



**TOWN OF LEDYARD**  
CONNECTICUT  
TOWN COUNCIL  
HYBRID FORMAT

741 Colonel Ledyard Highway

Ledyard, CT 06339

towncouncil@ledyardct.org

860 464-3203

Roxanne Maher

Administrative Assistant

Chairman S. Naomi Rodriguez

**MINUTES**  
**FINANCE COMMITTEE**  
**SPECIAL MEETING**

Monday, March 25, 2024

4:00 PM

Annex Meeting Room - Video Conference

**DRAFT**

I. **CALL TO ORDER** - The Meeting was called to order by Committee Chairman Councilor Saccone at 4:00 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 Councilor	Present	In-Person	4:00 pm	5:34 pm
Tim Ryan	Town Councilor	Present	Remote	4:00 pm	5:34 pm
Tony Saccone	Town Councilor	Present	In-Person	4:00 pm	5:34 pm
S. Naomi Rodriguez	Town Council Chairman	Present	In-Person	4:00 pm	5:34 pm
Carmen Garcia-Irizarry	Town Councilor	Present	In-Person	4:00 pm	5:34 pm
Fred Allyn, III	Mayor	Present	In-Person	4:00 pm	5:34 pm
Matthew Bonin	Finance Director	Present	In-Person	4:00 pm	5:34 pm
Jason Hartling	Superintendent of Schools	Present	In-Person	4:00 pm	5:15pm
Joanne Kelley	Board of Education Finance Committee Chairman	Present	In-Person	4:00 pm	5:34 pm
Earl (Ty) Lamb	Board of Education	Present	In-Person	4:00 pm	5:34 pm
Branden Gruber	Board of Education	Present	In-Person	4:00 pm	5:34 pm
Roxanne Maher	Administrative Assistant	Present	In-Person	4:00 pm	5:34 pm

VII. **BUSINESS OF THE MEETING**

1. Adopt a proposed Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget.

MOTION to remove from the Table the

MOTION to recommend the Town Council adopt a proposed Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget in the amount of \$67,086,407 comprised of:

- General Government: \$29,032,334
- Board of Education: \$38,054,073

Moved by Councilor Buhle, seconded by Councilor Ryan

VOTE: 3 – 0 Approved to Remove from the Table

**RESULT: APPROVE TO REMOVE FROM THE TABLE 3 – 0**

**MOVER:** Jessica Buhle, Town Councilor

**SECONDER:** Tim Ryan, Town Councilor

**AYES:** Jessica Buhle, Tim Ryan, Tony Saccone

- MOTION to recommend the Town Council adopt a proposed Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget in the amount of \$67,086,407 comprised of:

- General Government: \$29,032,334
- Board of Education: \$38,054,073

Moved by Councilor Buhle, seconded by Councilor Ryan

Discussion: The Finance Committee noted that because they discussed a number of budget adjustments at their March 20, 2024 meeting they agreed to Table acting on a proposed Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget, noting that more work was needed.

The Finance Committee proceeded by reviewing the requested Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) relative to the project's ranking in an effort to make adjustments to the proposed Fiscal Year 2024/2025; as presented by the Mayor as follows:

***Board of Education Reserve Fund for future Facilities Improvements***

- MOTION to remove from consideration the addition of \$200,000 to Account #**22570101-52850 (BOE Reserve)** ~~2104011 58240 (PW Building Upgrade Reserve)~~ for an adjusted total of \$200,000.

Moved by Councilor Saccone, seconded by Councilor Ryan

Discussion: Councilor Saccone explained although he suggested at their March 20, 2024 Finance Committee meeting that the Town begin to plan for long term Capital Replacement Projects for the Board of Education, such as the replacement of school roofs and other anticipated facilities expenses, similar to what the town has been doing for the purchase large pieces of equipment such as fire trucks, and public works heavy equipment, by setting aside funding each year; that after further consideration and other competing expenses that perhaps next year (fy 2024/2025) was not the time to begin this sinking fund plan. Therefore, he suggested the Finance Committee remove this budget adjustment from consideration.

