



Chairman S. Naomi Rodriguez

TOWN OF LEDYARD
CONNECTICUT
TOWN COUNCIL

741 Colonel Ledyard Highway

Ledyard, CT 06339

<http://www.ledyardct.org>

Administrative Assistant

Roxanne M. Maher

860 464-3203

HYBRID FORMAT
MINUTES
COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMITTEE
FOR DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION
REGULAR MEETING

Wednesday, March 19, 2025

6:30 PM

Town Hall Annex-Video Conference

DRAFT

- I. CALL TO ORDER – The Meeting was called to order by Councilor Brunelle at 6:30 p.m. at the Annex Meeting Room - Town Hall Annex Building.

Councilor Brunelle welcomed all to the Hybrid Meeting. She stated for the Town Council Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion 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-

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Location	Arrived	Departed
Willaim Barnes	Town Councilor	Present	In-Person	6:30 pm	6:58 pm
April Brunelle	Committee Chairman	Present	In-Person	6:30 pm	6:58 pm
Gary St. Vil	Town Councilor	Present	Remote	6:30 pm	6:58 pm
S. Naomi Rodriguez	Town Council Chairman	Present	In-Person	6:30 pm	6:58 pm
Jessica Buhle	Town Councilor	Present	In-Person	6:30 pm	6:58 pm
Jacob Hurt	Resident	Present	In-Person	6:30 pm	6:58 pm
Roxanne Maher	Administrative Assistant	Present	Remote	6:30 pm	6:58 pm

III. RESIDENTS & PROPERTY OWNERS COMMENTS

Mr. Jacob Hurt, 6 Nugget Hill Drive, Gales Ferry, stated that he was speaking for himself this evening. He noted that March 31st marked the International Transgender Day of Visibility which was meant to celebrate the Transgender Non-Binary Community and to raise awareness around the violence and discrimination they continue to face.

Mr. Hurt went on to state as we meet this evening, the Federal Government was taking active steps to strip away the Transgender Non-Binary Community's rights through executive and legislative action. He stated the Transgender Non-Binary Community has been kicked out of the military without warning and without recourse. He stated these

individuals were not allowed to have passports that align with their identity. He stated that there were several laws being put into play and trying to be passed that would limit their freedoms to interact in ways that you and I take for granted. He noted that there were threats to withhold funding from hospitals to perform gender reform and care for children. He stated in the latest Military Policy Bill they banned gender affirming care for the dependents of military members if they happen to be gender nonconforming. He stated of all of this rhetoric continued to single them out and endanger them for no reason other than to score political points. He stated that some states have also introduced bills that would make just identifying as transgender or providing support to such a person a felony with jail time. He noted that there was one bill in Arkansas that would ban gender affirming haircuts. He stated right here in Connecticut that Legislators have introduced over two- dozen Trans Bills this year alone, which was over double the number of these bills seen in the past 5-years combined. He stated that Legislators representing Ledyard have sponsored these bills and have made public remarks, spreading falsehoods about transgender children in order to score political points. He stated despite of all this, the Transgender Non-Binary Community was still here, fighting for their rights and humanity. He stated the Transgender Non-Binary Community have an exemplary resiliency in the face of these needless and cruel acts. He stated that none of this stuff, no executive orders, laws, or urban myths, does anything to lower egg prices, or anything to lower the mill rate, or anything to make crime go down; or to secure the border. However, he stated that terrorizing children by withholding care and bullying them does none of that either. He asked that residents imagine that if this was being done to your parent, your partner, your sibling, or your child. He asked the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion to recognize the Transgender Day of Visibility, and to once again provide an event in June to Celebrate Pride. He stated that the event appeared to be well received and well attended last year. He stated that he was also counting on his fellow residents to acknowledge the humanity and rights of their fellow residents, and to reflect on how they could help put a stop to the needless cruelty that the Transgender and Non-Binary Community faces today. He went to state for his fellow residents, who are members of the Transgender and Non-Binary Community that he was only speaking for himself tonight, but that they were far from being alone. He stated that their resiliency was exemplary, and he thanked them for continuing to try to live their authentic life. Thank you.

IV. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS/PRESENTATION – None.

IV. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION to approve the Meeting Minutes of February 19, 2025

Moved by Councilor Brunelle, seconded by Councilor Barnes

VOTE: 3 - 0 Approved and so declared

VI. OLD BUSINESS

1. 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.

- **Lantern Hill Waterfront Park (Bush Pond)**

Councilor Brunelle stated that it was her understanding that Parks, Recreation, & Senior Citizens Director Scott Johnson, Jr., was working to make some improvements to the Park that would include a picnic benches, etc., before they invited residents to see the new Park.

