



Chairman Gary St. Vil

TOWN OF LEDYARD
CONNECTICUT
TOWN COUNCIL

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

Wednesday, March 18, 2026

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-

Table with 6 columns: Attendee Name, Title, Status, Location, Arrived, Departed. Rows include April Brunelle, Adrienne Parad, Ty (Earl) Lamb, Jeff Eilenberger, Jacob Hurt, Cory Watford, and Roxanne Maher.

- III. RESIDENTS & PROPERTY OWNERS COMMENTS

Mr. Jacob Hurt, 6 Nugget Hill Drive, Gales Ferry, stated that he was speaking only for himself this evening. He noted that March 31st marks the Annual Transgender Day of Visibility. It was a day to celebrate their lives while calling out the discrimination they continue to face, noting in the past year the transgender community has endured unthinkable hostility from the federal government.

Mr. Hurt went on state that a law passed in Kansas last month invalidated the driver licenses of over 1,800 transgender Kansans for no reasons having to do with driving. In Iowa last fall transgender people were removed from that state's civil rights protections. Other states have passed, or were trying to pass, healthcare bans, sports bans, and bathroom bans, all with an eye of removing transgender people from society, denying them equal protection under the law, and forcing them to live without life-saving medical care and social acceptance. He stated these policies create a contradictory, harmful, and absurd narrative about the transgender community. Somehow, transgender folks were too strong to play sports, but too weak to serve in the military.

Mr. Hurt continued by stating that Connecticut was not immune to this absurdity, noting in the last year their State Legislators introduced over 30 Bills aimed at accomplishing some of the policies other states have enacted. He stated candidates for offices representing letters, publicly expressed anti-transgender views and showed support for the goals of some of those Bills. He stated over the last month people in Stonington have bothered the Board of Education about the supposed presence of a transgender athlete in schools, saying terrible things about an innocent kid.

Mr. Hurt stated despite being a tiny minority of the population everywhere, including in Connecticut, the transgender community has been made a scapegoat by politicians and culture warriors who would rather than focus on people different from us instead of doing anything about real problems facing us today. He stated the policies and attitudes brought about by this manufactured panic affect far more than just the transgender community, and should make folks stop and wonder what might happen when they; or someone they love; or they find themselves out of favor with a government this powerful and willing to do to you what it's doing to the transgender community today. He stated despite these continued attacks, the resounding majority of politicians who ran on anti-transgender messaging lost their elections in last year. He stated signs continue to point towards more folks caring about real issues instead of being willing to scapegoat a small number of people who were just trying to mind their own business. He questioned how much better the trans folks' lives would be if others also just minded their own business.

Mr. Hurt stated he was present this evening to ask the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion to acknowledge this year's Transgender Day of Visibility once again, commit to building a climate that was welcoming to all people in this town, and once again host a Pride Event this summer. He stated the last Pride Event was very successful, and he thanked the Committee for including the Pride Pizza Picnic on the Agenda. He stated having a Pride Event again this year sends a powerful and encouraging message to residents during these difficult times. Thank you.

Councilor Parad asked Mr. Hurt how he would like the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion to address the Transgender Day of Visibility. Mr. Hurt stated that they just did. Councilor Parad requested clarification, noting that Mr. Hurt was just looking for them to acknowledge the Transgender Day of Visibility. Mr. Hurt because it falls on March 31st that there would be some utility by including the Transgender Day of Visibility on their March Agenda. He noted in 2024 a lot of people had some emotional difficulty because the Transgender Day of Visibility coincided with Easter and there were some trouble distinguishing the two.

IV. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS/PRESENTATION – None.

IV. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION to approve the following Community Relations for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Minutes:

- Organizational Meeting Minutes of December 17, 2025
- Regular Meeting Minutes of December 17, 2025

Moved by Councilor Parad, seconded by Councilor Lamb

VOTE: 3 – 0- Approved and so declared

V. OLD BUSINESS

1. Primary Care for All Americans.

- Help volunteers working on the Primary Care for All Americans Initiative to conduct needed Surveys.

