

Liz Burdick, Town Planner
Town of Ledyard Planning & Zoning Commission
Attn: Public Hearing for Parking Amendment PZ#26-2ZRA
planner@ledyardct.org

June 21, 2026

CC: Ledyard Town Council
council@ledyardct.org

Subject: Comments Regarding Parking Amendment PZ#26-2ZRA

Dear Members of the Planning & Zoning Commission,

I am writing regarding the proposed Parking Amendment PZ#26-2ZRA and the implementation of HB 8002.

I recognize that the State's new law limits the Town's authority to require off-street parking in many situations. However, even under HB 8002, the Commission still retains important authority over safety, infrastructure, building scale, drainage, traffic mitigation, and site design. I encourage the Commission to use those remaining tools proactively to protect public safety and ensure that future development remains consistent with the capacity of Ledyard's infrastructure.

Ledyard differs from many communities that may have influenced the adoption of HB 8002. Most Ledyard residents are heavily dependent on automobiles for work, school, shopping, and daily activities. Public transportation options are limited, and many destinations are not accessible by walking or transit. As a result, parking demand in Ledyard reflects the practical reality that most households require one or more vehicles.

As a homeowner and resident of Gales Ferry Village, I am particularly concerned about how these changes may affect our neighborhood. Gales Ferry's historic village street grid was never designed to accommodate significant overflow parking from large-scale developments. Many roads are narrow, lack adequate shoulders, and serve as school bus routes. During winter weather, snow accumulation further reduces available roadway width, creating additional challenges for residents, emergency responders, and public safety vehicles.

The Village is already a highly active residential area where local streets regularly accommodate residents' vehicles, commercial and service vehicles, school buses, delivery trucks, pedestrians, and children walking to bus stops, playing outdoors, and traveling through the neighborhood. These roads function as shared community spaces as much as transportation corridors. Additional overflow parking would further constrain visibility, reduce maneuvering room, and increase conflicts between vehicles, pedestrians, cyclists, and emergency responders.

Without proactive planning and the adoption of appropriate parking restrictions where necessary, HB 8002 risks shifting parking impacts from developers onto existing neighborhoods and public roads. Gales Ferry Village, in particular, could experience significant parking spillover that would reduce visibility at intersections, impede traffic flow, and create safety concerns along local roads and access points to Route 12 and Hurlburt Road. The surrounding roads were not designed to absorb substantial overflow parking or increased vehicle volume.

These concerns become even more significant when considering the proposed Sweet Hill Farm development. The proposed six-story, 273-unit apartment development would introduce substantial additional traffic, parking demand, and service vehicle activity into an area that already experiences roadway, safety, and infrastructure constraints. The cumulative impact of reduced parking requirements combined with a development of this scale warrants careful scrutiny and proactive planning.

Particularly concerning is the location of the proposed development along Military Highway, a major commuter corridor that carries significant traffic associated with the Groton submarine base. Military Highway runs directly in front of the Sweet Hill Farm site and intersects with Hurlburt Road before connecting to Route 12. This corridor already experiences substantial congestion during morning and afternoon commuting periods. Additional residential traffic generated by a development of this magnitude has the potential to further strain roadway capacity, increase delays, and create additional safety concerns at key intersections and access points.

I have witnessed firsthand the traffic volumes and roadway constraints that already affect this area. The combination of existing commuter traffic, school bus routes, commercial and service vehicles, delivery trucks, and local residential traffic creates conditions that require careful planning before additional development pressure is introduced.

I urge the Commission to reconsider whether developments of this scale are compatible with the capacity of existing roads, infrastructure, and public safety resources in Gales Ferry Village and similar areas of town. At a minimum, projects generating substantial traffic and parking demand should be subject to rigorous traffic studies, parking demand analyses, and appropriate mitigation measures to ensure that existing residents and neighborhoods do not bear the unintended consequences of inadequate infrastructure planning.

If parking authority is limited by state law, the Commission still retains authority over building scale, site design, traffic mitigation, and infrastructure impacts. The Commission should ensure that building scale remains consistent with what local infrastructure can reasonably support. Building height and intensity directly influence parking demand, traffic generation, stormwater runoff, and public service needs. I urge the Commission to reconsider whether developments of this scale are compatible with the capacity of existing roads, infrastructure, and public safety resources in Gales Ferry Village and similar areas of town.

I respectfully urge the Commission to strengthen its review of larger development proposals by requiring traffic impact studies, parking demand analyses, and independent peer review where appropriate. The Commission should begin building the evidentiary record necessary to make future safety findings permitted under HB 8002 when site-specific conditions warrant additional parking or mitigation measures.

I also encourage the Commission to evaluate whether larger developments should require Special Permit review rather than proceeding automatically as by-right uses. Site-specific review allows the Commission to address traffic circulation, emergency access, parking management, landscaping, drainage, buffering, and other impacts that vary significantly from one location to another. Projects generating substantial traffic and parking demand should undergo special permit review rather than automatic by-right approval.

In addition, the Commission should evaluate whether certain constrained areas, historic village districts, and roadway corridors in Gales Ferry and elsewhere in town qualify for conservation or traffic mitigation districts under HB 8002. Identifying these areas proactively would help the Town address future safety concerns before problems develop.

Because many residents rely on private wells and aquifers, I also encourage the Commission to continue emphasizing stormwater management, groundwater recharge, and environmentally responsible site design. Permeable paving, landscaping, and improved drainage standards can help balance parking needs with protection of local water resources.

Finally, I urge the Commission and Town Council to begin discussing whether local parking management measures or parking restrictions may be necessary in areas vulnerable to spillover parking. Waiting until problems arise will make solutions more difficult and costly. Proactive planning today can help preserve public safety, neighborhood access, and quality of life for existing residents while accommodating responsible future growth.

My goal is not to oppose responsible development. Rather, I hope the Town will take proactive steps now to address the foreseeable consequences of HB 8002 and ensure that future growth occurs in a manner that protects public safety, infrastructure, and the quality of life of existing residents.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments and for your service to the Town of Ledyard.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gary Schaefer".

Gary Schaefer
9 Sunset Rd
Gales Ferry, CT