



TOWN OF LEDYARD
CONNECTICUT
TOWN COUNCIL
HYBRID FORMAT

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Ledyard, CT 06339

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Roxanne Maher
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Chairman S. Naomi Rodriguez

MINUTES
FINANCE COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING

Wednesday, April 17, 2024

5:00 PM

Annex Meeting Room - Video Conference

DRAFT

- I. **CALL TO ORDER** - The Meeting was called to order by Committee Chairman Councilor Saccone at 5:00 p.m. at the Council Chambers Town Hall Annex Building.

Councilor Saccone welcomed all to the Hybrid Meeting. He stated for the Town Council Finance Committee 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-Legistar Meeting Portal.

- II. **ROLL CALL**

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Location	Arrived	Departed
Jessica Buhle	Town Councilor	Present	Remote	5:00 pm	6:41 pm
Tim Ryan	Town Councilor	Present	In-Person	5:00 pm	6:41 pm
Tony Saccone	Town Councilor	Present	In-Person	5:00 pm	6:41 pm
S. Naomi Rodriguez	Town Council Chairman	Present	In-Person	5:00 pm	6:41 pm
Carmen Garcia-Irizarry	Town Councilor	Present	In-Person	5:00 pm	6:41 pm
Fred Allyn, III	Mayor	Present	In-Person	5:00 pm	6:41 pm
Matthew Bonin	Finance Director	Present	In-Person	5:00 pm	6:41 pm
John Rich	Police Chief	Present	In-Person	5:00 pm	6:41 pm
Jacob Hurt	Resident	Present	In-Person	5:00 pm	pm
Roxanne Maher	Administrative Assistant	Present	Remote	5:00 pm	6:41 pm

- III. **RESIDENTS AND PROPERTY OWNERS COMMENTS**

Mr. Jacob Hurt, 6 Nugget Hill Drive, Gales Ferry, stated the reason he was interested in attending tonight’s Finance Committee was because this was the meeting following the Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget Public Hearing that was held on April 15, 2024, at which they would consider the public’s input regarding the proposed budget. He stated that first he wanted to say that he was disappointed with some of the decorum and outbursts that happened at Monday night’s Public Hearing. He stated while he appreciated the work that the Finance Committee did to prepare the budget that he felt that it got sidetracked by some of the behavior he saw there. He stated Robert Rules 21 & 61 give the Chairman the ability to enforce meeting decorum and call a member to order if they were not doing what they were supposed to do. He stated more importantly it gives them a chance to take a recess. He stated he was not here to debate whether or not the Chairman was too fast on the gavel; or whether what was said was improper. But that he also woke up this

morning to various accusations of violation of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) because the video that came across looked like it got short and other sorts of stuff. He stated that he did not have a degree to debate that. He stated if they needed a minute that members could call for a recess. He stated rules were not meant to be a straitjacket, noting that they should be a guide. He stated the transparency that he was seeing from this group was vital, because he was not getting anywhere from the State or Federal level. So he was counting on here, and that he appreciated the thorough, diligent, bipartisan work that the Finance Committee and all eighteen Elected Officials did to get this budget ready to go. He stated he was interested to see what comes out tonight. Thank you.

Councilor Saccone thanked Mr. Hurt for his comments.

IV. PRESENTATIONS/INFORMATIONAL ITEMS – None.

V. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF PRIOR MEETING MINUTES

MOTION to approve the Finance Committee Meeting Minutes of April 3, 2024
Moved by Councilor Buhle, seconded by Councilor Ryan

VOTE: 3 – 0 Approved and so declared

VI. FINANCE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Finance Director Matthew Bonin reported on the following: (1) Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Mil Rate Stabilization – Mr. Bonin noted when the current year's budget was prepared it included the use of \$1 million from the Mil Rate Stabilization Fund. However, he stated at this point in the fiscal year, that they may not need to use the full \$1 million at year end; (2) Bond Anticipation Note Issuance School(s) Consolidation/Improvement Projects (Middle School & Gallup Hill School) – Mr. Bonin stated the Town's \$9.78 million Bond Anticipation Notes (BAN) would mature on May 1, 2024. He stated the Town was still waiting for the State to release the \$8 million Progress Payment to them. He stated today the Town opened the Bids for the next round of BAN's which were in the amount of \$10 million to provide additional funding for the School Roof Projects. He stated all of the Purchasers offered a 4.5% Coupon, however, he stated the Town selected the Bid that offered a \$13,000 Premium, which was money that would come back to the town and would be deposited into the Mil Rate Stabilization Fund, explaining the Premiums offered for Short-Term Issuances tend to be lower. He stated these Short-Term BAN's would mature in August, 2024; noting that the Town has submitted/filed all the paperwork required to the State, and that they would be meeting with the State Department of Administrative Services (DAS) tomorrow.

