TOWN OF LEDYARD
CONNECTICUT
TOWN COUNCIL

Chairman S. Naomi Rodriguez

MINUTES
PUBLIC HEARING
LEDYARD TOWN COUNCIL
HYBRID FORMAT
LEDYARD MIDDLE SCHOOL AUDITORIUM
1860 ROUTE 12, GALES FERRY, CONNECTICUT
REMOTE MEETING VIA ZOOM

PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES 7:00 P.M., APRIL 21, 2025

DRAFT

I. CALL TO ORDER – Chairman Rodriguez called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. at the Ledyard Middle School Auditorium; 1860 Route 12, Gales Ferry, Connecticut.

II. PROCEDURE OF THE HEARING

Chairman Rodriguez announced the procedure of the Public Hearing. She noted tonight's Public Hearing was a hybrid format noting that residents could attend in-person or remotely via the Zoom video conference. She asked those attending via video conference to mute their devices until they wanted to address the meeting.

Chairman Rodriguez stated they would begin the Public Hearing with budget presentations from Town Council Finance Committee Chairman Tony Saccone and School Superintendent Jason Hartling. She stated a Public Comment period would follow.

III. CALL OF THE PUBLIC HEARING

Administrative Assistant Roxanne Maher read the call of the meeting as follows:

LEGAL NOTICE
TOWN OF LEDYARD
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

The Ledyard Town Council will conduct a Public Hearing
at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, April 21, 2025
to receive comments/recommendations regarding a
Proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget.

This Public Hearing will be Hybrid Format

Please join the Public Hearing in-person or
remotely from your computer, tablet, or smartphone as follows:

In-person attendance will be at the
Ledyard Middle School Auditorium
1860 Route 12, Gales Ferry, Connecticut

Remote Attendance: Via Zoom Video Conference at:
https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83758167511?pwd=hJeNJsgbTLtQJKejpmDsXS1Kvg2KZb.1
or by audio only telephone +1 646 558 8656; Meeting ID: 837 5816 7511; Passcode: 151780

Interested persons may submit
written communications to towncouncil@ledyardct.org

Copies of the proposed Budget will be available on April 16, 2025 in the
Town Clerks' Office and on the town's website at:
https://www.ledyardct.org/Proposed-BOE-Budget
https://www.ledyardct.org/proposed-annual-budget

For the Ledyard Town Council
s/s S. Naomi Rodriguez, Chairman

Please Publish on: Friday, April 11, 2025

IV. PRESENTATION OF THE PROPOSED FISCAL YEAR 2025/2026 BUDGET

Town Council Finance Committee Chairman Tony Saccone welcomed all those who were attending tonight's Public Hearing both in-person and by video conference.

Councilor Saccone provided a brief overview of the Annual Budget Process noting the Mayor submitted his proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget to the Town Council on March 3, 2025 (first Monday in March) in accordance with the Chapter VII; Section 4, of the Town Charter. He went on to note the Finance Committee held three Budget Work Sessions on March 6, 10, & 18, 2025 to meet with the Mayor and Department Heads. He stated at their Special Meeting held on April 7, 2025 that the Finance Committee approved to forward the proposed budget for Town Council approval at their April 9, 2025 meeting to present at tonight's Public Hearing. He noted after tonight's Public Hearing the Finance Committee would have the opportunity to make additional budget adjustments at their Special Meeting scheduled for April 23, 2025 to consider residents comments and any new information that has come in, before forwarding the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget to the Town Council for their final approval to be presented at the Annual Town Meeting scheduled for May 19, 2025 that would adjourn to a vote on the machines on Tuesday, May 20, 2025.

Councilor Saccone stated the proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget presented this evening was in the amount of $71,062,240; comprised of a General Government of $30,394,998 4.24% increase (included Town and Board of Education Employees Healthcare Insurance); and a Board of Education $40,667,242; an increase of 5.98%.

Councilor Saccone stated when the Mayor received the budget requests from his Department Heads and from the Board of Education that the budget was calling for a 5 mil increase. He stated the Mayor worked to reduce expenses and presented a proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget to the Town Council calling for a 3.15 mil increase. He stated of the 45 General Government Department segments that 22 segments had an increase of 0%.

Councilor Saccone went on to note that the Finance Committee reviewed the proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budgets with the Department Heads line by line and worked to further reduce the Budget increase. He stated the proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget in the amount of $71,062,240 was calling for a 2.76 mil increase; for a projected Mil Rate of 37.97. He stated the proposed budget was responsible and resourceful, noting that there were few new opportunities for continued consolidations and savings.

Councilor Saccone stated in submitting his proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget to the Town Council that Mayor Allyn, III, noted the following:

- Grand List for the 2024 Valuation yielded a decrease of 0.51% for a loss of about $6,699,094 in assessed loss value; which was mostly driven by the State's methodology for motor vehicle evaluation, and a new Veterans Property tax exemption providing a $520,000 reduction in tax revenues.

- Debt Service decreased $107,580 (2.72%) compared to last year's decrease of $448,820, school roof projects.

- As of June 30, 2024, the Town's pension plan was 88.7% funded compared to 84% as of June 30, 2023. The increase was attributed to sound management and favorable market conditions

- 70.88% of Ledyard's Tax Revenue comes from residential property taxes.

- Budget Revenues from Grand Lists for area towns that were most comparable to Ledyard were two to three times higher than Ledyard's Grand List. Ledyard has historically been the leader in the area for having a heavy reliance on residential property taxes, with 95% of Ledyard's Tax Revenue coming from residential property taxes.

Councilor Saccone provided an overview of the Revenues noting that the October 1, 2024 Grand List saw a 0.51% decrease in assessed value (total net 1,311,231,566). In the coming year the projected revenue and changes from the current year were as follows: Taxes 70.88% an increase of 1.68%; State and Federal Aid: 23.34% a decrease of 0.715%; Charges for Services 3.23% a decrease of 0.56%, Investment on Income; 0.74% a decrease of 0.08%; Mil

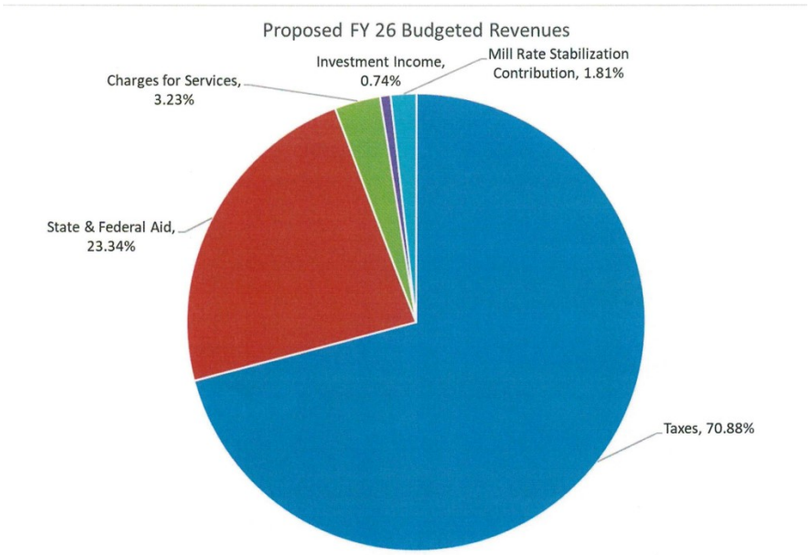
Rate Stabilization contribution: 1.81% an increase of 0.33%. He noted that this year's Mill rate stabilization input would be $1,304,675 to help offset the mil rate increase.