VOTE: 3 – 0 Approved and so declared

**RESULT: RECOMMEND TO APPROVE 3 – 0**

**MOVER:** Tony Saccone, Town Councilor

**SECONDER:** Tim Ryan, Town Councilor

**AYES:** Jessica Buhle, Tim Ryan, Tony Saccone

***Gales Ferry Fire Department Generator Replacement \$80,000***

- MOTION to add \$8,000 to the Gales Ferry Capital Account (Fire Station Generator Replacement).

Moved by Councilor Saccone, seconded by Councilor Buhle

Discussion: Councilor Saccone explained the Town applied for and received a \$500,000 Grant from the State for the replacement of some equipment which included a generator for the Gales Ferry Fire Station. He noted the State included the Gales Ferry Fire

Department's funding request in one of their Bond Packages. However, he stated the State has been slow in releasing the funding to the Town. He stated the Gales Ferry Fire Company has been requesting funding to replace their current generator as part of their budget request for a number of years; however, he stated the purchase has not been funded. He suggested adding \$8,000 to replace the generator and reimbursing the Capital Account when the Grant Funding has finally been received. He noted the age of their generator explaining that it was used to power the Gales Ferry Fire Station during outages and for the apparatus/equipment emergency readiness. In addition, he stated that the Fire Station was used for a warming and cooling station for town residents. He stated the funding was coming from the State, it was just a question of when it would be dispersed to the Town.

VOTE: 2 - 1 Approved and so declared (Ryan not in favor)

<b>RESULT: RECOMMEND TO APPROVE 2 - 1</b>
<b>MOVER:</b> Jessica Buhle, Town Councilor
<b>SECONDER:</b> Tim Ryan, Town Councilor
<b>AYES:</b> Jessica Buhle, Tony Saccone
<b>NAYE:</b> Tim Ryan

#### ***Juliet W. Long Fire Alarm System Replacement \$75,000***

- MOTION to adjust the funding plan for the Juliet W. Long School Fire Alarm Replacement Project as follows fully Funded in 2025: \$75,000.

Moved by Councilor Buhle, seconded by Councilor Ryan

Discussion: Councilor Buhle addressed the safety issues regarding Fire Alarm System at the Juliet W. Long Elementary School. She explained in the Mayor's proposed Capital Improvement Plan that the replacement of the Fire Alarm Systems at Juliet W. Long School and the High School were combined for a total cost of \$375,000; with \$125,000 being allocated for a three-year period beginning in 2026. However, she stated the Board of Education ranked the replacement of the Juliet W. Long School Fire Alarm at a cost of \$75,000 has High (Urgent), but that the High School Fire Alarm System Replacement at a cost of \$300,000 was not urgent. Therefore, she suggested rather than delay replacing the Fire Alarm System at the Juliet Long School for four years because the funding plan as presented would not begin until 2026; that they separate the two projects and allocate \$75,000 in 2025 to replace the Juliet W. Long Fire Alarm System; which could be done this summer.

Councilor Buhle went on to state that there may be some Grant Funding opportunities or perhaps there may be surplus funds from some of the Town's completed American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Projects that could be used toward the replacement of the Juliet W. Long School Fire Alarm System.

Mayor Allyn, III, stated that there may be some ARPA surplus funds from the Ledyard Center Sewer Extension Projects. He explained in working with Weston & Sampson Engineers that some of the work may come in less than originally anticipated because they may not have run the pipe through the wetlands.

Superintendent of Schools Jason Hartling addressed the Board of Education's Capital Fund; and he expressed concern that the Finance Committee was allocating Capital Funds that the Board of Education had already designated for capital other projects, that were included on

their Capital Projects List for this current year (Fiscal Year 2023/2024). He also noted that the Board of Education's Fiscal Year 2022/2023 surplus in the amount of \$217,387 has been transferred to the Board's Capital Non-Recurring Fund yet, explaining that the Board of Education was counting on these funds to use toward the current year's capital expenses. He stated that based on his calculations, with the addition of the \$75,000 to replace the Juliet W. Long Fire Alarm System, that the Board of Education's Capital Fund would have an approximate \$64,000 shortfall.

