



TOWN OF LEDYARD
CONNECTICUT
TOWN COUNCIL

Chairman S. Naomi Rodriguez

MINUTES
LEDARD TOWN COUNCIL – REGULAR MEETING
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2024; 7:00 PM
HYBRID FORMAT
VIDEO CONFERENCE VIA ZOOM

DRAFT

- I. CALL TO ORDER – Chairman Rodriguez called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. at the Council Chambers, Town Hall Annex Building.

Chairman Rodriguez welcomed all to the Hybrid Meeting. She stated for the members of the Town Council and 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. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

- III. ROLL CALL –

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Location
April Brunelle	Town Councilor	Present	In-Person
Jessica Buhle	Town Councilor	Present	In-Person
Carmen Garcia-Irizarry	Town Councilor	Present	In-Person
Kevin Dombrowski	Town Councilor	Excused	
Gary Paul	Town Councilor	Present	Remote
S. Naomi Rodriguez	Town Councilor	Present	In-Person
Tim Ryan	Town Councilor	Excused	
Tony Saccone	Town Councilor	Present	In-Person
Gary St. Vil	Town Councilor	Present	In-Person

- IV. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS/PRESENTATIONS

Rabbi Marc E. Ekstrand, Temple Emanu-El; Waterford, Connecticut

Chairman Rodriguez stated in November 2023 she had a conversation with Dr. Adrienne Parad who lives in Ledyard, during which time she asked Dr. Parad questions regarding certain statements and chants. She noted that Dr. Parad kindly told her what the statements and chants meant and how she felt as a Jewish woman and the experiences that her children were having in the school system. She noted that Dr. Parad informed her that Rabbi Ekstrand had come to a past Town Council meeting in 2020 to discuss Anti-Semitism when a Swastika was found spray painted in our town. Chairman Rodriguez told Dr. Parad that it would be a good idea for Rabbi Ekstrand to give an updated presentation to the Town Council in light of what her children were experiencing. She stated that she and Dr. Parad were in contact with each other during the past couple of months and Rabbi Ekstrand chose the Town Council’s February 28, 2024 meeting to give his presentation. She welcomed Rabbi Marc E. Ekstrand, of Temple Emanu-El; Waterford, Connecticut, to tonight’s meeting, noting that she looked forward to hearing his presentation

Rabbi Ekstrand thanked Chairman Rodriguez and the Town Council for having him at their meeting this evening, noting that he recognized some members of the Town Council from his last visit. He stated that he has come to Ledyard many times, noting that although he enjoyed coming to Ledyard, that he did not enjoy having to talk about the subject of Anti-Semitism and how it affects the Jewish community. He stated his Congregation *Temple Emanu-El* has members from the Connecticut River north to past the Rhode Island border, noting that there were quite a few members who reside in Ledyard. He stated when he attended the Town Council’s February 12, 2020 meeting it was to speak about a particular incident that had occurred. However, he stated during that intervening time that he visited the Ledyard Middle School, and that he has been listening to his congregants and hearing about their experiences, noting that during the past couple of years there has been a steady state of Anti-Semitism. He stated since October 7, 2023 when there was the terrible situation in the country of Israel that Anti-Semitism has peaked, not only here in Southeastern Connecticut but throughout our nation and around the world. He stated this Anti-Semitism has your friends and neighbors fearful and nervous

about their safety and the safety of their children in school. He commended Middle School Principal Ryan Earley for being open to discussion and for the positive actions he has taken to change this situation in the school, noting that he has been a good partner, but that there was still work to be done. He provided a pamphlet from *T'ruah* which was the Rabbinic call for Human Rights, noting that they published a brief guide on Anti-Semitism. He noted there was often confusion regarding what Anti-Semitism was; and what Anti-Semitism was not, and he provided some history regarding Anti-Semitism, noting examples of both. However, he stated the most recent/prevalent was associating all Jews with the actions and things that were going on in the State of Israel. He stated most of the Jew's we encounter in our communities are not Israeli Citizens, noting that there might be one or two who have dual citizenship; or there might be an Israeli or two who might be living in the United States on a long-term basis. However, he stated most Jews in our communities were citizens of the United States, just like you, and their loyalty was to this country. He stated tying things that were going on half a world away was placing criticisms on people who have nothing to do with those issues.

Rabbi Ekstrand continued by addressing the notion that all Jews were liberal and were constantly fighting against conservative values. He stated this notion was not true, noting the whole political spectrum was represented in his congregation *Temple Emanu-El*. He stated this made it interesting in delivering sermons, noting that he has to walk the tight rope of political ideals. He stated the way he does that was to talk about values, noting that we all care about the safety of our communities, we all care about educating our children, we all care about uplifting our communities, economic development, and he noted that these were not a right-left-conservative-liberal thing. He stated these values were being a citizen of the Town of Ledyard, being a citizen of the State of Connecticut, being a citizen of the United States, its being a member of the community.

Rabbi Ekstrand went on to talk about the most common form of Anti-Semitism right now, which was the issues that surrounded Israel and Palestine. He explained that the following were potentially Anti-Semitism things that might come up during conversations or in things that people might see: (1) Portraying Israel as an ultimate evil or grossly exaggerating its actual influence in the world – Rabbi Ekstrand stated Israel was a tiny nation, however, it gets a lot of Press. He stated Israel's influence was not as big as some make it out to be. He stated Israel has done some wonderful things for the world, but that it also had its problems just like any other nation; (2) Holding Jews collectively responsible for Israel's conduct; (3) Treating Jews as agents of Israel, simply because they were Jewish; (4) Referring to Jews as Zionists, when they really mean Jew; (5) Denying Jewish history, denying that they have a connection to the land of Israel; (6) Claiming that today's Jews were not real Jews; (7) Claiming that Jews' presence in the land of Israel was colonist endeavors. He stated that all these things were not true, were Anti-Semitic, and had no place in our conversations.

Rabbi Ekstrand also talked about what was not Anti-Semitic and were perfectly reasonable as follows: (1) To criticize or be opposed to the idea of Zionism; (2) Support arrangements that call for the full equity of both Israelis and Palestinians; (3) Calling for a two-state solution; or one-state solution; or binational state; (4) Being concerned for Palestinians who live in the occupied territory, or Gaza; and pointing out their terrible situation; (5) Calls for non-violence protests against the things that were happening in Israel, including boycotts; and divestment in sanctions; (6) They should be careful not to create double standards, where they hold one group of people to a higher standard than they hold other people to; or that they hold other nations to; or even to ourselves. However, he stated holding Israel to some standards was not Anti-Semitic. Rabbi Ekstrand stated all of these things were only criticism and were based on evidence of the things that were actually going on in Israel, noting in his opinion that they were not Anti-Semitic, however, he stated that there was some controversy about these things. He stated these things were all part of the discourse that they should be having about important issues that were going on in the world.

Rabbi Ekstrand noted that he was concerned about all minorities, noting that he had friends that were Islamic and Palestinian. He stated Jews and other Minorities were no different than you and that they should be recognized as your friends and neighbors. He stated Jews and other Minorities concerns and interests were largely the same as your concerns, noting that they wanted to make our communities a welcoming, wonderful, successful place to live, where everyone was safe, and where every citizen felt valued. He stated this could be achieved by welcoming Jews and other Minorities into their communities. He stated that Ledyard has done that in a lot of ways, noting evidence of that was inviting him to speak at

tonight's Town Council Meeting, or his audience with the Middle School Principal, and being invited to give an Invocation at a Veterans Day event in Ledyard. He suggested that Ledyard and other communities continue to do these types of things. He suggested communities find ways to uplift all minorities, whether it be recognizing their holidays in some way, or asking them to do culturally significant things in their community, and to let people know what they were about and to understand their traditions, etc.

Rabbi Ekstrand stated the Town Council's business was to make their local community the best it could be. He stated there would be people who would be asking the Town Council to make statements about things that were going on in the much wider world, about things that were going on with Israel, Hamas, and with the Palestinians. He stated there were places to make those statements. However, he suggested the place to make those statements was not here at the Local Level. He stated the right place to make those statements would be at the Federal Level. He noted those who are involved in government at any level know making statements at the local level was not their job, noting that it occurred at the Federal level. He stated the State Department was in charge of the Administration of Foreign Policy for our Nation, noting that they were experts on that; and that we should leave that work to them. He asked the Town of Ledyard to resist the call to make statements regarding this matter. He stated by doing so would not mean that the Town does not care about Palestinians or Israelis. He stated that they would be recognizing that there was a higher level of government, which was the on the national level, stating that was their job and they had the expertise to do that. He stated that did not mean that they cannot have opinions as individuals, noting that as citizens of the world that we should have opinions. However, he stated we should place the responsibility to make those statements about what they would like Israel to do; or not do; or what we would like to see for the Palestinian people, to the people in Washington D.C. in the State Department.

Rabbi Ekstrand concluded his remarks by thanking the Town Council for having him this evening. He stated that he deeply appreciated being invited for a second time and that he was a resource for them. He stated should the Town Council like to discuss how to uplift minorities in their community; or specific Anti-Semitic Incidents that he was available to help. He stated people listen and respect their Elected Officials and what they say matters. He noted that there were other organizations in Southeastern Connecticut who were also available and allies to help such as the Jewish Federation of Eastern Connecticut; the Antidefamation League; and the Jewish Community.

Chairman Rodriguez thanked Rabbi Ekstrand for his insightful presentation. She stated for a small community such as Ledyard, that we can learn from each other so that we can coexist with respect and understanding for all, as a community should. She again thanked Rabbi Ekstrand for taking time out of his busy schedule for the Town of Ledyard.

Board of Education Proposed Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget

Chairman Rodriguez noted that the Board of Education submitted its proposed Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget to the Mayor's Office on Monday, February 26, 2024 in accordance with Chapter VII; Section 4 of the Town Charter. She invited Board of Education Finance Committee Chairman Joanne Kelley to present the Board of Education's proposed budget this evening.