Councilor Saccone stated the *Mil Rate Stabilization Fund* current balance was at $3.1 million. The Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget has factored in using $1,304,675 which would equate to one mil. He explained that the idea of the Mil Rate Stabilization Fund was similar to a "*Rainy Day Fund*" and was used to smooth out or keep the mil rate somewhat stable. He stated without using the Mil Rate Stabilization Fund in the upcoming budget they would be looking at a 3.7-mil rate increase to support the town's operational expenses.

Councilor Saccone stated that they expect income from non-tax sources to decrease by 0.71% He noted Ledyard anticipated Education Cost Sharing (ECS) from the State would remain flat, and that there continued to be concerns over the funding methodology for Special Education (SPED). He also stated that Ledyard should continue to see the same level of funding from the State in areas such as Town Aid Road (TAR) and Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT).

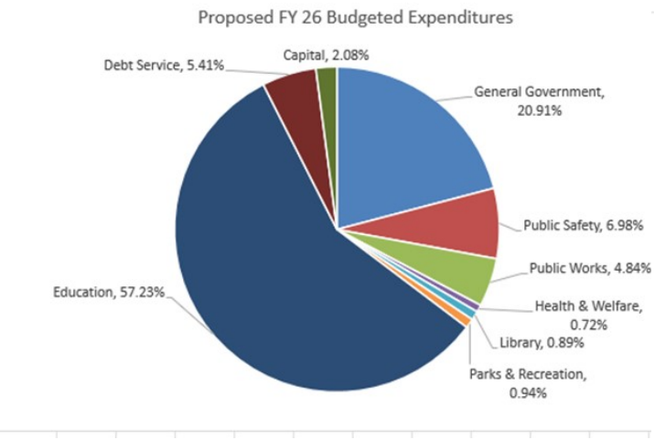
Councilor Saccone stated Finance Director Matthew Bonin worked with the Bank to earn a higher interest yield on the towns funds. He stated the projected Interest Earned Revenue for the upcoming year would be more than $525,000; and he thanked Mr. Bonin for his work.

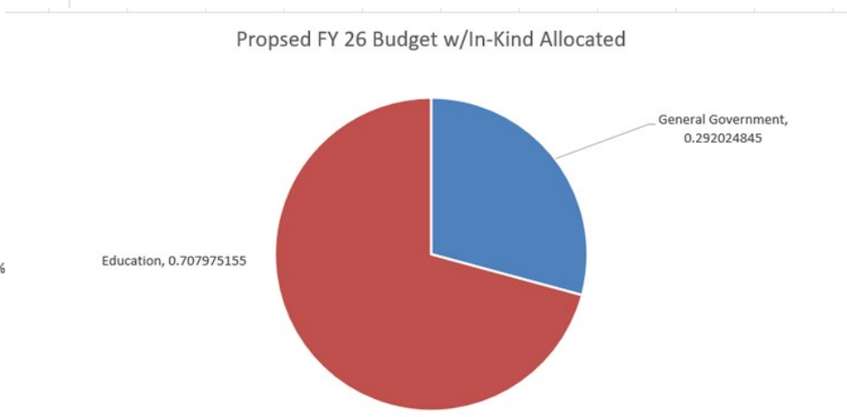
Councilor Saccone presented the Revenues by Source as shown in the pie chart below:



Revenues	Projected Budget	Increase/Decrease	% of Budget Revenues
• ***Taxes***	$50,467,49	$3,358,550	70.88%
○ *Education Grants*	$14,198,593	$394,394	
• ***Government Grant***	$2,418,757	-0-	23.34%
• ***Charges and Fees***	$1,773,050	$111,410	3.23%
○ *Other Finance Sources*	$1,290,422	$290,422	
• ***Investment Earnings***	$525,000	-$25,000	0.74%
• ***Mill Rate Stabilization Fund*** $	1,304,675	$1,304,675	1.81%

Councilor Saccone provided an overview of the Budget Expenditures by function noting the General Government Budget in the amount of $30,394,998 included approximately $9,643,000 of Board of Education in-kind expenses comprised of health care benefits, debt service obligations, liability insurance, workers compensation insurance, retirement obligations, school nursing and other miscellaneous services. 57.23% of the total budget is allocated for Board of Education expenses (this does not include in-kind expenses), 20.91% is allocated for General Government expenses, 6.98% is allocated for Public Safety, 4.84% is allocated for Public Works, 2.08% is allocated for Capital, 0.72% is allocated for Health & Welfare, 0.89% is allocated for Library, 0.94% is allocated for Parks & Recreation; and 5.41% is allocated for Debt Service, as shown in the pie charts below:

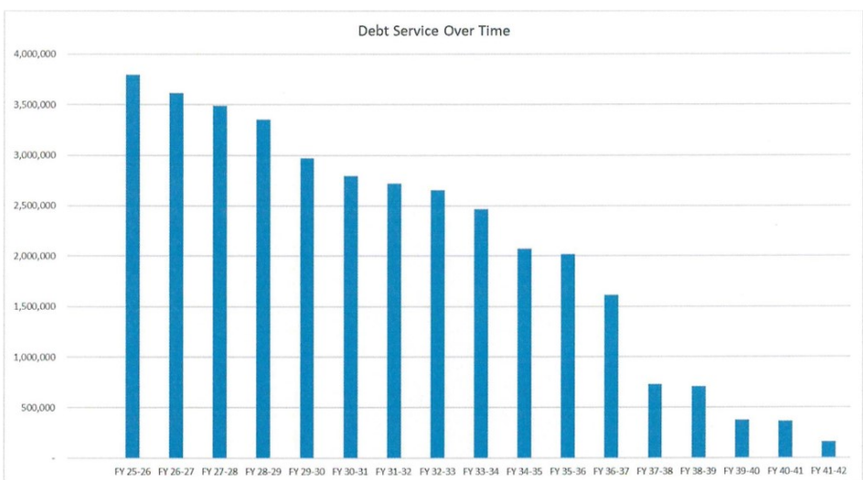




Councilor Saccone provided an overview of the town's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) noting the General Government budget allocates $1,476,345 to the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) that is tax levy funded. This funding, combined with state and federal grants, borrowing, and other funding sources, provides for a total CIP in the amount of $6,011,809. The CIP includes continued funding for critical road repairs/maintenance, reserve fund allocations for emergency services equipment, future vehicle purchases, technology enhancements, the replacement of the High School fire alarm system, renovations of the High School science lab classrooms and renovations of Juliet W. Long School classrooms, Dehumidification at the Middle School and Gallup Hill School, Chiller Replacement at the Gales Ferry School, enclosed bird nesting locations, the Lantern Hill Bridge Replacement, Parks & Recreation Master Plan Needs Assessment Study, and Pickleball Court Upgrades.