- Mr. Hartling, the Finance Committee, and Finance Director Matthew Bonin discussed Municipal Budgeting/Accounting. Councilor Buhle stated that the Town Council had to wait until the Annual Audit for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2023 was completed before they could transfer the Board of Education's \$217,387 Surplus to their Capital Fund. She noted Auditor CliftonLarsonAllen presented the Annual Audit for Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2023 at the Finance Committee's February 7, 2024 meeting; and that the Town Council subsequently approved to transfer the Board of Education's \$217,387 Surplus funds to their Capital Fund in accordance with "*Resolution Creating a Funding Mechanism for Making Annual Appropriations to a Capital Reserve Fund for the Board of Education*" adopted on September 28, 1988.

Finance Director Matthew Bonin noted that at their February 28, 2024 meeting the Town Council approved to set-up a new, stand alone, *Board of Education Capital Fund for Non-Bonded Board of Education Capital Items* to reside outside of the Town's Capital Nonrecurring Fund (CNR Fund 210). Therefore, he stated that the General Government's Finance Department and the Board of Education's Finance Department have been working to pay all invoices from the current Purchase Orders that the Board of Education has opened from the Board of Education's Capital Accounts. He explained that once all the invoices have been paid, that the Board of Education's Capital Accounts that were currently residing on the General Government's side of the ledger would be closed. He stated in addition they were working to set-up the new Board of Education Capital Accounts for Non-Bonded Capital Expenses that would reside on the Board of Education's side of ledger. He stated that once all of these actions have taken place that they would be able to transfer the Board of Education's Capital Funds, including the Board of Education's Fiscal Year 2022/2023 Surplus in the amount of \$217,387 to the Board's newly established Capital Accounts.

Councilor Ryan stated he appreciated Superintendent Hartling's comments regarding the Board of Education's capital funds; noting that this was an important discussion to have. However, he stated the Motion on the floor was to allocate \$75,000 in the Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget to replace the Fire Alarm System at the Juliet W. Long School. He stated as they work through this process that they would need to sort out the Board of Education's Capital Fund and the funding available.

Councilor Saccone stated if there was no further discussion regarding the Juliet W. Long Fire Alarm System Replacement that he would call for a vote.

VOTE: 3 – 0 Approved and so declared

**RESULT: RECOMMEND TO APPROVE 3 – 0**

**MOVER:** Jessica Buhle, Town Councilor

**SECONDER:** Tim Ryan, Town Councilor

**AYES:** Jessica Buhle, Tim Ryan, Tony Sacccone

### ***High School Fire Alarm System Replacement \$300,000***

- MOTION to adjust the three-year funding plan for the High School Fire Alarm Replacement Project as follows: 2026: ~~\$125,000~~ **\$100,000**; 2027: ~~\$125,00~~ **100,000**; 2028: ~~\$125,000~~ **\$100,000**.

Moved by Councilor Buhle, seconded by Councilor Ryan

Discussion: Councilor Buhle noted as she mentioned during the discussion regarding the Juliet W. Long School Fire Alarm System Replacement (see above); there would not be any adjustment to the timing of the funding plan for the High School Fire Alarm System Replacement. She explained that this adjustment would be to reduce the three-year allocation by \$25,000 each year, for a new allocation of \$100,000 for each of the three-year period; beginning in 2026 to replace the Fire Alarm at the High School.

VOTE: 3 – 0 Approved and so declared

### ***RESULT: RECOMMEND TO APPROVE 3 – 0***

**MOVER:** Jessica Buhle, Town Councilor

**SECONDER:** Tim Ryan, Town Councilor

**AYES:** Jessica Buhle, Tim Ryan, Tony Saccone

### ***Dispatch Emergency Communications CAD/RMS \$179,000***

- MOTION to adjust the two-year Funding Plan for the Dispatch Emergency Communications CAD/RMS System Replacement as follows: 2025: ~~\$90,000~~ **\$45,000**; 2026: \$89,030.

