



TOWN OF LEDYARD

Community Relations Committee

Meeting Minutes

741 Colonel Ledyard Highway
Ledyard, Connecticut 06339

Chairman
Kevin J. Dombrowski

Regular Meeting

Wednesday, September 21, 2022

6:30 PM

Town Hall Annex - Hybrid Format

In Person - Council Chambers- Town Hall Annex Building

Join Zoom Meeting from your Computer, Smart Phone or Tablet:

[https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87639811149?](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87639811149?pwd=eUdXdM84MXNoSFdBWTJ4aitxbWdLQT09)

pwd=eUdXdM84MXNoSFdBWTJ4aitxbWdLQT09

Or by Audio Only: Telephone: +1 646 558 8656; +Meeting ID 876 3981 1149: Passcode: 036344

I CALL TO ORDER

the Meeting was called to order by Councilor Paul at 6:30 p.m. at the Council Chambers - Town Hall Annex Building.

Councilor Paul welcomed all to the Hybrid Meeting. He stated for the Town Council Community Relations 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-Insite Meeting Portal.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Bill Saums
Gary Paul

Excused: John Marshall

In addition, the following were in attendance:

Mary McGrattan Town Council
S. Naomi Rodriguez Town Council
John Rich Police Chief
Roxanne Maher Administrative Assistant

III. CITIZENS COMMENTS

None.

IV. PRESENTATIONS / INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

None.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION to approve the Community Relations Committee Regular Meeting Minutes of August 17, 2022.

Moved by Councilor Paul, seconded by Councilor Saums

VOTE: 2 - 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

MOVER: Gary Paul

SECONDER: Bill Saums

AYE: 2 Saums and Paul

EXCUSED: 1 Marshall

VI. OLD BUSINESS

1. Continued discussion regarding Black History Month and update on the 2023 Black History Activity/Contest.

Councilor Rodriguez stated that she has begun working on the details of the Black History Month 2023 Activity/Contest and she noted the following:

- The Contest would be an Essay and Poster Contest.
 - The activities would once again be on a volunteer basis.
 - The activities would include an essay contest for Ledyard Middle School and Ledyard High School, and a poster contest for the elementary schools.
- Judges would include the following:
 - Board of Education Representative - The BOE has requested a representative to serve as a judge
 - Police Sergeant Mike McKinney
 - Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Council Member Crystal Whipple
 - Community Relations Committee Chairman Councilor Paul
 - Councilor Rodriguez
- Would not have grant funding in-time for the 2023 Black History Month Program; and hope to have grant funding for the 2024 Black History Month Program.
- Timing of Contest to be held during the month of January with Contest Winners being announced in February.

The Committee suggested the 2023 Black History Month Contest:

- Provide a theme for educational purposes such as a segment focusing on a local person.
- Engage residents using social media. Perhaps the Judges could post their favorite posters and essays on-line and ask residents to weigh-in.
- Display last year's (2022) posters around town to recognize Black History Month and to raise awareness of Ledyard's Contest.

RESULT: CONTINUE**2.** Review and discuss National Faith and Blue Weekend - Tool Kit First Responders Fish Fry Community Event

The Community Relations Committee and Police Chief John Rich reviewed their work to plan and organize the upcoming *First Responders Fish Fry Community Event* scheduled for Sunday, October 9, 2022 noting the following:

- First Responders Fish Fry will be held October 9, 2022 from 2:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. at the Holdridge Pavilion, Ledyard Town Green, and the Ledyard Congregational Church
- Chief Rich would send out Invitations to the Community via social media.
- Chief Rich has invited the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation Police Department and Fire Departments and the Ledyard/ Gales Ferry Fire Department to participate in the Community Event.
- Ledyard Police Union would provide fish for the Event and would fry in the Holdridge Pavilion.
- Ledyard Police Department would coordinate tickets at no charge for the Community Event via Eventbrite Registration (all were welcome, but attendees must register in advance for tickets for any meal served to them to obtain a headcount for food).
- Would contact Parks & Recreation Director Scott Johnson, Jr. to reserve the Holdridge Pavilion, Town Green, and parking areas.
- Councilor Saums would contact Parks & Recreation to ask about using the mobile restrooms.
- Need to contact Ledge Light Health District to ask about a permits.
- Councilor Saums would invite the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation to dance/drum in celebration of Indigenous Peoples Day, and have children's games as well.
- Boy Scout Troop 16 would be asked to manage a campfire next to the Chowder House.
- Town Council Community Relations Committee would provide the Sound System and some music (determine location for setup).