Description	Council Proposed Tax Levy	Council Proposed from Grants	Council Proposed Other	Council Proposed Total
Capital Improvement Plan 2024/2025	1,791,098	1,225,109	4,825,564	7,841,564
Capital Improvement Plan 2025/2026	1,476,345	1,195,859	4,415,605	6,011,809
Capital Improvement Plan Change	-314,648	-29,250	-2,441,064	-2,784,755

Councilor Saccone noted the proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 included $3,847,450 for Debt Service for continuing the payment of bonds for the construction of police headquarters facility and school renovation projects, as well as Clean Water Funds for the watermain extension projects. The debt service would see a $107,580 or 2.72% decrease from the current year.



Councilor Saccone reviewed the status of the capital projects the Town has been working on this year, noting that the construction work on some of these projects have been completed while construction work on a number of other projects would continue into the coming year as follows: the Sewer Line Extension Project, Board of Education Various School improvement Projects that include: replacement of the roofs at the Central Office, Gales Ferry School, and Juliet W. Long School; installation of solar equipment at Gales Ferry School and Juliet W. Long School; upgrades to the building management systems at Gales Ferry School; and electrical and HVAC upgrades at Juliet W. Long School.

American Rescue Act Funding (ARPA) $4,327,000

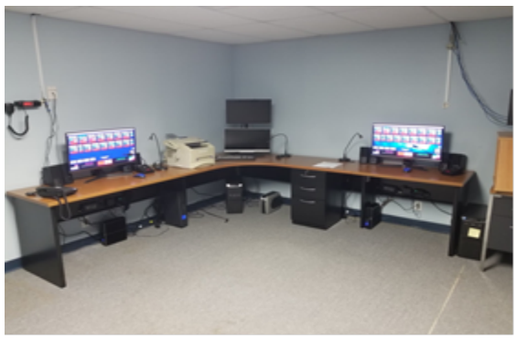
Councilor Saccone went on to explain the Finance Committee continued their work to review the status of the projects that were approved at the Fiscal Year 2022/2023 Budget Referendum for the use of the $4,327,000 Federal American Rescue Act Funding (ARPA) that Ledyard received. With some projects coming in under budget, and based on Departments recommendations at the December 11, 2024 meeting the Town Council approved to allocate funding for the following projects to ensure Ledyard met the federal guidelines that required all of the ARPA funding to be obligated by the end of the 2024 calendar year; and spent (liquidated) by the end of the 2026 calendar year:

- $14,999 for Smart Projectors for the Board of Education @ $3,000 each
- $50,000 to install a Solid Playground Surface at the Juliet W. Long School
- 10,000 to the Parks & Recreation Summer Camp Scholarships
- $2,500 to conduct an A2 Survey of the Spicer Homestead Ruins
- $20,000 to purchase CPR Devices
- $5,500 to purchase/install an ADA Compliance counter in the Town Clerk's Office

Councilor Saccone provided an overview of the ARPA Projects noting that to date thirty-one projects have been completed and nineteen projects were in-progress. He noted that the projects that made the ARPA List ranged from infrastructure projects such as the Ledyard Center Sewer Line Extension project to supporting our Regional Agency Partners, to facility maintenance projects, preservation of historical landmarks and park improvements, software upgrades and many others.

ARPA Projects Completed	
Playscape Replacement at 13 Winthrop, Gales Ferry	$50,111.00
Housing Rehab Grant - additional funding	$100,000.00
A2 Survey of Spicer Homestead Ruins	$2,500.00
LED Sign Panel, Gales Ferry	$26,443.27
LED Sign Panel, Ledyard Center	$29,816.88

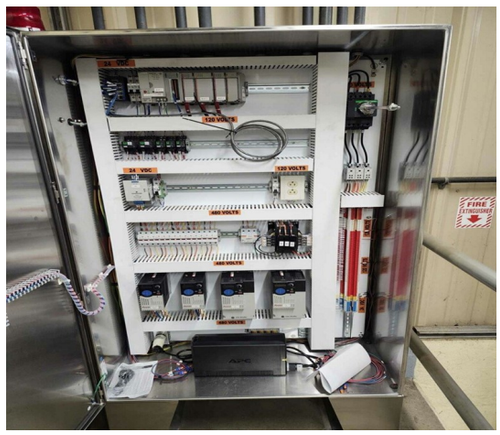
ARPA Projects Completed (Continued)	
Replace Food Pantry Roof	$8,700.00
Vinyl Re-siding of Food Pantry	$18,392.35
Solar Charging Stations	$5,816.14
Added ClearGov Modules	$10,500.00
Install WI-FI in Food Pantry	$2,640.76
Balance of funding for Owl Pro	$831.00
Concrete Floor - Pole Barn	$100,000.00
Town Green Upgrade Project	$75,000.00
Police Radio Interoperability	$46,125.00
Replace Dispatch Stations (2) in EOC	$60,486.98
Radio upgrades	$14,513.00
Replace Firehouse software	$8,000.00
Automated Doors - Senior Center	$4,972.00
Road Restoration Fund	$114,885.00
Emergency Services Building HVAC system replacement	$204,023.84
Park & Rec / Senior Center HVAC system replacement	$152,382.44
Town Hall HVAC system replacement	$80,072.48
Exterior Doors (TH and Annex) w/ Electronic Locking Systems	$4,972.00
Replace brackets on streetlight poles	$2,520.00
Ledge Light Health District - support COVID initiatives	$43,270.00
TVCCA - Commissary project	$15,000.00
Homeless Hospitality Center of New London	$10,000.00
Skid Mounted Sewer Pumps	$193,816.27
Sandy Hollow Road Guardrail Replacement	$300,000.00
Rotary Drum Thickener Panel	$32,653.33
CPR device purchase	$20,000.00



Dispatch Stations Emergency Operations Center (EOC)

