



TOWN OF LEDYARD

Community Relations Committee

Meeting Minutes

741 Colonel Ledyard Highway
Ledyard, Connecticut 06339

Chairman
Kevin J. Dombrowski

Regular Meeting

Wednesday, October 19, 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/84919774687?](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84919774687?pwd=Wi83WTFrRTJJMTI1M1BObi9GTHcxQT09)

pwd=Wi83WTFrRTJJMTI1M1BObi9GTHcxQT09

Or by Audio Only: Telephone: +1 646 558 8656; +Meeting ID: 849 1977 4687: Passcode: 737143

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 present:

Mary McGrattan Town Councilor
S. Naomi Rodriguez Town Councilor
Roxanne Maher Administrative Assistant

III. CITIZENS COMMENTS

None.

IV. PRESENTATIONS / INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

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 in the Agenda packet on the meeting portal for tonight’s meeting. He stated it was an interesting read, noting that 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.

The Committee agreed to further discuss the information at their November 16, 2022 meeting.

RESULT: CONTINUE

- V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION to approve the Community Relations Committee Regular Meeting Minutes of September 19, 2022

Moved by Councilor Paul, seconded by Councilor Saums

VOTE: 2 - 0 Approved and so declared

- VI. OLD BUSINESS

1. Continued discussion regarding the October 9, 2022 “First Responders Clam Chowder - Fish Fry”.

Councilor Saums addressed the First Responders Clam Chowder - Fish Fry that was held on Sunday, October 9, 2022. He stated the event was great noting they had great weather, great attendance and great food. He provided some background explaining the objective of the “*National Faith and Blue Weekend*” (*First Responders Clam Chowder Fish Fry*) was to pro-actively engage community members, faith-based organizations, civic organizations, and law enforcement in activities to connect on a personal level and create a safer and stronger community. He stated Chief Rich learned about the national program scheduled for the weekend of October 7 - 10 at the Police Chief’s Association Meeting. He stated in thinking about putting together an event for Ledyard that Chief Rich came up with the idea to incorporate the Police Union Fish Fry with the Ledyard Congregational Church Chowder. He stated Chief Rich asked the Congregational Church to host the event and to make the Chowder in the Chowder House. He stated it was a tremendous amount of work to organize and host the First Responders Clam Chowder - Fish Fry in recognition of the “*National Faith and Blue Weekend*”.

Councilor Saums went on to state that he was struck by the Welcoming Statement Chief Rich gave before the meal was served. He noted that Chief Rich remarked that “*In Ledyard we feed everyone*” and he read the Webster Dictionary’s definition for “Community” as follows: “*A feeling of fellowship with others as a result of having common attitudes, interests, and goals*”. However, he stated Chief Rich noted that although Webster Dictionary’s definition was close to defining Ledyard as a “community” that in his eyes the dictionary’s definition fell a little short. He noted that Chief Rich stated in thinking about Ledyard that he would add “*People who come together, support one another in times of crisis, sorrow or loss, that was what he has seen in Ledyard...And that was why it was such an honor for all on the Ledyard Police Department to serve this community*”.

Councilor Saums went on to note that Chief Rich also mentioned during his opening remarks that Ledyard was one of the greatest communities he has ever been a part of; and he thanked the following people: Ms. Tammy Brannon and everyone at the Ledyard Congregational Church, the Ledyard Town Council Community Relations Committee Gary Paul, Bill Saums, and John Marshall, Police Sergeant Jason Pudvah and the Ledyard Police Union, the Ledyard Center and Gales Ferry Fire Companies, the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation Police and Fire Departments, the Ledyard Boy Scout Troop #16; and Parks & Recreation

Director Scott Johnson, Jr. who provided support for the whole event, Senator Cathy Osten for attending the event, Connecticut State Police Troop E Lieutenant Albert Gosselin, the Congregational Church’s Chowder House Crew: Jim Ball, Scott Ingalls, Alex Dozier, Dolly Haze, and Toby Duncan, Chaplin Bob Petrel, Recruit Matthew Burchell, and the *One and Only* Sergeant Michael McKinney “*Big Mac*” for preparing the food for everyone. Councilor Saums stated in closing Chief Rich asked that everyone enjoy the food, company, and the beautiful day. He stated Chief Rich then introduced Councilor Gary Paul who played a beautiful rendition of “Amazing Grace”. Councilor Saums stated it was a great event, noting that a lot of people came and stayed noting it was great way to spend a Sunday afternoon in October.