Councilor Saums stated the Congregational Church Board would be discussing and voting on their participation in the *First Responders Fish Fry Community Event Proposal* on Sunday, September 25, 2022 as follows:

- Ledyard Congregational Church would provide the Clam Chowder and it would be cooked in the Church Chowder House.
- The Congregational Church would coordinate cooks for the chowder, and the Church would prepare the Chowder House on October 1, 2022 for cooking.

- Ledyard Congregational Church would open their Fellowship Hall and Kitchen for use during the Community Event.
- Ledyard Congregational Church would invite area churches.

The Committee noted they looked forward to the upcoming *First Responders Fish Fry Community Event* as it was a great opportunity to engage residents, faith-based organizations, civic organizations, and law enforcement in activities that would allow them to connect on a personal level and would help to create a safer and stronger community.

Councilor Paul thanked Chief Rich for all the work he was doing to coordinate this town-wide community event and for attending tonight's meeting.

Chief Rich left the meeting at 6:57 p.m.

RESULT: CONTINUE

3. MOTION to approve the "Community Relations Commission Mission Statement" as contained in the draft dated September 21, 2022.

Councilor Paul noted that he reviewed and agreed with Councilor Saums' comments to the *Community Relations Commission Mission Statement* as contained in the draft dated September ~~19~~, 21, 2022:

DRAFT: ~~9/19/2022~~ 9/21/2022

"The Community Relations Committee is tasked with being both an advocate and a resource for the community by listening, communicating, and engaging with the community, educating ourselves, standing up to discrimination and racism in all forms.

We do this by encouraging dialogue, promoting unity and understanding, and learning from one another as we continue to build a strong community together, making sure no-one is left behind."

Moved by Councilor Saums, seconded by Councilor Paul

Discussion: The Committee reviewed the proposed "*Mission Statement*" as contained in the draft dated September 19, 2022, noting that it more clearly defined the role that this Committee has taken on and the work that they were currently doing.

Councilor Paul stated he believed this Community Relations Committee was being more pro-active, noting that they were not waiting for issues to present themselves. He stated this Committee has been actively working to be engaged with the community, to be an advocate for the community, and to be a resource for the community. He stated the words "*educating ourselves..... and , making sure no-one is left behind.*" were powerful.

The Committee made some minor punctuation edits and agreed to vote on the updated draft dated *September 21, 2022* as noted above.

VOTE: 2 - 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

MOVER: Bill Saums

SECONDER: Gary Paul

AYE: 2 Saums and Paul

EXCUSED: 1 Marshall

4. Continued discussion and possible action draft a schedule for Public Information Forums to present to residents the types of services the town offers; how to access services and the authority residents should direct concerns regarding services.

Councilor Paul stated he spoke with Public Works Director/Town Engineer Steve Masalin about scheduling a time to present information regarding the services the Public Works Department provides to the town. He noted the importance to get information out to residents pertaining to Winter Operations relative parking bans during snow events and other snow removal policies.

The Committee agreed to invite Public Works Director/Town Engineer Mr. Masalin to the Community Relations Committee November 16, 2022 meeting, noting that it was important to get this information out to residents before the snow started to fall.

Councilor Paul thanked Councilor Saums, Councilor Rodriguez other Councilors for their help in planning and staffing the Community Relations Committee table at the August 31, 2022 Farmers Market. He stated the “*Are You Ready for Winter*” event presented information regarding the many local and regional resources to help those struggling to manage mental health issues as well as assistance programs for those in-need. He stated in addition to the organizations that support mental health they also provided information regarding assistance programs which included home heating fuel, renters rebate, food pantry and many others.