Mil Rate Stabilization Fund: Councilor Buhle noted that both the Fiscal Year 2023/2024 and the 2024/2025 planned to use \$1 million from the Mil Rate Stabilization Fund; therefore, she questioned the balance in the Fund. Mayor Allyn, III, explained that assuming the Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget uses \$1 million from the Mil Rate Stabilization Fund that the balance

would be \$3.7 million. Councilor Buhle stated if the town does not use the budgeted \$1 million Mil Rate Stabilization Funding either year or next year that the Fund balance would be \$5.7 million. She questioned whether Finance Director Matthew Bonin had any idea of the amount that would be needed from the Mil Rate Stabilization Fund for the current year (fy 23/24). Mr. Bonin explained although the end of the year was June 30, 2024 that the budget would not be closed until sometime in August to allow time for all the invoices for expenses incurred thru June 30, 2024 were paid, noting that final numbers would not be available until October, 2024.

VII. FINANCIAL REPORTS

Finance Director Matthew Bonin stated the following Financial Reports were attached to the Agenda on the meeting portal:

- Revenue Year-to Date Report- March 31, 2024

Mr. Bonin provided an overview of Revenues noting the following:

- ✓ Tax Collection Revenues were at 98.9% of budgeted.
- ✓ Impact Aid was projected to fall short by \$250,000 from budgeted.
- ✓ Interest on Deposits has earned \$759,000; which was \$458,000 more than budgeted

- Expenditure Year-to Date Report- March 31, 2024

Mr. Bonin provided an overview of Expenditures noting the following:

- ✓ Specially Approved Counsel was currently over budget by \$22,000.
- ✓ Defined Contribution Expense was trending to be over budget by \$9,000 – Mr. Bonin explained in some of the new contracts the match rate was higher than the previous contract. He stated as new employees were being hired they were coming into the Defined Contribution Plan; noting that the town's contribution would continue to increase.
- ✓ Police Salaries were over budget due to Contract Settlements.
- ✓ Public Works Budget – Although some lines within the Department were over budget that overall the budget was in good shape.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

1. MOTION to recommend the Town Council appropriate \$12,872.00 to Account #21020101-57300 (Police New Equipment); and authorize the expenditure of up-to \$12,872.00 to purchase equipment to support the *High Risk Rural Road Speed Enforcement Program*.

Moved by Councilor Buhle, seconded by Councilor Ryan

Discussion: Police Chief John Rich provided some background stating at their January 24,

2024 meeting the Town Council authorized the Mayor to submit 2024 High Risk Rural Road Speed Enforcement Program Grant for the Police Department. He stated the Grant Program was aimed at reducing the amount of speed related fatalities and injuries on Connecticut's High Risk Rural Roads. He stated that the town was notified that Ledyard's Grant Application was approved explaining that the *High Risk Rural Road Speed Enforcement Funding* was a 100% reimbursable Grant Program to support personnel costs for speed enforcement and to purchase equipment such as speed measuring devices. Therefore, he stated the Police Department was requesting the appropriation of funds to pay for speed measuring equipment as reflected in the two quotes provided as follows:

- Stalker Radar Equipment \$6,500 (two units)
- Source Well Solar Radar Signs \$6,372 (two signs)

Councilor Buhle questioned how many solar speed signs the town would have, noting that she has seen some signs around town. Chief Rich explained that the State gave two speed signs to each Municipality. However, he stated they have had some maintenance issues with trying to keep one of the signs operating. He stated the Police Department periodically moves the speed signs around town when they were conducting traffic studies, or if they have received complaints about speeding, explaining that the equipment provided data such as traffic count, speeds, etc.,

Councilor Saccone questioned whether the Police Department has seen motorist's behavior, such as slowing down, with the use of the speed signs. Chief Rich stated that they have seen positive results with the use of the speed signs. Councilor Buhle stated she agreed motorists' behavior does change with the speed signs. However, she stated they have noticed that after the speed signs were moved to a different location that the motorists behavior has reverted back.

Councilor Buhle questioned whether \$12,872.00 was the most they could receive from the 2024 High Risk Rural Road Speed Enforcement Program Grant. Chief Rich explained that the Program would allow Police Departments to submit for up-to \$60,000 (personnel, shifts, overtime, etc.). However, he stated the program was designed to run from March 31, 2024 to May 31, 2024 explaining that \$12,872.00 was what Ledyard could reasonably support. He stated he attended a Progress Meeting with the State earlier this week, noting that they had a conversation about the State supporting Ledyard with additional Highway Safety Funding for State Highway Roads, such as Route 12, Route 214, Route 117, and other roads that were designated as High Risk Rural Roads. Councilor Buhle stated the reason she questioned whether they could receive more funding was to purchase additional speed signs noting that people do slow down when they see them.

