



TOWN OF LEDYARD
CONNECTICUT
TOWN COUNCIL

Chairman S. Naomi Rodriguez

MINUTES
LEDYARD TOWN COUNCIL – REGULAR MEETING
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 11, 2025; 7:00 PM
HYBRID FORMAT
VIDEO CONFERENCE VIA ZOOM

DRAFT

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

Chairman Rodriguez welcomed all to the Hybrid Meeting. She stated for the members of the Town Council and the Public who were participating via video conference that the remote meeting information was available on the Agenda that was posted on the Town’s Website – Granicus-Legistar Meeting Portal.

- II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

- III. ROLL CALL –

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

- IV. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS/PRESENTATIONS – None.

- V. RESIDENTS AND PROPERTY OWNERS

Mr. Whit Irwin, 2 Winfield Way, Ledyard, stated that he was present this evening to tell the Town Council that he voted “No” on the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget at both the May 20, 2025 Referendum and at the second Referendum on June 10, 2025 noting that inflation in 2022 was 8%; in 2023 it was 3.3%; in 2024 it was 2.95%. He stated after the May 20, 2025 Budget Referendum failed the Finance Committee came up with a plan at their May 21, 2025 meeting. However, he stated the Town Council at their May 26, 2025 meeting threw out the Finance Committee’s recommendations and added more cuts that were frankly disgusting. He stated the Town Council did not address the Board of Education, which was larger side of the budget. He stated instead the Town Council went after the salaries of a few town employees that moved the needle less than five one hundredths of one percent of the budget, noting that it amounted to a penny. Therefore, he stated the budget the Town Council presented at the Second Referendum was garbage; and that he voted against the budget for a second time; noting that the Town Council should be ashamed. He noted that Waterford, Bozrah, Sprague, Colchester, Preston, Griswold, East Lyme, Salem, Groton, Baltic, Franklin, Lyme, North Stonington, and Lisbon all held line on tax increases. He stated every one of these towns have a mil rate that was lower than Ledyard’s mil rate. He stated Ledyard’s residents were getting squeezed noting consumer prices across the board. He noted State Senator Cathy Osten championed a Bill in Hartford that stripped away \$600,000+ in tax revenues that the Town has been collecting from the commercial businesses operating at the Mashantucket Pequot Foxwoods Resort and Casino. He stated the loss of \$600,000+ in tax revenue from these commercial business was almost 1% every year, and that the taxpayers would have to make up for that loss in tax revenue. He stated instead of addressing the larger side of the house; the Board of Education, that the Town Council went after 0.05 of 1% on the General Government side of the budget; and now they want to raise their taxes.

Mr. Irwin continued by addressing the property revaluation that would take effect next year. He stated during the last five-years the median home price in Connecticut went up 45%.; which means that their homes were going to be worth more; therefore, residents would be taxed more based on the increased value of their property. He stated even if the town lowered the mil rate that resident's tax bills were still going to go up, noting that the lower mil rate would not offset the increase in the value of their homes.

Chairman Rodriguez noted that Mr. Irwin's three minutes were up; and she thanked him for his comments.

Dr. Adrienne Parad, 5 Birch Street, Ledyard, noted that she submitted comments ahead of time, so they were on the record. She addressed Mayor Allyn, III, and the Town Council reading her June 11, 2025 email as follows:

I would not advocate for an improved budget, but to champion a vision, one that prioritizes the needs of the majority, not just the desires of a few.

A budget is not just a collection of numbers; it is a reflection of our town's values, our priorities, and our commitment to each other. We all recognize that resources are limited, and difficult choices must be made. But when we revise our budget, let us ask not, "What do people want?" but rather, "What do people truly need?"

As a physician, I often have difficult discussions with patients and colleagues about noting the differences between wants and needs. Just because one person may want a full body MRI, they likely do not need to have that. They do, however, need to follow evidence-based guidelines on screening for and treating any diseases. I can't be focused on Press-Ganey reviews when making tough medical decisions, and I have to focus on doing the right thing. In my profession, it is very difficult to simultaneously do the right thing and make everyone happy. It is not possible, so I choose to focus on making meaningful and actionable plans even if it doesn't necessarily make everyone happy. If I focused on my image and how people think of me all of the time, I wouldn't be able to make tough decisions and do the right thing.

So, what do we NEED? We need safe roads and reliable infrastructure. We need strong schools that prepare our children for the future. We need emergency services that protect us, social programs that uplift us, and economic initiatives that create opportunity—not just for today, but for the generations that will follow.

Of course, compromise is inevitable. No budget will satisfy every individual preference. But what matters is ensuring that we invest in the greatest good—the foundational services and initiatives that affect the majority of our town's residents. This means resisting pressure from loud voices advocating for pet projects that benefit a few at the expense of the many. It means making decisions based on necessity, impact, and long-term sustainability.

In my opinion, I would like to see the budget originally proposed by the Board of Education, with the adjustment of revenue, to be fully reinstated. Our school district is egregiously underfunded, and we need to slowly try to remediate all of our deficiencies now, and focus on growth in the years to come. I also would like to see a compromise on the raises to the Town employees to show them that we value them, while not also burdening our residents with a large tax increase to pay for it. Additionally, I am a strong believer in environmental stewardship, and would like to see the town composting program to stay intact.

I urge you—our leaders—to craft a budget that stands for fairness, responsibility, and the collective well-being of this town. A budget that may not satisfy every want, but one that meets the essential needs of our community. Because when we prioritize wisely, we don't just balance the numbers—we build a stronger, more equitable future for all. Thank you.

Mr. Jeff Eilenberger, 2 Village Drive, Ledyard, stated he was present this evening to defend the hacking of Finance Director Matthew Bonin's salary in the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget. He stated for those who do not know Mr. Bonin or know what he has done for this town that he would tell them that since Mr. Bonin joined the Town Hall Staff around 2022 that he worked with the banks to obtain higher interest earnings on the funds the town has in their Capital Reserve Accounts. He stated that these funds were designated for future capital investments and were sitting idle in the bank. However, he stated because of Mr. Bonin's work the Town's Capital Account earned \$43,000 in 2022 (for a partial year) which was .74% of the town's revenue for that year, and saved taxpayers money. He went on to note that in 2023 the interest earnings was \$576,000; in 2024 the interest earnings was \$1,010,000, and to date for 2025 interest earnings was \$623,000. Mr. Eilenberger stated that Mr. Bonin has saved Ledyard's taxpayers more than \$1.5 million by the revenue that has been received through the interest earnings on money that had been previously sitting stagnate in the town's bank accounts. He stated that he understands that a salary increase of over 10% seemed like a lot. However, he stated that he believed that by explaining to residents the amount of revenue Mr. Bonin has brought into the town; his education and background, and the need to bring the Finance Director's salary in-line with the market rate for the position that residents would understand. Mr. Eilenberger went on to state at their May 21, 2025 meeting the Finance Committee spent hours working on the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget. He stated that both Councilor Buhle and Saccone signed off on budget. However, he stated Councilor Buhle basically lied at the Finance Committee Meeting rather than say what she was going to do with the salaries. Thank you.

Ms. Wendy Hellekson, 14-L Lakeside Drive, Ledyard, stated that while she was many things in this town, that tonight she was speaking as a private citizen to speak about truth. She stated that every morning during her school day she was reminded about what makes this town special. She stated that every person that she encounters was kind, helpful, and generous. Therefore, she stated that was the reason the recent budget vote was confusing and disappointing. She stated out of the roughly 1,100 eligible voters, only about 700 voted against moving the budget forward, noting that this was not the mandate that some may claim. She stated what they were hearing from the voters was the result of a campaign that was driven by lies and fear. She stated when they live in a time when some say that there was no more truth, noting that too, was misinformation. She stated the truth was that the town started the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget preparation with a \$2.4 million dollars shortfall. The truth was that 700 people voted based on fears and that should not dictate the future of the town's 15,000 residents.

Ms. Hellekson went on to state that she would also like to tell them that Google was not where they could always go to get the truth. She stated that Google was a filing cabinet with the most used documents at the front, noting that it did not matter if the documents were right or wrong, noting that they were just the documents that were looked at the most. She stated that the truth lied in the investigation and verification of information in Ledyard, and like many places, has been assaulted by false information. She stated that anyone could say anything on the Internet. Therefore, she asked that they please be aware of what they were reading and reposting on social media. Thank you.

Mr. Steve Munger, 12 Nutmeg Drive, Gales Ferry, noted that he would begin his comments this evening the way he has started his comments every time he has addressed the Town Council. He stated that he appreciate everybody on the Town Council for their dedication to the town even though he disagreed with about 90% of what they do, as he has repeatedly said at prior meetings. He proceeded to address the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget; and he noted as others have said, it was tough on both sides (General Government and Board of Education). He stated that he no longer had kids or grandkids in the school system. However, he stated that he loves kids which was why he fought to allow Ledyard kids, who were attending other schools to play sports in town, noting that it was his understanding that it has not gone through yet. However, he stated if he happens to get back on the Board of Education that he would again fight for that because it was for all the kids in town. He stated that he did not prepare any comments because he did not plan to speak tonight. However, he stated in looking at Chairman Rodriguez he thought he better say something otherwise she would be disappointed.

Mr. Munger continued by addressing comments provided by other residents this evening. He stated that they were not all doctors, nurses, or engineers that work at Electric Boat and earn six-digit salaries every year. He stated for those families it was fantastic; however, he stated there were a lot of people who might not earn half that. Therefore, he stated for some to say they should pass the budget because they could afford it, that they were being selfish; because they have to consider everybody in town. He stated in September, 1996 when he bought his house in Ledyard that he did not think many people were that well off; however, he stated that he may have been wrong because from what he was hearing, Ledyard must be upper middle class, noting that everybody was saying *"We need more money for this, and we need more money for that"*. He stated that he heard residents say that more money for the schools would mean a better education. He stated if more money meant better schools and better graduation rates then the inner-city schools would have the best education and the highest graduation rates, because they get extra money. Therefore, he stated that he did not think that more money was the issue, noting that Ledyard has great teachers, and great schools. He stated that they have to take care of everybody, noting that the budget was supported by everybody's money. Therefore, he asked when the Town Council makes their final decision on the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget that they consider everybody, not only the people that were screaming *"No or Yes"* ; but that they think about everybody in the middle.

Mr. Munger addressed the comments about misinformation, noting that some have said *"Don't believe this; or don't believe that"*; noting that people were going to believe what they want to believe. He stated that he believed that they need to make sure they have the right budget for everybody, not just for those who were well off, but also for people who were in the middle; and in the lower income area, noting that should be their number one concern. He stated that he did not care whether the members of the Town Council were Republican Democrat, or Independent, that they have to take care of the whole entire Town.