Councilor Paul stated that he agreed with Councilor Saums’ comments regarding Chief Rich’s opening remarks. He stated it was refreshing to see the level of community within their Police Department and Fire Departments, volunteers and elected officials. He stated it was an awesome community event and he was humbled to play his rock version of *Amazing Grace*, noting that their first responders put their lives on the line every day. He thanked Councilor Saums for all his work, the Congregational Church, the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation, and everyone who helped out and who attended the event. He stated next year that he hoped that they would have more time to prepare for the *First Responders Clam Chowder Fish Fry Community Event* and that the Community Relations Committee would be able to be more involved.

RESULT: COMPLETED

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

Councilor Rodriguez provided an update regarding the status of planning for the Black

History Month 2023 Activity/Contest and she noted the following:

- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Organization - Councilor Rodriguez stated that she spoke to some members of the NAACP in New London to discuss Ledyard's interest in having a Black History Month Activity. She stated in speaking to Juliet Parker, who was the NAACP Secretary, that Ms. Parker stated that the NAACP was willing to help Ledyard with their program. However, Ms. Parker asked that she submit their request in writing, noting that Ms. Parker provided her e-mail address.
- Superintendent of Schools Jason Hartling - Councilor Rodriguez stated that Mr. Hartling was pleased that one of the Contest Judges would be a Board of Education Member. She stated Mr. Hartling requested that the information regarding the Black History Month Activity and Essay Contest be provided to the Schools in November, because the Art Teachers needed time to plan for the projects and to include the initiative into schedules.
- Poster Contest - Councilor Rodriguez stated the Poster Contest for the elementary school students would remain the same as last year. She stated the variety of Black History Month posters the kids came up with were great.
- Essay Contest - Councilor Rodriguez stated Black History Month Essay Topic was going to be "*Black Resistance - How African Americans Have Fought Repression from America's Earliest Days*", noting that this was the national theme.

Councilor Rodriguez stated that she would send a draft of the 2023 Black History Month Activity and Poster Contest Information to the Community Relations Committee to review and to provide comments before she sent it off the Board of Education to be distributed to the Principals' Offices at each of the schools.

Councilor Paul stated with the Town Council being seated in December, 2021 and their Sub- Committees not holding their first regular meeting until January, 2022 that the Black History Month Program (February) came up quick last year. He stated he has put some thought into the program; and he questioned whether it would be a good idea to transition the Black History Month Activity over to the Board of Education, with the Town Council's Community Relations Committee acting in a supportive role. He noted as Councilor Rodriguez explained, with the need to involve Superintendent Hartling, the School Principals, and the Teachers that it may be more appropriate for the Board of Education to directly handle the essay and posters contest with Councilor Rodriguez's direction. He suggested that perhaps the Essay Contest winner could read their essay at a Town Council meeting; and as they did last year, the winning posters could be displayed. He stated by the Board of Education taking the lead on the Black History Activity and Essay Contest, that perhaps the schools would be able to do more with the students by focusing additional programs on Black History Month with thinks like school assemblies, etc.

Councilor Saums addressed Councilor Paul's suggestion to transition the Black History Month Activities to the Board of Education. He stated because the Board of Education had a lot on their plate, and a lot of competing initiatives, that perhaps Councilor Rodriguez could help with lining up judges, or with establishing the contest the guidelines, or with handling things that had specific timelines, etc.

Councilor Rodriguez stated she would bring Councilor Paul's and Councilor Saums' suggestions regarding Black History Month Activities to Superintendent Hartling.

However, she stated the Essay Contest and Poster Contest was only part of the Black History Month Activity, noting that she was also trying to figure out other ideas for Black History Month for the town.

Councilor Paul requested clarification, questioning whether the other ideas for the town that Councilor Rodriguez was trying to figure out would be separate from the essay contest and poster contest. Councilor Rodriguez stated Councilor Paul's understanding was correct. She stated in speaking with High School Chorus Director Ms. Cometa that the Chorus would be doing a concert for Martin Luther King Day (January 16, 2023). She stated that she had hoped that in early February that the High School Chorus could sing something at the Town Council meeting.