Councilor Parad stated that she met with the group that was working to collect data in town. She stated because one of the components in the Sustainable CT Ad Hoc Committee was a Health Impact Assessment, they were interested in meeting with the Sustainable CT Ad Hoc. She stated their first step would be to get a baseline to see what the community's health indicators were before they could make an intervention and then reassess.

Councilor Parad went on to note that she was working to try to get information out to the community pertaining to: primary care, health, and chronic disease management. She stated that they were working toward everyone having access to primary care.

Councilor Lamb questioned the end goal and how he could help. Councilor Parad explained that they first have to see where they were before they could determine their goals. He stated their goal was for all Ledyard residents to have a primary care physician. She stated the data they were working to collect was:

- Who has a Primary Care Physician
- Do they have access to their Primary Care Physician
- Do they have medical insurance
- If you have a Primary Care Physician have they seen one in the last three-years

Councilor Parad explained that once they had this data they could then determine the path forward such as:

- Do they advocate with one of the local hospitals or clinic?
- A new Family Residency Program will be starting at Lawrence & Memorial Hospital/Yale New Haven. Councilor Parad stated that perhaps they could form a partnership with them.
- Foxwoods has started their own Primary Care Facility, which would be related to their Native Traditions.
- Family Medicine/Primary Medicine to be a goal of the High School Students. Councilor Parad stated during the past six-years she has been visiting the Middle School and High School to talk to the students about pursuing a career path in

medicine. She noted as Dr. Fine suggested during his presentation at the Town Council's September 10, 2025 meeting, that they set up a scholarship fund to help local students pursue a career as a Primary Care Physician, and then come back to their community to practice in their town. She stated many of these initiatives were not a two-year plan, noting that these can take 25 – 50 years.

RESULT: CONTINUED

Next Meeting: 5/20/2026 6:30 p.m.

2. Recognition of Colonel William Ledyard and Commemorate the Battle of Groton Heights.

Councilor Brunelle stated when Councilor Barnes was on the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion that he was hoping they could make this part of the Town's America 250 Celebration.

Councilor Lamb stated that he reached out to Councilor Barnes and that he provided some points of contact at the Groton Library and others that he was talking with to continue his work to bring this recognition of Colonel William Ledyard to fruition. Councilor Lamb went on to note that he has been attending the America 250 Planning Committee meetings and that he was hoping they could have Colonel Ledyard's Sword and its escort on one of his farm wagons that was going to be in the Memorial Day Parade. He stated they were working to building a theme around Colonel Ledyard. He stated that he was also hopeful they could do something to support a Reenactment of the Battle at Groton Heights.

Councilor Brunelle asked that Councilor Lamb let the America 2050 Planning Committee and those working on the recognition of Colonel William Ledyard that the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion was willing assist with any help they may need.

RESULT: CONTINUED

Next Meeting: 5/20/2026 6:30 p.m.

3. Discussion and possible action regarding the 2026 Black History Month Program (February).

Councilor Brunelle stated the *2026 Black History Month Student Essay and Poster Contest* was very successful. She noted that this was the fifth year they held the program noting that the Contest Winners were recognized at the Town Council's March 11, 2026 meeting. She stated the students received monetary prizes that were provided once again this year by former Town Council Chairman Naomi Rodriguez. She stated the Council Chambers was full of the students families, classmates, and residents to celebrate the students work in writing the essays and creating the posters.

Councilor Parad noted that a parent of one of the students who won the contest questioned what happened to the entries, because they had not seen their child's entry.

Councilor Brunelle stated last year the entries were displayed in the Council Chambers for folks to view. She stated after the Town Council meeting the entries were displayed in the Town Hall and then all of the entries were returned to the students. However, she stated because one entry may have accidentally been taken home this year the entries were not brought to the Council Chambers, and therefore, she would check with Chairman St. Vil about the whereabouts of the entries.