Mr. Earl (Ty) Lamb, 95 Lambtown Road, Ledyard, addressed the Town Council's May 27, 2025 meeting in which they worked to make budget adjustments to submit to the Second Referendum on June 10, 2025. He specifically noted the reductions to some of the General Government's Administrators/Department Head salaries, stating that he thought their action was a political game. He questioned whether any member of the Town Council knew how the General Government would work without the Mayor and their key Administrators /Department Head Staff. Thank you.

Mr. Edwin Murray, 26 Devonshire Drive, Gales Ferry, noted at the Town Council's May 27, 2025 meeting they came up with the adjusted budget, after a lot of discussion and compromise. He stated the reason he attended the meeting was because he wanted to hear what the Town Council was going to do for the folks who have told them that they did not agree with what they say. He stated that they may not have all the information, noting that some folks heard the wrong information. He stated that he has lived in Ledyard for two-years and that it was his perspective that the Annual Budget Process was this thing that just happened and that 400 to 500 people showed up and voted on the budget, noting that he wondered whether they were the same 400-500 people every year. He stated the point that he was making was that in past years that if about 200 voters said *"Yes"* the town got their budget. Therefore, he questioned those who have said that the 700 people that voted *"No"* at this year's Second Budget Referendum was not a mandate, when they were looking at the whole population of the town. However, he stated 700 *"No"* votes was really the people's frustration, because this year, for some reason, they decided to let people know. He stated right now a lot of people did not know everything, but the point was that more people came out. Therefore, he stated out of the 1,100 people who showed up at the polls that 700 people voted *"No"*; noting that in past years that out of the 400 – 500 people who showed up at the polls that maybe 200 people voted *"No"*. He stated the difference was not only did 1,300 people showed up for the First Referendum that was held on May 20, 2025, but that 1,100 came back for the Second Referendum yesterday on June 10, 2025 to tell them what they thought; and he noted that the Town Council needed to take notice of that participation. Therefore, he stated that the Town Council needed to ask themselves some questions and get some answers for the next budget. He stated the earlier they can hear what people think about the Budget the better. Thank you,

Mr. Matthew Bonin, Finance Director, stated that he would like to speak to the Town Council this evening. Chairman Rodriguez stated that Mr. Bonin could address the Town Council. Mr. Bonin noted that he sent an email to the Town Council. He stated although he did not receive an response that he assumed they read it, but that he was not sure if they did. He stated he had a few comments regarding the Town Council's May 27, 2025 Special Meeting. He stated that he has never felt more unappreciative than he did at that meeting. He stated the message he heard loud and clear was that members of the Town Council do not value what the General Government Administrators/Department Heads do for the Town. He stated the fact that none of the Town Councilors who were championing the salary cuts could look him or Town Clerk Patricia Riley in the eye when they brought forth the Motion was very telling. He stated that the entire process of un-doing the long overdue salary survey was pre-orchestrated. He stated that he would like to clarify a glaring error in Councilor St. Vil's Motion, noting that the Motion was presented in response to the *Budget Advisory Questions*; however, Mr. Bonin stated that the problem was that the budget failed. He noted that Councilor St. Vil claimed that he was pushing for 4% raises for the Administrators/Department Heads, but that was not true. Mr. Bonin stated that Land Use Director/Town Planner Elizabeth Burdick was hired at a salary of \$105,220 annually and that the information that was provided in the proposed budget reflected a 3% raise to get to the total of \$108,150. Yet Councilor St. Vil proposed reducing that salary line to \$102,066, resulting in a pay cut of \$2,934; stating that they were reducing her salary to less than what she was making now, which was a pay cut.

Mr. Bonin continued by addressing Councilor Brunelle's comment regarding why employees were paid more than others could not have been more disingenuous and insulting to all of the Town's Administrators/Department Heads. He stated that Councilor Brunelle's comment, was "*The pay is probably appropriate to what the Education and skill level is.*" Mr. Bonin said *seriously education and skill level*. He stated that he has BS in Accounting, and he is a Certified Public Accountant (CPA), which was one of the hardest professional certifications to acquire, of which Councilor Brunelle clearly knows nothing about what any of their education and skill sets were. Mr. Bonin stated in talking about pay disparity, for comparison purposes, that he would note that the salary of his counterpart at the Board of Education was \$155,250 a year, noting that his annual salary is \$111,459. He noted that his Board of Education counterpart was being paid almost \$44,000 more per year than he was being paid, that was a difference of \$850 a week, noting that he would remind the Town Council that he is a CPA; while his Board of Education counterpart is not a CPA. Mr. Bonin stated that based on Councilor Brunelle's statement that it would seem as though he should be making north of \$155,000. He stated the Finance Director's salary that was requested in the Fiscal Year Budget was not even close to that. He stated that he found it ironic that there was no discussion whatsoever on Board of Education's salary increases, noting that although Councilor Ryan tried it fell on deaf ears.

Mr. Bonin went on to note Councilor Garcia-Irizarry's pre-orchestrated comments in which she referenced Colchester as a comparison; and he questioned whether any members of the Town Council knew the history of the Finance Director position in Colchester.

Chairman Rodriguez thanked Mr. Bonin for his comments noting that his three-minutes was up.

Ms. Rebecca Watford, 429 Colonel Ledyard Highway, Ledyard, stated as a low- income family that she has seen how one bad vote could turn low-income families in town to being homeless. She stated that they were now homeowners and that a tax increase could very well tip that scale, to make her family homeless again. She went on to address the Board of Education, noting that she did not have much faith in the Ledyard School District. She stated that she had two autistic children in the Ledyard Public Schools, and that they absolutely failed; therefore, she has chosen to homeschool her children, and she pays for all the curriculum they need. She also noted the large population of Ledyard residents that were pulling their children from the Ledyard Public Schools and were also homeschooling their children. She stated the homeschooled children do not get invited to play sports in this town, and that their children cannot take part in any activities in this town. She stated as taxpayers on a low-income they have to question how a tax increase fits into their household budget. She stated that she wanted the town to know that a vote to increase taxes could make these homeowners who were living on a very low-income, to become a homeless population in Ledyard. She questioned with no low-income housing in town where these families could go,

noting that these low-income residents would be pushed to leave the town the town they loved so much. Thank you.

Mr. Mike Cherry, 5 Whippoorwill Drive, Gales Ferry, stated that he and his wife Mary have lived in town for about 40 years. He stated that this was probably the first year that he voted against the budget. He stated during the budget process that most years he has talked with the School Superintendent and that he has asked how they could do more for the schools. He stated this year they did do more for the schools to the tune of about seven (7) full-time positions noting that there was a reason for those positions. He stated that he was not an educator, and he did not know what the requirements were, but that he trusted the Board of Education, the Superintendent, and the staff to know what those needs were.

Mr. Cherry went on to state in reviewing the numbers that were presented at the Second Referendum on June 10, 2025 that the General Government budget increased by \$742,429. He stated in looking at the Healthcare Expenses, which has been a subject of discussion throughout this budget process, that the Board of Education Employees Healthcare increased by \$875,960. He stated if you take that almost \$1 million off of the General Government's proposed \$29,901,179 Budget that the General Government was less than their current year's budget to support the town's operation and services to residents, noting there was nothing to cut without impacting services. He stated that they could cut bulky waste pick-up but that would make the town look bad, noting that they had been there before. He stated that they could eliminate one of the library buildings; which was discussed in previous years, and it was decided that it was not a good idea. Therefore, he stated that there was no place to cut in the General Government side of the budget. He stated while he understands the constraints, and he understands how people feel, noting that the town paid to educate his two children and the majority of that came from other people, who paid their taxes; that it was now his turn. Thank you.

State Senator Cathy Osten, asked Chairman Rodriguez if she could speak during public comment. Chairman Rodriguez stated "Yes". Senator Osten stated that she wanted to correct the record regarding the *Dual Taxation Bill* that has been talked about this evening. She explained that *the Dual Taxation Bill* passed the General Assembly today; and as a result Ledyard would receive \$800,000, which was more than the amount they were receiving right now; and it was more than what the town would receive next year after the Property Revaluation has been completed. She stated with the current Property Revaluation that there would be a decrease in commercial property; and an increase in residential property. She stated the State has included that \$800,000 for Ledyard through the year 2027. However, she stated that some people were saying "*Well, we can't trust the State.*" She stated that since she has been a State Senator, that she has brought in more than \$1.2 million in grants that were directly reflective of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation; and an increase in PILOT Funding (Payment in Lieu of Taxes); and an increase in Pequot Fund, that has been incorporated in this year's State Budget, noting that it has been incorporated in every State Budget for the last five (5) years, stating that there has never been a decision to decrease those dollars. She stated in addition; the State has put into their budget that they would maintain *Hold Harmless for the Schools*. She stated for Ledyard this was a lot of money noting that it was \$13,000 in year-one; and \$26,000 in year-two. She also stated that there was also additional special education money that for Fiscal Year 2025, noting for the current year Ledyard received \$192,000 that they were not expecting to receive and that these funds helped out with special education costs. Senator Osten stated in addition to that, there was the same dollar amount in both year-one and year-two, with an increase for Special Education. She noted the State has \$181 million dollars in year-one and year-two which was increased by \$40 million dollars. In addition to that, she stated that the State put \$30 million dollars in the Budget for Seed Money, noting according to the Office of Fiscal Analysis (OFA), Ledyard would receive \$173,000.

Senator Osten concluded by stating that every year she works to make sure that she brings more dollars back to this town, and that she would continue to protect those dollars as she has done every year, noting that she had a proven track record of that. Thank you.

Ms. Joanne Kelley, 12 Thames View Pentway, Gales Ferry, stated that she wanted to correct the record on a lot of the inflammatory rhetoric that has been going around; and she wanted to correct statements made by Mr. Bonin and Councilor Ryan, who she was sorry was not present this evening.

Ms. Kelley noted at the Town Council's May 27, 2025 Meeting that Councilor Ryan stated that he was reading from a Report that stated the Board of Education had salary increases in the amounts of 10%; 26% and 36%. She stated that it was all made up, noting that those percentage increases had nothing to do with salaries, and as she has stated there has been a lot of inflammatory rhetoric going around town. She stated that she gets it, noting that it was an election year; and that it was an attempt to pit residents against each other; and particularly against the Board of Education, and it was successful. She stated the Budget Referendum failed twice, noting that there was a lot of information put out without context, that led people to make incorrect assumptions about what the mil rate increase would mean to them. She stated that she tried to correct a lot of that as she could, but it was like playing whack-a-mole.