Councilor Ryan stated that he agreed with Councilor Buhle that drivers do slow down when the speed signs light up and flash the speed that they were traveling. However, he stated that he thought the signs had more of an impact on residential roads than on state highways.

Councilor Ryan addressed the datasets the speed signs collected and stored; and he questioned whether the town would need to pay for a service to store the data. Chief Rich stated that currently the Police Department’s only experience with the speed signs and dataset was with the signs that they received from the State, explaining that the state managed the datasets and sent them reports. He stated because the town would be on their own with the speed signs they owned, that Ledyard has requested the State collect the datasets, noting that they would receive seven years of support. Councilor Ryan questioned the cost for the service after seven years. Chief Rich stated that he did not have that information.

VOTE: 3 – 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT: APPROVE TO RECOMMEND 3 – 0
MOVER: Jessica Buhle, Town Councilor
SECONDER: Tim Ryan, Town Councilor
AYES: Jessica Buhle, Tim Ryan, Tony Saccone

The Finance Committee thanked Chief Rich for attending tonight's meeting.

- 2. MOTION to recommend the Town Council authorize overspending Account #10110101-5310 (Legal Fee) thru June 30, 2024. Funding to be transferred to Account #10110101-5310 (Legal Fee) at year end.

Moved by Councilor Ryan, seconded by Councilor Buhle
Discussion: Councilor Saccone explained that this Legal Fee Account resided in the Town Council Department Budget to pay for legal expenses for taxation and land issues pertaining to Indian Affairs.

Mayor Allyn, III, stated that he anticipated having an Executive Session with the Town Council sometime in May, 2024 to discuss on-going matters regarding taxation and land issues, as Councilor Saccone mentioned.

Councilor Ryan noted the background information listed the legal fees to date from Perkins Coie. He stated that the town would also be expecting some legal support from Attorney Lloyd Langhammer, and he questioned whether they knew what those costs might be. Mayor Allyn explained that Attorney Langhammer was the town’s tax attorney, noting that next year all of the legal fees would be budgeted separately. He stated that he would provide more information during the upcoming executive session.

VOTE: 3 – 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT: APPROVE TO RECOMMEND 3 – 0
MOVER: Tim Ryan, Town Councilor
SECONDER: Jessica Buhle, Town Councilor
AYES: Jessica Buhle, Tim Ryan, Tony Saccone

3. MOTION to recommend the Town Council adopt a proposed Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget in the amount of \$67,430,573 comprised of:

- General Government: \$29,060,750
- Board of Education: \$38,369,823.

Moved by Councilor Buhle, seconded by Councilor Saccone

Discussion: Councilor Ryan stated that this was the budget that was presented at the April 15, 2024 Public Hearing. He stated that they received comments both in-favor and against the proposed Fiscal Year Budget as presented. He stated at the Finance Committee's Special Meeting that was held on March 25, 2024 he voted against the proposed budget in the total amount of \$67,430,573; and that he planned to do the same tonight. He stated during that meeting he proposed an alternate budget number that would have still given the Board of Education a 6.3% increase over the current years budget (fy 23/24).

Councilor Ryan stated based on some comparisons of surrounding Municipalities that have been made with regard to budget increases slowing in growth over the last few years, that he stated he conducted some additional research. He stated because people liked to compare Ledyard to Montville and Stonington he looked at their budgets. He stated the 6.3% increase in the Education Budget he was proposing was still significantly greater than the budget increases that were being proposed for the Montville (4.5% increase); and Stonington (4.9% increase). He went on to note over the last three budget cycles Ledyard's Education Budget had an accumulative 15.5% increase which was a larger percentage increase than either of those two School Districts (Montville 12.7% & Stonington 14%). Therefore, he stated he did not believe Ledyard was shorting their School District, but rather they were outperforming other School Districts in terms of budgets, in terms of increases year over year, especially in the accumulative sense. He stated the proposed \$38,170,595 which was 6.3% increase included funding for additional services, such as Interventionists Coordinator and increase the Substitute Teachers Pay from \$100 per day to \$125 per day. He stated he called neighboring towns noting that the Substitute Teachers Pay ranged from \$120 per day (Districts similar to Ledyard; \$160 (New London); \$170 per day (Norwich). Therefore, he stated that he believed the proposed Education Budget he proposed was fair.