Board of Education Finance Committee Chairman Joanne Kelley stated before she began her presentation that she wanted to thank Rabbi Ekstrand for his comments this evening. She stated it was gratifying to hear that Ledyard's Middle School Principal was welcoming, open to speaking with Rabbi Ekstrand, and was doing the right things for their students.

Ms. Kelley thanked the Town Council for the opportunity to present the Board of Education's proposed Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget this evening 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.

Ms. Kelley stated the proposed budget was a result of a careful and methodical budget process which showed that the Board of Education continued to be good stewards of the resources allocated to them. She stated the PowerPoint Presentation would illustrate that over 90% of the proposed budget increase

reflected contractual obligations, inflationary increases for existing line items, and other non-negotiable obligations such as State Mandates for programing. She noted as Superintendent Hartling stated in his Budget Transmittal Letter that the Board of Education’s proposed Fiscal Year 2024/2025 budget primarily funded the status quo.

Ms. Kelley stated the Board of Education believed that the proposed Fiscal Year 2024/2025 in the amount of \$38,369,823 supported the following:

- The critical and increasing needs relative to the academic achievement with the continuation of a year long implementation of a multi-tiered system of targeted intervention to address the persistent failure to meet grade level learning expectations in Literacy and Math.
- It recognizes and takes on critical mental health needs for our children in a school-based student centric environment.

Ms. Kelley stated the mental health crisis in our schools was not only a Ledyard problem, noting as everyone was aware. However, she stated that Ledyard was taking some meaningful steps to address it in the upcoming proposed budget.

Ms. Kelley began her presentation of the Board of Education’s Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget by providing an overview of their Mission Statement as follows:

❖ **Mission Statement**

“Ledyard Public Schools provides every child with the experiences, support, and opportunism necessary for life and success in our diverse and evolving world.”

❖ **Values**

Ms. Kelley noted the Board of Education’s Values were part of their upcoming Strategic Plan:

- Belonging
Ledyard’s Schools promote and instill a sense of belonging for all by creating a safe, caring, respectful environment where diversity is acknowledged, encouraged, and celebrated.
- Partnerships
Ledyard’s Schools reflect the beliefs, values, and aspirations of the community and are most successful when true partnerships exist within and beyond our schools.
- Learning
Ledyard’s Schools provide multiple opportunities within and outside the classroom for rigorous and relevant learning experiences that allow students to develop and pursue their passions.
- Critical Thinking
Ledyard’s Schools encourage students and staff to ask questions, explore, and persevere, to advance understanding, and solve problems.
- Achievement
Ledyard’s schools support students to achieve academically, socially, and emotionally, while developing the skills necessary for learning and success throughout one’s lifetime.

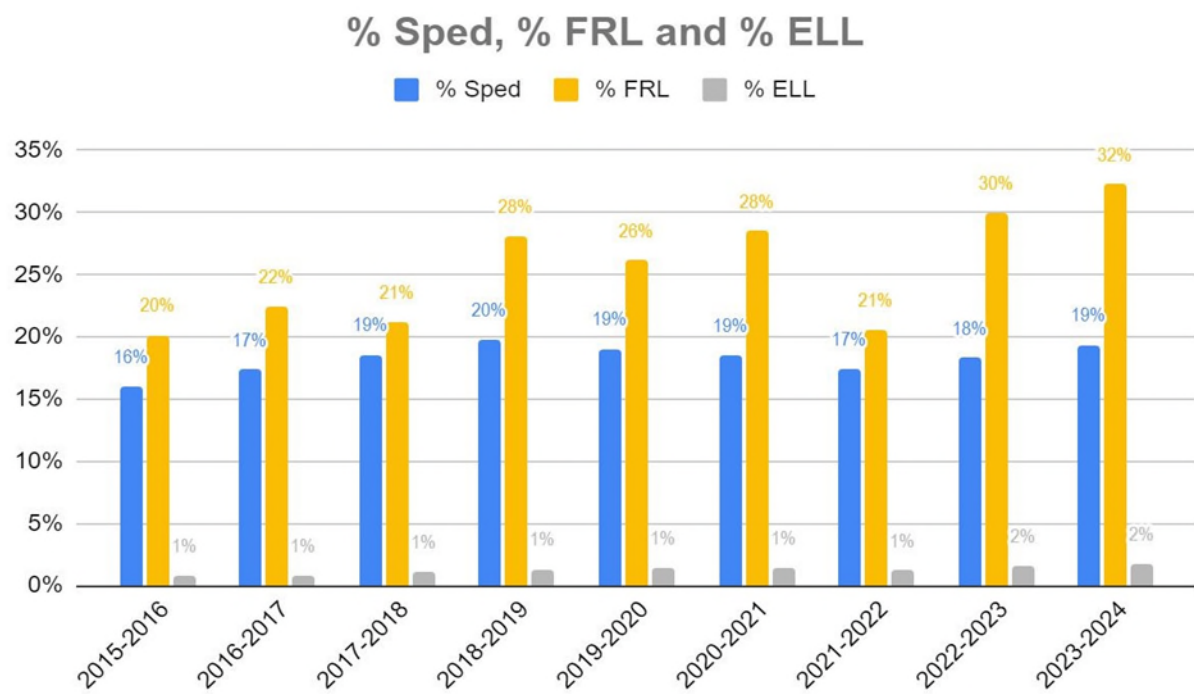
❖ **Increasing Needs of Students**

Ms. Kelley stated the demand for programming, intervention, and other support would not disappear anytime soon. She reviewed the *“General State of Connecticut Indications for At-Risk Students”* noting the following percentages:

- 19% Special Education Students
- 32% Students receiving Free and Reduced Lunch Program
- 2% Language acquisition – English Language Learners

Ms. Kelley reviewed and explained the following *General State of Connecticut Indications for At- Risk Students*” Graph:

General State of CT Indicators of at Risk Students



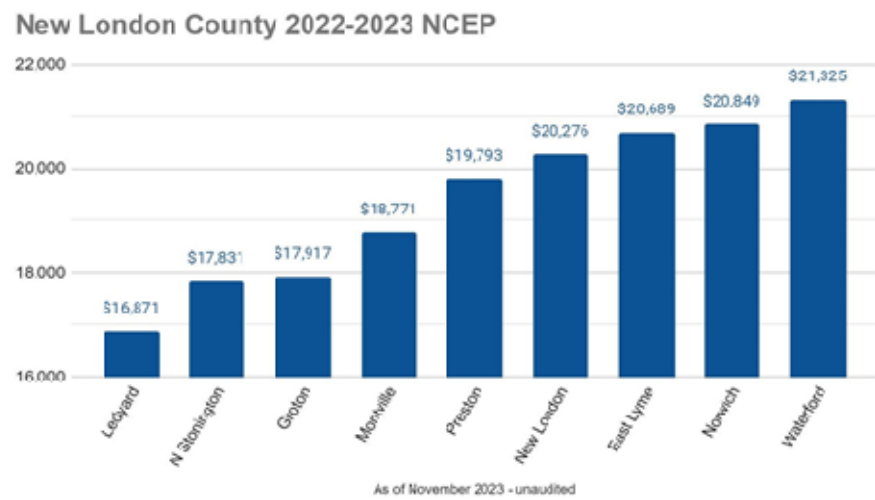
Blue Metric – Illustrated the work Ledyard has done to stabilize the increase of needs by appropriately identifying their students and providing them with the services that would eventually allow them to exit out of the special education program if appropriate.

Orange Metric: Illustrated the Free or Reduced Lunch population which was over 30% for this current school year. The State of Connecticut and Federal Government used the Free or Reduced Lunch population to measure the level of poverty in the community.

❖ **Per Pupil Expenditures**

Ms. Kelley presented the Per Pupil Expenditure Graph noting that Ledyard continued to be in the lowest 10% of Connecticut’s 169 towns. She noted Ledyard’s Per Pupil Expenditure at \$16,871 was the lowest in our area, noting as a comparison that Waterford’s Per Pupil Expenditure was \$21,235.

Per Pupil Expenditure



Ms. Kelley provided a *Comparison of School Districts Relative to Support* which provided a breakdown of the Per Pupil Expenditures. She stated that Ledyard continued to have the highest Student per Adult Ratio noting that Ledyard’s ratio was 7.5 students to one Adult, compared to Norwich which had 4.4 Students per Adult. She explained the student to adult ratio data included the following:

- Certified Student Support
- Certified General Education
- Para-Professionals
- Other

Comparison of School Districts Relative to Support

District	# Students	NCEP Rank	NCEP \$ FY23	Certified Student Support	Certified General Education	Para-professionals	Other	Students per adult
Groton	4104	142	\$17,916.69	141.7	284.2	222.6	277	5.2
Norwich	3348	75	\$20,849.37	126.4	240.9	282	236.5	4.4
East Lyme	2617	79	\$20,688.74	76.9	195.5	103.5	139.1	6.0
Ledyard	2421	153	\$16,871.20	59.8	156.3	64.7	101.4	7.5
Waterford	2338	73	\$21,325.37	61.1	166.3	86	110.7	6.4
Montville	2017	122	\$18,770.85	59.6	151.3	96.5	149.5	5.1
Stonington	1800	66	\$21,585.72	53.2	143	83.2	86.1	5.8
						Information obtained from EdSight		

❖ **Budget Priorities**

Ms. Kelley stated the proposed Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Education Budget addressed the following priorities:

- Continue the evolution of literacy and numeracy instruction and the ongoing profession growth of our educators.
- Continue enhancements and evolution of the Interventionist Model.
- Continue to address and ameliorate achievement gaps and the number of students below basic on the Smarter Balanced Assessment Chart (SBAC)

❖ **Key Changes**

Ms. Kelley reviewed the following Key Changes:

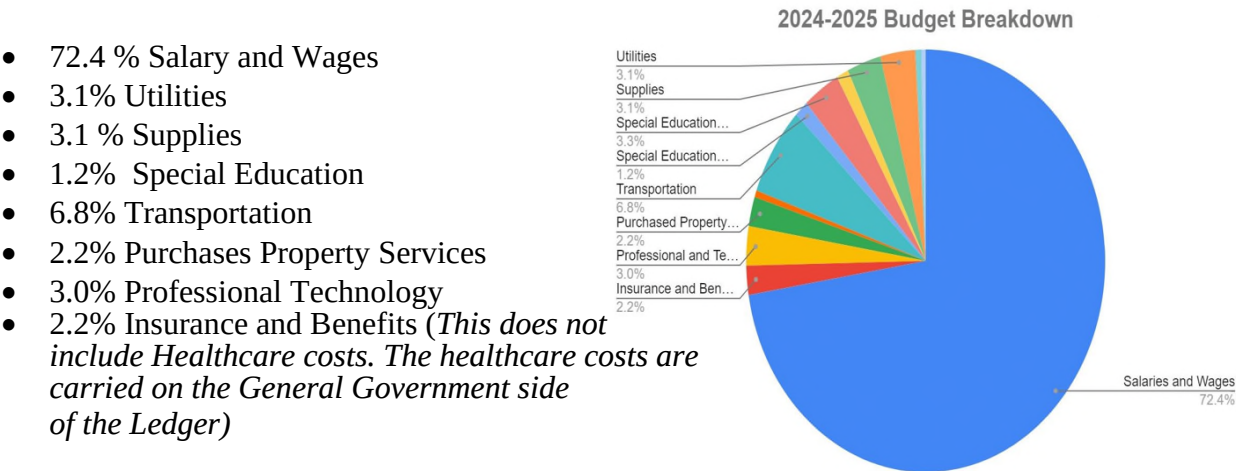
- \$150,000 Savings related to three (3.0) known teacher retirements (Full-Time Teachers would be retained).
- Increase Substitute Teacher wages from \$100 to \$125 per day; and to provide an additional 10% coverage – Ms. Kelley explained at \$100 per day that Ledyard was paying the lowest rate for substitute teachers in the area, noting that they were not able to get the substitute teachers when needed. However, she stated increasing the substitute teacher wages to \$150.00 would not necessarily solve that problem.
- Increase Multi-tiered Support Systems (MTSS) with the addition of a Full-time Coordinator - Ms. Kelley stated the Board of Education added a Full-time Coordinator for the MTSS, noting that they needed the additional position last year, but they put it off a year. She explained the Coordinator would help to expand their Interventionist Programs that had been bolstered by the Department of Defense Education Agency Grant funding (DoDEA). She stated the Interventionist Programs were essential to meet the increased needs of their students who were requiring targeted interventions to meet grade level learning expectations. She explained that the MTSS Program has been implemented over several years (6 – 7 years) with incremental additions of Interventionists in their

Schools System. She stated they now have baseline coverage with Literacy and Math Interventionist in each school building. She stated the final piece of the MTSS was the addition of the Coordinator, who would proactively assess students for what was needed, coordinate the targeted interventions, monitor progress, and making data driven decisions on how to best intervene for each individual student.

- Compliance with State “*Right to Read Program*” Requirements - Ms. Kelley explained that this was a State Mandated Curriculum. She stated The Board of Education attempted to obtain a waiver, because they believed that their curriculum met all of the requirements of the *Right to Read Program*. However, she stated the State has only approved specific curriculum packages for the Program. Therefore, she stated like many other schools that Ledyard would continue to seek waivers, noting that in the meantime it was going to cost Ledyard about \$200,000 to implement the *Right to Read Program* to comply with the unfunded mandate.
- Add Teacher at Middle School to reduce classroom overcrowding - Ms. Kelley explained this would add a Family Consumer Science Teacher.
- Add Social Worker at the Middle School to replace an outside provider - The Elementary & Secondary School Emergency Relief Grant (ESSR) funding would end in 2024. This was a critical position to their Mental Health Team.
- Clinical Supervision – Ms. Kelley stated this position would complete their school-based Student Centrix Mental Health Team. She noted that this area was critical and as she mentioned earlier this evening mental health was not only a Ledyard issue.
- Literacy Interventionist – Ms. Kelley stated the addition to the Literacy Interventionist would be the final complement to the Literacy Team.
- \$75,000 Savings with the Elimination of “*Over the River*” choice transportation – Ms. Kelley stated the elimination of the choice transportation was due to the decrease in grant funding and a reduction in ridership.

❖ **Budget Expenditures**

Ms. Kelley provided an overview of the Budget Expense Breakdown as follows:



❖ **Inflationary Budget Adjustments**

Ms. Kelley noted that inflation has impacted the Board of Education’s expenses specifically Transportation and Energy costs, which have put a stress on the Education budget. She reviewed the breakdown of the Inflationary Budget Adjustments as follows:

- **Budget Increases:**
 - Salary Increases \$983,842
 - Inflationary Adjustments:
 - ✓ Transportation/Utilities \$407,900
 - ✓ Services \$155,267
 - ✓ Year 1 State Mandated Reading Curriculum \$100,000
- **Total Increases:** \$1,735,293

- **Budget Decrease/ Savings:**
 - Budget Reductions/Savings
 - ✓ Teacher Retirements \$105,000
 - ✓ Other Budget Requests \$532,105
- **Total Budget Savings:** \$637,105

❖ **Unbudgeted District Needs**

Ms. Kelley stated as they have been doing for the past several; years the Board of Education has continued their “Needs Assessment” activities with the Administrators of each school to prioritize their request and needs. She stated although many of items in the yellow area were important, that they: (1) May not be able to secure funding; (2) May not be able to secure staffing; or (3) May not have the structure in place to fully utilize the program.

Ms. Kelley stated that they would not be funding the requests noted below:

2024/2025 Unbudgeted District Needs by Tier			
YELLOW	Considered tor inclusions in budget	\$878,042	935,562
RED	considered for future inclusion in budget	\$1,021,449	1,018,949
Proposed Strategic Plan Implementation Costs		+/-	\$1,055,000

Request	Estimated Cost	Location	Type
Behavior interventionist (2)	\$72,772	Student Services	Salary
BCBA	\$85,000	Student Services	Salary
Grade level field experience	\$15,500	LMS	Prof Serv
General interventionist, est MA3	\$57,520	LMS	Salary
Transition Kindergarten teacher, est MA3	\$57,520	GFS/JWL	Salary
Transition Kindergarten teacher, est MA3	\$57,520	GHS	Salary
Math Coach (2)	\$190,000	GFS/JWL	Salary
Assistive Technology Coordinator	\$75,000	Curriculum	Salary
Content Facilitator Stipends	\$2,296	LMS	Salary
Summer School -- VLP licenses and teacher hourly	\$16,312	LHS	Other
Assistant Maintenance Director	\$75,000	Maintenance	Salary
Special Education Teacher FTE	\$65,000	LMS	Salary
Expand Curriculum Coordinators - per diem pay similar to guidance counselors	\$21,122	Curriculum	Salary
LEAP Home Visitors	\$15,000	Student Services	Prof Serv
Wrestling Mats	\$10,000	LMS	Equipment
Laminator and Supplies	\$5,000	LMS	Equipment
Literacy Paraprofessional	\$20,000	LMS	Salary
1.0 FTE English teacher	\$65,000	LHS	Salary
add .5 School Counselor to become 1.0 School Counselor	\$30,000	LHS	Salary

Ms. Kelley stated the District Requests in Red were needs that have been identified; however, they recognize that they most likely would not be included in Ledyard’s Education Budget for the foreseeable future.

Director of Curriculum	\$140,000	Curriculum	Salary
Late bus	\$65,000	Transportation	Prof Serv
Musical instrument updates	\$75,000	Curriculum	Equipment
Expanded prek; 3 teachers and 6 paraprofessionals	\$345,000	Student Services	Salary
Virtual learning proctor	\$65,000	LHS	Salary
1.0 FTE mathematics teacher	\$65,000	LHS	Salary
1.0 FTE Family and Consumer Science	\$65,000	LHS	Salary
Disc Golf Course - permanent installation	\$5,700	LHS	Equipment
Printers in each T&O classroom	\$2,500	LHS	Equipment
2 Elementary World Language Teachers	\$127,166	Curriculum	Salary
Elementary Instrumental Music Teacher	\$63,583	Curriculum	Salary

❖ **Projected Revenues:**

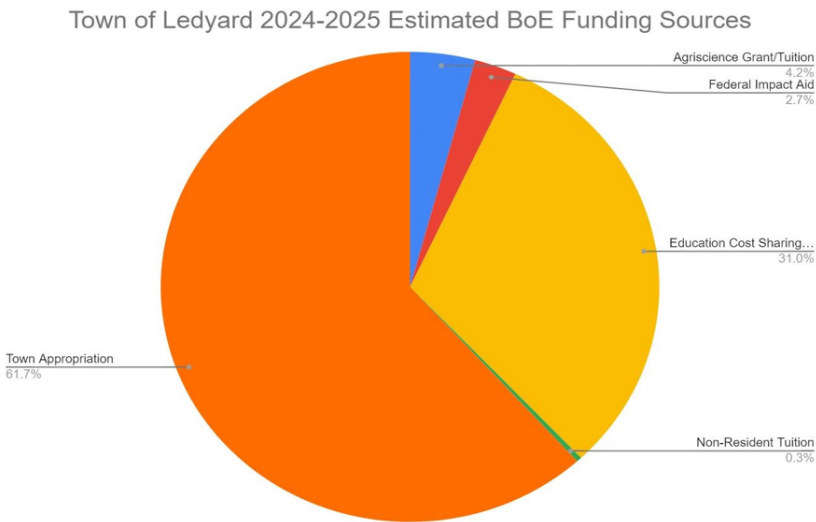
Ms. Kelley explained that the Board of Education’s Projected Revenue were estimates of what they expected as follows:

State/Federal Revenues						
	Town Budget 2021-22 (MUNIS)	Actual 2021-22	Town Budget 2022-23 (MUNIS)	Actual 2022-23	Town Budget 2023-24 (MUNIS)	Superintendent Proposed Budget 2024-25
FPL 503 (Impact Aid)	\$1,500,000	\$1,387,082	\$1,500,000	\$1,558,207	\$1,500,000	\$1,050,000
AgriScience Operating	\$695,736	\$997,429	\$850,000	\$1,051,239	\$850,000	\$850,000
Education Cost Sharing (ECS)	\$11,492,516	\$11,438,366	\$11,492,516	\$11,475,245	\$11,624,199	\$11,904,199
Total	\$13,688,252	\$13,822,877	\$13,842,516	\$14,084,691	\$13,974,199	\$13,804,199

Tuition Based Revenues				
	Actual 2021-22	Actual 2022-23	Town Budget 2023-24 (MUNIS)	Superintendent Proposed Budget 2024-25
Non-Resident Reg Ed Tuition	\$34,648	\$43,470	\$57,960	\$44,772
Non-Resident Spec Ed Tuition	\$82,089	\$126,736	\$37,437	\$82,086
AgriScience Tuition	\$717,110	\$728,355	\$764,176	\$764,176
Total	\$833,846	\$898,561	\$859,573	\$891,034

Ms. Kelly provided an overview of the expected Revenue Sources by percentage as follows:

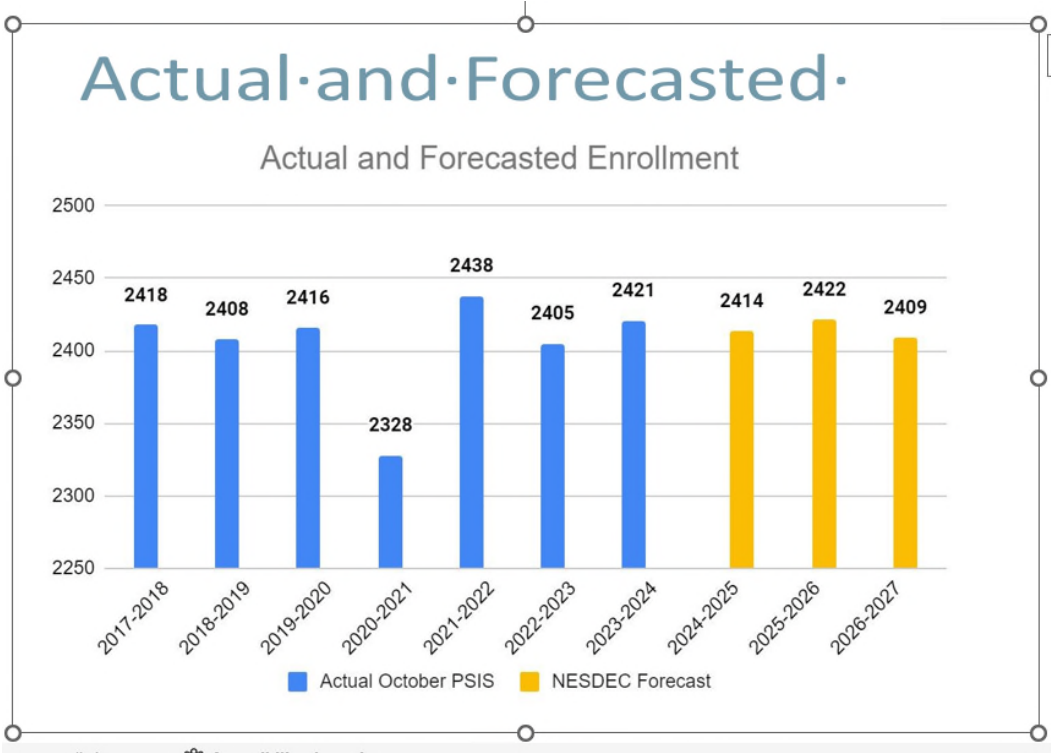
- 61.7% Town Appropriation (Tax Revenue) an increase of 2.7% over the current year.
- 31.0% Education Cost Sharing – A slight decrease in ECS Funding in the amount of 0.7% from the current year.
- 2.7 % Federal Impact Aid – Ms. Kelly explained for Fiscal Year 2022/2023 they projected Impact Aid to come in at \$1,500,000. However, the actual amount came in higher than projected at \$1,558,207. She noted that the Board of Education has been working to maximize the Impact Aid by trying to increase awareness in the value of completing the request forms to identify eligible families. However, she noted these revenues were projected estimates.
- 4.2% Agri-Science – slight decrease of 0.2 % from the current year.
- 0.3% Non-Resident Tuition - slight decrease of 0.3 % from the current year.



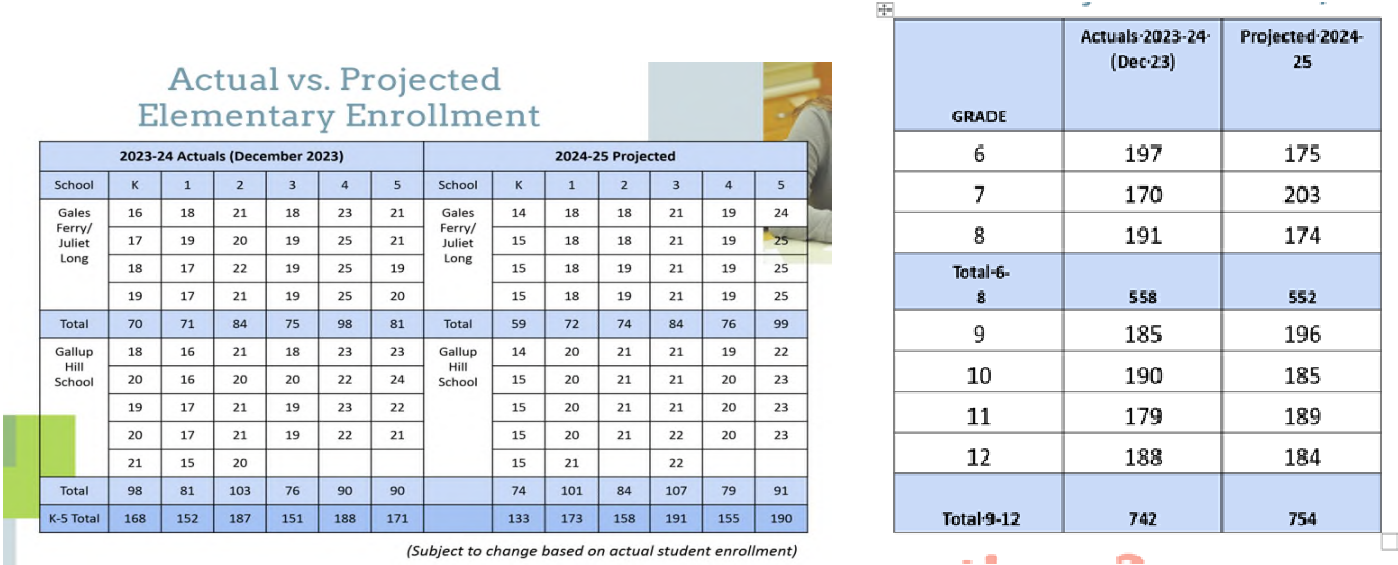
• **Enrollment**

Ms. Kelley stated although Ledyard’s enrollment oscillated slightly from year to year, that it was typically steady with a total enrollment between 2,400 - 2420, with the exception of the 2020/2021 School year because of the Covid-19 Pandemic, noting that their enrollment dropped with many students being homeschooled.

Ms. Kelley went on to explain that the Enrollment was only one data point of many that impacted their budget. She stated with seeing all of the new three-to-four-bedroom homes being constructed in Ledyard that she anticipated that they would see some growth with the school’s enrollment numbers.



Ms. Kelly stated the following charts showed the number of students per class, noting that there was not much change.



Ms. Kelley stated that she was excited about the Board of Education’s proposed Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget in the amount of \$38,369,823 because it would provide critical resources to meet their students’ needs. She stated that she has had children in Ledyard Public Schools for over forty years, noting her youngest child was 7-years old when her first grandchild was born. She stated that she currently had a High School Senior and a grandchild who was

attending the Pre-K program. She stated during the past 7-years, with the support of the Board of Education Central Office Administration and the support of the Town Council that the Ledyard Public Schools has come so far in what they offer their students. She stated about five-years ago in speaking with a Specialist about a family member who needed some support in school that the Specialist suggested she get the student into another school because they would not get the type of support they needed from the Ledyard School System. Ms. Kelley stated that this was very disheartening because she loved Ledyard Schools, noting she educated all of her kids here. She stated that she could have moved to any town, noting there was nothing holding her to Ledyard. However, she stated the reason she has stayed in Ledyard was because of the schools, and she commented that she believed most people come to Ledyard because of their schools.