Ms. Kelley continued by stating that she was not going to stand here and beg the Town Council to listen to the results of the *Budget Advisory* Questions and to restore the \$160,000 to the Board of Education's Operating Budget, noting that more people asked that the Board of Education Budget not be cut, commenting that it was bad enough that 80% of the approved Capital Plan that was presented had been chopped away. She stated that the original Capital Plan that the Board of Education approved was \$569,000; and that only \$114,000 was left. She stated in reality, what that does was just kick the can down the road, which will wind up costing taxpayers more in the long run, and that she thought it was important for people to know that. She stated that they all know what happens when they defer maintenance on our homes, noting that it may be necessary at times, but that it was never cost effective.

Ms. Kelley went on to state that she wanted to talk a little bit about last year's Board of Education Budget, noting that they attempted to cut roughly \$300,000 from the budget that was related to two very important positions. She noted one position was for the one full-time Multi-Tiered Support Systems (MTSS) Coordinator to oversee the literacy and numeric numeracy intervention team that they had slowly, laboriously, and incrementally funded over the previous eight-years, with the very spare budget increases because Ledyard was sorely lacking in these skilled specialists who assess plans and provides support for students.

Chairman Rodriguez thanked Ms. Kelley for her comments noting that her three-minutes was up.

Ms. Elizabeth Burdick, Land Use Director/Town Planner, noting that she was not a Ledyard Resident, but was a member of the Town's Staff. She stated after the Town Council's May 27, 2025 meeting that she received a copy of the Post Meeting Action Letter, which showed that her salary had been cut. She stated that she sent a letter to Councilor St. Vil because he made the Motion. She stated although she did not receive a response to her letter that she hoped all the members of the Town Council read her letter noting that it was posted to the Correspondence List for tonight's meeting.

Ms. Burdick continued by stating her comments would be brief noting that the Town of Ledyard Staff were some of the hardest working, most qualified, and most pleasant people she has had the privilege to work with in municipal government. She stated any of the staff members whose salaries were cut and those who were not cut, would go out of their way to help any resident that asked for their assistance, and they should be paid at least the mid-range market rate salaries for high-rate service they provide to the public. She stated that she felt that none of them deserved to be blindsided, or to have their salaries cut. She stated that she watched the video of the meeting and that she was disappointed that one Councilor said that the Board of Education Staff should be paid more because of their education and skill level. She stated that she would invite any Board of Education Department Head to walk into Town Hall and perform the duties of any Town Hall Department Heads; and vice-versa, noting that she does not know anything about running school. She stated that they were all skilled in their respective jobs. She stated that she confirmed that there were no cuts to the Board of Education salaries that she was aware of; and she asked that the Town Council correct her if she was wrong. She stated that she started working in Ledyard in 2018 and after three-years she relocated out of state. She stated that she came back to Connecticut because her parents were ill, and when she had the opportunity to come back to Ledyard that she was thrilled

because she loved working in Ledyard during the three-years she had previously spent here. She stated even though there was no complaints about her and that she did great work in the just over 3-years she had spent in Ledyard, that she was not given a warm welcome by the residents of this town when she returned. She stated in fact, that she has been treated by the residents of this town worse than in any town that she has ever worked in, despite the fact that she was the Ledyard Town Planner before, simply because she was not the previous Town Planner. Therefore, she stated having her salary reduced felt a little personal; noting that not only did the Town Council not give her a cost-of-living increase, that they actually cut her salary current salary by \$3,000, noting that she just wanted to say that for the record. Thank you for listening.

Ms. Caitlyn Greco, 9 Stone Court, Gales Ferry, attending remotely via Zoom, stated that she and her husband were raising three boys that were attending Ledyard Public Schools. She stated that she has a background in finance, technology, and education. She stated after extensively reviewing the Board of Education Budget that she voted “No”. She stated the reason she was present this evening was because she attended the Board of Education’s June 10, 2025 meeting and after only partially providing her comments regarding her reasons for voting “No” on the budget; that she was cut-off, and the Board of Education told her to tell the Town Council her reasons instead

Ms. Greco continued by stating that she was extremely disappointed in the Budget, as well as some of our Elected Official’s insistence in misleading residents about the budget on social media and she noted the following:

- **Funding Residency Verification** – Ms. Greco stated if the quality of Ledyard’s education was suffering so much over money, why the School Administration was asking for additional funding for Residency Verification, stating that non-Ledyard Residents prefers Ledyard’s Schools to the ones in their town.
- **STEM Elementary Teachers** - Ms. Greco stated that it was also being represented that \$200,000 was required for three Elementary STEM (Science Technology, Engineering Mathematics) Teachers because it was mandated by the State. Ms. Greco stated in looking up State Mandates, that she could find one that required them to hire three new elementary STEM Teachers.
- **Value of Transparency**- Ms. Greco stated while they claim to value transparency, that it was about time they start sharing the specific legislation reference, especially with social media posts.
- **STEM Curriculum** – Ms. Greco stated if STEM curriculum was truly mandated that it could be implemented for much less than \$200,000 if managed by our wonderful General Education Teachers. She stated that she was a consultant in the Ed-Tech space for a company that offers turnkey curriculum that was designed for educators who do not have a STEM background to teach computer science. She stated that they offer site licenses, allowing entire schools and all the teachers access for under \$10,000 per school. She noted that many competitors exist in the space at similar for lower price points; and that some were even free.
- **Teachers Time Constraints** - Ms. Greco stated if Ledyard’s teachers were as time limited as some claimed at last evening’s Board of Education Meeting that efficiency training and AI Literacy Programs would be quite effective. She noted that one program her family uses at home cost a maximum of \$100 per year stating that it can design full curriculum, including exams and grading rubrics, essentially allowing educators to proofread and modify content quickly, instead of building it from scratch.
- **Administrators** – Ms. Greco stated that she also finds it concerning that Ledyard has so many Administrators for such a small number of students, and they keep saying any further reductions in the budget would result in teacher layoffs, instead of being more frugal with salaries and curriculum expenses. She stated that perhaps it was time to cut one of their well-compensated Administrators in order to afford the \$200,000 they request every time they were asked to do something, noting that one Administrative cut could cover the entire cost of the supposedly necessary STEM Program.

- ***Shared School Superintendent*** – Ms. Greco stated that it appears that legislation actually allows for school districts to partner and share one superintendent. She stated if Ledyard's Administrators prefer to remain in their roles, it was time they learn to budget like money does not grow on trees.

Ms. Greco concluded her comments by stating that she would be happy to research all options at multiple price points, and present them to the Board of Education, and allow our town to decide what was best. She stated if the Board of Education would like any help at all with this research that her family was always willing to provide assistance. She stated that she was sure that her family was not the only ones in town who would be happy to volunteer to keep Ledyard affordable for all residents, including her own family. Thank you.

Mrs. Eleanor Murray, 26 Devonshire Drive, Gales Ferry, stated for those who worked very hard to prepare the Annual Budget that it must be disappointing to have it voted down twice. She stated that she spent this afternoon on Facebook batting down the flies of bad information. She noted that she was on four different Facebook Pages and that she told people that they were believing bad information, and it was not true, that they should really look again at the information, and that they should try to believe what the truth was, however, she stated that her efforts were not too useful. She suggested that the budget information be shared more in advance. She stated she lived in Niskayuna, New York, as they all know because she has told everybody a thousand times. She stated if the town shared information a little bit more in advance, she thought that people would have a chance to swallow it, to digest it, and have a chance to ask the questions a little bit more in advance. She stated that the night before the Referendum was not useful at all. She stated the way things were done with the Finance Committee that was not helpful the second time around. She stated that she would really like to see the Board of Education Budget be separate from the Town Budget, noting that it should have happened a long time ago.

Mrs. Murray continued by addressing Land Use Director/Town Planner Ms. Burdick's comments and she stated the reason she did not have a warm welcome was because when 100 people in town did their speeches against Cashman, that she spoke in favor of the Project at the former Dow Chemical/Styrenics Property; so that was not going to make it warm here for her. Thank you very much.

Ms. Christine Krupansky, 18 Saw Mill Drive, Ledyard, noted her June 10, 2025 email to the Town Council. She stated what they were hearing was frustration as the root problem from the people that have come out to speak to the Town Council in a 2 to 1 fashion saying that they were not in favor of this year's budget, noting that they received the same response at the first vote and at the second vote. She stated the reason she showed up tonight was to let the Town Council know that work needed to be done by all of them in a nonpartisan way, to acknowledge the fact that the townspeople do not want to weather a 6% increase. She stated the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget, as proposed, was \$70 million, noting that they do not care about whether it was Board of Education or whether it was the Town; what the residents care about was that it is a 6% increase, and it will be felt by every homeowner. She stated it was her understanding that they will probably see another 6% increase next year (fy 26/27) without including any kind of contractual increases. Therefore, she stated they need to take into consideration: (1) Things that we need; and (2) Things that we want. She stated to consider the things that we want may not be a good idea for this year; and that they might be able to plan for those things in two-years. She stated if the Town Council was forthright with the townspeople, and heard the people who came out and voted the budget down twice; that maybe they should think about what we really need and not what we want across the board such as cutting salaries for people on one side of the town, not the other side. She stated that a 6% budget increase was a lot. Thank you.

Mr. Gary Paul, 49 Avery Hill Road Extension, Ledyard, former Town Council Member, stated he wanted to reiterate the following:

- ***State Funding*** – Mr. Paul stated that he does not trust the State with anything, noting that their track record was horrendous, to say the least.

- ***Town Administrators/Department Heads*** – Mr. Paul thanked the Town’s Administrators /Department Heads for all that they do for the town, noting that Ledyard has the best people from the Mayor all the way down.
- ***Misinformation – Social Media*** – Mr. Paul stated it was disturbing to hear about the misinformation on Facebook and other Social Media sites.
- ***Results of the Budget Referendum*** - Mr. Paul stated the townspeople came out and told the Town Council that they have to do better. He stated the Town Council has a daunting task, noting that the townspeople spoke, and that their job was to listen. Thank you.

Mr. Gary McKeon, 15 Elizabeth George Drive, Mashantucket, thanked everyone who expressed concerns regarding the Budget. He stated that he has known State Senator Cathy Osten for a long time and as the previous speaker stated that he also does not trust the State. He noted that the State promised to give Ledyard money from the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Resort & Casino in lieu of taxation; however, he noted that State Funding would eventually dry up.