- MOTION to amend the motion as follows:
MOTION to increase the Board of Education's proposed Fiscal Year 2024/2025 *Operating* Budget by ~~\$315,750~~ *\$115,750* for a revised total of ~~\$38,369,823~~ *\$38,170,595 for a increase of 6.3% over the current year's budget (fy23/24) as proposed by the Board of Education.*

Moved by Councilor Ryan, seconded by Councilor Saccone

Discussion: Councilor Buhle stated she would not support the proposed amendment for the following reasons:

- (1) The Town Council can only provide a dollar amount to reduce the Education Budget. The Town Council cannot tell the Board of Education where to reduce their budget. Therefore, the Board of Education may choose to cut things that the Town Council thought was sensible.
- (2) While they were seeing growth in the Education Budget; Ledyard's Per Pupil Expenditure was still behind the State's average; and they were not closing the gap.
- (3) The proposed Education Budget in the amount of \$38,369,823 made sense.

- (4) The Superintendent's proposed Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget was funding the status quo. The \$315,750 difference between Superintendents proposed Budget the and the Board of Education's adopted Budget, which the Town Council voted on at their March 27, 2024 meeting, was what the Board of Education wanted to see beyond contractual increases.
- (5) Reducing the \$315,750 by \$200,000 would equate to 0.15 mils. Councilor Buhle stated for someone who lived in a house such as her home, it would be a difference of \$31 per year or 2.60 per month.

Councilor Saccone stated is vote to support the Board of Education's proposed budget in the amount of \$38,369,823 was based on his year and half experience working in the School System, noting the facilities needs, mental health support; educational needs, etc. He stated the higher budget number would support the status quo and help Ledyard's School District catch up a little.

Councilor Ryan stated he reviewed the Board of Education's Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget line by line and he talked with multiple people within the School District and in the Administration. He stated he had two school age children as well, and that the last thing he would want to do was hurt the student facing services. However, he stated that he saw that there was room within the Board of Education's budget that would not hurt student facing services; and would in-fact increase the student facing services, as the Board of Education has requested.

Councilor Ryan continued by stating he understood Councilor Buhle's comment about the difference between a 6.85% increase versus a 6.3% increase in terms of a dollar perspective. However, he stated it was the optics, stating they need to ask themselves as a Town Council and as a Board of Education: (1) Whether they were doing the right thing for the taxpayers; (2) Were they doing the best they could; and (3) Was this the best they could do. He stated they should be challenging each other; stating that he understands the tough times people were going through, how expensive things have gotten, how inflation was affecting everything, not just municipal and education budgets, but the personal household budgets of our taxpayers. Therefore, he stated he believed that it was incumbent on him to look at whether they were being good stewards of the taxpayers money. He stated this was the type of work that he does every day where he worked, noting that they wanted to see that you were doing the very best you possibly could. He stated that he was sure that the Board of Education felt that way about the budget passed and that he could appreciate that.

Councilor Ryan addressed the State's Per Pupil Expenditure Average with regard to Ledyard working to close the gap, noting that he believed that Ledyard was closing the gap. He stated although it may not be as fast as some would like, that the numbers he presented earlier this evening demonstrated that Ledyard was outpacing other School Districts right now. He stated Ledyard may be behind in terms of the Per Pupil Expenditure, however, he would encourage residents to visit the Secretary of State's website which provided the breakdown of how the Per Pupil Expenditures were aggregated; and where the costs actually go. He stated they could argue whether or not the Per Pupil Expenditures had a direct relation to the

quality of the education. He stated spending more money does not necessarily provide a better education, noting the real indicators was the empirical evidence you see in the schools, such as how the money was spent, the caliber of teachers they were able to get in the classroom and whether the teachers were able attract and retain the students attention, noting that this was a student facing service. He stated that he believed Ledyard was doing that, rhetorically questioning whether the town could do more, commenting that the town could always do. He stated the point of his comments was to be a good steward of the taxpayers money and show that they were asking the tough questions and keeping an eye toward what the town really needed. He concluded by stating that he appreciated everyone's viewpoint

Councilor Buhle stated she also reviewed the Board of Education's proposed Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget line by line, noting that she wrote down about 200 questions and researched them. She stated that she watched the Board of Education review their budget spreadsheets to create their Wish List and then whittle it down little by little to arrive at their \$38,369,823 budget; therefore, she stated that she felt that the Board of Education did the best they could. She stated the Board of Education was trying to be responsible but deliver what their students need. She expressed concern that if they reduced the Board of Education budget that some of the support programs they have been working to get in place would not be continued. She stated post Covid that there were a lot of children that needed special services, noting that it was a lot for a child to experience something like the Covid Pandemic for two-years during their formative years, stating the impact was not going to easily go away.