Ms. Kelley continued by noting that she hears residents say that they pay a lot of money in taxes and yet question why the students test scores were not that good, or why Ledyard Schools were not top notch when they look at the List of School Ratings. Ms. Kelley stated although they do pay a lot in taxes that Ledyard has always funded their Schools at a low level. However, she stated it was not just about money, explaining that the commitment that has been made to their students over the past 6-7 years to improve outcomes in literacy, numeracy, social and emotional areas has been phenomenal. She stated this work was not done overnight, stating that they have incrementally done a lot. She stated that Ledyard was now on parity with a lot of schools in our area, that they were not measuring up to 5-6 years ago. She stated that they were already seeing improvement in test scores, noting that previously they had been persistently not reaching grade level. She stated that they owed Ledyard taxpayers a quality performing School District, noting that she believed that they were getting there. She stated that she realized that a 6.85% education budget increase was high for this town. She stated that in the upcoming budget year the Board of Education would be providing an Interventionist and the MTSS Coordinator, stating the reason they were not included in the current year's budget (fy 23/24) was because the Board of Education was mindful of the budget number and they brought the education budget in with a 3.92% increase, when towns all around Ledyard were coming in with much higher budget increases. She asked that the Town Council average the education budget increase from the current year and the upcoming year, noting that she believed that the Board of Education's Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget was fair and reasonable, and it would get Ledyard Public Schools to where they needed to be. She stated that there were plenty of other things the Board of Education would like to see happen, noting that what they have included in the proposed Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget would make a significant difference for their students. She stated to put any of their requests off would be a disservice to the students.

The Town Council, Board of Education Finance Committee Chairman Joanne Kelley, and Superintendent of Schools Jason Hartling discussed the following in further detail:

Clinical Mental Health Supervisor would oversee 8-Staff members (4 Clinical Social Workers and 4 Psychologists). School Districts were taking on a larger role in the mental health aspect of their students' growth. Ledyard's Social Workers were Licensed Clinical Social Workers who deliver mental health services.

Federal Impact Aid Revenue \$1,050,000 was based on the number of students that the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation (MPTN) certified were living on tribal land. The Federal Impact Aid goes directly to the Town of Ledyard; and was not managed by the Board of Education. The funds were treated as a "Pass-thru"; the Town's Finance Director and the Board of Education's Finance Director worked together to manage the Federal Impact Aid funding and move the funds from the Town to the Board of Education's expenditures. The grant funding was drawn down from the specific grant account to directly off-set a portion of the expenditures associated with each pupil. Ledyard's per pupil cost was \$16,871, and the Federal Government was providing the town \$4,050 to off-set those per pupil costs.

Utilities Electricity Increase \$407,900 the current rate was favorable and would carry into December, 2024. The Central Office actively reviews the utility market for commodities and has locked-in a new rate that would begin in January, 2025 which was higher than what they

were currently paying. The Purchase Power Agreement associated with the solar panels on the High School, Middle School and Gallup Hill School, does help to mitigate the increased costs of electricity. Solar panels would also be installed with new roofs on the Juliet W. Long School which would generate 60% of the electricity load, and at the Gales Ferry School, which would generate 90% of the electricity load.

Grant Funding comes into specific Grant Accounts and could only be used for the specific program that they were received for. The grant funding was drawn down from the specific grant account to directly pay for the expenses for which the grant funding was received for. If the grant funding came in higher than projected that the funding would reside in the grant account until the funding was drawn down. The grant funding could not be used for any other purpose.

Board of Education Budget once approved by the townspeople that the Board of Education would have their funding (current year fy 23/24 - \$35,908,368), which they would use to pay for all of the expenditures for the School District. The source of the revenues, whether it was tax revenue, grant funding from the Federal Government, State of Connecticut, Out of Town Tuition, Agri-Science Grant Funding, etc. were all managed by the Town.

Special Education Grant Funding (SPED) was the only revenue that impacted the Board of Education because they received the grant funding directly from the State; therefore, they had full responsibility and liability for these funds. The increase in the Special Education costs were related to the out placements of students; and increased needs for specialized services that were outside the scope that Ledyard could provide for students in the district. The Board of Education has built well designed programming; however, there were still some services they could not provide. In addition, the State Legislature increased the age for School District's responsibility for special education students from 21 to the end of age 22. Because these were students that could not be serviced within Ledyard Public Schools that they go to a specialized placement school. The costs ranged between \$60,000 - \$250,000 per student, which did not include transportation costs. The other variable that impacts special education costs were students transferring from another school district to Ledyard. Ledyard has appealed to their State Delegation to allow the special education funds to follow the student.

District Wide Teacher Account Lines had a significant increase. In Fiscal Year 2022/2023 the expense was \$500,373; but for Fiscal Year 2024/2025 the expense was \$818,342. The District Wide Teacher Salary Accounts were primarily listed for the elementary schools, because that was how the expenses were bucketed, noting at the elementary school they shared some interventionists and some teachers for things such as music/instrumental, art, etc., and shared some interventionists. One of the Board of Education's goals was to clean this up with the addition of the Interventionist and the MTSS Coordinator in the upcoming budget (fy 24/25) to more accurately reflect the expenses for each school.

Family Consumer Science Teacher was being funded for the Middle School in the proposed Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget. However, there was also a Family Consumer Science Teacher for the High School, which was not funded and was included on the 2024/2025 *Unbudgeted District Needs by Tier- Red Table*. Mr. Hartling explained that during the 2017 School Year some positions were cut at the High School. Long-term the Board of Education would like to restore the Family Consumer Science Teacher for the High School, which was the reason the position for the High School was included on the *Unbudgeted District Needs by Tier- Red Table*.

Tuition Public Expenses was to pay tuition for Ledyard students who were attending Magnet Schools providers, such as LEARN in New London; and to pay tuition to schools around the state for Ledyard students who were placed at those schools by the Department of Children and Families (DCF). Also, if Ledyard students attending Magnet Schools have disabilities that Ledyard also pays for those Special Education costs.

Tuition Non-Public Expenses was to pay tuition to Specialized Schools for students with disabilities, such as Johsua Center, and others.

Education Cost Sharing Revenue (ECS) projected increase in the amount of \$428,954 (Fiscal Year 2022/2023 \$11,475,245 – Fiscal Year 2024/2025 \$11,904,199) would mitigate the projected reduction in the Federal Impact Aid. The projected ECS Grant Funding dollar amount included in the proposed revenue was taken from the State’s Biennium Budget that was passed last year by the State of Connecticut. Although State funding was not guaranteed, the Board of Education provided revenue estimates as a starting point based on the information they had at the time their proposed budget was submitted. The Mayor and The Town Council would then make adjustments/decisions in establishing the Mil Rate. Both the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) and the Agri-Science Grant Funding could change. Although the State was in the second year of the Biennium Budget that the Legislation would continue to work to finetune the numbers. Prior to this year’s Legislative Session, the Governor proposed reducing the proposed increase for the ECS Grant funding by \$150 million.

Agri-Science Grant Funding was funding that came from both the State and from out-of-town students attending Ledyard’s Agri-Science Program. Should the Agri-Science Grant Funding come in above the projected budgeted amount those funds would be used for capital purchases/improvements for the Program, upon the approval of the Town Council.

Inflationary Adjustments (Transportation, Utilities, Services) were based on market changes and the cost of commodities. The increases were not based on a general Cost of Living increase. The Board of Education was currently in negotiations with their Transportation provider and may decide to solicit bids depending on the results of the negotiations. Natural Gas which was the fuel source to heat the schools increased by \$50,000.

Net Current Expenditure Per Pupil (NCEP) Chart indicated that the closest Ledyard was to the State’s Average Per Pupil Expenditure was in Fiscal Year 2022/2023. The numbers in the five-year chart provided in the Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget PowerPoint presentation this evening were based on unaudited actuals and those numbers fluctuate depending on date.

Interest Revenue projected for the General Government budget was \$500,000 for the upcoming Fiscal Year 2024/2025. The Capital Reserve Funds for things such as fire trucks, public works equipment, large purchases, etc., resided in interest bearing accounts. These funds were in the State Investment Fund (STIF) which was currently earning 5.20% interest. The Operating Funds for salaries, etc., do not reside in a long-term interest-bearing account. The Board of Education did not have any money in the bank that would carry interest.

Purchase Property Services (copier leases, fiber network maintenance, technology services, etc.) included an increase of \$185,000. The reason these expenses were considered operating expenses was because they were not tangible property assets. Capital expenses would be things that were depreciable assets, such as new roof or stools for the science lab.

Instructional Supplies incurred to comply with the State Mandated “Right to Read Program” Requirements would be paid using an \$86,000 State Grant that was received after the Board of Education submitted its proposed Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget. Assistant Superintendent of Schools Anne Hogston and staff would be reworking the Department of Defense Education Agency Grant (DoDEA) to help mitigate the cost to implement the first year of the *Right to Read Program*. The reason the instructional supplies expenditure account fluctuated from year to year was because it included all the School District’s curriculum materials. The purchase of textbooks and other supplies vary from year to year based on what was purchased the previous year and the needs for the upcoming year.

\$2,921,000 Grant Funding in the Board of Educations’ proposed Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget was not reflected on the Revenue Pie Chart in the Board’s PowerPoint presentation because those revenues go directly to, and were managed by the Board of Education. Therefore, the Board of Education’s proposed Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget in the amount of \$38,369,823 was actually \$2,921,000 higher with the addition of this *Grant Funding*. These grant funds paid for expenses such as salaries and costs associated with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Grant Funding. Because these grant funds have remained flat some of the expenses for the students with disabilities would be paid by town allocations.

Salary Budget Lines provided in the Munis Financial budget report do not delineate the number of staff that were being paid from a particular salary line. Knowing the number of teachers the salary lines included would provide some perspective in understanding the dollar amount. Superintendent Hartling stated the Board of Education's Executive Summary, and the Projected Salary Section (page 18) of their budget may help to understand those numbers. However, he stated that he would try to get those numbers from the Munis Financial System for the Town Council.