Councilor Saums stated he liked the idea that was suggested by Ms. Nicole Cruz-Glacken at the Community Relations Committee's August 17, 2022 meeting to fly the Pan African Flag in front of Town Hall. He stated that they would need to talk to the Mayor about the idea. Councilor Rodriguez suggested if the Town Hall raised the Pan African Flag that they could have a short program at that time. She stated last year New London had a short ceremony in which the Pan African Flag was raised by a military person, police officer and a town council member. She stated that she would provide more information at the Community Relations Committee November 16, 2022 meeting.

Councilor Paul stated that they discussed some good ideas this evening and that he would contact the Mayor regarding the Committee's ideas.

RESULT: CONTINUE

3. 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 and that he was available to attend the Community Relations Committee November 16, 2022 meeting to provide a presentation/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 before the snow started to fall. He stated Ledyard's Public Works Department does a lot of in town and that this would be a good opportunity for residents to ask questions.

Councilor Saums stated he would prepare a flyer to send to MIS Director Regina Brulotte to create a link on the town's website that Councilors could share on their facebook pages.

RESULT: CONTINUE

4. 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.

No Action

Councilor Paul stated as they were moving into the winter months that they would put conversations in the park off until the spring. Councilor Saums stated he agreed, noting with the shorter daylight hours and colder weather that it would be difficult to gather people outside.

RESULT: CONTINUE

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

Councilor Saums stated he did not have an update, noting that he would communicate with MPTN Council Member Crystal Whipple to discuss possible dates to schedule their Informal Gathering.

RESULT: CONTINUE

6. 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*”.

Councilor Rodriguez stated Ms. Ann Dagle from the *Brian Dagle Foundation - Brian’s Healing Hearts - Family Suicide Prevention Group*, located at 461 Main Street in Niantic, was available to attend the Town Council’s October 26, 2022 meeting. Councilor Rodriguez noted Ms. Dagle was looking forward to giving a presentation to the Town Council and that Ms. Dagle hoped the town would develop a relationship with the *Brian Dagle Foundation - Brian’s Healing Hearts - Family Suicide Prevention Group*. She stated Ms. Dagle was pleased to hear that the Town Council would be wearing **Green** to show their support for Depression and Mental Health.

Councilor Paul thanked Councilor Rodriguez for contacting Ms. Dagle and for inviting her to Town Council’s October 26, 2022 meeting to give a presentation regarding the work that the Brian Dagle Foundation does. He stated that there was a lot involved in operating a town from the financial and fiscal management, having good schools, 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 town leaders could do was to talk about it and keep it on the forefront, and show their support for folks struggling with these illnesses.

RESULT: CONTINUE

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

Councilor Paul stated he visited the Park on East Drive (Christy Hill Park) today and he noted the lights looked great. He stated the railroad ties and wood chips have not been

done yet, but that the improvements were progressing nicely. He stated that he would contact Parks & Recreation Director Scott Johnson, Jr. to discuss the status of the park improvements.

Councilor Paul continued by noting the e-mail received from Mr. Jamieson noting that the residents in the area were happy with the progress that has been made at the Park to date.

RESULT: CONTINUE

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

None.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

1. National League of Cities - Race, Equity and Leadership (REAL) - Report dated 10/4/2022 re: Indigenous Peoples, Rebuild Trust & Repair Relationships

Councilor Saums stated he attended the on-line webinar noting the first part of the presentation was well-done, and that the second part of the presentation was interesting

explaining that Tribal Members from across the country discussed the things they have done in their local and state governments. He stated the presentation was attached to tonight's agenda packet on the meeting portal.

Councilor Rodriguez noted page 26 "*Allotment and Assimilation Era 1887-1934*" talked about the Federal Government separating the Tribal Children from their families and sending them to Boarding Schools where they were prohibited from speaking their native language, tribal dress, and traditional practices. She stated those who survived the Boarding Schools reported mistreatment, abuse and even death of indigenous children at the hands of the school leaders and staff. She stated it was heartbreaking to read.

Councilor Saums provided an overview of the history noting pages 25-26 "*The Treaty-Making Era*" (1778 - 1871) was when the Europeans signed the first treaties with Indian Tribes in the early 1600s. The Treaties between the U.S government and Indian Tribes established a pattern of legal and political interaction starting in 1778 with the Delaware Tribe. In 1871, when the treaty-making era formally ended, the U.S. had signed more than 350 treaties with Indian Tribes. Even after 1871, there were many written agreements between Tribes and the United States which functioned like treaties. He stated the treaties morphed from a friendship and reciprocity sort of relationship into one-sided type of arrangements.