RESULT: COMPLETED

4. Woman's History Month (March)

- Linda C. Davis Woman of the Year Award

Councilor Brunelle stated that Nominations for the Linda C. Davis Woman of the Year Award would remain open to March 31, 2026. She stated that she posted the information regarding the Award on social media, noting that nominations should be submitted to her at abru@ledyardct.org. She explained that she would forward all of the nominations with the letters to the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion to review and to list their top choices. She stated the Award Recipient would be recognized at one of the Town Council's April meetings, noting that she sponsored the Award.

Councilor Lamb stated he recalled a conversation about whether the Linda C. Davis Woman of the Year Award was only for women. Councilor Brunelle stated because March was Woman's History Month the program was for women. However, she went on to note that the Community Relations Committee did have a conversation about whether they should also have a Ledyard Man of Year Award; or rename this Award to *Ledyard Person of the Year* to open it up to any Ledyard resident. She stated at that time Councilor Barnes was on the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion, and that he felt that they should leave the Linda C. Davis Award for woman, noting that sometimes they did not have to have one of everything. Therefore, she stated the Committee dropped it at that time, however, she stated she would not be opposed of doing an Award for a Community Member – gender neutral.

Councilor Brunelle went on to state that she was thinking about doing something similar to the Black History month essay program for a Junior Councilor for a day or a Junior Mayor for a day. She stated the essays could be reviewed and a student would be selected to sit at the dais with the Town Council or spend the day with the Mayor to try to spark student's interest in community service; and to see how local government worked.

Councilor Lamb stated that he was in-favor of getting youth involved in civics. He stated when he served on the Board of Education that they had great success with involving the students.

The Committee agreed to further discuss the idea of “*Youth Councilor*” at their next meeting.

RESULT: CONTINUED

Next Meeting: 5/20/2026 6:30 p.m.

5. Discussion regarding the Jewish Community/Asian Community (May)

Councilor Parad noted her interaction with Mr. Hurt earlier this evening relative to just acknowledging the *Annual Transgender Day of Visibility*. Therefore, she stated that acknowledging their Jewish Community and their Asian Community may be enough, noting that this Committee has taken on a lot.

Councilor Brunelle stated that she could make a graphic for May to acknowledge Ledyard’s Jewish Community and their Asian Community.

RESULT: CONTINUED

Next Meeting: 5/20/2026 6:30 p.m.

6. Discuss the Foster Care Community.

Councilor Brunelle stated that she did not have the time to reach out to the Foster Care Community since their last meeting.

Councilor Lamb suggested rather than the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion take on an additional task, that they provide the Foster Care Advocates an opportunity to give a presentation in May to bring awareness to what they do.

It was also suggested that the Foster Care Community may be interested in hosting a Booth at the Farmers Market to provide literature and talk with folks about the Program.

RESULT: CONTINUED

Next Meeting: 5/20/2026 6:30 p.m.

7. Identify various town venues to host “*2026 Informal Conversations in the Park*” to engage residents in discussions regarding their concerns and their ideas for potential solutions.

Councilor Lamb noted the following venues for holding their information conversations:

- Historic Up-Down Sawmill was a nice park to hold informal conversations, especially when the Sawmill was operational.

- Nathan Lester House, if they had bad weather they could probably move into barn.
- Conservation Commission parks
- Pollinator Gardens

Councilor Lamb suggested they would be more successful if they had some focus points when they plan their informal conversations that would cover a range of subjects to try to bring diverse groups together.

Councilor Parad stated she was at the Parks, Recreation, & Senior Citizens Center for their March 17, 2026 meeting and she noted that she saw the gym they were making at the Cetner. She stated once the gym was completed that it would be a great have their residents who were age 55+ come see the gym and they could talk about fitness.

RESULT: CONTINUED

Next Meeting: 5/20/2026 6:30 p.m.