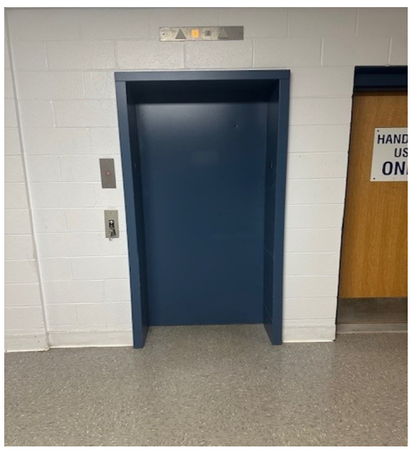
New Skid Mounted Sewer Pumps

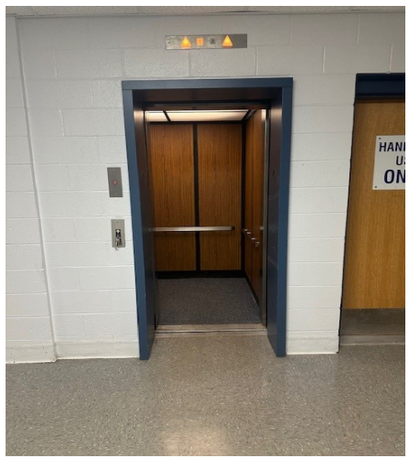
Wastewater Treatment Facility



Waste Water Treatment Facility
Rotary Thickening Drum

New Playscapes – 13 Winthrop

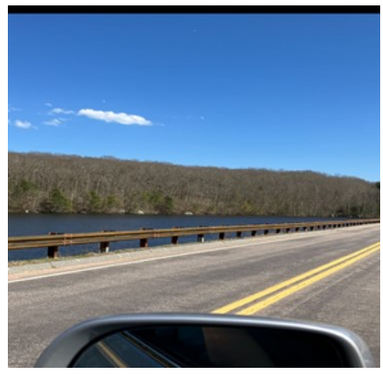




Ledyard High School Elevator Update

Town Hall HVAC
Replacement

Town Hall Lift
Handicap Access



Sandy Hollow
Guardrail Replacement

ARPA Projects In-Progress	
Gales Ferry Tennis Court Repairs	$22,478.00
Gales Ferrry Basketball Court Repairs	$9,930.00
Gales Ferry Fence Replacement	$11,556.00
Senior Center Floor Main Room	$11,255.00
Senior Center Kitchen Floor	$3,629.00
Senior Center Vestibule Floor	$1,028.00
Parks and Rec Summer Scholarships	$10,000.00
Nathan Lester House repairs	$77,829.82
Ledyard Up/Down Sawmill	$41,340.00
Gales Ferry Corridor Study	$48,333.67
Funding for youth mental health clinicians	$119,440.00
Sidewalk Infill in Ledyard Center	$5,200.00
Town Hall Vertical Lift	$8,756.24
ADA Compliant Counter - Town Clerk's Office	$4,879.00
Sewer Line Extension Phase I	$674,032.05
Multi-Use Pathway Administration and Engineering	$101,582.74
Sewer Line Extension Phase III	$276,426.15
Smart Projectors for BOE	$14,131.00
Solid Playground Surface - JWL - BOE	$16,065.35

Gallup Hill Road Now Meets
State Requirements

Multi-Use Pathway to High School
And Sewer Line

Councilor Saccone addressed the projected 37.97 mil rate to support the proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget as presented this evening in the amount of $71,062,240; and he provided a comparison of area towns for the upcoming Fiscal Year as follows:

Municipality	General Government Increase/Decrease	Board of Education Increase/Decrease	Mil Increase/Decrease	Notes
Colchester	5.75%	5.15%	1.62	Used $500K to reduce mil increase to 1.62
East Lyme	12%	4.16%	2.92	BOE reduced proposed budget increase by $1.5 Million
Groton	3.8%	7.28%	1.9	
Ledyard	4.24%	5.98%	2.76	Used $1.3 Million from Mil Rate Stabilization Fund
Montville	3.56%	4.49%	1.72	Council requested BOE to reduce budget increase to 3% (pending)
New London	-2.08%	0	-0.3	Workforce reduction of 10-15%
North Stonington	3.77%	4.00%	0.12	BOE reduced increase from 6.46% to 4%

Municipality	General Government	Board of Education	Mil Increase/Decrease	Notes
Norwich		4.90%	2.28	
Plainfield	12.4%	4.98%	2.6	Did not adjust MV . Depreciation Schedule
Preston	11.8%		2.75	
Stonington	-4.39%	4.71%	0.73	
Waterford	2.71%	4.78%	0.85	

Councilor Saccone noted the proposed 2.76 mil increase would increase property owners tax bill as follows:

House Assessed Value	Annual Tax Bill Increase
$150,000	$413.00
$250,000	$689.00
$350,000	$965.00
$450,000	$1,241.00

Councilor Saccone continued by explaining in the upcoming fiscal year the State would be considering the following Bills:

- Commercial and Industrial Property Tax.
- Taxation on Indian Lands – Councilor Saccone stated Legislative efforts continue to be discussed that would prevent towns from taxing private companies operating on tribal lands.

Councilor Saccone provided a recap noting the proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget in the amount of $71,062,240 represented a 5.39% increase over the current year's budget (fy 24/25) and would require a mil increase in the amount of 2.76 mils or a proposed Mill Rate of 37.97 to support the budget.

Councilor Saccone concluded by stating the Town Council was interested in hearing residents comments and suggestions regarding the proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget this evening.

Councilor Saccone deferred to School Superintendent Jason Hartling to present the Board of Education proposed Budget for the upcoming year.

Board of Education proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget $40,667,242

Board of Education Finance Committee Chairman Earl (Ty) Lamb stated on behalf of the Board of Education Finance Committee and the Board as a whole that he wanted to thank the individuals who spent a lot of hours on this year's Budget Process. He stated the Board of Education began their work in October, which has brought them here to today. He stated that he would like to thank the parents, the residents, other stakeholders, and taxpayers for attending the various meetings, noting that their voices were heard. He also stated that he would like to thank the Board of Education Staff in general, especially Superintendent Hartling, Finance Director Kenneth Knight, Director of Facilities and Grounds Wayne Donaldson for his work on the Capital Plan, Administrative Assistant Anita Cletus, all the School Principals, Directors, and Staff for all working together.

Mr. Lamb went on to state that Town Council Finance Committee Chairman Tony Saccone reached out to the Board of Education and provided some suggestions, which the Board of Education was going to discuss and perhaps implement as they go forward to improve the budget process next year. He stated that he would turn over the Board of Education's proposed Budget Presentation to School Superintendent Jason Hartling.

Superintendent Hartling thanked Mr. Lamb and everyone for joining them tonight, both online and present here at the Ledyard Middle School Auditorium. He stated the Board of Education's proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget was in the amount of $40,667,242. This was an increase of $2,297,429 or 5.98% over the current Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget.

Superintendent Hartling stated before he gets into the actual budget that he wanted to begin with the School District's Mission Statement; explaining that the Board of Education went through a Comprehensive Strategic Planning Process.

- ***Mission Statement***

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

- ***Strategies***
  - ✓ Enhancing partnerships within and beyond the schools;
  - ✓ Providing opportunities for all students; and
  - ✓ Ensuring active and engaged learning.

- ***District Priorities***

Superintendent Hartling reviewed the School District's Priorities as follows:

- Continuing opportunities for students in alignment with the Strategic Plan;
- Successful launch of the new literacy program (in compliance with the State of CT mandate) to benefit our students;
- Ongoing professional growth and support of our educators and staff;
- Continue enhancements and evolution of our intervention model;
- Continue to address and ameliorate achievement gaps and the number of students below basic on the Smarter Balanced Achievement Consortium English Language Arts and the Math (SBAC).

- Key Budget Changes

Superintendent Hartling provided an overview of Key Changes in the Education Budget as follows:

- $113,500 Security Enhancements.

- $710,619 Inflationary Adjustments include the following:

  - ✓ $68,980 Miscellaneous Adjustments.

  - ✓ $77,000 Transportation – Ledyard has the lowest Transportation Contract in the region.

  - ✓ $44,800 Utilities – Due in part to the Public Benefit Charge - Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA).

