



Legislation Text

File #: 22-106, **Version:** 2

AGENDA REQUEST GENERAL DISCUSSION ITEM

Subject:

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

- Long Pond on Lantern Hill Road (Showcase the Lantern Hill Waterfront Park, (2) Provide some history regarding Long Pond; (3) Provide information regarding the importance of preventing invasive plants from being transferred from different bodies of water, and (3) Engage residents)
- Winthrop Park near the Gales Ferry Community Center (Town Council April 10, 2024 meeting Mr. Kelly expressed concerns regarding the tennis courts, pickle ball courts, engage residents etc.).

Background:

(type text here)

Department Comment/Recommendation:

Meeting Action Detail:

Community Relations Committee Meeting 04/19/2023

File #: [22106](#) Version: 1

Type: General Discussion

Title: 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.

Action: Continued

Meeting Note:

Councilor Paul stated Park & Recreation has been discussing scheduling a tour to visit the many recreational parks in town in May, 2023. He stated that he would keep the Community Relations Committee informed as more information becomes available.

Councilor Paul noted that Councilor Saums was working with the Administrators of the Ledyard/Gales Ferry Forum on the idea of hosting a “*Whining Wednesday*” and a “*Thankful Thursday*”. Therefore, he suggested they defer this discussion to their next meeting, when Councilor Saums could provide an update.

Councilor Marshall suggested hosting an Informal Gathering/Conversation at the Town Green or at another Park some afternoon to talk with residents. He noted the event could be similar to the July 20, 2022 Informal Gathering they had at the Park on East Drive. He stated the town had a lot of parks, and it would be good feature them, noting that the Parks were underutilized.

Action: Continued

Community Relations Committee Meeting 04/19/2023

File #: [22106](#) Version: 1

Type: General Discussion

Title: 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.

Action: Continued

Meeting Note:

Councilor Paul stated that he spoke with Director of Senior Citizens and Park & Recreation Scott Johnson, Jr., about touring/visiting the many recreational parks in town in May, 2023. He stated they could advertise that the Parks & Recreation Commission along with the Community Relations Committee would be conducting a tour of the Towns Recreational Parks:

- Aljen Heights Park - Councilor Saums stated noted that some residents had questions regarding the Park at Aljen Heights. He stated that he did not know if the questions were regarding the condition of the equipment or the condition of the field. He also noted that a new playscape was put in near the Community Center in Gales Ferry.
- Erickson Park
- Highlands Lake
- Bush Pond - Lantern Hill Waterfront Park (Graham Property)

Councilor Saums suggested because they would not know when they would be at each of the Parks that they could post on Facebook or other social media sites when they were heading to the next park location, for residents that would like to join them.

Councilor Paul stated visiting the Recreational Parks would be a good opportunity for residents to see the great Parks the town has; and for residents to ask questions or to bring issues of concern to the Community Relations

Committee’s attention. He stated when they had the July 20, 2022 Informal Gathering at the Park on East Drive he was amazed to learn that a lot of residents did not know that they could contact the Parks & Recreation Director to discuss the issues at the Park such as the lighting or condition of the equipment, which was the reason residents were contacting the Mayor’s Office, the Town Council, and the Police Department.

Councilor Paul stated having the opportunity to talk to residents in-person and for residents to talk with their elected officials in-person was a win-win. He stated that it gave them the opportunity to let residents know if they had concerns about what was happening at the Park that they had a great Parks & Recreation Director, who had also attended the July 20, 2023 Informal Gathering to hear the residents’ concerns, suggestions, and to answer their questions. He stated that was what he believed the Community Relations Committee was about, to bring the community together and to help them by directing them to the appropriate department and staff that could address their concerns.

Councilor Paul stated if they could obtain comments on other topics that he would be open to hosting an Informal Gathering at other locations such as the Historic Up-Down Sawmill.

Action: Continued

Community Relations Committee Meeting 03/15/2023

File #: [22106](#) Version: 1

Type: General Discussion

Title: 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.

Action: Continued

Meeting Note:

Councilor Paul noted that Councilor Saums was working with the Administrators of the Ledyard/Gales Ferry Forum on the idea of hosting a “*Whining Wednesday*” and a “*Thankful Thursday*”. Therefore, he suggested they defer this discussion to their next meeting, when Councilor Saums could provide an update.

Action: Continued

Community Relations Committee Meeting 02/15/2023

File #: [22106](#) Version: 1

Type: General Discussion

Title: 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.