8. Discussion regarding the Pride Pizza in the Park (June).

Councilor Brunelle stated last year the Congregational Church partnered with the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion and that the Church was interested in partnering with them again this year. She stated she was planning the event for Saturday June 20, 2026; and she was working to reach out to vendors such as Chet's Italian Ice, Rolling Tomatoes Pizza Truck, Munches, Par-Four, and others.

Councilor Lamb questioned how many people attended the Pride Pizza in the Park in past years. Councilor Brunelle stated the first year they had about 12 people, and the second year they had about 20- 25 people. Councilor Lamb stated that truck vendors were typically interested in bigger crowds.

Councilor Lamb questioned whether this Committee had a line in the budget to help facilitate bigger events to help build community. Councilor Brunelle stated that they do not have a line in the town's budget, noting that it would be good to have some funding to support the awards and those types of things. However, she stated that some residents may not want their tax dollars used to pay for certain things. She stated although they could have fundraisers to support their events, that she has shied away from doing that. Councilor Parad questioned how they could bridge the gap between those who might want to; and those who might not want to support a budget to be used for things such as the Pride Event, to build a better community. Councilor Lamb stated on the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Agenda there were community outreach topics that touches all aspects of their town, such as the recognition of Colonel William Ledyard, that conservatives may support. He stated that they had to start the conversation somewhere. He stated that he could start a conversation with friends and 501(c) organizations and that he would bring back the feedback he received. He stated that he was looking for opportunities to build bridges and build community.

RESULT: CONTINUED

Next Meeting: 5/20/2026 6:30 p.m.

9. Native America History Month (October).

Councilor Brunelle stated because the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion had a lot on their plate that she would suggest they defer this discussion to future meeting.

Councilor Lamb questioned whether the Committee was looking for area Tribal Nations to make some suggestions. Councilor Brunelle stated “Yes”; noting that the Committee may want to invite them to give a presentation about their Schemitzun, “*The Feast of Green Corn and Dance*”; or another topic. Councilor Lamb stated that he would take this item.

RESULT: DEFER

Next Meeting: 5/20/2026 6:30 p.m.

10. Farmers Market Booths to highlight town services.

Councilor Brunelle stated as the Farmers Market Committee Town Council Liaison that she has been attending their meetings, noting that they were lining up their vendors. She stated that she would be submitting a request for a Booth for at least three Markets, noting that the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion could invite others such as the Foster Care Community, or healthcare providers, and others to join them. She stated if some other organizations were not available that they could sign residents up for “*Notify Me*” to receive town news alerts from the town’s website, as she did last year. She also stated that they could invite other Town Committees to join them to bring awareness to the initiatives they were working on.

Councilor Lamb stated the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion should encourage their fellow Councilors to bring the Farmers Market Booths up when they attend their Liaison assignments, and that they should also take advantage of the opportunity to give presentations to the Town Council to highlight the work of their volunteer committees.

RESULT: CONTINUED

Next Meeting: 5/20/2026 6:30 p.m.

11. Coordinate and Support Town Organizations such as:

- Linda C. Davis Food Pantry
- Citizens Helping Animals in Need (CHAIN)

Linda C. Davis Food Pantry

Councilor Brunelle suggested the Community Relations Committee wait until fall when they start to conduct their food drives for Thanksgiving and the Holiday Season.

Citizens Helping Animals in Need (CHAIN)

Councilor Lamb stated that Mr. Jeff Eilenberger was present this evening, noting that his wife was involved with the Citizens Helping Animals in Need (CHAIN).

Councilor Brunelle stated Citizens Helping Animals in Need (CHAIN) recently had their Craft Sale Fundraiser, noting that it was a great event.

Councilor Lamb questioned what “*Coordinate and Support*” meant. Councilor Brunelle stated that the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion could help to promote the needs of these Organizations. She noted as an example that the Food Pantry or the Animal Control Facility may be in need of certain supplies that they could post on their social media pages, or announce at a Town Council meeting.