  - ✓ $482,569 Special Education - Superintendent Hartling explained that Ledyard's Student Services was an ongoing area of challenge, noting that this was a statewide issue. He stated the costs or outplacement services continues to skyrocket for support such as Speech, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy. However, he stated the biggest Special Education driver was transportation. He explained that although transportation was part of their general role, that special education transportation was broken out because it needed to be included in their special education total costs. He also addressed new students or students who have been recently identified for special education.

- Increased literacy intervention capacity with High Dosage Tutoring.

- 4.0 FTE Paraeducators to support regular and special education programing - This was actually equivalent to 6 staff personnel, because they do not work a full schedule.

- 3.0 FTE Elementary STEM Teachers & Materials – Mr. Hartling explained that Ledyard had secured about $1 million dollars in Department of Defense Education Activity Grants (DODEA), which was a springboard that provided a lot of the curriculum work and professional learning that the Board of Education was required to do; and has been doing over the last several years. However, he stated that the DODEA Grants were sunsetting; and now they would have to continue with that curriculum work and materials. He noted that he wanted to be explicitly clear, these were all things that they would have had to do regardless of whether they had received the DODEA Grant funding. He stated that receiving the DODEA Grant provided a savings for their taxpayers over the last several years.

- Budget Prioritization/Recommendations

Superintendent Hartling stated as they have in past years, the following budget requests were prioritized and color coded and he reviewed the following:

Board of Education Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget Recommendations that have been included in the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget:

Green Recommended to be Included in the Budget

$668,939

REQUEST	ESTIMATED COST	LOCATION	TYPE
3.0 FTE Elementary STEM	$193,896	Curriculum	Salary
Elementary STEM Materials	$4,500	Elementary	Equipment
Increase TEAM Mentor Payment to $750 a year	$9,983	Curriculum	Salary
General Curriculum Supplies	$4,700	Curriculum	Supplies
Central Office Surge Capacity	$3,120	Curriculum	Salary
Intervention Resources	$15,000	Curriculum	Supplies
Math Learning Center K-5 (student books, manipulatives, intervention resources)	$17,62	Curriculum	Supplies
Curriculum Associates iReady/Ready Classroom 6-8 (ELA & Math)	$44,266	Curriculum	Supplies
Textbook – General Instruction (increase over prior year)	$16,772	Curriculum	Supplies
DreamBox	$25,728	Curriculum	Supplies
Forefront Platform K-5	$5,736	Curriculum	Supplies
Ignite -Literacy Intervention Program	$50,000	Curriculum	Professional Services
Various Athletic Expense Increases	$31,450	LHS Athletics	Other

Blue Reduction to Budget

-$139,915

REQUEST	ESTIMATED COST	LOCATION	TYPE
Initial Purchase reduction for Grade 4-5 Teachers & Interventionist Ipads	-$,6825	Curriculum	Equipment
Reduction from Year 1 cost of mandated Literacy Program	-$48,000	Curriculum	Supplies
Discontinue Usage of Lexia Software	-$15,000	Curriculum	Supplies
Reduction in non-dedicated ambulance service	-$1,350	LHS Athletics	Professional Services
Expected Heating Oil Decrease	-$25,000	Maintenance	Supplies
Reduction in initial costs for program from prior year	-$15,000	LMS	Equipment
Reduction in initial supplies- Unified Arts	-$4,500	LMS	Supplies
Remove/Discontinue CABE	-$19,000	Districtwide	Other

Yellow Considered for Inclusion in the Budget

$1,250,384

REQUEST	ESTIMATED COST	LOCATION	TYPE
BMS System Parts GHS & JWL	$35,000	Maintenance	Supplies
Late Bus LHS & LMS	$167,582	Transportation	Professional Services
Advanced Email Filtering/Attack Prevention	$14,400	Technology	Professional Services
Behavior Interventionists (2)	$72,772	Student Services	Professional Services
BCBA	$210,000	Student Services	Professional Services
Math Coach (2)	$190,000	Elementary	Salary
1.0 FTE Instructional Coach LMS	$86,286	Curriculum	Salary
1.0 FTE ELA Interventionist MS	$86,286	Curriculum	Salary

(Continued) *REQUEST*	*ESTIMATED COST*	*LOCATION*	*TYPE*
1.0 FTE Math Interventionist MS	$86,286	Curriculum	Salary
Art Display 200 Hallway (Locker Removal)	$11,000	LHS	Other
1.0 FTE English Teacher	$64,632	LHS	Salary
1.0 FTE Mathematics Teacher	$64,632	LHS	Salary
Content Facilitator Stipends	$6,888	LHS	Salary
Assistant Maintenance Director	$75,000	Maintenance	Salary
Attendance Home Visitor (2)	$78,000	Student Services	Salary

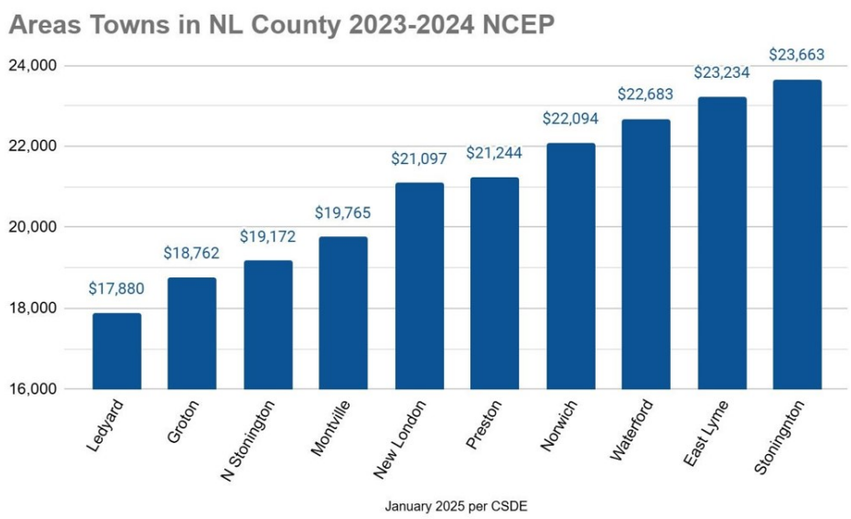
Red Considered for Inclusion in Future Budget

$870,558

REQUEST	ESTIMATED COST	LOCATION	TYPE
1.0 FTE Band Teacher (add .50 JWL & GHS)	$64,632	Elementary	Salary
Transition Kindergarten Teacher; est MA3	$57,520	GFS	Salary
Transition Kindergarten Teacher; est MA3	$57,520	GHS	Salary
General Interventionist; est MA3	$57,520	LMS	Salary
Director of Curriculum	$140,000	Curriculum	Salary
Expand Pre-K (3 Teachers; 6 Paraprofessionals)	$345,000	Student Services	Salary
2 Elementary World Language Teachers	$127,166	Curriculum	Salary
Grade Level Field Experience	$15,500	LMS	Professional Services
Disc Golf Course	$5,700	LHS	Equipment

- Per Pupil Expenditure

Superintendent Hartling stated although he did not like to make comparisons that he wanted to present the following chart below regarding other towns in Southeastern Connecticut:



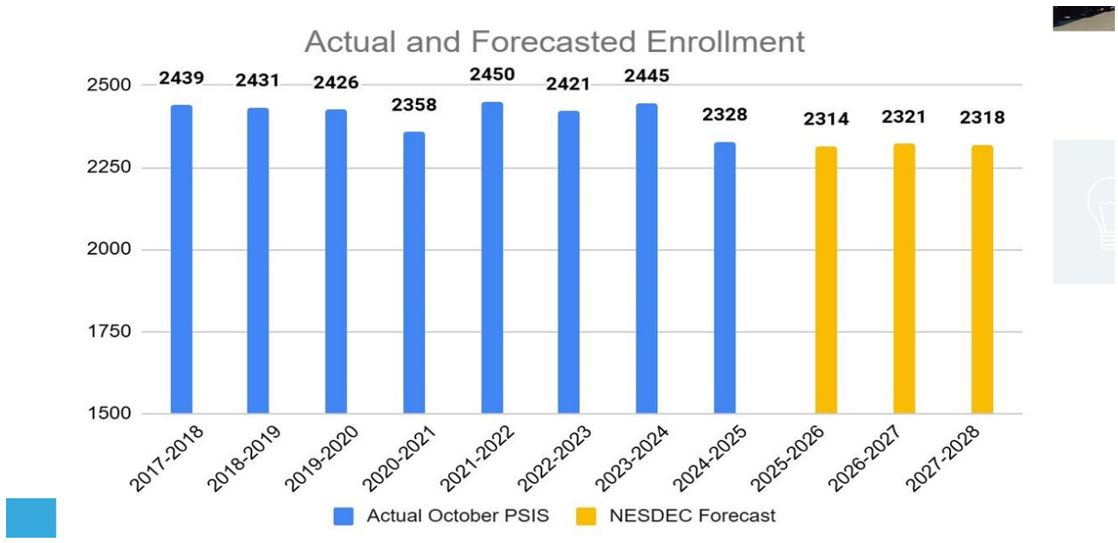
Superintendent Hartling stated that their Teachers, Staff, and every Member of the Team were working incredibly hard and incredibly efficient to get the gains that they were getting; noting that they did not have enough funding in Ledyard to do what they needed to do for the student profile and based on the academic needs to keep moving forward. He stated that they were not in a situation where they have a lot of extra cash, noting that the Teams in the schools were wearing a lot of hats.

Mr. Hartling stated the next lowest Per Pupil expenditure was Groton, who had $846,000 more than Ledyard to support their students.

- ***Student Enrollment***

Superintendent Hartling stated Student Enrollment was projected to stay relatively stable, noting that this was subject to change. He stated if they put 1,000 more housing units in town, that may change the enrollment scenario.

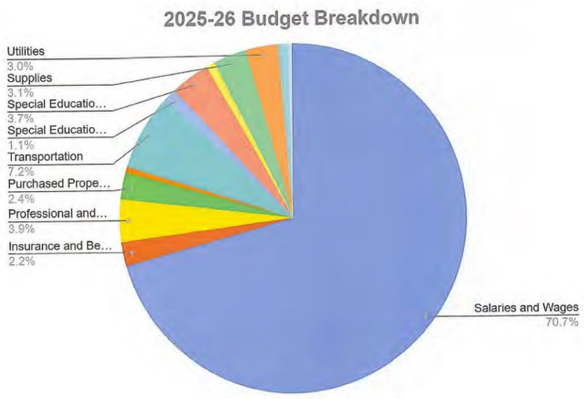
Superintendent Hartling went on to explain that they were seeing an ongoing need profile of about 21% of their students being identified as having a disability, which continues to have a strain on the system. He stated that this also impacted their ability to deliver services, noting that this was a statewide trend.



❖ *Budget Expenditures:*

Superintendent Hartling explained that $939,000 of this budget request included increases related to agreed upon contractual increases for six (6) bargaining units, and non-Union employees.

- 70.7 % Salary and Wages
- 3% Utilities
- 3.1 Supplies
- 3.79% Special Education
- 7.2% Transportation
- 2.4% Other Purchases Services
- 1.9% Purchases Property Services
- 3.9% Professional Technology
- 2.2% Insurance and Benefits (*This does not include Healthcare costs).*



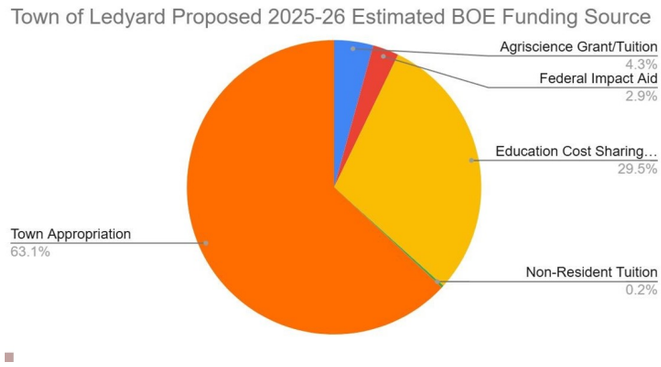
❖ *Projected Revenues:*

Superintendent Hartling reviewed the Board of Education's Funding Sources as follows:

Revenues

Revenue	Program	Actual 2022/2023	Actual 2023/2025	Town Budget 2024/2025 (Munis)`	Proposed 2025/2026	Difference
State/Federal Revenues						
	FPL 503 (Impact Aid)	$1,558,207	$1,804,635	$1,050,000	$1,164,411	$114,441
	Agri-Science- Operating	$1,051,239	$1,019,200	$850,000	$1,331,385	$481,385
	Education Cost Sharing (ECS)	$11,475,245	$11,547,735	$11,904,119	$12,016,278	$112,079
Sub Total State/Federal Revenue		$14,084,691	$14,371,570	$13,804,199	$14,512,104	$707,905
Tuition Revenues						
	Non-Resident Regular Education	$43,470	$71,867	$44,772	$62,680	$17,908
	Non-Resident Spec. Education	$126,736	$60,559	$82,086	$25,500	-$56,586
	Agri-Science	$728,355	$829,361	$764,176	$411,563	-$352,163
Sub Total Tuition		$898,561	$961,787	$891,034	$499,743	-$391,291
Total Education Revenues		**$14,983,252**	**$15,333,357**	**$14,695,233**	**$15,011,847**	**$316,614**

Superintendent Hartling stated that Ledyard had some additional sources of revenue that were not typical for most communities, such as the revenue they receive for the Agricultural Science Program and from Impact Aid. He presented the pie chart below showing the breakdown of revenues as follows:



- 63.1% Town Appropriation (Tax Revenue).

- 0.2% Non-Resident Tuition.