Chairman Rodriguez stated Parks, Recreations, & Senior Citizens Director Scott Johnson, Jr., presented a Lantern Hill Waterfront Park Plan which included a parking area, picnic area, and boat launch and other things. She noted that it was her understanding that all this work would be completed in time for this residents to enjoy the park this summer. She noted that public access to Pond was donated to the Town by the Graham Family.

Councilor Barnes, Parks, Recreation, & Senior Citizens Commission Liaison, noted at the PR& SC's March 18, 2025 meeting that resident Mr. Brandon Graber asked about the materials that would be used for the Boat Launch at Long Pond and whether there would be an area for wheelchair access for fishing. He stated the PR&SC explained that although they did not know at this time where the fishing area would be that it would be wheelchair accessible. They also discussed the need to secure the wheelchair and having a railing.

Master Park Plan: Chairman Rodriguez stated during the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget Work Session that Parks, Recreations, & Senior Citizens Director Scott Johnson, Jr., requested funding to conduct Master Plan of all the Town's Parks. She went on to state in working to develop a Master Park Plan that Mr. Johnson would like to visit the all the Parks with the Consultant that would be preparing the Master Park Plan, and that he planned to invite members from other Town Committees to participate in the tour and assessment of the Parks. She stated that this would be a good opportunity to also welcome the community to participate and to ask questions.

RESULT: CONTINUED

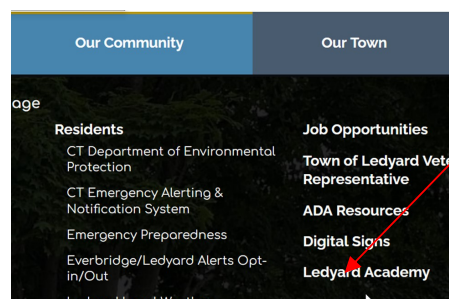
Next Meeting: 04/16/2025- 6:30 p.m.

2. Review the status of Department Heads Government Training Presentations.

The Committee noted that the **Ledyard Academy Link** located under the *Our Community Tab* on the Town Website; as noted below:

Administrative Assistant Roxanne Maher stated that she forwarded a February 13, 2025 email to the Committee noting that the MIS Department created a **Ledyard Academy Link** located under the *Our Community Tab*. The link is noted below:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLsJAGmKziDMTXgiAUdDzirHQDuGWusk6Q>



The Committee agreed to send a reminder to the Department Heads requesting that they submit their Presentations by June, 2025; and asked that Administrative Assistant Roxanne Maher to resend their October 24, 2024 Memo as a friendly reminder.

RESULT: CONTINUED

Next Meeting: 04/16/2025 - 6:30 p.m.

3. Start a relationship with the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Council to help foster communication and mutual points of interest.

Chairman Rodriguez stated that she and Mayor Allyn, III, would be meeting with MPTN Chairman Rodney Butler and Tribal Councilwoman Crystal Whipple. She stated that she would provide an update after their meeting.

RESULT: CONTINUED

Next Meeting: 04/16/2025 6:30 p.m.

4. Research Community Organizations that provide Opioid and Substance Abuse Disorder, Recovery, and Prevention Programs for the use of the Opioid Settlement Funding.

Councilor Brunelle stated although this item was on the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion's agenda that they were not currently working on it, because some of their other Committees have been taking the lead. She noted the town was working with Organizations to provide opioid and substance abuse and recovery programs.

Chairman Rodriguez stated during the March 10, 2025 Budget Work Session the Finance Committee discussed with Police Chief John Rich the cost of the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) Program. She noted that Police Chief John Rich stated although many of the supplies, such as the books and other materials the Police Department used for the DARE Program were donated; that most of the costs to administer the program was for personnel, which involved about 133-man-hours. She stated that the Finance Committee discussed allocating funding from the National Opioid Settlement Funding to pay for the man-hours to for the DARE program in the upcoming Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget.

RESULT: CONTINUED

Next Meeting: 4/16/2025 6:30 p.m.

5. Preparations for the 2025 Black History Month Program.

Councilor St. Vil stated the many Black History Month Events that included the following: (1) Poetry Slam that was held at Lucille's Restaurant in Ledyard Center; (2) Reading at the Gales Ferry Library; (3) Black History Month Celebration that was held at New Life Christian Church, on Route 117; and (4) 2025 Black History Essay & Poster Activity Contest; were well received by the community.

Councilor St. Vil stated announcing the winners of the 2025 Black History Essay & Poster Activity Contest would be their last event for this year.