Councilor Ryan stated that he agreed with Councilor Buhle's concerns regarding the need to provide special support services, explaining when he reviewed the Board of Education's budget that he wanted to make sure these services were kept in the budget. However, he stated as Councilor Buhle mentioned, unfortunately the Town Council would not get to say as to where the Board of Education should make reductions. He stated that he would hope that the Board of Education would make responsible choices to keep the student facing services and improvements, like the Interventionist Coordinator in-play, and reduce other things that were not student facing, should the Town Council reduce their budget. He stated the Town would have to leave it up to the Board of Education to do the right thing.

Councilor Saccone stated past Town Councils, and past Mayors have been good stewards of the town's money. He stated taking into consideration the taxes required to support the proposed Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget that he continued to support the Board of Education's Budget in the amount of \$38,369,823. He stated that he appreciated Councilor Ryan's comments regarding asking the tough questions and the optics.

Councilor Saccone called for a vote on the Amendment as follows:

MOTION to increase the Board of Education's proposed Fiscal Year 2024/2025 *Operating Budget* by ~~\$315,750~~ *\$115,750* for a revised total of ~~\$38,369,823~~ *\$38,170,595 for an increase of 6.3% over the current year's budget (fy23/24) as proposed by the Board of Education.*

Moved by Councilor Ryan, seconded by Councilor Saccone

VOTE: 1 – 2 Motion Failed (Buhle, Saccone not in favor)

RESULT: MOTION FAILED 1 - 2
MOVER: Tim Ryan, Town Councilor
SECONDER: Tony Saccone, Town Councilor
AYES: Tim Ryan
NAYES: Jessica Buhle, Tony Saccone

Councilor Saccone called for a vote on the Main Motion as follows:

MOTION to recommend the Town Council adopt a proposed Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget in the amount of \$67,430,573 comprised of:

- General Government: \$29,060,750
- Board of Education: \$38,369,823.

Moved by Councilor Buhle, seconded by Councilor Saccone
2 – 1 Approved and so declared (Ryan not in Favor)

VOTE:

RESULT: APPROVE TO RECOMMEND 2 – 1
MOVER: Jessica Buhle, Town Councilor
SECONDER: Tony Saccone, Town Councilor
AYES: Jessica Buhle, Tim Ryan, Tony Saccone

4. Any other New Business proper to come before the Committee.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

1. Continued discussion regarding the status and possible changes to Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and Capital Non-Recurring (CNR) Fund based on the *American Rescue Act* Funding (ARPA) and the process to approve ARPA Projects and expend ARPA Funding.

The Finance Committee, Mayor Allyn, III, and Finance Director Matthew Bonin, discussed the status of the ARPA Projects relative to the allocation of surplus funds from completed projects and to consider and prioritize remaining needs.

Mayor Allyn, stated currently there were only two or three ARPA Projects that have not yet been started. He continued by noting the following:

- ***Sandy Hollow Guiderail Replacement/Installation: \$330,000*** - Mayor Allyn, III, stated the replacement/installation of the Sandy Hollow Guiderails that the Town Council approved to add to the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) projects list at their March 13, 2024 meeting should be completed within the next week.

Councilor Saccone stated with the new Guiderails that the Fire Department may have to go under the guiderail to connect to the draft site on the east end of Route 117. He noted the old guiderail was laying on the ground in that location. However, he stated that he believed they would be okay because there were fire hydrants on Route 117 and a draft site at the parking area.

- **LED Digital Message Sign Ledyard Center Location** – Councilor Buhle stated during the Parks, Recreation & Senior Citizens Commission’s April 16, 2024 meeting they questioned whether the planned location for the Message Sign in Ledyard Center was changed. Mayor Allyn stated the location of the Ledyard Center Digital Message Sign was not changed, noting that the location has always been planned for in-front of the Town Green. He explained the original location of the sign would have been in the State Department of Transportation’s (DOT) right-of-way, which was closer to the road (Route 117). However, he stated after a long battle that the DOT would not permit the Message Sign to be placed in their right-of-way. Therefore, he stated the Message Sign was moved back so that it would be in the curve of the stonewall, noting that the sign would be mounted on 7-8 foot posts. He stated the Town would be required to obtain approval from the DOT to trim the trees, noting that the trees were planted as part of the Ledyard Center Streetscape Project using Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) Grant Funding. However, he stated his contact at the DOT has assured him that the approval to trim the trees would only take a day.
- Councilor Buhle stated she was pleased with the location, noting that some thought it was going to be at the crosswalk where the cones currently were. Mayor Allyn explained that the posts for the Ledyard History sign had rotted, so the sign was taken down and the cones were placed there so no one would fall in the post holes. He stated new posts would be installed and the Ledyard History sign would be put back in place.