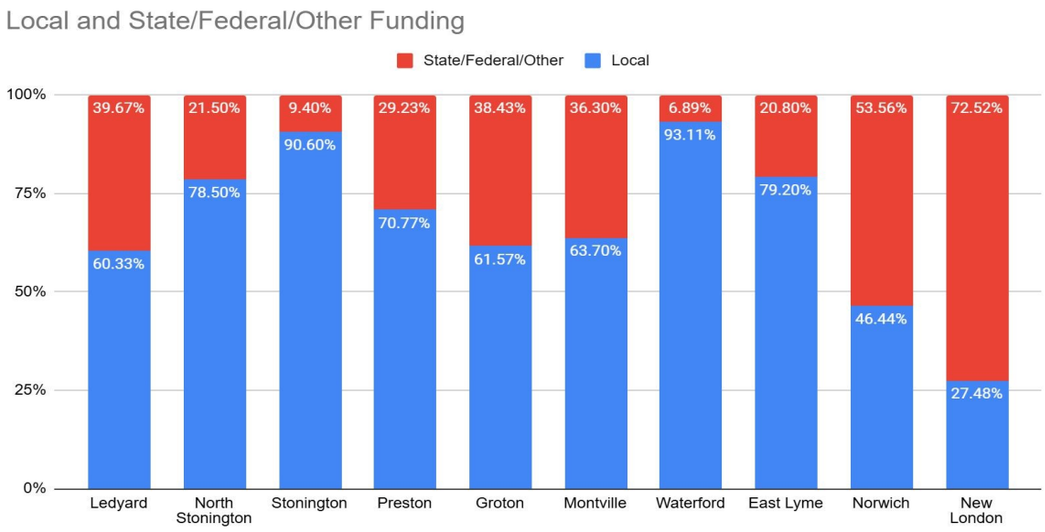
- 29.5% Excess Cost Sharing – Superintendent Hartling noted the State pushed through $40 million for Special Education; which the Governor has signed off on. He noted the State's formula to address high-cost students with disabilities was confusing. He explained that the way it worked was that the Town had to spend 4.5 times their per pupil expenditure and then the State would reimburse the town for the amount over that. He stated Ledyard's per pupil expenditure of $17,888 X 4.5= 80,496; noting that they budget 72%. However, he stated that instead of receiving grant funding based on 72% of their per pupil cost, they were only receiving grant reimbursement based on about 64% of their actual costs. He went on to state that this happens statewide; and therefore, the formula adjustment would only bring them back to where they were from a parity standpoint. He stated the other piece of this was that Ledyard had less students. He stated that they work hard to keep their costs down, however, he explained that was part of the risk relative to Special Education, noting that it was complex and that they worked to build all associated costs into their Special Education Per Pupil Expenditure. He stated that State Senator Cathy Osten has been receptive to Ledyard's concerns relative to that. He stated had the Legislature not fixed it; that they would have had to look for other ways to fill that gap within the current fiscal year budget.

- 2.9 % Impact Aid – Superintendent Hartling stated Ledyard has been working to maximize their Impact Aid by increasing awareness regarding the value of completing the request forms to identify eligible families.

- 4.3% Agri-Science – Superintendent Hartling noted the State has changed the funding stream for the Agricultural Science Progrm explaining they removed them from a Tuition-Based system to relying on State Grant funding. He stated that they were prohibited from charging anything over 58%; or had to charge 58% less for the Agri-Science Tuition this fiscal year, noting that the State tried to subsidize the difference with Grant Funding. He stated that this was going to be an interesting calculus as we move forward because it was not funded in future years. He stated that the Legislature still had some work to do because the language was unclear. He stated right now the language reads that they have to spend any of that extra grant money (about $800,000) on new spending just for the Agri-Science Program this year; which was not a reasonable situation. Therefore, he stated that the Legislature was supposedly contemplating a fix for that language, noting at this point the Board of Education was suggesting that they would have about $316,000 in Revenues based on educational activities.

Superintendent Hartling stated in response to some questions that he compiled a comparison of school funding sources for Ledyard and nearby districts. He stated as they have discussed for many years, Ledyard Public Schools spends less per pupil than surrounding school districts and ranks among the lowest-funded 10% in the state. The data below outlines the share of school funding covered by local taxpayers versus state, federal, and other sources.

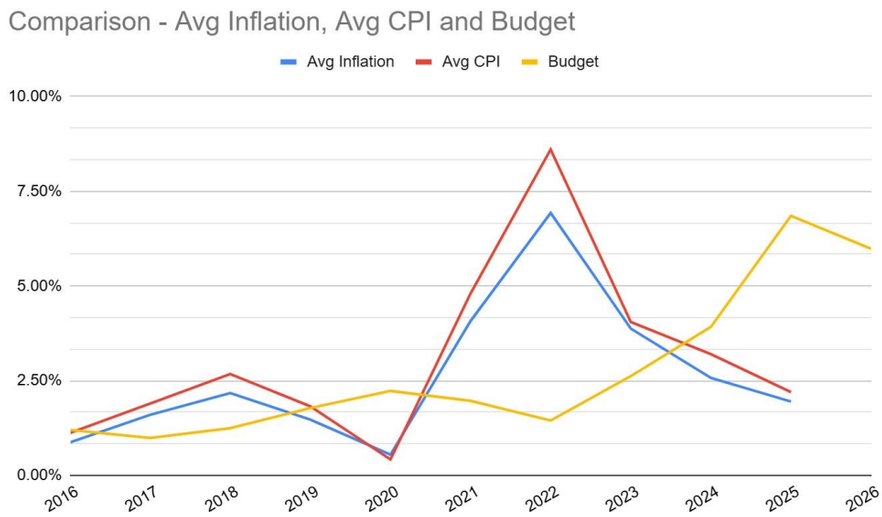
% Per Pupil Expenditure Paid by 2022/2023 Taxpayers



Ledyard spends and contributes less per student than comparable suburban and rural districts.

Superintendent Hartling stated as expected, higher-poverty districts like Norwich and New London received significantly more State and Federal funding as a percentage of their budget. He stated while these school districts benefit from greater external support, Norwich taxpayers still contribute more money per student than Ledyard taxpayers, whereas New London taxpayers cover a much smaller portion per student. He noted that New London was an anomaly in this area, and that they needed to be careful in their comparison because New London was a "*Magnet School District"* with tuition students and supplemental State funding that skews their data. He stated without the tuition payments from other districts and the Magnet Grants that New London would most likely mirror Norwich's taxpayer percentage.

Superintendent Hartling went on to state in response to a question on how the Board of Education's Budget compared to inflation that he added the ten-year (2016-2026) Graph below to his presentation this evening:



Superintendent Hartling stated that School Districts do not respond to inflation like our houses do. He explained because of the length of their contracts that the impact of inflation can lag behind by two years or so. He noted as an example that the Board of Education had a multi-year contract when the oil and electric prices spiked, which minimized that impact for them. However, he stated that those things were now coming to roost, noting that Ledyard had one

of the most competitive Transportation (Bus) Contracts in the region, stating that they mitigated the 17% - 20% increases that other school districts saw two or three years ago. He stated last year they had to renew the Transportation Contract which would run for three years. He stated the same was true for their Labor Contracts, explaining that this year two of their six bargaining units were in negotiations, and that next year they would be in negotiations with the Teachers Union, which was their largest bargaining unit.

Superintendent Hartling pointed out that in running the numbers Finance Director Kenneth Knight found that had Ledyard Public Schools followed inflation their budgets would have been about $1.9 million higher. He stated that inflation was interesting because when the Board of Education was below inflation everyone was happy; however, he stated when the Board of Education's budget numbers spikes above inflation that people ask why.