Moved by Councilor Buhle, seconded by Councilor Ryan

Discussion: Councilor Buhle noted that the Dispatch Emergency Communications CAD/RMS System Replacement may be eligible to receive funding through the Congressional Directed Spending Grant which Congressman Chris Murphy's Office was working on. Therefore, she suggested reducing the allocation by 50% for 2025 and leaving the funding the same for the second year of the funding plan. She stated if the town does not receive the Congressional Directed Spending Grant that they could increase the funding allocation in the second year to keep the project on track. She noted the current two-year funding plan was as follows: 2025: \$90,000 (suggest reducing allocation to \$45,000); 2026: \$89,030.

Chairman Rodriguez stated that she was working with Congressman Chris Murphy to obtain the Congressional Directed Spending Grant.

VOTE: 3 – 0 Approved and so declared

### ***RESULT: RECOMMEND TO APPROVE 3 – 0***

**MOVER:** Jessica Buhle, Town Councilor

**SECONDER:** Tim Ryan, Town Councilor

**AYES:** Jessica Buhle, Tim Ryan, Tony Saccone

### ***High School Elevator Replacement \$222,000***

- MOTION to adjust the three-year Funding Plan to replace the existing High School Elevator as follows: ~~2026-2025~~: \$74,000, ~~2027-2026~~: \$74,000; ~~2028-2027~~: \$74,000. (**Total Request: \$222,000**).

Moved by Councilor Ryan, seconded by Councilor Buhle

Discussion: Councilor Buhle stated at the Finance Committee's March 20, 2024 meeting that initially she suggested starting the three-year funding plan to replace the elevator at the High School next year (2025) as not to delay the project. However, she stated the background information provided by Board of Education Director of Buildings and Grounds Wayne Donaldson noted that grant funding may be available to replace the existing elevator at the High School. Therefore, she suggested the Finance Committee not change the current three-year funding plan to provide time to seek grant funding for this project; and to keep the original three-year funding plan which was to begin funding the project in 2026.

The Finance Committee agreed **not to adjust** the funding plan to replace the High School Elevator and to leave the three-year funding plan as submitted in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) which was scheduled to begin in 2026 as follows: proposed **2026: \$74,000, 2027: \$74,000; 2028: \$74,000. (Total Request: \$222,000)**.

VOTE:

0 – 3 Motion Failed

**RESULT: MOTION FAILED 0 – 3**

**MOVER:** Tim Ryan Town Councilor

**SECONDER:** Jessica Buhle, Town Councilor

**AYES:** Jessica Buhle, Tim Ryan, Tony Saccone

**MIS Department Computer Software**

- MOTION to reduce Account #10113151-57410 (Computer Software) by \$684.16 for a new total of \$32,267.00.

Moved by Councilor Buhle, seconded by Councilor Ryan

Discussion: Councilor Buhle stated during the March 14, 2024 Budget Work Session MIS Director Justin Dube explained that if the town implemented the new *Mime-cast* software that the existing *Mail Archiver* software would no longer be needed and that his budget could be reduced by \$684.16. She stated that she has since spoken to Mr. Dube and that he was comfortable with decreasing the Computer Software Line by \$684.16 for a new total of \$32,267.00.

VOTE:

3 – 0 Approved and so declared

**RESULT: RECOMMEND TO APPROVE 3 – 0**

**MOVER:** Jessica Buhle, Town Councilor

**SECONDER:** Tim Ryan, Town Councilor

**AYES:** Jessica Buhle, Tim Ryan, Tony Saccone

**High School Refuge Area: \$15,000**

Councilor Buhle questioned the purpose of the Refuge Area.