Councilor Ryan questioned whether the cost of the LED Digital Message Sign in Ledyard Center would be the same as the one that was recently installed on Route 12 in-front of Gales Ferry Fire Department. Mayor Allyn stated that he believed ARPA Funding budgeted for the two signs should be adequate, noting that the two LED Digital Message Signs would be the same stating that the panel measured 48 X 36. He went on to state there would be a difference in how the two signs were mounted, explaining the sign on Route 12 was installed on the existing sign piers, noting that the State also owned a piece of land in front of the Gales Ferry Fire Department. He went on to explain for the Ledyard Center Message Sign they would be installing 3,000 psi concrete piers to support the 7-8 foot posts and per the DOT they would need to use breakaway bolts so in high winds (110 mph) the sign would come down. He stated that they still had to install conduit and electric to the sign in Ledyard Center.

Chairman Rodriguez addressed the tree in the area of the Ledyard Center Message Sign and she questioned whether the tree could be relocated. Mayor Allyn stated that they would have to look at the cost of digging the tree out and relocating it without damaging the tree. He stated that he could talk to DOT noting that the Town would need to obtain an Encroachment Permit to do work in a State Right-of-Way.

RESULT: CONTINUE

Next Meeting: 04/17/2024; 5:00 p.m.

2. Continued discussion regarding potential uses for the funding received from the National Opioid Settlement Payments.

Mayor Allyn, III stated during the last three weeks Town received \$39,000 from the Sackler Family Trust - Purdue Pharma, and others who were party to the case such as Johnson & Johnson, Teva, Allergan, Walgreens, CVS, and Walmart. He stated that he spoke to Southeastern Regional Action Counsel (SERAC) which was a non-profit organization located in Norwich, that works to engage with the communities of Eastern Connecticut to implement practices to reduce the impact of behavioral health challenges such as substance abuse, etc. He noted at their September 27, 2023 meeting the Town Council appropriated \$36,100 from the National Opioid Settlement Funds to Ledge Light Health District/ Ledyard Prevention Coalition to implement programs to address opioid use disorder and prevention, and to expand access to intervention, treatment, and recovery options. However, he stated he stated that there were other local Organizations such as SERAC that does similar work, noting that the Town Council could also consider other groups/organizations to be recipients of these funds, noting that the Town Council could provide funding to more than one organization. He stated that SERAC would be interested in speaking with the Town Council. Chairman Rodriguez stated the month of May was open for presentations at the Town Council Meeting. Mayor Allyn stated that he would contact SERAC to schedule a presentation. He noted a recent news article reported 98% of Connecticut towns that were receiving Opioid Settlement Funding has not used any of their funding to date. Administrative Assistant Roxanne Maher noted that the Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion had an item on their agenda later this evening to research and vet non-profit organizations in an effort to provide recommendations for the Town Council to consider partnering with for the use of the Opioid Funding.

RESULT: DISCUSSED

Next Meeting: 04/17/2024; 5:00 p.m.

3. Continued discussion regarding potential uses of the revenue received from Public Act No.21-58 “*An Act Concerning Solid Waste Management*” in accordance with “*Resolution Regarding Revenues Received from Beverage Container Surcharges*” adopted on June 8, 2022.
 - **Street Sweeper \$269,000:** Councilor Buhle noted at their April 3, 2024 Finance Committee meeting Public Works Director/Town Engineer Steve Masalin provided some information regarding the need to purchase a Street Sweeper and the potential to share the equipment with neighboring towns. She questioned whether Mr. Masalin had any updates regarding the interest of other towns to participate in a shared program. Mayor Allyn, III, stated that Mr. Masalin talked with the Town of Preston, however, he did not have any additional information to provide this evening. He noted that he would try to get more information from Mr. Masalin that would allow the Finance Committee to continue to discuss the Street Sweeper.

Councilor Ryan questioned whether the rented Street Sweeper was still scheduled to arrive at the end of April. Mayor Allyn stated “Yes”. Councilor Ryan thanked Mayor Allyn, noting that the rental unit would tie the town over for this year.

Councilor Buhle stated the Ledyard Beautification Committee would be doing their “*Trash for Treasure Fill a Dumpster*” roadside clean-up on Sunday, April 21, 2024 for Earth Day. She questioned whether there was a way to allocate some of the *Beverage Container Surcharges (Nip Bottles)* funding to the Beautification Committee to pay for expenses related to the event.