Superintendent Hartling went on to address their estimated revenues, noting that the Board of Education's revenue numbers were based on the feedback they received from the State of Connecticut, noting that they expect their revenues from School Related Activities to increase by about $316,000. However, he explained that the only oddity was how the State changed the Agri-Science Funding, as he mentioned earlier. He explained that Ledyard High School's Agricultural Science Program has been predominantly funded by tuition from the sending towns. However, he explained that the State has now mandated Ledyard to reduce its tuition because the State was going to increase Agriscience Operating Grant Funding. Therefore, he stated that they would see a spike in that operating grant, which would almost completely offset the decrease in Agri-Science Tuition. Therefore, he noted that there would be a $352,000 decrease in the Agri-Science Tuition and a $481,000 increase in the Agri-Science Operating Grant Funding. He explained that all Agri-Science Revenue received must be spent directly on the Agri-Science Program.

Superintendent Hartling thanked everyone for their time this evening. He stated he hoped they found the information he provided valuable. He stated that residents could send any questions to him directly at: jhartling@ledyard.net; or to the Board of Education, noting that they would respond, and any questions that were germane to the community, they have been putting those on the Board of Education's website under the FAQ Tab.

Chairman Rodriguez thanked Councilor Saccone and Superintendent Hartling for their presentations.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENTS (Please limit to 3 minutes)

Chairman Rodriguez opened the floor to Public Comment, and she asked that residents come up to the podium and state their name and address for the record.

Mr. Mike Cherry, 5 Whippoorwill Drive, Gales Ferry, thanked the Board of Education, the Town Council, Mayor Allyn, III, and Superintendent Hartling for their work in preparing and presenting the proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget. He stated that he was not an educator or a real estate agent; and therefore, he had to assume they all put their best foot forward with the proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget; and that he believed the numbers they provided were correct. However, he stated that he had the following questions:

- ***Mil Rate Stabilization Fund*** - Mr. Cherry stated that he did not agree with using $1,304,675 from the Mil Rate Stabilization Fund to reduce the mil rate increase. He stated that there were many unknowns going into next year, including the 2025 Revaluation. He stated that his experience after living in Ledyard for 40 years, with multiple Revaluations, that the people who lived in the Highlands, or Christy Hill would always see a larger delta increase in their taxes than those who lived in Pheasant Run. He stated three homes in that neighborhood have sold for more than $500,000, noting that there no longer seemed to be a ceiling in the real estate market. He stated that he would never have thought that the first house his parents bought for $12,000 many years ago would someday sell $500,000. Therefore, he stated that the Town should hold off on using the Mil Rate

Stabilization Fund in the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget, noting that he realized by not using the Mil Rate Stabilization Fund that the mil rate would increase by 3.76 mils instead of the 2.7 mil increase that was being presented this evening.

- ***In-Kind Expenses*** – Mr. Cherry noted at the Town Council's April 9, 2025 meeting that Mr. Murray questioned: (1) How Ledyard formatted their budget; and (2) Recording the Board of Education expenses that currently reside on the General Government side of the budget ledger. Mr. Cherry stated that he looked at the *In-Kind Expenses* and that he agreed with Mr. Murray's comments. He stated that recording the expenses for the Board of Education's *In-Kind Expenses* on the education side of the budget ledger was only an accounting move, explaining that the town was still going to pay for those expenses. However, he stated by recording those expenses on the education side of budget ledger that it would give residents more visibility.

  Mr. Cherry stated in looking at the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) that one of the Municipal Fiscal Indicators was the real estate market. He stated when people look at the town's mil rate; that they should also look at the prices of homes in Ledyard, which have increased by 60%.

- ***Per Pupil Expenditure Comparison*** - Mr. Cherry commented on the comparison between the Town of East Lyme ($23,234) and Ledyard ($17,880), noting that the dela was $5,354. He stated that Ledyard had 2,314 Students and if they increased their per pupil expenditure by $5,354 that they would be looking at another $12,389,156; and he stated that it was never going to happen in Ledyard.

- ***Budget Presentations***- Mr. Cherry stated that the Reports were great, easy to read, and made sense. He stated the **Blue**, **Green**, **Yellow**, and **Red** Lists in the Board of Education's presentation showed that they were making hard decisions. He stated that they would all like to have more interventionists; and more pre-k transition people.

- ***Mil Rate Increase per Household*** – Mr. Cherry noted that during the General Government's Budget Presentation that Councilor Saccone provided an example of what the projected 2.76 mil increase would cost taxpayers. He stated that he agreed that a four-bedroom home would see a $50.00 per month increase in their property tax. However, he stated the way they were seeing the housing market increase that it appeared that people like to live in Ledyard, and therefore, he thought that an additional $50.00 per month was worth it. He stated in looking at the equalized mil rate, which was based on the housing market, that Ledyard was lagging behind by a couple of years.

- ***ALICE Report*** – (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed**) –** Mr. Cherry stated according to the ALICE Report Ledyard's Median Income was about $98,000 for a family of four (2 adults, one infant, one preschooler). He stated that based on the United Way of Southeastern Connecticut Report that a family of four need to be earning $100,000 a year. Therefore, he stated that more than half of Ledyard's residents were in trouble if they get a flat tire, or the washing machine, or refrigerator breaks noting that something was not going to get done. He stated that kids were not going to get shoes, and they would be eating oatmeal instead of bacon and eggs.

- ***Tax Structure*** – Mr. Cherry stated that Ledyard needed to figure out how to change their Tax Structure. He noted that only 5% of our taxes come from Commercial, Retail, and Industrial Properties, noting that the challenge was how do they increase that. He stated after the 2025 Revaluation they would also find that not only would the value of median priced homes appreciate more than the higher priced homes, but that the Industrial, Retail Commercial numbers would decrease. He stated that this was going to create another problem for them next year.

  Mr. Cherry concluded his comments by stating for all of these reasons he was not in-favor of using the Mil Rate Stabilization Fund in the upcoming Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget. Thank you.

Mrs. Mary McGrattan, 7 Lynn Drive, Ledyard, addressed the expenses listed in the **Yellow** Box in the Board of Education's proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget and she questioned "*Attendance Home Visitors – Full-Time Employees*". Superintendent Hartling explained that Ledyard has recovered well from an attendance standpoint, stating that this was for adults to visit the homes of students who were missing a significant number of days of school to collaborate with the families to figure out how to support getting their children back to school. He stated if the children were not in school they cannot learn. He went on to explain that the State has supported this program.

Chairman Rodriguez thanked the residents for their comments.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Rodriguez noted the upcoming dates for the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget:

Annual Town Meeting – Monday, May 19, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.
Referendum – Tuesday, May 20, 2025- 6:00 a.m.– 8:00 p.m.

Hearing no additional public comments, Chairman Rodriguez adjourned the public hearing at 8:01 p.m.

Chairman Rodriguez thanked everyone for attending tonight's Public Hearing.

_____
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 Public Hearing
Meeting held on April 21, 2025.

_____
S. Naomi Rodriguez, Chairman