Board of Education Member Joanne Kelley explained the Refuge Area was for students with disabilities to go to during an emergency for safety/rescue purposes. She stated the \$15,000 requested in the Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget would install call stations with direct contact at the main fire control panel for two-way communication between disabled individuals and rescue personnel in the event of an emergency.

### ***Board of Education Capital Non-Recurring Fund (CNR)***

Councilor Ryan addressed the Board of Education's Capital Non-Recurring Fund (CNR), and he questioned if some projects were completed under the estimated costs such as the High School Classrooms Renovation/Upgrades (\$165,000); or the High School Science Lab Upgrades (\$100,000) whether those funds could be redirected to off-set the cost of other projects such as the Juliet W. Long Playscape.

Finance Director Matthew Bonin explained that the Board of Education's Capital Reserve Fund was one account line in the budget, and therefore, it was used for all of the Board of Education's capital projects. He suggested going forward that the Board of Education's Reserve Fund be further delineated.

- MOTION to reduce the Board of Education's Capital Non-Recurring Fund by \$63,400.  
Moved by Councilor Buhle, seconded by Councilor Ryan  
Discussion: (see above discussion; & see Juliet W. Long School Fire System Replacement (see above)).

VOTE: 3 – 0 Approved and so declared

### ***RESULT: RECOMMEND TO APPROVE 3 – 0***

**MOVER:** Jessica Buhle, Town Councilor  
**SECONDER:** Tim Ryan, Town Councilor  
**AYES:** Jessica Buhle, Tim Ryan, Tony Saccone

### ***High School Science Labs Renovation/Upgrades: \$100,000***

- MOTION to revise the three-year funding plan for the High School Science Lab Upgrades as follows: 2025 ~~\$100,000~~ \$80,000; 2026 ~~\$100,000~~ \$110,000; 2027 ~~\$100,000~~ \$110,000.  
Moved by Councilor Ryan, seconded by Councilor Buhle  
Discussion: (see above)

VOTE: 3 – 0 Approved and so declared

### ***RESULT: RECOMMEND TO APPROVE 3 – 0***

**MOVER:** Tim Ryan, Town Councilor  
**SECONDER:** Jessica Buhle, Town Councilor  
**AYES:** Jessica Buhle, Tim Ryan, Tony Saccone

### ***School Recommissioning***

Councilor Buhle stated the Board of Education's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) included the Recommissioning of the Gallup Hill School for a cost of \$72,000 and the Recommissioning of the Middle School for a cost of \$24,840. She questioned the purpose of the Recommissioning and the reason for the cost difference between the two schools noting that both schools recently received major improvements.

Superintendent Jason Hartling explained that Eversource completed a Recommissioning Study to determine if there were some energy savings that could be gained with adjustments

to the HVAC systems at both the Gallup Hill School and the Middle School. He stated Eversource paid 100% of the cost for the initial study; and he explained that the second phase of the project would involve a more in-depth study to lay out exactly what needed to be done. He stated to proceed with the second phase of the study that Eversource would need a 50% deposit to begin the investigation phase which would be refunded if the projects moved forward. The initial Report showed that there would be yearly savings; and that Eversource would pay 40% of the implementation cost, which would bring the entire cost of both projects down for the town during the payback period.

Mr. Hartling went onto to explain that the two schools were not constructed at the same time; and therefore, the materials in the schools were quite different, which could account for the difference in the Recommissioning costs between the two schools. He noted the Recommissioning costs for the two schools as follows:

- ✓ **Gallup Hill School \$72,000:** The Investigation Cost for Gallup Hill School would be paid 100% by Eversource if the recommendations were implemented. The Implementation Cost was \$120,500; however, Mr. Hartling explained that Eversource would need a 50% deposit from the town to begin the Investigation Phase, noting that these costs would be refunded if the project moved forward. The initial study has shown yearly savings of \$30,552 for a 2.4-year payback period.
- ✓ **Middle School \$28,400:** The Investigation Cost for the Ledyard Middle School would be paid 100% by Eversource if the recommendations were implemented. The Implementation Cost was \$41,400, however, Mr. Hartling explained that Eversource would need a 50% deposit from the town to begin the Investigation Phase, noting that these costs would be refunded if the project moved forward. The initial study has shown yearly savings of \$2,015 for a 1.2-year payback period.
- MOTION to adjust the \$72,000 funding plan for the Recommissioning of the Gallup Hill School to be funded in **2026**, instead of **2025**, as requested by the Board of Education.  
Moved by Councilor Buhle, seconded by Councilor Ryan  
Discussion: (see above)  
3 – 0 Approved and so declared