Mr. McKeon continued by stating that the Board of Education has an enormous amount of State Unfunded Mandates, which their State Representatives vote for and approve through the different Legislative Bills, noting that the biggest problem for the Board of Education was probably coming from Hartford.

Mr. McKeon went on to state that the General Government Budget was one-third of the overall budget and after the first Referendum they cut \$400,000 from their side of the budget. He stated the other two-thirds of the budget was for the Board of Education and that \$160,000 was cut from their budget after the first Referendum. Therefore, he stated there were places to cut. He stated perhaps there were people that they do not have to hire; noting that the Board of Education had three Directors of Departments. He stated Town Employees actually got their pay cut, that was ridiculous. He stated to talk about morale, that people do not leave a job because of money; people leave because they were not appreciated.

Mr. McKeon stated three weeks ago he was out knocking on doors, noting that he spoke to residents who live in the Highlands who cannot afford a massive tax increase. He stated they would see the result of whatever the Town Council does today, in November, 2025. He stated for the last 20-years that he has lived in town the taxes have been reasonable; the mil rate increases have been reasonable. However, he stated when they get to the point of ridiculous, people actually pay attention. He stated the Town Council has a very hard job to do, and they do not have a lot of time to do it; so they better look very closely. Thank you.

Ms. Kristen Chapman, 7 Windward Lane, Ledyard, began her comments by noting that not only was she a resident, that she was also a town employee, and she has children in the School System. She stated that she has nothing but wonderful things to say about their School Principals and Teachers, stating that they do an absolutely amazing job. She stated she was present this evening in support of her colleagues. She stated that she did not plan to speak tonight, but that she wanted to share with the Town Council that in addition to her full-time role as the Executive Assistant to the Mayor that she was also Social Services Coordinator for the entire town. She explained while Ledyard does not have a Social Services Department that there were other towns that have Social Services Departments that were staffed with 3 or 4 people that do the same job that she does, noting that her role as Social Services Coordinator was not her full-time job. She stated because of her role as Social Services Coordinator that she works with the town’s population that would be most affected by the proposed tax increase. She stated that she would have loved to have had the first budget that was presented at the May 20, 2025 Referendum, noting that they need to fund their schools. She stated that the Town Council was going to have a difficult time adjusting this budget; noting that the real problem for Ledyard was revenue; and she asked this Town Council how they were going to diversify the tax base. She stated the tax increase was on all of their residents, noting that she was a town resident, and a single mother, and she cannot afford the proposed tax increase, so she voted “No”; although she would have loved to vote “Yes”. She stated that Ledyard has a problem that will continue unless they diversify the tax base.

Ms. Chapman continued by addressing the needs of the town's residents, noting that this year the Linda C. Davis Food Pantry had more guests than ever before; and she has received more telephone calls this year from residents who need assistance. She stated that she thought some may not have a clear picture of the people that would be affected by the proposed tax increase. She stated that she would like to share that she has been receiving telephone calls from residents whose household income was \$100,000 a year; however, they cannot pay their bills right now; and they do not qualify for any type of assistance, including assistance through the town. She stated Ledyard has people, including herself, that cannot afford a \$1,200 Luxury Bill; noting that was what people were facing. She stated the first Budget was not bad, however, residents cannot afford the proposed tax increase. Thank you.

Chairman Rodriguez thanked everyone for attending tonight's meeting, for participating in the Budget Process, and for their comments this evening.

VI. COMMITTEE COMMISSION AND BOARD REPORTS – None.

VII. COMMENTS OF TOWN COUNCILORS

Councilor Barnes stated that the Town Council has some serious things to talk about this evening. However, he stated that first he would like to talk about two really great things in town.

- **Ledyard Farmers' Market** - Councilor Barnes stated this evening he could not find a parking spot at the Farmers Market, noting that once he was able to get his dinner that he had to eat a little quicker than he planned. He stated that the Ledyard's Farmers' Market was amazing. He went on to note that his family has talked about how much they missed the Ledyard Fair, noting that it was a really great weekend that they looked forward to each year. He stated that there were a lot of people in this room who either partake or volunteer to make the Ledyard Farmers' Market happen each week during the summer and he thanked everyone for their participation and support.
- **Community** – Councilor Barnes stated that he was in awe this evening noting that the Council Chambers was full because a lot of people love this town. He stated that he was not elected to serve on the Town Council, explaining that Mr. Gary Paul, who spoke during Citizens Comments this evening, decided that he could have his spot on the Town Council; and that he very much appreciated having the opportunity to serve Ledyard, because he loves this town.

Councilor Barnes went on to state when they talk about a political party, that he liked to think of his Party as Ledyard. However, he stated when residents would say what about Gales Ferry, that former Town Council Chairman Linda Davis said it best, noting that she would say: "*Gales Ferry is the Capital of Ledyard*". Therefore, he stated that he did not care which party they were, or which side of the town they live on, that they need to do, what they need to do for the town. He thanked all those here tonight regardless of their perspective, and he stated that he was glad to be in a town where people cared enough to come out and speak. Thank you.

Councilor Brunelle thanked the residents for coming, whether we agree or we do not. She was so glad that everybody came out today and online to speak their minds, noting that it was important.

Councilor Saccone stated that he would reiterate the comments that he appreciated everybody coming out to participate in this budget process. He stated at every Finance Committee he begged residents to attend the Finance Committee meetings to see what the Town was being faced with; which was a steep increase, because before they even began to look at projected expenses for the coming year, that they were dealing with a \$2.5 million loss in revenues. He stated it was a lot of hard work to minimize the impact for their residents, explaining that they used some funding from the Mil Rate Stabilization Fund (Rainy Day Fund), noting that he would talk more about the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget which was voted down at the Second Referendum yesterday (June 10, 2025). He stated all the Finance Committee Members did everything they could to keep the mil rate increase to a minimum; noting the many State

Unfunded Mandates, and skyrocketing inflation, however, he stated that any increase was not good. He stated based on the current budget and projected mil rate that a home with an average assessed value of \$200,000 would see about a \$31 increase a month. He thanked the residents for their comments.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated that she would like to make a statement regarding the May 27, 2025 Special Town Council Meeting and the emails sent by the Mayor and Finance Director Mr. Bonin to the Town Council; as well as the email that Land Use Director/Town Planner Ms. Burdick's email to Councilor St. Vil.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated as Town Councilors, they were the stewards of the taxpayers' money. They try to find a balance between compensating the town's employees fairly and their duty to the taxpayers. Six out of the nine Town Councilors were serving for the first time. Many of them were not aware of the *Resolution Establishing Administrators /Department Head Benefits* that passed in 2023 regarding the Department Heads/Administrator's salaries. That Resolution was passed by the 26th Town Council. That being said, it was their duty to be familiar with all the Town's Ordinances and Resolutions.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated that she found all the messages and feedback that they have received very disheartening and disappointing. She stated that they all appreciate immensely what their town employees do. None of them made lightly the decision of cutting the magnitude of the salary increases for the Town Clerk, the Human Resources Director, the Finance Director, and the Land Use Director. Before the First Referendum, they all voted "Yes" for those increases. On making the decision of decreasing the amount of the salary increases, that she took the task of looking at the salaries of other Towns and sharing that information with her fellow Councilors. She stated that she looked at the salaries of the Towns surveyed in the Salary Study that was done specifically for Preston. In that study, after the Town of Preston received the results, they decided to increase the salaries of their Department Heads/Administrators in a staggered way and not all at once as has been proposed in Ledyard's Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget. She stated that her intention was to approach those salary increases in a similar way to how Preston adopted their salary increases and that it was not in a pre-orchestrated way as was stated in Mr. Bonin's email. In addition to that, she stated that it was important to clarify that the results of the Salary Study was specific to Preston. The Firm hired to conduct the Salary Study did an analysis of what each position entailed and interviewed each employee to understand their responsibilities, skills, education, experience, etc. Based on that information and the Survey that they surveyed other towns, and the Firm recommended a range of salaries (low-point, mid-point, high-point) for each position. Such a Study has not been done for Ledyard. As Mr. Bonin expressed in his email regarding her comparison of salaries to Colchester, the results from the Preston study cannot be applied completely to the Town of Ledyard due to the differences in responsibilities, skills, education, and experience of the employees in analogous positions. That being said, her vote for the Motion that Councilor St. Vil made was based on the information available, noting that they do not have a Study for Ledyard like the Study that was done for Preston. She noted in the Town Council Meeting of February 15, 2023, Former Councilor Bill Saums stated the following "...they did not have a mechanism to survey surrounding towns to find out what employees do in similar positions because all of the positions were different, the requirements were different, and the staffing level was different among towns."

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry went on to state that she and the rest of the Councilors that voted "Yes" for Councilor St. Vil's Motion did it with a heavy heart as they all know that Ledyard employees give their best to their town. She stated that it was very difficult for them to come to their decision as this year the increase in the mil rate was quite significant and as the Mayor has mentioned many times, that many residents can barely make ends meet, which was something that they have to consider when making decisions regarding the taxpayers' money.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry noted at the time when the *Resolution Establishing Administrator/Department Head Benefits* was passed, Former Town Councilor Andra Ingalls (Republican), Former Town Councilor Bill Saums (Democrat), and even Town Councilor Tim Ryan and Kevin Dombrowski (Republicans) shared the same or similar sentiment as the majority of the Councilors on the 27th Town Council. She noted the Finance Committee

Minutes of January 4, 2023, and she quoted Former Councilor Bill Saums as follows: *“Councilor Saums addressed the language in the new Wage and Compensation Section as follows: ‘Employees shall be paid at the rate as designated by the Mayor or contractually negotiated. Increases in wages shall be effective on the first day of July and may not be less than the percentage of the highest union contracted increase for that fiscal year’. He stated that the town has been very careful with raises for Department Heads; noting that the Department Heads have not received many raises; and the raises they received have not been much. Therefore, he stated that he was in-favor with keeping the Department Head’s wage increases at par or upping them a little based on the past cycle. However, he stated if this clause was included in the Resolution; and for some reason one union asked for a 5% wage increase, and the town said ‘No’; but the union then won their case through Arbitration; that the fourteen Department Heads covered by the Resolution would also receive a 5% wage increase. Therefore, he stated he had concerns, because the town did not have total control over what they give their union employees.”* Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated in addition, Former Councilor Saums also expressed during that meeting the following: *“He concluded by expressing concern that with the proposed wage language, as written, in the ‘Resolution Establishing Administrator/Department Head Benefits’ that they could end up giving some big raises unintentionally. He questioned whether they could write the wage language in a way that would prevent them from unintentionally giving big raises to Department Heads.”* Councilor Garcia-Irizarry went on to note at the same meeting that Councilor Ryan suggested the following: *“...basing the Department Head wage increases on an average of wage increases of the bargaining units.”*