Mayor Allyn stated Public Act No.21-58 “*An Act Concerning Solid Waste Management*” was specific in how the funding could be used noting the following:

- (1) Environmental measures intended to reduce the generation of solid waste;
 - (2) Reduce the impact of litter caused by such solid waste, including, but not limited to, the hiring of a recycling coordinator;
 - (3) The installation of storm drain filters designed to block solid waste and beverage container debris or
 - (4) The purchase of a mechanical street sweeper, vacuum or broom that removes litter, including, but not limited to, such beverage containers and other debris from streets, sidewalks and abutting lawn and turf
- ***Beautification Committee Events:*** Councilor Ryan, Beautification Committee Liaison, stated that he talked to Committee Chairman Jennifer Eastbourne about the use of the Nip Bottle Revenues to help support their Earth Day Roadside Clean-up Event. He stated that allocating some of these funds would help the Beautification Committee with their mission. He stated by allocating some funding to the Beautification Committee ahead of time they would not be caught flat footed for their events.
 - ***Solar Power Trash Compactors:*** Councilor Buhle stated that she was continuing her work to obtain updated quotes for the Solar Powered Trash Compactors with only the trash compactor feature. She also noted that Parks, Recreation & Senior Citizens Director Scott Johnson, Jr. was also working to obtain quotes for the concrete pads to place the units on.
 - ***Staff to Empty Trash at Farmers Markets*** – Councilor Ryan stated at the Finance Committee’s April 3, 2024 meeting Parks, Recreation & Senior Citizens Director Scott Johnson, Jr. discussed using some of the Nip Bottle Revenues to pay part-time staff to empty trash bins and clean-up during the Farmers Market. He stated based on \$20.00 per hour the cost would be about \$180.00 per week for the 14 weeks of the Farmers Market Season, noting that currently the Farmers’ Market was paying for trash dumpster/totes service. He noted that Mr. Johnson stated paying part-time summer staff to empty the trash cans could solve the problem of the trash cans overflowing, noting that between food trucks and Styrofoam containers the trash cans fill up quickly. Councilor Ryan stated the use of these funds would provide a job for a person in the community.

Councilor Buhle stated it was her opinion that emptying trash cans did not fit the intent of Public Act No.21-58 “*An Act Concerning Solid Waste Management*”. She went on to state the reason she suggested the Solar Powered Trash Compactors was because other area towns used the Nip Bottle Revenues to purchase the Trash Compactors, noting that Ledyard would not be towing the line relative to a not-allowed use of the funds. However, she stated that they still had more work to do relative information and costs, etc. before they made a decision on how to use the Nip Bottle Revenues.

Councilor Saccone stated he thought that using the Nip Bottle revenues to hire a part-time person to clean-up and empty trash cans at the Farmers Market was a good use of the funds because if the Town Green was not picked-up that with a little wind, the Farmers Market trash would end up at the front door of the Police Department or the Town Hall.

- ***Food Waste Compost Program:*** Councilor Garcia-Irizarry questioned whether she should talk about the Food Waste Compost Program now or wait until the next item on the agenda (Item #4). Councilor Buhle stated that she thought the Nip Bottle Revenues could be used to pay for Food Waste Compost Program, because: (1) It would reduce *solid waste*; (2) Reduce the need to truck the solid waste out of state.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated that she hoped the Nip Bottle Revenue could be used to pay for the PILOT Food Waste Compost Program, because it would reduce the amount of waste going into the incinerator or being trucked to out of state landfills. She continued by stating that she emailed Blue Earth Mr. Sam King to obtain answers to the following questions that were raised at the Finance Committee’s April 3, 2024 meeting: (1) Contract Term was for one-year; (2) Early termination the cost was a one month fee; (3) Low Participation PILOT would cost about \$3,068 per year. Councilor Garcia-Irizarry suggested during the PILOT Test Program that the Town track the tonnage of the Food Waste and what the cost would have been if it was sent to the incinerator plant or landfills, versus the cost for the Compost Test Program; (4) Blue Earth would pick-up the Food Waste and transport it to Quantum Biopower located in Southington, Connecticut. She stated Quantum Biopower had Anerobic Digesters explaining that this company would compost the food waste and sell it. Councilor Ryan stated that Quantum Biopower would make money by selling the compost they produced from the towns Food Waste. Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated that Councilor Ryan was correct, however, she stated that the Tipping Fees were going to continue to increase, noting that the Town would need to either pay for the Food Scrap tonnage at the Incinerator Plant or pay to Truck it out of state. She stated realistically that the town most likely would not save any money the first year of the PILOT Food Waste Compost Program, however, she stated by diverting the Food Waste, which contained a lot of water and added to weight that they would save money long-term.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry concluded by asking the Finance Committee to consider using the Nip Bottle Revenue (*Revenues Received from Beverage Container Surcharges*) to implement a PILOT Food Waste Compost Program. She recommended the town start with the Low Participation Option estimated to cost \$3,068 per year.