Action: Continued

Meeting Note:

Councilor Paul stated by scheduling the programs and services the Committee would like to highlight at the Farmers’ Summer Market that it would enable them to target other topics that residents may be interested in talking about. He stated possibly bringing back something like a “*Whining Wednesday*” on the Ledyard-Gales Ferry Forum would help the Committee to solicit the types of topics that residents were interested in talking or learning about.

Councilor Saums stated that contacted the three Administrators of the Ledyard/Gales Ferry Forum and he noted that they indicated that they would be willing to field something like a “*Whining Wednesday*” and that they also suggested hosting a “*Thankful Thursday*”. He stated the Administrators also suggested the format be like a Poll that would be open from 5: 00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. and that they would manually turn off the comment period at 8:00 p.m.

Councilor Marshall stated that he liked the Ledyard/Gales Ferry Forum Administrator’s suggestions.

Councilor Paul reviewed examples of some open-ended type of questions presenting one question each week, that would keep the comments on topic such as:

1. Where would you like to see Electric Vehicle Charging Stations located in Ledyard?
2. Do you think roadside trash in Ledyard is excessive?
3. Would you be interested in participating in a town-wide Earth Day Clean-up?
4. Did you know that the “Bottle Bill” (Public Act No. 21-58 - An Act Concerning Solid Waste Management”) implemented a five-cent surcharge on any beverage container containing a spirit or liquor of fifty milliliters. Each quarter the surcharge fee is dispersed to the town in which the beverages were sold. Last quarter the Ledyard received \$13,027.06, which was for a total of 260,541 nip bottles that were sold during that quarter. The funds could only be used for the following purposes: (1) environmental measures intended to reduce the generation of solid waste; and (2) reduce the impact of litter caused by such solid waste, including, but not limited to, the hiring of a recycling coordinator, (3) the installation of storm drain filters designed to block solid waste and beverage container debris or (4) the purchase of a mechanical street sweeper, vacuum or broom that removes litter, including, but not limited to, such beverage containers and other debris from streets, sidewalks and abutting lawn and turf.
5. What town services would you like to know more about?
6. Would you be interested in participating in informal discussions regarding town issues?

7. What town issues would you like to discuss?
8. If you are a new Ledyard Resident why did you choose to move to Ledyard?
9. What would you like to see change in our community?
10. Do you use any of the town's parks, and if so, which parks do you like best and why?
11. Do you Love Ledyard and Why?

Councilor Saums stated the hope was to engage and obtain input from residents on topics that they would like to discuss. He noted the safety concerns at the Park on East Drive were brought to their attention by a resident. He stated with the Community Relations Committee's involvement and thru a concerted effort of several Town Departments that they were able to address the concerns. He stated the Community Relations Committee did a mailing to the residents in the area of the Park on East Drive and they received a good turnout at the July 20, 2022 Informal Gathering, noting that it was a positive result and experience.

Councilor Saums suggested the Committee forward the list of questions to the Ledyard/Gales Ferry Forum Administrators and ask them to consider putting one or two questions into a Poll per week.

Councilor Paul addressed how the Poll Question should be presented, questioning whether it should be phased: "*The Town Council's Community Relations Committee would like to know.....(Poll Question)*". The Committee agreed that presenting the Poll Question as Councilor Paul suggested would provide transparency and validation to residents.

Councilor Saums stated that he would work with the Ledyard/Gales Ferry Forum Administrators to post these questions in the format of a Poll on *Whining Wednesday* and *Thankful Thursday*.

Councilor Paul stated this initiative was a great way to engage residents and for any of any of the town's leaders to get residents' temperature on specific issues/topics.

Action: Continued

Community Relations Committee Meeting 01/18/2023

File #: [22106](#) Version: 1

Type: General Discussion

Title: 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.

Action: Continued

Meeting Note:

Councilor Paul noted at their December 21, 2022 meeting the Committee discussed launching something like a “*Whiney Wednesday*” on the Ledyard-Gales Ferry Forum to solicit topics that residents were interested in talking or learning about.

Councilor Saums stated that they would need to talk to the Forum’s Administrators to see if they would be willing and able to field something that a *Whiney Wednesday*.

The Committee discussed crafting a general type of open-ended question to post on the Forum to engage residents and to learn about the topics regarding Ledyard that residents were interested in talking and learning about.

The Committee noted the Informal Gathering they held at the Park on East Drive on July 20, 2022 went well; and based on the residents feedback that some great improvements have been made to the Park (Christy Hill Park).

Action: Continued

Community Relations Committee Meeting 12/21/2022

File #: [22106](#) Version: 1

Type: General Discussion

Title: 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.