RESULT: CONTINUE

5. Continued discussion and possible action to 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 Saums stated the Community Forum Page was a great way to obtain ideas and feedback from residents. He stated a few years ago, when Ledyard Center School was sold, the Ledyard Fair was looking for ideas about what they should do. He stated the Ledyard Fair received over 500 comments from residents on the Community Forum, noting that there was a lot of interest in a Food Truck Fair. He stated the Parks & Recreation Commission held a Food Truck Fair at the Town Green on May 21, 2022.

Councilor Saums suggested the Community Relations Committee contact the Administrator of the Community Forum to post something to solicit topics or concerns that residents were interested in talking or learning about.

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sold, the Ledyard Fair was looking for ideas about what they should do. He stated the Ledyard Fair received over 500 comments from residents on the Community Forum, noting that there was a lot of interest in a Food Truck Fair. He stated the Parks & Recreation Commission held a Food Truck Fair at the Town Green on May 21, 2022.

Councilor Saums suggested the Community Relations Committee contact the Administrator of the Community Forum to post something to solicit topics or concerns that residents were interested in talking or learning about.

The Committee noted the Food Truck Fair was a great idea, noting that because so much was done in Ledyard Center that they would like to see an event such as a Food Truck Fair be held Gales Ferry. The Committee noted that the Sweet Hill Farm would be a great location for a Food Truck Fair. Councilor Paul noted that Economic Development Commission Member Jessica Buhle did a great job in planning the *Regatta Day Festival* in June, 2022, noting that they used the Sweet Hill Farm and it was a great venue

RESULT: CONTINUE

· Discuss possible ideas to present town services during the Parks & Recreation October 28, 2022 Trunk or Treat Event.

- *Trunk or Treat - October 28, 2022.*

The Committee discussed the Town's *Annual Trunk or Treat* Event and agreed that it they did not want to take away from the kids excitement and fun with trying to disseminate information regarding town services to residents during the Trunk or Treat event.

RESULT: COMPLETED

6. Continued discussion regarding the possibility to schedule joint meetings with the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation to discuss items of mutual interest.

Councilor Paul noted that unfortunately due to illness they had to cancel their Informal Gathering with the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal (MPTN) that was scheduled for Thursday, September 8, 2022. illness.

Councilor Saums stated that he would communicate with MPTN Council Member Crystal Whipple to discuss possible dates to reschedule their Informal Gathering.

RESULT: CONTINUE

7. Continued discussion to present information to bring awareness to October being "Depression and Mental Health Month".

Councilor Paul stated October was "*Depression and Mental Health Month*" and "*Breast Cancer Awareness Month*". He noted as he mentioned earlier (Old Business Item 4 above) that the Community Relations Committee brought a lot of resources to residents during the August 31, 2022 Farmers Market at which the Committee hosted a "*Are You*

Ready for Winter?” table. He noted the many local and regional organizations who attended the event to talk with residents about the many services that were available to assist people who may be suffering from depression or other mental health issues. He continued by noting the following data:

- 46,000 people died by suicide in 2020 - This was one death every 11 minutes.
- 12.2 million people seriously think about suicide.
- 3.2 million people made a plan to commit suicide.
- 1.2 million people have attempted suicide.

Councilor Rodriguez stated Ms. Ann Dagele from the *Brian Dagele Foundation - Brian's Healing Hearts* - Family Suicide Prevention Group, located at 461 Main Street in Niantic, was pleased to have the opportunity to talk with Ledyard residents at the August 31, 2022 Farmers Market. She stated Mayor Allyn, III, has heard Ms. Dagele speak at a Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (SCCOG) meeting. She stated Ms. Dagele would like to develop a relationship with Ledyard through their Youth & Social Services Department/Programs and she suggested inviting Ms. Dagele to a Town Council meeting in October to give a short presentation regarding Suicide Prevention and Mental Health noting this would be a good opportunity for the town to begin developing a relationship with the Brian Dagele Foundation.