Capital Projects included \$7.6 million in bonded projects that were requested in the current year's budget (fy 23/24) with the projects spanning over multiple years. Several of those bond project requests were then moved forward to the upcoming Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget; and now go out to 2026; 2027; 2028. Bonded projects such as: (1) High School Parking Lot; (2) High School Window Replacement; (3) Middle School Cafeteria Expansion; (4) High School Classroom ventilation and air conditioning were pushed to subsequent years because they recognized the fiscal realities the Town of Ledyard faced relative to the costs of those projects. The Board of Education approved and submits a Capital Plan to the Town and then the Town decides which projects they were going to fund based on the available funding. The budget included the following Capital Accounts: (1) Capital Non-Recurring which was funded by the Board of Education's budget surplus from the previous year; (2) Town Allocation on an annual basis; (3) Bonded Items for larger projects such as roof replacements etc.; (4) Operating Capital Account that addressed things such as parking lot repairs, etc.; (5) Agri-Science Capital which was funded by grant funding received for the Ag-Science that came in higher than the amount budgeted, as discussed earlier this evening. The Board of Education's approved Capital Projects were listed in the Town's Spending Plan.

Board of Education Finance Committee Chairman Joanne Kelley noted that the *Committee to Review the Budget Process* discussed the Budget Format and the Munis Financial Reports. She stated the Committee considered formatting the Board of Education's budget by each school building. However, she stated the Committee found that because none of the schools were the same (size, number of students, energy costs, etc.) that they decided there was no benefit to changing the format.

Chairman Rodriguez stated that she attended one of the Board of Education's Budget Workshops. She noted that she was disheartened to hear a Member comment that the proposed 6.85% budget increase would increase residents taxes by about \$100, implying that it was not that much money. She stated as Town Councilors their role was to serve as the financial stewards of the residents tax dollars; and therefore, they needed to make sure the Board of Education's proposed Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget was the best they could do. She stated \$100 was a lot of money for someone who was living just above the poverty level, or for a senior citizen; or a disabled person who was on a fixed income. Therefore, she asked if the proposed Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget in the amount of \$38,369,823 was the best they could do. Ms. Kelley stated the Board of Education took its time to discuss and deliberate their expenses. She stated the Board of Education found that they needed to finish some of the initiatives that they had been working on for years in the area of the Intervention Program and the Mental Health Program. She stated not to fund the services that were included in the proposed Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Education Budget would be detrimental to their students, noting that they had a legal obligation to educate their students.

Chairman Rodriguez thanked Ms. Kelley, Superintendent Hartling, and the members of the Board of Education for their hard work in preparing a proposed Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Education Budget. She stated although no one wanted to see increases, that they needed to recognize that the Board of Education has been holding the line for many years, with minimal increases in years past; and therefore, they knew at some time they were going to see increases. She stated the Board of Education's proposed Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget in the amount of \$38,369,823 has been received and filed. Thank you.

V. RESIDENTS AND PROPERTY OWNERS

Mr. Mike Cherry, 5 Whippoorwill Drive, Gales Ferry, stated he was not an educator and that he was not an educational administrator, therefore, he assumed that a lot of work went into preparing the Board of Education's proposed Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget, and that these

were the minimum needs the town had. He stated that he thought a number of the expenses listed in *2024/2025 Unbudgeted District Needs by Tier* in the yellow and red charts should be funded. He stated over the years that he has had discussions with Superintendent of Schools Mr. Hartling about what the cost would be to increase their Per Pupil Expenditures to “Average”. He provided the following cost scenarios based on this year’s proposed Education Budget numbers: (1) Fund Per Pupil Expenditures at *Average* would increase the Per Pupil Expenditures by \$3,000 per student for a total education budget of \$7.2 million which was a 5-mil rate increase which would require an additional \$150 a month for residents who lived in a home that was valued at \$300,000; (2) Fund Per Pupil Expenditures at *Median* would increase the Per Pupil Expenditures by \$4,000 per student for a total education budget of \$9.6 million, which would require an additional \$200 per month for residents who lived in a home that was valued at \$300,000. He stated that he did not think the town could afford to do this; and he stated that the question was “How do we fix this?” He stated the Mil Rate/Taxes were based on their Grand List, which in Ledyard was almost exclusively residential and automobile, with only 5% of the Grand List coming from commercial/industrial. He stated the way out of this situation was for the Economic Development Commission to help the Mayor build their Grand List. He stated the Board of Education did an excellent job on the proposed Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget.

Mr. Cherry continued by commending Board of Education Member Joanne Kelley and Town Councilor Jessica Buhle, noting that they responded to questions that were posted on Facebook asking how the Covid Pandemic Funding was used. He stated that Ms. Kelley and Ms. Buhle provided answers the same day that the questions were posted, noting that the responses were specific and showed that Ledyard met the criteria for the use of the funds as well as the deadlines. He thanked those who made the decisions on how to spend the Covid Pandemic funding noting that Ledyard did not use the money for recurring expenses that they would then have to provide for going forward.

Mr. Cherry concluded his comments by suggesting the town not support the budget by taking money from the Rainy-Day Fund or the Mil Rate Stabilization Fund, noting that these funds were in-place to off-set one-time expenses, not reoccurring expenses. He stated if these funds were used this year that it would only put the town in worse shape for next year. He concluded his remarks by thanking everyone who worked on the proposed Board of Education Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget.

Chairman Rodriguez thanked Mr. Cherry for his comments.

Mr. Earl (Ty) Lamb, 95 Lambtown Road, Ledyard, noted that Ledyard was very fortunate to have exceptional residents who have volunteered to serve their town. He noted that Mr. and Mrs. Godino were some of those exceptional residents. He recognized Mrs. Sheila Godino’s letter dated February 21, 2024 in which she stepped down from serving as Chairman of the Cemetery Committee; and the item on tonight’s Agenda in which Mr. Vincent Godino was being reassigned to continue to serve on the Historic District Commission. He stated that Mr. and Mrs. Godino were two examples of dedicated residents who have served the Town of Ledyard for many years. He stated it was people like Mr. and Mrs. Godino and all the other volunteers who chose to serve their community making Ledyard a little better than a lot of other towns. He concluded his comments by stating that he wanted to recognize Vincent and Sheila (Rusty) Godino for all the different Committees and Commissions they have served on.

Chairman Rodriguez thanked Mr. Lamb for this comments, noting that she sent Mrs. Sheila (Rusty) Godino a letter to thank her for her many years of service to the Ledyard.

Mr. Andy Parad, 5 Birch Street, Ledyard, thanked Rabbi Ekstrand for attending tonight’s Town Council meeting. He noted that he agreed with Rabbi Ekstrand’s comments regarding focusing on local issues and building communities with that in-mind. Mr. Parad continued by stating that he was present this evening to talk about Pickleball. He stated that he has been playing Pickleball for about 5-years, noting that he plays against Pickleballers from all over New England. He stated that he has traveled to Dallas, Texas, for a national tournament a few months ago. He stated that we were probably all aware of the increasing popularity of pickleball, both for good and not as good reasons. He stated that it was his opinion that the best thing about pickleball, was that it brings people together to be active who otherwise would not be active or have that social connection. He went on to state, as he traveled to other towns to play pickleball, and in getting to know people from other towns who have undertaken building pickleball courts in their own town, he has learned a lot about pickleball courts. He stated with the building of pickleball courts invariably coming up in Ledyard, that he wanted to bring up a few points so that Ledyard does not mess this up.

Mr. Parad continued by explaining that tennis and pickleball were not the same sport, noting that the net requirements were different. Tennis players do not like having the pickleball lines on the courts and the need to readjust the nets. Also, pickleball players do not like using temporary nets or chasing the ball all the way to the back of the tennis court. Pickleball needs dedicated courts. He stated that Stonington was the only town in the area that he was aware of that has redone their tennis courts and has put in dedicated pickleball courts at their High School. However, he stated Stonington made a huge mistake, because they only put in 2 pickleball courts when they had the room to put in at least 6, if not more, and he noted that the people who play at the Stonington pickleball courts were not happy that more courts were not built. He stated once they started the process to construct the pickleball courts that in terms of cost, that it proportionally made sense to build more than two-courts. He stated that he believed the same mistake was made when the four tennis courts were built at Ledyard High School. He stated every other high school in the area has at least 6 tennis courts. He stated that he has had some difficulty getting more information, but from what he understood for legal reasons the two courts at Blonders Park cannot be used, at least for matches. He stated the last time he was at Blonders Park he noticed that the courts were not well maintained. He stated according to someone with knowledge from when the four courts were built, he noted the following a quote: “*Town Council said it would cost more to build the 6 courts than 4 courts*”. However, Mr. Parad stated that it would have been pennies for the taxpayers, commenting to save a buck they burden two sports programs for decades.

Mr. Parad suggested to learn from Ledyard history and not make the same recent mistake that Stonington did, that they should add 2 tennis courts and as part of that project build essentially as many pickleball courts, probably 6 or 8, that would fit on the plot of land by the current tennis courts. He stated that while the 2 courts at Blonders Park could be resurfaced and turned into probably 4 pickleball courts at a lower cost, that it would not take into account that pickleball in the coming years was going to become at least an intramural sport and probably a team sport. He stated that because they would be needing the pickleball courts at the High School, that was where they should be focused, rather than building town pickleball courts. He stated that it would be a benefit for our community and our High School athletes. He stated the town needed to start planning now for the future and do the right thing, so we do not end up with decades of regrets and spending more money later.

Mr. Parad concluded by stating that grant funding was available, noting that he and some other people around town would be happy to explore this further. However, he stated that they would need to know if seeking grant funding for the construction of pickleball courts at the High School was something that would be supported by the Town Council and the Board of Education before they started to proceed down that path.

Chairman Rodriguez thanked Mr. Parad for his comments.

Mayor Allyn, III, addressed Mr. Parad’s comments regarding the construction of Pickleball Courts, noting that the Parks & Recreation Commission has included funding in their budget for the upcoming fiscal year (24/25) to construct six pickleball courts. He stated tax dollars would not be used for the project, noting that the funds would be coming from the Parks & Recreation Capital Account (Fund 0203) that was funded by Ordinance #200-009 “*An Ordinance Providing for the Transfer of Certain Revenue From the Real Estate Conveyance Tax to Specific Town of Ledyard Funds*” which allocated 40% percentage of the Conveyance Tax from the Real Estate Transactions to the Parks & Recreation Capital Account. He suggested Mr. Parad provide input to Parks & Recreation regarding the Pickleball Courts.