RESULT: CONTINUED

Next Meeting: 5/20/2026 6:30 p.m.

12. Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Crossover with Board of Education

Councilor Brunelle stated that she has not had the time to contact the Board of Education’s Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Committee.

Councilor Lamb stated it would be good if the Board of Education’s Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Committee and their Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion could work together. He stated Board of Education Chairman Jennifer Reguin was the past Chairman of their DEI Committee, however, he did not know who was the current Committee Chairman.

RESULT: CONTINUED

Next Meeting: 5/20/2026 6:30 p.m.

13. Organizations for those with Disabilities -Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) Month

Councilor Parad noted that July was Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) Month.

Councilor Lamb stated that he would research what services and programs were available for the Southeastern Region.

RESULT: CONTINUED

Next Meeting: 5/20/2026 6:30 p.m.

14. Discuss Homeless Hospitality Center

Councilor Lamb stated he spoke with Councilor Thompson and that he would be working to get the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion a VIP Tour of the New London Hospitality Center.

Councilor Lamb stated that he was interested in learning more about the types of services and programs the New London Hospitality Center provided; as well as learning more about the services provided by other organizations such as United Way; noting that these programs also feed into other Social Services, and they helped people get back on their feet.

RESULT: CONTINUED

Next Meeting: 5/20/2026 6:30 p.m.

15. Discuss Immigrant Community

Councilor Lamb stated Immigrant Community recognition takes place during the month of June. He stated that he had a number of contacts throughout the region, noting that many of their life stories were interesting and encouraging, noting how hard their parent's life was and now the second generations were working as engineers and other professionals. He suggested that they hear from the people in their community who were immigrants; and that he would try to line up something.

RESULT: CONTINUED

Next Meeting: 5/20/2026 6:30 p.m.

16. Any Old Business proper to come before the Committee

- Town Communications– Facebook Site - Councilor Parad noted the many veterans that spoke at the Finance Committee's March 4, 2026 meeting and the Town Council's March 11, 2026 meeting. She stated the veterans were asking that the town provide more communication; because they were not satisfied that they had to go onto the Town's website to find things, and they wanted a Facebook type of outreach from the Town Council and the Town Government. Councilor Parad stated that she was torn on how they could get this done, questioning who would be responsible to run the Facebook site, would it need to be a paid position, would it be a volunteer, what type of information would be posted to the site. She stated she was interested in hearing the thoughts of the other members of this Committee on this topic.

Councilor Brunelle stated when she initially took on the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion that she wanted to either have a Ledyard podcast or a short video reporting weekly on each of the meetings that took place. She stated although she had the time and was willing to do the short videos; noting that she had experience doing public access television shows; that some people did not like the idea because they had concerns about having to continue it; when she was no longer available. However, she stated that she liked to focus on the present and not worry about whether someone wanted to continue it later on. She described the process to create the short weekly videos noting that it could take a couple of hours to prepare the script and

video the recording. She stated SEC-TV in Groton would edit the video and upload it to their public access channel, noting that the weekly video would be 30 minutes to one hour. She stated that she would be willing to take on this on; or partner with another member of the Committee if they were also interested in doing this.

Councilor Lamb stated the Finance Committee discussed reviewing the following Reports noting that the Reports included information about improving communications with the residents.

- Committee to Review the Budget Process Report dated October 31, 2023
- Committee To Transform The Budget Process Report dated October 3, 2016

Councilor Lamb suggested instead of reinventing the wheel that the Committee review the recommendations that were provided in the Committee to Review the Budget Process October 31, 2023 Report. He stated that the Committee would need some time to review and consider their options.

Councilor Brunelle stated that communication was key.

RESULT: CONTINUED

Next Meeting: 5/20/2026 6:30 p.m.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Brunelle moved the meeting be adjourned, seconded by Councilor Lamb.
VOTE: 3 – 0 Approved and so declared. The meeting was adjourned at 7:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

April Brunelle
Committee Chairman
Community Relations Committee