Councilor Paul noted the color for *Depression Awareness* was *green* and the color for *Breast Cancer Awareness* was *pink*. He suggested Councilors were something *green* at one meeting in October and wear something *pink* for the second meeting in October to bring awareness and to show their support for folks struggling with these illnesses.

Councilor Paul noted that there was a lot involved in operating a town from the financial and fiscal management, maintaining roads, fire and public safety, providing infrastructure and services, etc. However, he stated one of the most important things was to have a Healthy Community. He stated there was a mental health crisis going on and that the best thing they could do was to talk about it and keep it on the forefront. He stated the new Mental Health Hotline number was 988, noting that people could call or text to the Hotline number.

RESULT: CONTINUE

8. Review comments received at the July 20, 2022 Informal Conversation with residents at the Park on East Drive.

Councilor Paul noted he attended the Parks & Recreation Commission's September 20, 2022 meeting. He stated the reason the Commission decided not to hold their meeting at the Park on East Street (which P&R refer to as the Christy Hill Park) was because they were still working with Eversource to have the light's that have been installed turned on. He stated Mr. Johnson was hoping to have the lights turned on by their October 18, 2022 meeting. However, Councilor Paul stated that if Eversource does not get the light's turned on soon that Mr. Johnson would like the members of the Community Relations Committee join him in an informal gathering to talk with the residents to follow-up on the status of work at the Park.

Councilor Paul went on to note that Mr. Johnson reported that the Parks & Recreation Department has been locking the Park every night. Also, the Department was continuing to clean up areas of the Park; and along with addressing other issues, they were working on the infields.

Councilor Rodriguez stated Ms. Jamieson reported that the residents were happy with lights that were installed and with the work that has been done in the Park. However, she noted that Ms. Jamieson stated the residents would still like to meet with the Parks & Recreation Commission. Councilor Rodriguez stated because the daylight hours were getting shorter that the Parks & Recreation Commission may not be able to hold a meeting at the Park; and therefore, she suggested that perhaps the residents could meet with Parks & Recreation Director Scott Johnson, Jr. Councilor Paul, and herself. She noted that Ms. Jamieson seemed to be pleased with holding such a meeting.

Councilor Saums suggested that residents could attend the Parks & Recreation Commission meetings, noting that they were open to the Public and they could express their concerns or just listen to the meeting. He stated the Parks & Recreation Commission meets on the third Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at the Parks & Recreation/Senior Citizens Center on Van Tassel Drive, in Gales Ferry.

Councilor Saums went on to state in reading the Parks & Recreation Commission minutes that they have been discussing the Park on East Drive, which the Commission referred to as “*Christy Hill Park*”. He also noted the Parks & Recreation Director’s Report was included as part of the Commission’s Meeting Minutes and that Mr. Johnson has reported on the wood chips, the lights, Eversource, etc.

The Committee noted the Town Council received e-mail received from Mr. Jamieson earlier today regarding the Park on East Drive.

RESULT: CONTINUE

9. Any other Old Business proper to come before the Committee
None.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

1. Review and discuss the National League of Cities “Responding to Racial Tension in your Municipality”

<<https://www.nlc.org/resource/responding-to-racial-tension-in-your-city-a-municipal-action-guide/>>

Councilor Paul noted the National League of Cities “*Responding to Racial Tension in your Municipality*” was included on the Committee’s August 17, 2022 Agenda as an Informational Item. He stated the Guide provided the following:

- How to respond to racial tension in the community.
- Offered checklists and ideas to the town’s administration and to local law

enforcement.

Councilor Saums noted in preparation for tonight’s meeting that he did not have time to review the entire document.

The Committee agreed to defer this discussion to their October 19, 2022 meeting.

RESULT: CONTINUE

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

IV ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Paul moved the meeting be adjourned, seconded by Councilor Saums

VOTE: 2 - 0 Approved and so declared. The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gary Paul
Committee Chairman
Community Relations Committee

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