VOTE:

**RESULT: RECOMMEND TO APPROVE 3 – 0**

**MOVER:** Jessica Buhle, Town Councilor

**SECONDER:** Tim Ryan, Town Councilor

**AYES:** Jessica Buhle, Tim Ryan, Tony Saccone

**Juliet W. Long Playscape : \$70,000**

Councilor Buhle stated one of the Juliet W. Long School's playscapes had sections that were damaged from use over the years and that the playscape needed to be replaced for safety reasons. She stated the Board of Education requested \$70,000 in their 2024/2025 Capital Improvement Plan to replace the Playscape; however, the Mayor reduced the amount to \$50,000. She stated the Juliet W. Long Parents & Teachers Organization (PTO) have been working with Parks & Recreation Director Scott Johnson, Jr. who has been very helpful in providing guidance regarding playscape. She also noted that the PTO has been working to fundraise to help with the cost of Margin of Excellence upgrades to the Playscape; such as installing poured rubber landing areas instead of using woodchips; and

to ensure that the playscape would be inclusive for children with all abilities. She stated the purpose of the PTO's fundraising efforts was not to off-set the cost of the basic \$70,000 Playscape, but to provide for the Margin of Excellence upgrades.

Superintendent Hartling noted Councilor Buhle's comments, and he stated that not to fully fund the Playscape at the original request of \$70,000 would be a disappointment to the members of the PTO, who have been working to raise money to provide upgrades to the playscape ensuring that it would be accessible for all children, etc.

- MOTION to restore \$20,000 to the Juliet W. Long Playscape Replacement for a total allocation of **\$70,000**, as requested by the Board of Education.

Moved by Councilor Buhle, seconded by Councilor Ryan

Discussion: (see above)

VOTE: 3 – 0 Approved and so declared

**RESULT: RECOMMEND TO APPROVE 3 – 0**

**MOVER:** Jessica Buhle, Town Councilor

**SECONDER:** Tim Ryan, Town Councilor

**AYES:** Jessica Buhle, Tim Ryan, Tony Saccone

Superintendent Hartling excused himself from the meeting, noting that he had two other commitments scheduled for this evening as well.

Mr. Hartling left the meeting at 5:15 p.m.

- MOTION to increase the Board of Education's proposed Fiscal Year 2024/2025 **Operating** Budget by \$315,750 for a revised total of \$38,369,823 as proposed by the Board of Education.

Moved by Councilor Ryan, seconded by Councilor Buhle

Discussion: Councilor Ryan stated because the Finance Committee voted on a number of Board of Education Capital Projects this evening he suggested adding the word "**Operating**" to provide clarification.

Councilor Ryan stated for transparency that the public should be aware of the following:

- The Town's municipal budget, which included Capital investments for both the town and schools, represented a 1.4% increase over last year's expenditures.
- The proposed Board of Education budget \$38,369,823 represented a 6.85% increase over last year's expenditures, noting like every other municipality, the education budget was the largest driver of overall town expenses. For Ledyard the Board of Education's Budget was about 60% of the total annual budget.
- The proposed budgets would represent a .65 Mill increase in our Mill Rate, or roughly another \$162 a year for a single-family home with an assessed value of \$250,000. However, this mil increase was dependent on the town using \$1million from the town's Mill Rate Stabilization Fund. Councilor Ryan explained that the purpose of the Mil Rate Stabilization Fund was for unexpected circumstances, and that it should not be used for recurring expenses.