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated as they could see, at the time the Councilors back then were concerned about a 5% increase, noting that it seemed like increases of 10% and 20% was not something that they ever imagined back then.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry continued to quote excerpts from the February 15, 2023 Finance Committee Meeting by Former Councilor Andra Ingalls as follows: *“...stating that she agreed with sunsetting the term and making sure that they were paying competitive wages. She stated part of the work in stewarding the town’s resources was that they were stewarding tax dollars, noting that the best resource the town had was their employees. Therefore, she stated in stewarding the resource of the town it meant taking proper care of our professionals. She stated the best way they could do that was to pay them a competitive rate. She stated that they could not afford to go to high, noting that every tax bump was being paid by people who cannot afford it. She stated one person’s pay increase was coming out of someone else’s household budget. She stated that they were aware of all of this, and that they feel the tension of it, and that they want to do right by everyone, as much as they can.”*

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry went to note the following quotes from the February 22, 2023 Council Meeting noting that Former Councilor Bill Saums *“stated while the Finance Committee understood the intent, that they had concerns regarding the possible long-term and unintended consequences.”* In addition, he *“stated the Finance Committee talked with the Administrator of Human Resources Don Steinhoff about a couple of ideas and they settled on the idea of accepting the Department Heads proposed language for three years: ‘wage increases may not be less than the percentage of the highest union contracted increase for that fiscal year’, noting that conceptually that would put the Department Heads wages closer to about where they should be. However, he stated to avoid the law of unintended consequences, the Finance Committee added the following language to sunset the clause after three years ‘...and continuing until June 30, 2025.’”*

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated that the term of the Resolution was scheduled to sunset at the end of this month which meant that the Resolution has to be reviewed and acknowledged with any changes becoming effective on after July 1st, 2025. She stated that she would also like to add that the salary increases could have been started in the FY of 2025, but that was not done and now it was all being done at once before the Resolution sunsets.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry noted the February 22, 2023 Town Council Minutes in which Former Councilor Andra Ingalls was quoted as follows *“stated budgets were a value statement. She stated by putting numbers into a budget that they were communicating their*

values, priorities, what the community needed and the things they think were important. She stated because there were always multiple needs pulling on the same pot of money there were tensions. She stated part of that pulling/tension was stewarding their tax dollars and stewarding their professionals. She stated the town's professionals were paid with tax dollars and that some of those tax dollars were being demanded of people who could not afford to pay somebody else's pay increases. She stated every time she voted 'yes' on these types of decisions that she feels the tension, noting that she feels the need to take care of our staff and that she feels the ach of someone who cannot afford to pay somebody else's pay increase; and that she knows everyone on the Town Council feels the same way. She stated the reality of working with the budget was that it affects people. She stated that they were always working to try to find that balance, noting that they cannot be absorbent, and at the same time they cannot be dismissive of the skill set that was being brought to the town."

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated in addition to Former Councilor Andra Ingalls' comments that Former Councilor Saums *"stated during the School Superintendent's Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Budget presentation earlier this evening, that he had the same thoughts that Councilor Ingalls expressed. He stated he was thinking that the taxpayers cannot afford an increase; or if they can afford it that they do not want to pay it. However, he stated at the same time they have to look at what was happening to their kids. He stated that they have to strike a balance, noting that they have to get the kids the education they need, because they were going to produce and pay the taxes down the road; and at the same time, they have to be sensitive to those who have to pay for that education. Councilor Paul stated that he appreciated the comments made this evening. He stated from a layman perspective that every time he hears about a tax increase that his heart sinks. He stated these are the types of things he talks about with residents, noting that it comes down to money. However, he stated they have a responsibility to provide education and services to the town."* Also, *"Chairman Dombrowski noted both Councilor Saums' and Councilor Ingalls' comments, and he stated by making an investment in their employees that they were making an investment for their residents and for the town, but at the same time he stated they needed to be careful not to over burden their residents. He also addressed the importance to recognize the skill set of their employees and to make sure they were compensated at a point in which they wanted to continue work and produce for the town. However, he stated at the same time they have to recognize that it was the residents of the town who have to pay for it. He stated this was the difficult challenge they had serving as members of the Town Council."*

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated in reading all the minutes from 2023 that she quoted this evening that she agreed with the statements that Former Councilors Andra Ingalls, Bill Saums, and Gary Paul expressed in that meeting. She stated that she also agreed with the statements made at that meeting by Councilor Dombrowski.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated that they want to appropriately compensate their employees and diminish the impact of taxes in their residents, which was why they proposed an increase of 4%; and they suggested that additional salary increases in the same range be done each year to try to bring the Department Heads salaries to market rate.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry noted during the Town Council's May 27, 2025 Meeting that Councilor Ryan mentioned the salaries of the School Principals and other School Administrators. She stated that those salaries were negotiated by the Board of Education; and the Town Council has no say over those negotiations, noting that the salary increases were 3% per year. She stated in addition to that; they acknowledge that the voters said that both the General Government Budget and the Board of Education Budget were *Too High* with more voters saying that the General Government was *Too High*. Taking in consideration the opinion of the voters, the Motion that Councilor St. Vil made did not include any wording to reinstate the funds that were cut at the Finance Committee meeting for the Board of Education's Operational and Capital Budgets, noting that those cuts were not touched by this Town Council. She stated even with the cuts to the salary increases; the dollar amount of the cuts made to the Board of Education were still higher than the dollar amount of the cuts made to the General Government Budget.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry proceeded by stating that now, she would like to address the discrepancies regarding Land Use Director/Town Planner Ms. Burdick's salary. She stated in the FY 2024, the salary approved by the voters for the Land Use Department Head was \$95,270, but the actual salary was \$105,220, pointing out that this was a significant discrepancy that does not match what the voters approved. In addition to that, Finance Director Matthew Bonin and Land Use Director/Town Planner Elizabeth Burdick brought to the Town Council's attention that the salary for the Land Use Director position that was included in the Motion that Councilor St. Vil made was an actual reduction of her current salary. Both Mr. Bonin and Ms. Burdick wrote to the Town Council to clarify that Ms. Burdick's current salary was \$105,220; however, Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated the salary approved by the voters for her position in FY 2025 was \$98,150. She stated the 4% increase proposed in Councilor St. Vil's Motion was based on the \$98,150 salary that was approved by the voters; and not what her current salary was. Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated that if her memory does not fail her, that the Town Council was never informed of the increase in the salary of that position. She noted the numbers that were included in the Councilor St. Vil's Motion were based on the numbers provided to them in the budget materials. She stated that the Town Council could not make accurate decisions if the numbers were incorrect.

Councilor St. Vil stated what Councilor Garcia-Irizarry just presented were the facts. He stated to summarize that they reviewed facts, data, and previous Town Council actions. He stated as First Term Councilors that they were ignorant of the politics, of how information can be presented, and how misinformation plays a part in their constituents perspective. Nonetheless, Councilor St. Vil stated that he would vote for what he believed was the right thing; noting that the right thing was the children in this town.

Councilor Dombrowski stated that this Town Council now had the challenge to figure out what was the right path forward; noting that he appreciated the comments made this evening by all of their residents, town staff, and Board of Education Members. He stated in working on this partnership that they need to be engineers and analytically review the data and the facts; while they try to take the emotion out of their decisions to determine what was the right number for the town. He stated that they might not agree on what that number should be; or they may not agree on how to achieve that number, or they may not agree on what the number would ultimately end up being. However, he stated that what they do must be in the best interest of the town, noting that was their task, regardless of emotion. Thank you.

Councilor Buhle stated at the Town Council's May 27, 2025 Meeting that she voted alongside four other Councilors to reduce the salary increases of four talented and hardworking department heads. She stated that despite the information presented after the fact that this was not something within Town Council's authority, that she must be honest, noting that she regretted her "Yes" vote as soon as the meeting was over, probably actually right after she said "Yes". Not because of backlash from opposing Councilors, but because she voted to support those pay increases the first time and truthfully, she supported the first budget forwarded by the Council wholeheartedly. However, she heard the voices of the residents who spoke out, both in public comment and email, and also in private and in personal conversations. The overwhelming concern that market rate salary adjustments were not appropriate in this budget year, and some residents, as a whole, feeling that the salary increases were unjustified.

Councilor Buhle went on to note that she heard the comments from Councilor Garcia-Irizarry, with information providing other salary numbers that aligned with the Motion presented: *"to reduce the salary increases to 4% instead of the market rate adjustments originally proposed"*. She stated that she personally attempted to start the discussion to find a halfway point that valued their town employees but also respected the concerns of their residents and voters, though there were no alternative numbers proposed. With that she learned that she should have had more of a spine and proposed something more fair and favorable all around. She stated the longer she had to think about it, not because of corrections and backlash, but because her brain does not let things go; and because she does not sleep when she is anxious, she must say that she has grown to regret it further. She noted that she did not regret acting in what she had considered to be the wishes of the residents who voted and expressed their opinions publicly or privately. However, she stated that she does regret that she did not address it the way she had addressed the Board of Education funding, which was to continue to fight for what the right thing was for this town with education and good conversations. She stated that she personally thinks the negativity to these increases were a knee jerk reaction to

the numbers, the same way others have a knee jerk reaction to the overall Board of Education Budget.

Councilor Buhle stated that she knows that the path forward to fund the Board of Education at the right levels needed to continue to provide excellent education required her to push back against those who argue to reduce funding. She stated that she should have brought that same energy to defining the market rate salary adjustments/increases.

Councilor Bule concluded her comments by stating that she apologizes to those who dedicate their work to the growth and improvement of this town, whom she has slighted and disrespected when she should have used her voice to stand up for them the way she has stood up for education funding.