Councilor St. Vil went on to state that this week he would be notifying the Teachers and School Principals of the winners; and that the winners would be recognized for their work and awarded their prizes at the Town Council's March 26, 2025 meeting. He stated that he looked forward to seeing the students and their parents, noting that the Council Chambers was full last year when they presented the Black History Essay & Poster Activity Contest awards.

Chairman Rodriguez stated the Schools Newsletters would also announce the winners of the 2025 Black History Essay & Poster Activity Contest

RESULT: COMPLETED

6. Schedule for Informal Conversation Forums and for Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Initiatives.

- **March:**

Linda C. Davis Woman of the Year: Councilor Brunelle stated that March was Women's History Month and since the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion announced that this year they would start the Linda C. Davis Woman of the Year Award that she has been receiving nominations. She stated that residents could submit their nominations at abru@ledyardct.org noting that the deadline for nominations would be March 31, 2025.

The Committee discussed the process to review the nominations and select a winner for the Linda C. Davis Woman of the Year Award. They agreed that because this was the first year and they did not have much time to develop a plan in how the winner would be selected to receive this honor; that the Committee would review the nominations and select the winner for this year. However, they discussed going forward that they would involve others from the community to participate in the judging and selection of the resident to receive the Linda C. Davis Woman of the Year Award.

Chairman Rodriguez suggested that going forward that perhaps the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion could ask others town leaders to serve as the Judges for the Linda C. Davis Woman of the Year Award.

- **May:**

Asian Pacific American Heritage Month: Councilor Brunelle stated that she had some ideas for Asian Pacific American Heritage month. She noted although she did not know whether there was a large *Asian Pacific American* Community in Ledyard that she would talk with Parks, Recreation & Senior Citizens Director Scott Johnson, Jr., about having a small type of celebration.

- **May (continued):**

Jewish American Heritage Month: Councilor Brunelle stated that she knew that Ledyard had a Jewish community.

Chairman Rodriguez stated that she could reach out to Rabbi Marc E. Ekstrand, of Temple Emanu-El; Waterford, and a couple of members in the community. She stated that Rabbi Ekstrand has come to Ledyard meetings in past years and that he has stated that he was willing to participate in future events in Ledyard.

- **June**

Pride Month LGBTQ+ - Councilor Brunelle stated that she would like to conduct a simple survey on what people would like to celebrate Pride Month. She stated the survey listed a number of ideas such as: Parade, Picnic in the park like last year; Vendors in the park, a 5K-Event using the new Multi-Use Pathway, Flags.

Chairman Rodriguez suggested that they could combine all of those ideas into one event, noting they could have a parade, with a picnic noting that they would have space in the park for vendors.

Councilor Brunelle stated that they were definitely going to do something for Pride Month in June; and she noted that she was open to suggestions.

Councilor Brunelle went on to note that she recalled that the Town used to have a *Color Me Day*, however, she did not know who hosted the event. Administrative Assistant Roxanne Maher stated that Parks & Recreation hosted the Children's Color Me Day, noting that it was previously held in September.

Chairman Rodriguez noted that she had attended the Children's Color Me Day a few times. She noted that she would talk with her contact at Parks & Recreation to try to obtain more information on what was done in the past for the Children's Color Me Day.

- **July**

Disability Awareness Month: Councilor Brunelle stated that she did not know that July was Disability Awareness Month. She suggested the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion work with the Senior Citizens Center to have a fundraiser to help with providing handicap access to the Park, Recreation & Senior Citizens Center Facility or to help pay for the railings when they create the handicap access fishing area at Long Pond. She stated that these were a few ideas, noting that they had some time to discuss other ideas, because the Disability Awareness Month was not until July.

- **August**

Indigenous People Day: Councilor Brunelle stated that August 9, 2025 was Indigenous People Day. However, she stated that the month of November was Indigenous Heritage Month. Therefore, she stated that she did not know which one to start working

The Committee agreed to work on Indigenous Heritage Month because it was for the month of November.

Chairman Rodriguez noted in talking with Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Members Ms. Mylasia Thomas and Ms. Whipple that one of the ideas they discussed was to invite a Native American Chef to the Senior Center to do a cooking class. She stated that it was also suggested that they could have some Native American Dancers perform.

- **September**

Hispanic Heritage Month: Councilor Brunelle stated because September was still warm that they could do something outside

Councilor Brunelle stated that these were her ideas on ways to celebrate Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, and she asked whether the Committee had any other ideas.

Councilor St. Vil noted Mr. Earl (Ty) Lamb's email dated 2/17/2025 in which he provided topics for the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion to consider. Councilor Brunelle stated that she had hoped that Mr. Lamb could attend tonight's meeting. However, she stated they would defer their discussion regarding Mr. Lamb's ideas to their next meeting.