- A mil rate increase of .65 mils may not seem like a lot. However, Councilor Ryan stated that we must be sensitive, noting for Fiscal Year 2023/2024 that Ledyard currently was the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest Mill Rate in our region, behind only Norwich and New London. Chairman Rodriguez stated that Ledyard had the 4<sup>th</sup> highest mil rate in the area.
- Ledyard's total grand list value was in the bottom half in the same referenced region, even when taking into account 4% growth from last year. Ledyard simply does not have the taxable real property, especially Commercial and Industrial, which would help to bring in the much-needed revenue.

Councilor Ryan went on to state with all the points he mentioned this evening that among the top aspects that attracted people and businesses to a particular town was affordability, safety, quality of services, quality of housing, and quality of schools. He stated prioritizing all of these aspects was a financial balancing act. He stated responsible budgeting now would allow the town to receive favorable treatment when it came time to bond for larger investments such as the replacement of roofs and other major projects. He stated responsible budgeting now allowed the town to spend less on those types of projects in terms of interest and fees.

Councilor Ryan continued by stating everyone's budgets could be larger, noting that we could all use more money. However, he stated the town needed to take a consolidated, Ledyard-centric approach to address the real needs of our community, balanced against what the community could afford. He stated while inflation was often cited as a reason for increased budget demands, that we cannot forget that our taxpayers, who fund 70% of the town's budget, were facing the same inflation in other areas of their lives, while we all know that salaries have not kept up. He stated that it was against this backdrop that we should consider the town budgets that were before us.

Councilor Saccone stated that he was in-favor of the proposed Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Board of Education Budget in the amount of \$38,369,823 as the Board requested. He stated his three kids attended Ledyard Schools, and for a short time he worked in the Board of Education's Facilities Department, therefore, he was aware of the systems were in desperate need of repair, such as fire alarm systems and elevators, etc., that they were planning to fund in the next few years. He continued by addressing the Mil Rate Stabilization Fund, noting that these were taxpayers funds that were sitting in the account and currently collecting a good interest rate. Therefore, he stated that the Mil Rate Stabilization Fund was a good funding source to offset the mil rate increase. He stated the Mil Rate Stabilization Fund was taxpayers money and that it should go back to them. He concluded by stating that he was in-favor of the Board of Education's requested budget in the amount of \$38,369,823; noting that this was an increase of \$2,461,455 or 6.85% over the current year's budget.

Councilor Buhle stated that she has spoken passionately about the Board of Education's proposed budget at previous meetings. She stated she was a parent of a child who had experienced a Magnet School and has since transferred to Ledyard's Schools. She stated as Superintendent Hartling has said, that Ledyard wanted to create schools that encourage our residents to send our children to our schools, and not to send them to other schools. She stated the Board of Education's requested budget in the amount of \$38,369,823; would help to accomplish that goal. She stated the proposed budget Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Education Budget included funding to help attract Substitute Teachers and would provide positions such as a Social Worker and Clinical Supervisor noting that these positions were an important piece for Special Education, which was Federally Mandated.

Councilor Buhle went on to state the community elected a new Board of Education, who has worked hard to prepare a Fiscal Year 2024/2025 that would support the areas that mattered for Ledyard students.