Action: Continued

Meeting Note:

Councilor Paul suggested the Community Relations Committee develop a list of the types of programs they would like to inform residents about and then decide on a schedule of when they would like to present them. He stated having a schedule in place would allow them to coordinate with other departments/organizations/entities that they would like to feature.

The Committee discussed the success they had at the Farmers Market last summer and noted that the following topics for consideration the upcoming summer Market:

- The Brian Dagle Foundation for Suicide Prevention
- First Responders “Heroes” Police and Fire Departments
- ✓ Do a staged demonstrations such as the rescue of the man in the abandoned well
- Volunteer Table to talk to residents about how to get involved in their community and their local government.

Councilor Paul also noted that the Committee could host events at different town sites to expose residents the

many great town-owned properties that were available to the public, and to engage with residents who may be already visiting the site such as:

- Up-Down Sawmill - The mill operated in the fall and would be a good opportunity to talk with residents after the Sawmill demonstration.

The Committee also discussed ways to obtain input from residents on issues of concern.

Councilor Saums noted the Ledyard/Gales Ferry Forum was a great opportunity to obtain feedback from residents. He noted at one time the Forum had a “*Whiney Wednesday*”.

The Committee agreed to launch something like a “*Whiney Wednesday*” on the Ledyard-Gales Ferry Forum in January, 2023.

Action: Continued

Community Relations Committee Meeting 11/16/2022

File #: [22106](#) Version: 1

Type: General Discussion

Title: 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.

Action: Continued

Meeting Note:

Councilor Paul stated he learned a lot from Public Works Director/Town Engineer Steve Masalin’s presentation this evening. He stated that he yearned for more residents to attend the Community Relations Committee’s meetings and their Informational Forums because they provide a lot of great information regarding the services to the community.

Chairman Dombrowski noted at their November 7, 2022 meeting the Land Use/Planning/Public Works Committee discussed working with the Land Use Departments to put together a presentation to help residents understand the Land Use processes relative to the approval of applications, etc. He noted the complexities of Land Use stating that it involved Regulatory, the Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD), etc., He stated Land Use matters were not discretionary, explaining that an Application either met the Regulations or it did not meet the Regulations.

Councilor Paul stated in-light of some of new developments in Gales Ferry such as the Dollar General Store and the Cashman Marine Dredging at the former Dow Chemical property, that residents have been questioning the Land Use process and approvals. He noted the LUPPW Committee discussed ways to provide information to residents pertaining to the structure and operations of the Town’s Land Use process which included posting a *Frequently Asked Question* (FAQ) Sheet and/or uploading short videos on the town’s website which would answer land use questions and that could be linked to social media pages. He suggested the Community Relations Committee invite Land Use Director Juliet Hodge to give a presentation regarding the Land Use Departments in February or March, 2023.

Councilor Saums thanked the residents who attended tonight's meeting in-person at the Council Chambers to see the Public Works Department Presentation, noting that there were no residents in attendance on-line. He stated it was very informative and that he wished more residents could have seen the presentation.

Action: Continued

Community Relations Committee Meeting 10/19/2022

File #: [22106](#) Version: 1

Type: General Discussion

Title: 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.

Action: Continued

Meeting Note:

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.

Action: Continued

Community Relations Committee Meeting 9/21/2022

File #: [22106](#) Version: 1

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Title: 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.

Action: Continued

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.

Action: Continued

Community Relations Committee Meeting 9/21/2022

File #: [22106](#) Version: 1

Type: General Discussion

Title: 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.

Action: Continued

Minute Note:

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.

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.

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.

Action: Continued

Community Relations Committee Meeting 8/17/2022

File #: [22106](#) Version: 1

Type: General Discussion

Title: 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.

Action: Continued

Meeting Note:

The Community Relations Committee discussed the following potential venues to engage residents about issues that are of concern to the Community.

- Nathan Lester House
- Up-Down Sawmill - The mill operated in the fall and would be a good opportunity to talk with residents after the Sawmill demonstration.

Councilor Saums commented on the good participation the Community Relations Committee received at the July 20, 2022 Informal Conversation with residents at the Park on East Drive. He stated that he believed the good turnout was because they had a topic for the discussion, noting that residents previously brought concerns regarding safety issues at the Park to the town’s attention. He also noted that letters were sent to the residents in the area of Park; and that the letters were followed-up with a mailing of flyers the week before the event.

Councilor Saums suggested in working to plan/schedule future Informal Conversations to engage residents that they identify the subject matter that would be the topic of conversation.

Action: Continued