IV. COMMITTEE COMMISSION AND BOARD REPORTS – None.

VI. COMMENTS OF TOWN COUNCILORS

Councilor Brunelle stated she noticed a video that showcased Ledyard that was posted on Town’s website earlier today. She suggested people watch the video, noting that it was nicely done.

Councilor Saccone noted a few weeks ago the Town’s Fire Companies responded to a fatal accident that occurred on Route 12, in Gales Ferry. He recognized the Volunteer Fire Companies for an outstanding job in assessing the situation and in the handling of the three patients that were involved. He stated although the outcome was unfortunate, the volunteers did an outstanding job.

Councilor Buhle noted the town video that Councilor Brunelle mentioned. She stated the Town Marketing Video was an Economic Development Commission project. She thanked EDC Member Peter Hary for his involvement with the project and she noted that she took the pictures of the submarines.

VII. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF PRIOR MEETING MINUTES

MOTION to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of February 14, 2024
Moved by Councilor Buhle, seconded by Councilor Saccone

VOTE: 7 – 0 Approved and so declared

IX. COMMUNICATIONS

Chairman Rodriguez stated a Communications List has been provided on the meeting portal for tonight’s meeting and she noted there were referrals listed.

COMMUNICATIONS LISTING FOR FEBRUARY 28, 2024

INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE

1. Mayor email dated 2/21/2024 re: Appointment of Town Representatives to Southeastern Connecticut Resource Recovery Recycling Authority (SCRRRA)
2. Mrs. Godino ltr dated 2/13/2024 re: Resign – Cemetery Committee
3. Retirement Board ltr dated 2/20/2024 re: Meeting of February 20, 2024

OUT GOING CORRESPONDENCE

1. Admin Asst ltr to Mayor dated 2/15/2024 re: Action ltr. Town Council Regular Meeting of February 14, 2024.
4. LTC ltr to Board of Education dated 2/15/2024 re: Ledyard Administrators Association Contract – July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2027 (LAA)

NOTICE OF AGENDAS

1. Retirement Board Agenda 2/20/2024
2. Parks, Recreation & Senior Citizens Agenda 2/20/2024
3. Agricultural Commission Agenda 2/20/2024
4. Historic District Commission Agenda 2/26/2024
5. Water Pollution Control Authority Agenda 2/27/2024
6. Library Commission Agenda 2/26/2024
7. Zoning Board of Appeals Agenda 2/1/2024 - Cancelled
8. Finance Cmt Agenda 2/21/2024
9. Community Relations Cmt Agenda 2/21/2024 - Cancelled
10. Town Council Agenda 2/28/2024

MINUTES

1. Retirement Board Sp. Minutes 1/23/2024
2. Parks, Recreation & Senior Citizens Agenda 1/16/2024– Cancelled
3. Parks, Recreation & Senior Citizens Sp. Minutes
4. Agricultural Commission Minutes 11/21/2024
5. Historic District Commission Minutes 1/22/2024
6. Water Pollution Control Authority Minutes 1/23/2024
7. Library Commission Minutes 1/22/2024
8. Finance Cmt Minutes 2/7/2024
9. Town Council Agenda 2/14/2024

REFERRALS

Administration Committee

1. Mayor email dated 2/21/2024 re: Appointment Town Representatives to Southeastern Connecticut Resource Recovery Recycling Authority (SCRRRA)

X. COUNCIL SUB COMMITTEE, LIAISON REPORTS

Administration Committee

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated although the Administration Committee has not met since the last Town Council meeting they had a number of items on tonight's agenda that she would address later this evening.

Community Relations Committee

Councilor Brunelle stated the Community Relations Committee has not met since the last Town Council meeting. However, she stated the Black History Month Activities/Contest were going well. She stated the Poetry Slam that was held at Lucille's Restaurant in Ledyard Center on Monday, February 19, 2024 went great. She noted Kia Baird sang *Lift Every Voice* at the event, noting that she did a great job. She stated for those who may have missed the Poetry Slam that they planned to have more of these types of events.

Finance Committee

Councilor Saccone stated the Finance Committee met on February 21, 2024. He stated in addition to the items on tonight's Agenda the Committee also discussed the following: (1) Public Act No.21-58 "*An Act Concerning Solid Waste Management*" in accordance with "*Resolution Regarding Revenues Received from Beverage Container (Nip Bottles) Surcharges*"- Councilor Saccone stated the Finance Committee continued to discuss the Surcharge Revenues the Town has been and would continue to receive from the State, noting that Councilor Buhle suggested they consider purchasing *Bigbelly Solar Powered Trash Compactors* to be used at various town properties such as the Lower Town Green. He noted the Finance Committee would continue review the information provided at their March 6, 2024 meeting; (2) American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funding Project List – Councilor Saccone stated the Committee discussed the reallocation of surplus funds from completed ARPA Projects in an effort to prioritize "*Add-On Projects*". He noted the following projects were discussed: Route 12 Corridor Study; Guard Rails for Sandy Hollow Road; Wastewater Treatment Facility additional equipment; Ledyard Center Sewer Extension Project Phase I & II; (3) Potential uses of the funding received from National Opioid Settlement Payments – Councilor Saccone stated at their September 27, 2023 meeting the Town Council appropriated \$36,100 to Ledge Light Health District/ Ledyard Prevention

Coalition to implement and expand access to opioid use disorder prevention, intervention, treatment and recovery options. He noted that the Ledyard Prevention Coalition provided a Report noting that from January, 2023 to February, 2024 that there were 40 Overdoses and one Fatal Overdose in Ledyard/Gales Ferry. In addition, the Committee discussed the placement of the Emergency Overdose Kits in town.

Land Use/Planning/Public Works Committee

Councilor St. Vil stated the LUPPW Committee has not met since the last Town Council meeting. The LUPPW Committee's March 4, 2024 meeting would be canceled.

Permanent Municipal Building Committee

Councilor Brunelle stated the PMBC was continuing their work on the School Roof projects at Juliet W. Long School and the Gales Ferry School.

Public Safety Commission

Councilor Saccone noted that work has begun to change the town's emergency radio system over to the State-wide system, which was being funded by \$284,000 Grant.

Library Commission

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry reported that the Library Commission's February 26, 2024 was rescheduled to February 29, 2024 due to the lack of a quorum.

Board of Education

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated the Board of Education held a special meeting on February 27, 2024 at which they discussed the Gales Ferry School and Juliet W. Long School Roof Projects.

XI. MAYOR’S REPORT

Mayor Allyn, III, reported on the following: (1) Retirement Board February 20, 2024 meeting – Mayor Allyn explained that the Defined Benefit Plan which closed in 2012 for new employees as funded at 88.7%, which was among the top 10 funded pension plans in the State of Connecticut. The Retirement Board has recommended the Fiscal Year 2024/2025 include \$850,000 for Defined Benefit Plan, noting that the program was funded on an annual basis; (2) Ledyard Prevention Coalition February 20, 2024 Meeting – Mayor Allyn stated during the meeting they discussed the Opioid Settlement Funds. He stated Ledyard would be receiving another traunch of funding from Walmart and other Retailers, noting that the town would be receiving Opioid Settlement funding through the year 2037. He stated that the Town Council would continue to work to identify needs for the use/distribution of these funds. He stated the Ledyard Prevention Coalition had Emergency Overdose Kits ready to be deployed noting that one kit would be located in Gales Ferry and one kit would be in Ledyard. He stated an Overdose Map was provided at the meeting which helped to identify potential areas in town for the location of the Emergency Kits. He stated Parks, Recreation & Senior Citizens Director Scott Johnson, Jr., was working with the Ledyard Prevention Coalition, and Police Chief John Rich on the two locations; (3) Electric Boat (EB) Legislative Breakfast February 22, 2024 – Mayor Allyn stated Electric Boat President Kevin Grainey gave an excellent update, noting that the Norwich-New London Labor Market grew by 3.2% and was the second highest employment growth in New England; (4) Bid Openings for Bid #2024-01 (Senior Center Re-shingling) and Bid #2024-02 (Food Pantry Siding Improvements) were held on February 22, 2024 – Mayor Allyn stated the bids came in under the estimated budget. However, he stated because the town did not receive the required three bids in accordance with Ordinance #200-001 (rev. 1) “*An Ordinance for Purchasing*” that Public Works Director/Town Engineer would be seeking bid waivers for both projects; (5) Economic Development Commission Marketing Video – Mayor Allyn stated the EDC completed their Marketing Video project, noting as mentioned earlier this evening, the video was on the Town’s website. He thanked EDC Member Peter Hary for his work on the project; (6) Multi-Use Pathway Project – Mayor Allyn stated the work to construct the Multi-Use (pedestrian and non-motorized bicycles) Pathway from the Bill Library to the High School was scheduled to begin next week with the clearing and grubbing of the shoulder of the road. The work would include realigning how Gallup Hill Road comes into Colonel Ledyard Highway. He stated instead of a “Y” configured intersection, it would now be a “T” intersection; (7) Town Hall Improvements – Mayor Allyn stated the Public Works Crew has been painting and replacing the carpet in Town Hall, which has not been done in about 25-years. This project also included the consolidation and reconfiguration of some Departments.

Questions to the Mayor - None.

XII. OLD BUSINESS – None.

XI. NEW BUSINESS

CONSENT CALENDAR

- *1. MOTION to reappoint Mr. George Hosey (U) 2 Lucienne Way, Ledyard, to the Permanent Municipal Building Committee for a three (3) year term ending March 26, 2027.
- *2. MOTION to reappoint Mr. William Thorne (R) 3 Adios Lane, Ledyard to the Retirement Board for a three (3) year term ending January 20, 2027.
- *3. MOTION to reappoint Mr. Thomas Cassabria (R) 18 Silas Deane Road, Ledyard to the Housing Authority for a five (5) year term ending March 31, 2029.

