the town thousands of dollars.

You may be asking yourself how an ethics ordinance would have such a catastrophic effect on the Parks, Rec, & Senior Citizens Department's operation. With that I ask you a question, what type of person makes the best program instructors? That would be P&R professionals, summer camp staff, teachers, and coaches! These individuals are a town employee in some capacity that P&R then contracts out to teach programs.

At the end of each summer, we survey our staff to see if they have any skills that could be used for programs and if they will be available during the school year. Those that are interested we then pay as a contractor to offer some of our preschool sports programs such as t-ball, little tykes' soccer and peanut basketball. These programs would disappear if this ordinance were passed eliminating the feeder programs for our youth sport leagues.

We have Parks, Rec, and Senior Center union employees who run rowing and fencing programs. Both these programs are something this department brags about offering as they are unique. A lot of effort has gone in over the years to develop and grow these programs. Whether it's countless hours coordinating with the BOE to have participants dropped at the boat launch after school, to the thousands of dollars spent on equipment needed to start the fencing program. These programs would also disappear if this ordinance were passed.

My next concern is with coaches. Does this ordinance only pertain to staff working directly for this department? We work with the high school coaches to offer clinics and camps during the off seasons. The CIAC, the state's body overseeing high school sports ethics, makes it very clear that no coach can hold team practices in the off season as it's an unfair advantage. However, those coaches can offer clinics or camps through the local recreation department in the off season. The state organization responsible for high school sports ethics not only allows but encourages this. This ethics ordinance would deem it unethical though so we would potentially lose all clinics provided by high school coaches simply because they are already paid to coach through the BOE.

One of my biggest concerns is that this ordinance will eliminate all the town's current inclusive programming! To be clear, In Connecticut it is illegal for a public entity to remove inclusive recreation programs unless it's due to non-discriminatory budget cuts, low participation, or safety concerns. It is a direct violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Connecticut General Statutes 46a-64. Enacting an ordinance that restricts the town from hiring the individuals that are most qualified to teach inclusive programs is not an allowable situation to eliminate inclusive programming.

Everything I have explained here tonight is not only ethical but the industry standard in the Parks & Recreation field. I'll use myself as a prime example. When working for the City of New London I was on payroll as the recreation supervisor, while also being paid as a contractor to instruct their Kids Marathon program, youth triathlon team, Kindergarten fitness enrichment classes and an adaptive sports class for children on the autism spectrum.

I would like to reiterate that passing this ordinance in its current form would have a detrimental effect on the Parks, Rec and Senior Citizens department and the residents of Ledyard. It will result in a loss of programs, registrations fees, and revenue, while increasing camp fees, adding money back into the general fund, and creating staffing challenges across our entire operation.