VIII. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF PRIOR MEETING MINUTES

MOTION to approve the following:

- Special Meeting Minutes of May 14, 2025
- Regular Meeting Minutes of May 14, 2025
- Special Meeting Minutes of May 19, 2025
- Special Meeting Minutes of May 27, 2025 (as filed)
- Public Hearing Minutes of June 4, 2024
- Special Meeting Minutes of June 4, 2025

Moved by Councilor Dombrowski, seconded by Councilor Brunelle

VOTE: 8 – 0 Approved and so declared

IX. COMMUNICATIONS

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

X. COUNCIL SUB COMMITTEE, LIAISON REPORTS

Administration Committee

Councilor Buhle stated the Administration Committee met earlier this evening and addressed the following: (1) “*Ordinance Establishing an Ethics Commission for the Town of Ledyard*”.- Councilor Buhle noted the Committee made some final edits to the Ordinance and would be forwarding the document to the Town Attorney for their legal review and recommendations; (2) “*Resolution Establishing a Sustainable-CT Ad-hoc Committee*” – Councilor Buhle stated the Committee made some final edits to the Ad Hoc Committee Membership and forwarded a recommendation for Town Council approval at their July 9, 2025 meeting; (3) Job Descriptions – Councilor Buhle noted the Committee reviewed updates with Human Resources Director Christine Dias regarding the following: Mechanic II; Fiscal Assistant II Finance and Human Resources; Fiscal Assistant II Finance Department; and Assistant to the Tax Collector; and (4) Reappointments to the Farmers Market Committee and the Parks, Recreation & Senior Citizens Commission - Councilor Buhle noted these reappointments would be forwarded to the Town Council’s July 9, 2025 Agenda.

Community Relations Committee for Diversity Equity & Inclusion

Councilor Brunelle stated the Community Relations Committee for DEI next meeting was scheduled for June 18, 2025 at 6:30 p.m. She reported that the Pride Day Pizza In the Park would be held on the Town Green on Saturday, June 28, 2025 from 12:00 Noon to 4:00 p.m. She stated that they would have a Pizza, Ice Cream, Balloon Twister, and D.J. She stated that all were welcome.

Finance Committee

Councilor Saccone stated the Finance Committee cancelled their June 4, 2025 meeting; however, they have two items on tonight’s Agenda.

Land Use/Planning/Public Works Committee

Councilor St. Vil stated the LUPPW Committee met on June 2, 2025, however, he stated he did not have anything noteworthy to report for this evening.

Historic District Commission

Councilor Barnes stated the Commission has been working through the process to seek a Historic Designation for the Spicer Homestead Ruins which was located within the town-owned Clark Farm Property. He stated the A2 Survey was complete, which was good news, noting that they were looking at the next step in the process.

Parks, Recreation & Senior Citizens Commission

Councilor Barnes stated the Town received the Good News! that their 2025 STEAP Grant Application was approved in the amount of \$892,000 noting that it would require a \$179,000 town match for Playscape Improvement Projects for the following:

- \$567,588.38 - Town Green ADA Park included new equipment, installation, Poured In Place (PIP) Surfacing, R&D of existing equipment.
- \$199,113.00 - Colonel Ledyard/Blonders Park included new Playground Equipment, installation, Poured In Place (PIP) Surfacing under new equipment and under existing swings and R&D of existing equipment.
- \$141,321.42- Aljen Heights Park included new Playground Equipment and swings, installation, Poured In Place (PIP) Surfacing under new equipment and swings and R&D of existing equipment.
- \$163,865.30 – East Drive includes new Playground Equipment and swings, installation, Poured In Place (PIP) Surfacing under new equipment and swings, and R&D of existing equipment.

Councilor Barnes also noted that the Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP) would be stocking the Sawmill Pond with fish for no cost to the Town.

Conservation Commission

Councilor Barnes stated the Conservation Commission has some concern regarding invasive species in Long Pond and Bush Pond. He noted that the Conservation Commission would be working with Parks & Recreation on the invasive species, explaining that the cost to treat the invasive species was about \$2,500; and that it would need to be done every few years. He stated there was going to be some discussion regarding the Parks and potential avenues for funding to share the burden. He stated the Conservation Commission may hold a “*Fishing a Challenge*” at Long Pond and Bush Pond this year.

Library Commission

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated the Library Commission’s next meeting was scheduled for June 16, 2025. She reported the Library App, which was paid in part by the Town and in part by the Friends of the Library allowed residents to borrow 4 books a month through the *Book Cloud*. However, she explained because funding for the Library App has run out they had to stop offering books through the *Book Cloud*; but that *eBooks* were still available to patrons.

Board of Education

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated the Board of Education met on June 10, 2025 and she reported the following: (1) Teacher Workload – Teachers spoke during “*Public Comment*” about their increasing workload at the expense of their lesson planning time. They normally have an hour or so for lesson planning for grading, but sometimes they have to use that time to do other administrative work that they did not have to do in the past and that it keeps getting bigger and bigger. After their work day during the week when they go home that they keep grading papers and making lesson plans, and on Saturdays as well; (2) Recognition Ceremony for Juliet W. Long School and Gallup Hill School was scheduled for Thursday, June 12, 2025; and (3) Discussed the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget and other Policy Matters.

Inland Wetlands and Water Courses Commission

Councilor St. Vil noted the IWWC met on June 3, 2025 and he noted that he had no major updates to report.

Planning & Zoning Commission

Councilor St. Vil stated the Planning & Zoning Commission would be meeting on Thursday, June 12, 2025 in the Council Chambers. He stated their Agenda included proposed text Amendments to the Zoning Regulations. He stated the Commission would be looking for feedback from the residents regarding the proposed Zoning Regulations Amendments.

XI. MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Allyn, III, stated that he wanted to touch on a couple of things Councilor Garcia-Irizarry mentioned specifically not only here tonight, but also on her incredibly lengthy Facebook Post as follows:

- ***Staggering the Salary Increases:*** Mayor Allyn noted that Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated that many Town Councilors advocated to stagger the salary adjustments until the salaries were at market rate. He reminded the Town Council that last year they began the process to stagger bringing the Administrator/Department Head salaries up to market rate with their Administrative Assistant Roxanne Maher and his Executive Assistant Kristen Chapman, noting the remaining Administrator/Department Heads whose salaries were below market rate would be increased in the upcoming budget year (fy 25/26). Therefore, he stated that they put two salaries through last year with the plan to put the remaining three salary adjustments in this coming year's budget, noting that was the "*Staggering Plan*".
- ***Salary Survey Study:*** Mayor Allyn stated that he understands that this was Councilor Garcia-Irizarry's first two-year term as an elected official, however, he was disappointed with her comments regarding Ledyard not conducting their own Salary Study when other towns were willing to share the Salary Survey Study they conducted noting that this saved Ledyard about \$30,000. He stated the \$30,000 Ledyard saved by using the Salary Survey Study that Preston conducted with Brooklyn; was about equal to the Administrators/Department Head salary adjustments required to bring them up to the mid-range of the market rate for their positions. He stated by Councilor Garcia-Irizarry advocating that Ledyard go out on their own to conduct a Salary Survey Study was senseless and pointless, noting that if all the town's did that they would be reinventing the wheel 169 times in this state.
- ***Department Head Wages in Budget Book-*** Mayor Allyn noted that Councilor Garcia-Irizarry talked about the department head wages and what appears in the budget book, and she said that she would rather see Munis printouts; which was actually shocking, because most people do not want to see Munis printouts. He stated that most would prefer to see a spreadsheet that showed a three-year history; the current year; and then the proposed budget year. He stated during the Budget Work Sessions, which was very early in the budget process it was mentioned that there were several people that were hired during the interim of the year; and that those salaries were identified as the predecessor's salary at the time.
- ***4% Salary Increases*** – Mayor Allyn stated that Councilor Garcia-Irizarry mentioned 4% raises and the "*Resolution Establishing Administrator/Department Head Benefits*" that was adopted on February 22, 2023. However, he stated the "*Resolution Establishing Administrator/Department Head Benefits*" was originally adopted on March 10, 1989; noting that the *Administrators/Department Head Resolution* has been around long before many of us. He explained that the Resolution was a long-standing five- page document that was essentially a handshake Agreement with Department Heads, as opposed to a union contract that could be 50-60 pages or more. He stated the "*Resolution Establishing Administrator/Department Head Benefits*" talks about 3% raises, which was the typical the increase that the Union Contracts received. He stated in bringing these Administrators/Department Head salaries up to the mid-range of the market rate for their positions, that giving them a 4% increase was like maxing out a credit card and then saying that they were going to make the minimum payment every year; and that they were going to catch-up. However, he stated that it would never happen,

noting with a minimum payment they would never be able to catch-up. He stated that he proposed adjusting these salaries to below the mid-range of a salary survey that was already two-years old. He stated these Administrators/Department have been underpaid for many years with the continuous promise that their salaries would be brought up to market rate, but each year that does not happen. He stated if Ledyard does not start paying these employees fairly for the work they do; the town would lose some incredibly high-quality staff; and that would turn the town upside down; however, he stated that it may be their goal. He stated that he was stunned to hear what Councilor Garcia-Irizarry was saying, and to see what she put in print, noting that they have talked about the Salary Study for the 6th or 7th time.

Mayor Allyn stated that he would yield the remainder of his time for his Report to any other Administrator/Department Heads that wanted to speak to the Town Council this evening.

Chairman Rodriguez responded to Mayor Allyn stating that this time of the meeting was for the Mayor Report, noting that the Public already had their time to speak at the beginning of the Meeting. Therefore, she stated if he would like to give his Report that the floor was his.

Mayor Allyn, III, reported on the following: (1) National Opioid Settlement Funding – Mayor Allyn stated the town received \$11,507 in the latest National Opioid Settlement Disbursement; (2) Gales Ferry School Roof Replacement - Mayor Allyn stated they were still having major issues with the roof, noting that more information would be coming; (3) Farmers Market Opening Day – June 4, 2025- Mayor Allyn stated he *Rang the Bell for the Opening of the 2025 Farmers Market Season*, noting they had a fantastic turn out; (4) Yale- Harvard Regatta Luncheon - June 5, 2025 – Mayor Allyn stated he attended the Luncheon noting that the Regatta Day Weekend was great; (5) Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (SCCOG) Legislative Breakfast – June 10, 2025 – Mayor Allyn stated that the SCCOG’s has been lobbying the State to stop putting Unfunded Mandates on the towns. He noted that there were more than 1,400+ Unfunded Mandates and that the list grows every year. He stated the Veterans Tax Exemption was one of the recent Unfunded Mandates. Mayor Allyn noted the following State Legislative Updates: (a) Farm Equipment Exemption increased from \$100,000 to \$250,000; and (b) Omnibus Housing Bill passed; (6) Town Attorney Protocol – Mayor Allyn stated in response to a number of people independently reaching out to Town Attorney Matt Ritter; that Attorney Ritter followed up with him because people should not be contacting him directly; and that they needed to go through the Mayor’s Office. He stated that if the Town Council would like Attorney Ritter to put this protocol in writing that he has offered to do so. Mayor Allyn stated that per Attorney Ritter the town would be billed for every one of the emails that Councilors sent to him because he received multiple emails. He stated this was not to say that he pulled back what Members of the Town Council could do, but that they need to go through the proper channels; (7) Organic Compost Program – Southeastern Connecticut Regional Resources Recovery Authority (SCRRA) - Mayor Allyn stated Public Works Director/Town Engineer Steve Masalin spoke with SCRRA today about Ledyard discontinuing their Organic Compost Program. He stated that SCRRA has agreed to continue Ledyard’s Organic Compost Program and to also pick-up the cost.