Moved by Councilor Buhle, seconded by Councilor St. Vil

VOTE: 7 – 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT:	APPROVED 7 - 0
MOVER:	Jessica Buhle, Town Councilor
SECONDER	Gary St. Vil, Town Councilor
AYES:	Brunelle, Buhle, Garcia-Irizarry, Paul, Rodriguez, Saccone, St. Vil
EXCUSED:	Dombrowski, Ryan

Administration Committee

4. MOTION to appoint the following to the Historic District Commission:
- Mr. Vincent Godino (D) 1906 Center Groton Road, as an Alternate Member for a five (5) year term ending, December 6, 2024, filling a vacancy left by Mr. Lamb
 - Ms. Kelly Lamb (U) 93R Lambtown Road, Ledyard, as a Regular Member for a five-year (5) year term, ending December 6, 2024, filling a vacancy left by Mr. Godino.
- Moved by Councilor Garcia-Irizarry, seconded by Councilor Brunelle
Discussion: None.

VOTE: 7 – 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT:	APPROVED 7 - 0
MOVER:	Carmen Garcia-Irizarry, Town Councilor
SECONDER	Jessica Buhle, Town Councilor
AYES:	Brunelle, Buhle, Garcia-Irizarry, Paul, Rodriguez, Saccone, St. Vil
EXCUSED:	Dombrowski, Ryan

5. MOTION to appoint Ms. Ammie M. Chittim (D) 972 Shewville Road, Ledyard, as a Regular Member to the Historic District Commission to complete a five (5) year term ending December 6, 2028, filling a vacancy left by Ms. Dyson.
- Moved by Councilor Garcia-Irizarry, seconded by Councilor Brunelle
Discussion: None.

VOTE: 7 – 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT:	APPROVED 7 - 0
MOVER:	Carmen Garcia-Irizarry, Town Councilor
SECONDER	Councilor Buhle, Town Councilor
AYES:	Brunelle, Buhle, Garcia-Irizarry, Paul, Rodriguez, Saccone, St. Vil
EXCUSED:	Dombrowski, Ryan

6. MOTION to appoint Mrs. Karen Parkinson (R) 55 Rose Hill Road, Ledyard, as an Alternate Member to the Historic District Commission to complete a five (5) year term ending December 6, 2028, filling a vacancy left by Ms. Lamb.
- Moved by Councilor Brunelle, seconded by Councilor Buhle
Discussion: Councilor Buhle stated that she has talked with Mrs. Parkinson on several occasions and she noted that she would be an asset to the Historic District Commission.

Chairman Rodriguez noted Mrs. Parkinson’s background, enthusiasm, and energy, noting that she would be a great addition to the Historic District Commission.

VOTE: 7 – 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT:	APPROVED 7 - 0
MOVER:	April Brunelle, Town Councilor
SECONDER	Jessica Buhle, Town Councilor
AYES:	Brunelle, Buhle, Garcia-Irizarry, Paul, Rodriguez, Saccone, St. Vil
EXCUSED:	Dombrowski, Ryan

7. MOTION to set a Hybrid (In-Person & Video Conference) Public Hearing date on March 13, 2024 at 6:30 p.m. to be held in the Council Chambers, 741 Colonel Ledyard Highway, to receive comments and recommendations regarding a proposed “*An Ordinance Establishing a Farmers Market for the Town of Ledyard*” as presented in the draft dated January 17, 2024.
- Moved by Councilor Garcia-Irizarry, seconded by Councilor St. Vil
Discussion: None.

VOTE: 7 – 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT:	APPROVED 7 - 0
MOVER:	Carman Garcia-Irizarry, Town Councilor
SECONDER	Gary St. Vil, Town Councilor
AYES:	Brunelle, Buhle, Garcia-Irizarry, Paul, Rodriguez, Saccone, St. Vil
EXCUSED:	Dombrowski, Ryan

Finance Committee

8. MOTION to grant a Bid Waiver to Quiet Corner Restoration LLC, of Hampton, Connecticut, the amount of \$83,025.17 due to receiving fewer than the required three bids in response to Bid 2024-03 (Nathan Lester House Exterior Rehabilitation) in accordance with Ordinance #200-001 (rev 1) “*An Ordinance for Purchasing*”.

Moved by Councilor Buhle, seconded by Councilor Saccone

Discussion: Councilor Buhle stated in response to Bid #2024-03 RFP (Nathan Lester House Exterior Rehabilitation) that only two Bids were received from the following: (1) Proulx Building & Remodeling, LLC in the amount of \$111,240.00; and (2) Quiet Corner Restoration, LLC in the amount of \$83,025.17. She stated that the Quiet Corner Restoration, LLC proposal was reasonable.

Chairman Rodriguez questioned whether Historic District Commission Chairman Earl (Ty) Lamb would like to add any additional information regarding the Commission’s bid waiver request. Mr. Lamb noted that he attended the Finance Committee’s February 21, 2024 at which they asked the appropriate questions regarding the project. He stated the exterior work was needed to keep the Nathan Lester House in good shape.

VOTE: 7 – 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT:	APPROVED 7 - 0
MOVER:	Jessica Buhle, Town Councilor
SECONDER	Tony Saccone, Town Councilor
AYES:	Brunelle, Buhle, Garcia-Irizarry, Paul, Rodriguez, Saccone, St. Vil
EXCUSED:	Dombrowski, Ryan

9. MOTION to authorize the Finance Director to revise the tracking of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) in Account #21010103-54500-G0014 (Historic District – Building Maintenance-ARPA) to move \$55,575.17 from the Sawmill Projects to the Nathan Lester House Projects to facilitate the Nathan Lester House Exterior Rehabilitation Work (Bid #2024-03).

Moved by Councilor Saccone, seconded by Councilor Buhle

Discussion: Historic District Commission Chairman Earl (Ty) Lamb, 97 Lambtown Road, explained in allocating the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) for the Historic District Commission that the funding was being tracked by two separate accounts; one Account designated for the Nathan Lester House projects; and one Account designated for the Up-Down Sawmill projects. However, he stated in soliciting bids for the Nathan Lester House Exterior Rehabilitation Work the cost was more than they initially estimated. Therefore, he stated the Historic District Commission decided that the best approach for all of their projects was to request these funds be transferred from the Up-Down Sawmill account to the Nathan Lester House account.

VOTE: 7 – 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT:	APPROVED 7 - 0
MOVER:	Tony Saccone, Town Councilor
SECONDER	Jessica Buhle, Town Councilor
AYES:	Brunelle, Buhle, Garcia-Irizarry, Paul, Rodriguez, Saccone, St. Vil
EXCUSED:	Dombrowski, Ryan

10. MOTION to appropriate and transfer the Board of Education Fiscal Year 2022/2023 audited surplus of \$217,387 from unrestricted fund balance to Account #21070101-58250 (BOE Reserve 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.

Moved by Councilor Buhle, seconded by Councilor Saccone

Discussion: Councilor Buhle explained with the receipt of the Annual Audit for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2023 that in accordance with the “*Resolution Creating a Funding Mechanism for Making Annual Appropriations to a Capital Reserve Fund for the Board of Education*” it has been the Town Council’s practice to annually transfer the Board of Education’s surplus to their Reserve Capital Fund to be used for capital projects. She stated that this was an administrative action to document on the record the transfer of the surplus funds.

Councilor Buhle continued by noting in discussing the process to allocate these surplus funds from the Board of Education’s Capital Account with Finance Director Matthew Bonin, that Mr. Bonin explained that when the Board of Education submitted its Capital Projects List they note that all the funding to support their projects would be coming from the tax levy. However, she stated in preparing the budget for the upcoming fiscal year that Mr. Bonin explained that the amount of tax levy needed to support the Board of Education's Capital Projects request would be reduced by their surplus amount for the upcoming fiscal year budget, noting that this has been the practice for many years.

VOTE: 7 – 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT:	APPROVED 7 - 0
MOVER:	Jessica Buhle, Town Councilor
SECONDER	Tony Saccone, Town Councilor
AYES:	Brunelle, Buhle, Garcia-Irizarry, Paul, Rodriguez, Saccone, St. Vil
EXCUSED:	Dombrowski, Ryan

11. MOTION to authorize the Finance Director 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).
Moved by Councilor Saccone, seconded by Councilor Buhle
Discussion: Mayor Allyn, III, explained that Finance Director Matthew Bonin has recommended the Board of Education’s Capital Lines for non-bonded expenses be taken out of the General Government’s Capital Nonrecurring Fund (CNR) and moved into the Board of Education’s side of the ledger to manage these funds. He explained that currently the Board of Education had five non-bonded capital lines that were nested within the Town’s CNR Fund 210. He stated by moving these capital accounts to the Board of Education that it would provide them with more flexibility. He stated that Finance Director Matthew Bonin would continue to have the same visibility of these capital accounts that he currently has.

Councilor Saccone stated that it would also make it easier to track the projects and funding.

VOTE: 7 – 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT:	APPROVED 7 - 0
MOVER:	Tony Saccone, Town Councilor
SECONDER	Jessica Buhle, Town Councilor
AYES:	Brunelle, Buhle, Garcia-Irizarry, Paul, Rodriguez, Saccone, St. Vil
EXCUSED:	Dombrowski, Ryan

XV. ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Buhle moved to adjourn, seconded by Councilor Paul
VOTE: 7- 0 Approved and so declared. The meeting adjourned at 9:07 p.m.

Transcribed by Roxanne M. Maher
Administrative Assistant to the Town Council

I, S. Naomi Rodriguez, Chairman of the Ledyard Town Council,
hereby certify that the above and foregoing is a true and
correct copy of the minutes of the Regular Town Council
Meeting held on February 28, 2024.

S. Naomi Rodriguez, Chairman