Chairman Rodriguez questioned whether Councilor Brunelle has contacted Farmers' Market Committee Chairman Pam Ball to reserve space at this Summer's Farmers Market. Councilor Brunelle stated that she did contact Ms. Ball and that she filled out the Non-Profit Organization Form and picked some dates. However, she stated that she has not heard back from the Farmers' Market Committee. Chairman Rodriguez asked Councilor Brunelle to let her know the dates as soon as she heard back from Ms. Ball, because she has invited Ann Dagle from the Brian Dagle Healing Heart's Foundation, and that she would like to invite other Mental Health Providers to attend the Farmers' Market, however, she needed to have a date.

Chairman Rodriguez went on to state that last year she attended a Mental Health Awareness Celebration that the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation hosted, noting that the place was full of Organizations from all over the State. Therefore, she stated that she could ask them for some names of the Mental Health Organizations to see if they would be interested in coming to the Ledyard Farmers' Market to provide information to residents.

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

- ***Youth Fishing Designated Waterway*** - Councilor Barnes noted at their February 12, 2025 meeting he brought up the idea to have a designated Youth Fishing Area. He stated that he did not have an opportunity to discuss the idea with the Parks & Recreation before tonight's meeting, but that he would reach out the Parks, Recreation & Senior Citizens Director Scott Johnson, Jr.

RESULT: CONTINUED

Next Meeting: 4/16/2025 6:30 p.m.

- ***Colonel William Ledyard's Sword*** – Councilor Barnes stated at their February 12, 2025 meeting he proposed an idea to try to do more to educate residents and to recognize the name sake of their Town. He suggested that they do something at the stone that marked where Colonel Ledyard was killed; or at Colonel Ledyard's Memorial Gravesite, which was at the Colonel Ledyard Cemetery on Mitchell Street, Groton.

Councilor Barnes went on to note that Colonel Ledyard's sword was in the Groton Library. He stated that Memorial Day was a fitting time to recognize and honor Colonel Ledyard and the Black Soldiers who fought and died in *The Battle of Groton Heights*. He stated if people would attend the event that what he would like to see was a gathering at the that site and then have a procession to his gravesite carrying his sword. He stated the Program could involve community groups such as the Girl Scouts, and the Boy Scouts.

Councilor Barnes stated that he has since spoken to Groton Library Director Ms. Wendy Connell about loaning Colonel Ledyard's Sword to Ledyard for a Ceremony. However, he stated that Ms. Connell stated that she did not believe that she could just relinquish this piece of historic artifact. He went on to explain that Ms. Connell stated that if Ledyard was doing some type of Ceremony that she thought that she may be able to bring the Sword in its case to the event. Therefore, he stated that this Committee would need to find out whether they had support from groups to champion such an event, whether it be the Boy Scouts or another type of civic group or organization.

Councilor Barnes noted at the America 250 Planning Committee he brought up the idea about Colonel Ledyard's Sword and that the Committee loved the idea. Therefore, he stated that Mayor Allyn, III, planned to talk with Groton about whether Ledyard could borrow the Sword.

Councilor Barnes stated the America 250 Planning Committee has been talking about including a Kick-Off Announcement for the *250th Celebration Year of the Signing of the Declaration of Independence* in the Events Magazine to say something like "***Save the Year***" instead of "*Save the Date*". He stated that the 250th Celebration would also be announced at this year's Memorial Day Parade. Therefore, he stated it would be great if they could get Colonel Ledyard's Sword for this year's Memorial Day Parade, but that he was really hoping that Ledyard could get the Sword from Groton the following year for our Country's 250th Celebration. He stated that Mayor Allyn, III, was planning to write to Groton to request that they allow Ledyard to borrow the Sword for their 250th Celebrations.

Councilor St. Vil stated that his Nephew-in-Law, who lived in Rhode Island, makes movie quality replicas, therefore, he stated if Groton would not allow Ledyard to use Colonel William Ledyard's Sword as part of their Ceremonies to recognize and honor Colonel Ledyard and the Black Soldiers who fought and died in *The Battle of Groton Heights* as part commemoration of their local history, that perhaps he could see if they could have a replica of the Sword made. However, he stated that it would be really great to have the real Sword at their events.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

1. Any New Business proper to come before the Committee – None.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

VOTE: Councilor Brunelle moved the meeting be adjourned, seconded by Councilor Barnes
3 – 0 Approved and so declared. The meeting was adjourned at 76:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

April Brunelle
Committee Chairman
Community Relations Committee