Questions to the Mayor

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry addressed the Organic Compost Program with Blue Earth and she requested clarification, noting that Ledyard would discontinue the Program with Blue Earth and that Southeastern Connecticut Regional Resources Recovery Authority (SCRRA) would continue the Program and pay for the cost. Mayor Allyn stated that Public Works Director/Town Engineer Steve Masalin and SCRRA just spoke today noting that the details still needed to be ironed out.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry noted Mayor Allyn’s comments regarding the Land Use Director/Town Planner’s salary being reduced and her preference to receive the Munis Printouts. She stated that she agreed with Mayor Allyn that no one wants to read the Munis Printouts because they are complicated. She stated that the Munis Printout Salary Line for Land Use Director/Town Planner said that Ms. Burdick was hired at \$105,220; that was the reason she said they should read the Munis Printout, noting that the Town Council went by the numbers in the Budget spreadsheet. She noted that the Town Council gets a lot of information,

and she stated if the Land Use Director/Town Planner's \$105,220 salary was mentioned during one of the meetings, that she does not remember that. She stated that she feels bad for Ms. Burdick because they were unaware, and unintentionally cut her salary, noting that Ms. Burdick was completely right, that was never their intention, noting that they were just following the numbers that were provided.

Mayor Allyn stated there were five Administrators/Department Heads whose salaries needed to be adjusted to bring them up to the mid-range of the Salary Survey Study that was already two-years old. He stated two Administrators/Department Head's salaries were adjusted last year (fy 24/25) and the salaries for the remaining three Administrators/ Department Heads were supposed to be adjusted in the upcoming budget year (fy 25/26). He provided clarification noting that the salaries were supposed to be "*Adjusted*" they were not talking about a "*General Wage Increase*". He stated ironically, the Land Use Director/Town Planner salary was not part of the five Administrators/Department Heads that were identified for a *Salary Adjustment*.

Chairman Rodriguez stated the Town Council received the Mayor's proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget on March 3, 2025 in accordance with the Town Charter. She stated the Town Council was working off the proposed budget that was submitted, noting that was the document they worked from during this whole budget cycle. She stated that she attended every Budget Work Session (March 6, 10, 18); and she took notes on every page of the budget. She stated in the Mayor's proposed budget the history provided for Fiscal Year 2024/2025 listed Land Use Director/Town Planner salary at \$98,140; noting that if there was a change that she would have written it down. Therefore, she stated the increase provided in the Mayor's submitted budget was reflecting a 10.2% salary increase for the Land Use Director/Town Planner from the current year's salary that was listed in the budget spreadsheet. She noted the current year's salary listed was \$98,140; and the proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 salary was listed as \$108,150 showing a 10.2% increase.

Chairman Rodriguez went on to state in March and in April during the Finance Committee Meetings that she commented that the voters would not like to see double digit salary increases. Mayor Allyn stated during the Town Council's May 27, 2025 Special Meeting that she also said that they thought they were giving 4% salary increases for these Administrators/Department Heads. Chairman Rodriguez noted the May 19, 2025 Annual Town Meeting Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget Handout to the residents for the May 20, 2025 Referendum that the budget history listed for the Land Use Director/Town Planner salary in the current fiscal year (fy 24/25) showed a salary of \$98,140 with a proposed fiscal Year (25/26) salary of \$105,220; reflecting a 10.2% increase, noting that this was the information the Town Council worked from and the proposed budget the voters received. She stated that she apologized to Land Use Director/Town Planner Elizabeth Burdick, noting that it did look like a pay cut. She stated no wonder Ms. Burdick was upset, noting that it was unintentional stating that nobody wanted to do that.

Chairman Rodriguez stated immediately after the Town Council's May 27, 2025 Special Meeting that she saw Councilor Barnes, Councilor Buhle, Councilor Garcia-Irizarry, and Councilor Saccone talking about what could be done to make this right, noting that they regretted what was done. She stated that she thought about options, noting that the first person she called was the Mayor. She stated that she went to the Mayor's Office to speak to him twice, but because he was not in his Office, she later called and gave him her idea of a plan to make this right; and that he immediately agreed to her plan. She stated that she told the Mayor that she wanted to talk with the Administrators/Department Heads right away to relieve their anxiety. She stated that she first spoke to Town Clerk Patricia Riley, noting they had a heart-to-heart honest conversation, and she appreciated that. She stated she then spoke with Finance Director Matthew Bonin, noting that he had to rush off to a meeting, but he let her know how he felt about what the Town Council did. She stated because she was sick on Tuesday that she was not able to talk to anyone else until this week. She stated that she had conversations with Land Use Director/Town Planner Elizabeth Burdick, and Human Resources Director Christine Dias about the plans that were put into place to correct what had been done.

Chairman Rodriguez noted as Councilor Dombrowski stated, they were between a rock and a hard place when it comes to this budget. She stated during the time the Town Council was working to prepare the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget in March that her husband was laid off, noting she does hear the concerns about the 31% of Ledyard residents that were included in the ALICE (Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed); and therefore, she was worried. She stated that she heard that residents cannot afford a tax increase as Executive Assistant/Social Services Coordinator Kristen Chapman described earlier this evening. She stated they were in the same position and know what residents were going through. She stated the Town Council has to make some hard decisions on the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 budget noting that absolutely no one would be happy with whatever they decide tonight; but they have to come up with a budget by the fourth Monday in June per the Town Charter and they have to notify the State of the Town's Budget by June 30, 2025.

Councilor Brunelle stated that she did not say anything earlier this evening during the "*Councilor Comments*" portion of tonight's Agenda. She stated that she wanted to apologize for her words, explaining that they came out in a way that she did not intend. She stated in no way did she want to insult anyone's intelligence, or how hard they work. She stated that her intention was only to comment that they could not compare salaries fairly between the Town side and Public Education side. She stated that the Town Council does not have all the information, and they were not allowed to mention anything about the salaries for the Board of Education because the Board of Education handles them. She stated that she totally gets it, that the Administrators/Department Heads think that she hates them, or that she thinks that they stupid, but that was not true. She stated that anybody who knows her knows that she is a very nice person, that she likes everyone, that she was very respectful, and very appreciative of everyone. She stated that she feels really bad, because she does not like to see animosity and finger pointing and acting like someone has a hidden agenda. She stated that none of them have a hidden agenda, and they do not want to make anybody suffer, or take your money away, noting that was never the intention. She stated as many people have said the Town Council did not want to make anybody feel bad; and they did not want to make anybody feel like they were not being heard. But sometimes words are misspoken, and they come across incorrectly, and she apologizes for that. She stated that they all have to get along and work together. She stated that none of them would be sitting here if they did not care about the town. She stated it was easy to say "*You're a bad guy; You're a bad guy; I don't like you; . You're wrong. You're against this or that*". But that was not true; nobody here was against anybody, we were just trying to make the best decisions as Councilor St. Vil said. She stated that she does not agree with taking all the emotion out of their decisions because emotion was what makes us. She stated *Yes, at some point they have to be analytical; Yes, at some point they have to look at the numbers and the data; Yes, but you also have to have a heart and compassion, or you would not care about people.* She stated that she has three jobs; she grew up and went to school in Olneyville, which was an inner city in Providence, Rhode Island. She stated that she could tell them that her school was not the best funded, noting that they were lucky if they had grants once in a while that got them out of the city to do fun things, but it was very few and very far between. She stated that they did not have an excellent education system. She stated the reason she was making this comment was because she wants to encourage everyone tonight to work together because they need to make the best decision for the town. She stated unfortunately this budget was always going to be hard because there was too much that had to be funded with too little to fund it with. She stated that nobody wants to attack the General Government versus Board of Education, but that they have to make some kind of decision tonight, and that was all she wanted to say. Thank you.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated at the end of the Town Council's May 27, 2025 Special Meeting that she approached Councilor Saccone and Councilor Barnes and asked if there was any way that the Finance Committee could have a Motion that would guarantee a certain percentage increase for Administrators/Department Heads, that could be done in a period of 2 or 3 years, until their salaries were adjusted.

Mayor Allyn stated that he hears what Councilor Garcia-Irizarry was saying. However, he stated when they were talking about \$30,000 in a \$29,901,179 General Government Budget that they were splitting hairs for the minutia on this issue. Chairman Rodriguez stated at the

Town Council’s May 27, 2025 Special Meeting that she recommended doing half this year and half next year. Mayor Allyn stated that although he was nodding his head in agreement that no one made a Motion to support Chairman Rodriguez’s idea, so nothing happened. He stated that it was important to note that he has never been as vocal as he has been in these meetings, because these were critical staff people in Town Hall for the operation of the General Government and town services provided to residents. He went on to note that he has said it time and time again at least 6 or 7 times, so the Town Council knows where he stands on fairly compensating their Administrators/Department Heads for the work they do for the town.

XII. OLD BUSINESS – None.

XIII. NEW BUSINESS

Chairman Rodriguez stated without objection that she would like to reorder tonight’s agenda to address Item #2 as the first item of business, before the Town Council gets into addressing the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget, noting that Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA) Chairman Ed Lynch was attending the meeting remotely via Zoom.

General Items

- 1. MOTION to grant a Bid Waiver to Groton Utilities, 295 Meridan Street, Groton, in the amount of up-to \$138,000 for emergency repairs to a water line that has impacted 10 homes in the Highlands Neighborhood.