Councilor Ryan stated since the Finance Committee's March 20, 2024 meeting, that he spoke stakeholders from both sides of the Budget, and he thanked Mayor Allyn, III, Finance Director Matthew Bonin, Superintendent of Schools Jason Hartling, Board of Education Finance Committee Chairman Joanne Kelley, and Board of Education Member Anthony Favry for taking the time to talk with him. He stated they had frank discussions about the budget in general and priorities, noting that he was in-favor of addressing the fire alarm systems. However, he stated with regard to the Board of Education's Operational Budget, that although he believed that there was room for some efficiencies, that it was not immense. He noted the General Government's proposed budget was extremely lean, noting that the town was able to offset some of their contractual increases with savings in other areas; or as they have discussed, by kicking things down the road. He stated that it was a shared sacrifice, noting that they were here as a Team and that they had to work together on the budget. He stated he was a big fan of giving the schools what they needed. However, he stated a 6.85% budget increase was a little high; and that he believed that it would send the wrong message. He stated they needed to show that the town was being aggressive and that they were trying to find the efficiencies, while also funding the basic needs; and that they were moving the town forward incrementally. He stated although the Town Council could not make suggestions to specific Board of Education operational expense lines, that based on discussions, that he believed there was some room for efficiencies. Therefore, he suggested a **6.3%** increase for a proposed Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Board of Education Budget in the amount **\$38,170,595** instead of the 6.85% increase as the Board of Education has requested. He stated an Education Budget in the amount of **\$38,170,595** would still be a significant increase to the Board of Education's baseline Operational Budget, noting that it would increase their expenditures by 6.3%. He stated with a 6.3% increase that nothing was being cut from the Education Budget (fy 23/24).

Councilor Saccone stated although Ledyard was not trying to compare their Education Budget to other Connecticut Towns, the fact was that they were seeing Board of Education Budgets skyrocketing. He stated based on what other towns were doing that they could see that increases were needed for their schools. Therefore, he stated that he was in-favor of the proposed Board of Education's budget increase. Councilor Ryan stated he wanted to be clear, noting that he was also in-favor of an increase to the Board of Education's proposed Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget; just not as much of an increase as has been requested.

- MOTION to amend the motion as follows:

MOTION to increase the Board of Education's proposed Fiscal Year 2024/2025 **Operating** Budget by **\$315,750 \$115,750** for a revised total of **\$38,369,823 \$38,170,595**. **as proposed by the Board of Education.**

Moved by Councilor Ryan

Hearing no Second the Motion failed.

Councilor Saccone called for a vote on the Motion, as originally moved as follows:

MOTION to increase the Board of Education's proposed Fiscal Year 2024/2025 **Operating** Budget by \$315,750 for a revised total of \$38,369,823 as proposed by the Board of Education.

VOTE:

2 – 1 Approved and so declared (Ryan not in favor)

**RESULT: RECOMMEND TO APPROVE 2 – 1**

**MOVER:** Tim Ryan, Town Councilor  
**SECONDER:** Jessica Buhle, Town Councilor  
**AYES:** Jessica Buhle, Tony Saccone  
**NAYES:** Tim Ryan

Finance Director Matthew Bonin stated with the budget adjustments the Finance Committee approved this evening, the proposed General Government Budget was **\$29,060,750**; an increase of \$28,416 over the proposed budget the Mayor submitted.

- MOTION to recommend the Town Council adopt a proposed Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget in the amount of \$67,430,573 comprised of:
  - General Government: \$29,060,750
  - Board of Education: \$38,369,823

Moved by Councilor Ryan, seconded by Councilor Buhle

Discussion: Councilor Ryan stated although he supported the proposed General Government's proposed Fiscal Year Budget in the amount of \$29,060,750; that he would be voting "No" on the total proposed budget this evening, because he did not support increasing the proposed Board of Education to \$38,369,823.

Councilor Ryan stated although he was in-favor of increasing the Board of Education's budget for the upcoming fiscal year (24/25) that he did not support the level of increase that was requested.

It was noted that the proposed Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget 67,430,573 would call for a .65 mil increase for a projected mil rate of 35.21.

VOTE: 2 – 1 Approved and so declared (Ryan not in favor)

**RESULT: RECOMMEND TO APPROVE 2 – 1**

**MOVER:** Jessica Buhle, Town Councilor  
**SECONDER:** Tim Ryan, Town Councilor  
**AYES:** Jessica Buhle, Tony Saccone  
**NAYES:** Tim Ryan

**X. ADJOURNMENT**

Councilor Saccone moved the meeting be adjourned, seconded by Councilor Ryan.

VOTE: 3 - 0 Approved and so declared, the meeting was adjourned at 5:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Anthony Saccone, Sr.  
Committee Chairman  
Finance Committee