Councilor Saums noted during the *Removal Era* (1830-1850) that President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act in 1830. He noted the *Indigenous Peoples, Rebuild Trust & Repair Relationships Report* stated that the policies during the period removed many Tribes from their eastern homelands to lands west of the Mississippi River to Indian Territory, going into what is now known as Oklahoma. While some sections of Eastern Tribes agreed to move west to protect their interests.

Councilor Saums stated the *Reservation System* (1850-1891) was between the Removal and Allotment Eras, and that *Indigenous Peoples, Rebuild Trust & Repair Relationships Report* noted that this era was when Federal Policy gave way to the Reservation system. He stated between 1850 and 1891, there were numerous treaties, statutes, and executive orders were made that required Tribes to relocate to distant territories or confined them to smaller areas that were “reserved” portions of the Tribes’ aboriginal territories. Reservations still exist today; however, Native Americans were not required to remain confined on them. He noted during this time, States also passed laws that discriminated against Native Peoples.

Councilor Saums stated as Councilor Rodriguez noted the “*Allotment and Assimilation Era 1887-1934*” was when the US Government tried to bring the American Indians into their colonial civilization and erase Indian history and culture.

Councilor Saums stated the history provided in *Indigenous Peoples, Rebuild Trust & Repair Relationships Report* showed that things did not really begin to change until the Self-Determination Era (1968-present) explaining in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Federal Indian Policy began to support the concept of Indian Self-Determination. He stated various laws and executive orders strengthened support for Tribal Governments and Reaffirmed Federal acknowledgment of Tribal sovereignty.

Councilor Saums stated during the *Self-Determination Era* the country recognized that the Indigenous People had their own people, their own culture, their own history and that they did exist. He stated it was amazing that the Indigenous People still exist noting that the US Government spent 400 years trying to eliminate them.

Councilor Rodriguez stated her family visited the National Museum of the American Indian. She stated they spent hours reading the history, noting that it was very sad. However, she stated in the end the American Indian said that they were still here; and she commented that she was grateful that they survived. She stated it would be great for others to read the “*National League of Cities - Race, Equity and Leadership (REAL) - Report dated 10/4/2022 re: Indigenous Peoples, Rebuild Trust & Repair Relationships*”.

Councilor Saums stated he seen poor behavior occur here in Ledyard during a time when there was a proposed development on a piece of town property. He stated a group of residents, including himself, were fighting the development of the property because they believed there were Indian structures on the property. He stated they had members of the Tribe testify about the existence of the stone structures, what they were used for, and how far back they went. He stated they could read a lot of information regarding the scientific testing of the structures which included the stone chambers, and ceremonial walls, noting that the Indians landscaped with stone, and that the stone structures exist all the way up into northern New England and that they also exist around the world. However, he stated the Developer had Archologies testify that the native stone structures did not exist, and that they were built by colonel white settlers. He went on to state whether people believed it or did not believe it, that there were native stone structures in Ledyard. He stated the fact was that there were two sides who would testify, noting that they would bring out all of their resources to prove their side of the argument. He stated

the Gungywamp-Denison Pequotsepose Nature Center in Groton had all kinds of evidence of Native American Indian stone structures. He stated there was a serpentine wall, that had no purpose, except for ceremonial. He stated white colonels would not build a wall like that.

Councilor Paul stated he loved history and that he would encourage everyone to continue to learn more. He stated he planned to read the “*National League of Cities - Race, Equity and Leadership (REAL) - Report dated 10/4/2022 re: Indigenous Peoples, Rebuild Trust & Repair Relationships*”. He stated they were all part of the Ledyard Community and that they all had to respect one another.

RESULT: CONTINUE

- 2. MOTION to approve the Community Relations Committee 2023 Meeting Schedule.

Community Relations Committee (3rd Wednesday, Annex Building 6:30 p.m.

January 18	February 15	March 15	April 19
May 17	June 21	July 19	August 16
September 20	October 18	November 15	December 20
January 17, 2024			

Moved by Councilor Paul, seconded by Councilor Saums

Discussion: Councilor Paul stated in accordance with CGS 1-225 each Committee must file its meeting schedule for the coming year in the Town Clerk’s Office. He stated if there were no objections that the Community Relations Committee would continue to meeting on the third Wednesday of each month.

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

- 3. 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 7:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gary Paul

C o m m i t t e e C h a i r m a n

Community Relations Committee

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