Mayor Allyn stated one of the allowable uses per the Public Act No.21-58 “*An Act Concerning Solid Waste Management*” was to reduce solid waste, noting that the Food Waste Compost Program would reduce the amount of solid waste, therefore, it appeared to meet the requirements of the law. However, he stated for the PILOT Test Program they would need to determine the target audience. He stated some residents have purchased compost bin from SCRRRA through the Town Hall. However, he stated as previously mentioned there were some residents, who lived in apartments, condominiums, or higher density housing areas, that do not have the ability to have a compost bin in their backyard. Therefore, he stated the message would be key to getting residents to bring their Food Waste to the Compost Bins at the Transfer Station.

Councilor Buhle suggested that neighborhoods could work together to have a community based plan to share the task of bringing the Food Waste to the Transfer Station. She noted as an example that one week she could bring the Food Waste to the Transfer Station, and the next week another neighbor would be responsible to bring the Food Waste to the Transfer Station. She agreed that there would be huge education component to make residents aware of PILOT Food Waste Compost Test Program and the importance of participating, relative to reducing their tonnage, reducing their cost to dispose of trash through the tipping fees, and for the environment. She stated that Ledyard was great at coming together to do great things.

Mayor Allyn stated he agreed that the PILOT Food Waste Compost Program would be a precursor to the State’s Legislation that would require all Municipalities to separate their Food Waste by 2028. He also noted SCRRRA Executive Director David Aldridge’s presentation at the Town Council’s April 10, 2024 meeting, noting that SCRRRA may have a more centralized ability to bring the Food Waste to the Compost Facility in Preston.

Councilor Ryan stated he agreed with Mayor Allyn’s comments, and he questioned once SCRRRA gets their Food Waste Compost Facility in Preston fully operational to include residential, whether Ledyard would discontinue their contract with Blue Earth. Mayor Allyn stated the SCRRRA Food Waste Compost Facility would still include a proposed Tipping Fee. Councilor Ryan stated once the SCRRRA Food Waste Compost Facility was fully operational that he would like to see the numbers of the two Facilities (Blue Earth and SCRRRA) noting that it may be advantageous to either stay the course with Blue Earth or to move to SCRRRA.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated that Blue Earth would work with Ledyard to educate the community on the Food Waste to Compost Program. Councilor Ryan questioned whether there would be an additional cost for the education component. Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated “*No*”, that the education campaign would be included as part of their service. She stated the Test Starter Kit at a cost of \$2,188 would include the following:

- 100 - 6 Gallon Container
- 2,500 Compostable Bags.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated as an incentive the Town could offer the first 100 residents to receive the one 6 gallon container and compostable bags for free. Councilor Buhle stated the reason she liked the Starter Kit was because residents would get compostable bags, which would also be required for the SCRRRA Food Waste Compost Facility. She suggested the town also talk with SCRRRA because they sell compost pails for \$6.00 and compost bins for \$45.00. Therefore, she stated the town would be able to purchase 100 compost pails for \$600 dollars versus the \$2,188 for the Blue Earth Starter Kit. Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated she liked the idea to check with SCRRRA about purchasing the compost pails from them, noting that there could be a cost saving. She stated Blue Earth did not require the town to purchase the supplies from them. She stated the only stipulation was that they use **Compostable Bags**, not Biodegradable Bags, or Plastic Bags, which was also a requirement for the SCRRRA Food Waste Compost Facility. She stated that there was a difference between **Compostable Bags** and *Biodegradable Bags*.

Councilor Buhle stated before they could make any decisions regarding the use/allocation of the *Beverage Container Surcharges* (Nip Bottle Revenue) they would need to know the plan for the Street Sweeper. She commented that a few weeks ago they had all this Nip Bottle Revenue and no ideas on how to use the funds, and within a short time they now have all these ideas and not enough Nip Bottle Revenue to support them.

RESULT: DISCUSSED

Next Meeting: 05/15/2024; 5:00 p.m.

4. Continued discussion regarding PILOT Composting Program. (see above – Old Business Item #3)

5. Any Old Business proper to come before the Committee – None.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Buhle moved the meeting be adjourned, seconded by Councilor Saccone.

VOTE: 3 - 0 Approved and so declared, the meeting was adjourned at 6:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Anthony Saccone, Sr.
Committee Chairman
Finance Committee