Moved by Councilor Dombrowski, seconded by Councilor Buhle

Discussion: Water Pollution Control Authority Chairman Ed Lynch, attending remotely via Zoom, explained that one of the original 10-inch cast-iron water pipes that was installed during the 1960’s on Thompson Road in the Highlands Neighborhood was falling apart. He stated every time there was a leak they have to shut down the entire Highlands Neighborhood because of the lack of valves on the system. He stated because they were actually repairing something that was not originally done properly that it would be considered “*New Construction*” and it would involve some engineering work; and Groton Utilities, as their water operations provider, would need to inspect the installation, etc., before they took on the responsibility of the water line. He stated because the engineering, inspections and other things were already included in the current Water Operations Contract the WPCA has with Groton Utilities that a Bid Waiver to Groton Utilities was being requested for several reasons, which included the cost savings for the engineering work, inspections; and other associated costs. In addition, he stated that because Public Works Director/Town Engineer Steve Masalin indicated that the road needed to be paved that the WPCA thought it would be a good opportunity to get the water line repaired before the road was paved. Mr. Lynch stated that this work would include the installation of a 4”- 352-foot ductile iron pipe with a 10-inch valve to prevent them from having to shut all the water down for the entire Highlands Neighborhood in the future should they have a leak. Mr. Lynch also noted that there would also be a cost savings by doing this during the day instead of at night and having to pay overtime rates. He stated that ten homes on Thompson Road would be affected.

VOTE

7 – 0 - 1 Approved and so declared (St. Vil abstained)

APPROVED 7- 0- 1

MOVER: Kevin Dombrowski, Town Councilor

SECONDER: Jessica Buhle, Town Councilor

AYES: Barnes, Brunelle, Buhle, Dombrowski, Garcia-Irizarry Rodriguez, Saccone

ABSTAINED: St. Vil

EXCUSED: Ryan

Finance Committee

2. Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget

Chairman Rodriguez stated the Second Budget Referendum that was held on June 10, 2025 Failed. She noted in accordance with Chapter VII; Section 6 of the Town Charter, in the event that the *second referendum does not approve a budget; the Town Council shall adopt a final budget by the fourth Monday in June. Should both the referenda and the Town Council fail to adopt a final budget by the fourth Monday in June, the budget that was presented at the second referendum shall be deemed to have been adopted, and expenditures made in accordance there with for the ensuing fiscal year.* Therefore, she stated that the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget was now in the Town Council’s hands at this point in the process. She stated that while we all want to be mindful of the many competing demands in both the General Government Budget and the Board of Education Budgets that she was going to ask that tonight they focus and work to adopt a budget that the Town, Schools, and our residents can live with. She stated that they have all given their commentary at many meetings on why they each support; or do not support certain aspects of the budget; and many have made their positions known both at multiple meetings; on social media; and other venues throughout this process. Therefore, she stated that tonight she would ask that they all reserve opening statements; commentary; and posturing; and that they stay focused on the task at hand. She stated that this Year has been a long and arduous budget process; and it was time to once again roll up their sleeves; work together; and get the business of the town done by putting a budget in place for the Town to move forward with the upcoming fiscal year; in the interest of their residents.

Chairman Rodriguez noted the Budget that was presented at the Second Referendum on June 10, 2025; and failed was as follows:

Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget in the amount of \$70,408,421; (comprised of General Government of \$29,901,179; and Board of Education of \$40,507,242)

Chairman Rodriguez stated with that being said that she would like to put forward the following budget adjustments.

❖ MOTION to approve the following adjustments to the proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget:

Account #	Title	Reinstate Salary (change from 6/10/2025)	
1011-2101-51600	Finance Director	\$133,000	\$17,083
1011-0311-51600	Town Clerk	\$ 77,400	\$ 7,639
1011-4301-51600	Land Use Director	\$108,150	\$ 6,084
1011-0205-51606	Human Resource Director	\$ 97,850	\$ 1,442
Total General Government Increase:			\$32,248

In addition, Adjust the following Accounts:

Account #	Title	Reduction	(New Amount 6/11/2025)
10110101-5879	Contingency-Town Council	\$4,000	\$ 3,000
10110201-58790	Contingency- Mayor	\$5,000	\$ 1,000
10110201-51305	Town Hall Floater	\$9,692	\$ 19,000
10120301-5611	Fire Marshall Oper	\$2,000	\$ 6,000
10140107-56301	Sand and Salt	\$10,000	\$125,000
Total General Government Operating Decrease			\$30,692

Board of Education Capital

Title	Reduction
Board of Education Capital	\$45,000
Total Board of Education Decrease	\$45,000

Moved by Chairman Rodriguez seconded by Councilor Buhle
Discussion: Chairman Rodriguez question the mil rate increase with the budget adjustments she presented in the Motion (above)

Councilor Buhle noted that the mil rate increase would be 1.95; which was .04 mils less than the 1.99 mil rate increase that was required to support the Revised Fiscal Year 2025/2026 that was presented at the Second Referendum on June 10, 2025.

Councilor Buhle noted Chairman Rodriguez's statement asking that they hold comments this evening. However, she stated that she had some prepared comments for this evening and requested permission to provide just some of her comments. Chairman Rodriguez agreed to Councilor Buhle's request.

Councilor Buhle proceeded by stating that she has seen this budget support become ridiculously partisan. She has seen comments about this budget essentially threatening her to "*do the right thing*" or lose her seat in November.

Councilor Buhle stated that she would do the right thing; and if she loses her seat in November, that she would remind residents that she was here out of a deep love for her town and a desire to make it better, and that she does not do this for a love of power or money (certainly wouldn't choose an unpaid position if that was her intention). She stated that she was elected to this seat because of the values she shares with the voters in this town, and the experiences that makes them neighbors and a great community.

Councilor Buhle went on to state that her values were to support families like her family all around this town. While they may not all have the same experiences, privileges, lifestyles, budgets, or desires, they do share a few common goals: to live in a town that was amazing to call home, a town they were proud of, a town that values their children's education, a town that strives to be better every chance it gets.

Councilor Buhle stated that she would tell them right now that any additional cuts into this budget would take them all away from those common goals.

Councilor Buhle noted when it comes to education, Ledyard has been in the bottom 10% of funding for ten years. Per Superintendent Hartling, the 2024-2025 School Year had 35 fewer support staff than the 2014-2015 School Year with almost the same number of students. Councilor Buhle stated, "*Over the last decade, this town has continuously decided that education is not worth funding, and that she would not support that plan*".

Councilor Buhle continued by stating that she would like to take a moment to cut out of her perfectly written speech and say that her son was in the special education program through the Town of Ledyard. She stated that the answer was not to fund education less. She stated the answer was to continue to provide resources for their educators; so they have support staff to provide the necessary services their special education students need, because they do not fund the choices for outplacement or for being homeschooled. She stated unfortunately, that does not work for most people, and it was a benefit for their town; and not a benefit for their students. She stated that this was something that she certainly struggled with in her family, and that she was so disheartened that it was something that affects so many of their residents. She stated that they were certainly not going to make it better, noting that 25% of the students in the State were special education students. She stated that it was not something they could afford, so it was something that absolutely needed their attention. She stated that she had a bunch of other things that she was going to say but they were not going to be really positive; so she would stop here.

Councilor Barnes stated in his absence this evening that Councilor Ryan asked that he read his remarks as follows:

Tim Ryan, Town Councilor

Member, Ledyard Finance Committee

Submitted remarks for the 6/11/25 Town Council Meeting to be included in the official record

Comments for New Business Item #1

First, I would like to apologize for not being able to be present tonight; I had prior familial arrangements and, quite honestly, I did not expect the budget process to continue into mid-June.

Clearly, that is not the case, as the budget again failed at a second referendum, with 710 voters opposed, and 406 in support. Nearly the same margin of failure as the first referendum – in other words, not even close. I guess this shouldn't be surprising given that municipal budgets have been failing at referendum in many surrounding municipalities.

Regardless, per the town charter, it is now up the Town Council to establish a budget that represents the will of our constituents, who clearly are not willing to accept such a large increase in taxes. As you churn through debate tonight, I will remind everyone that this is the Town Council, and we are responsible for representing the town as a whole, not just a specific subset of the population of our town.

In the interest of time, I won't delve into the forensics as to how we got here, and instead focus on the path forward, using the current budget proposed at the second referendum, compared to the current years' budget as a basis:

	24/25 Adopted	25/26 2nd Referendum	% Change	\$ Change
BOE Operational	\$ 38,369,823	\$ 40,507,242	5.6%	\$ 2,137,419
BOE Healthcare	\$ 5,768,830	\$ 6,594,790	14.3%	\$ 825,960
General Government Operational	\$ 22,245,770	\$ 22,183,489	-0.3%	\$ (62,281)
General Government Healthcare	\$ 1,046,150	\$ 1,122,900	7.3%	\$ 76,750
Total	\$ 67,430,573	\$ 70,408,421	4.4%	\$ 2,977,848

I've broken out healthcare, recognizing that we don't control those costs and so that we can have a fair comparison. Shockingly, as you can see, the General Government Operational budget is a net decrease from the current year, to the tune of about \$62,281, or .3%. The BOE budget is still enjoying a 5.6% increase compared to last year, even with a \$160,000 reduction from the initial proposed 25/26 budget.

First, I would recommend not decimating the General Government with any additional cuts. In fact, I would *strongly* recommend restoring market rate salary adjustments (Based on the salary survey) to town department heads, amounting to \$32,248. Note that this still puts the General Government Operational budget at \$30,033 *LESS* than the current year, or a .1% reduction, essentially a net-zero change from the current year. An exceptional achievement by the Mayor and the Town Department heads. As I've stated in past meetings, recognizing these department heads – many of which have advanced education and bring a wealth of professional experience to the table – with competitive compensation will actually save the town money, as should the council proceed with not including market rate adjustments in the budget, I would fully expect affected department heads to seek employment in a town that appreciates what they bring to the table, requiring the town to seek – and train – replacements. This aligns with Councilor Rodriguez' comments from the 2/22/23 Town Council Meeting where wage adjustments were discussed, where she stated, "if they do not hire qualified people that it would also cost the town money", and she went on to note "that having qualified employees was an investment in the town."

I will also note that these market rate adjustments actually have been phased in over the last year, with the first two adjustments occurring in the current year's budget, and the last three planned for this next year.

Second, the BOE Operational Budget represents an increase of \$2,137,419, which still consists of over \$500,000 in programmatic improvements. According to the BOE's presentation at the Town Meeting, these expenses are not related to contractual or inflationary increases and are additional expenses over and above what is required to maintain current services. These improvements also include several new full-time hires, which represent not just new current expenses, but new expenses in the perpetuity. I would posit that, based on the two referendum failures, this is clearly not the right year to be considering improvements of this scope, especially ones that create new recurring expenses. To that end, I would recommend a *starting point* of reducing the BOE top line budget by \$500,000. That might seem drastic, but it still represents an increase of \$1,637,419 over the current year, or 4.3%. Additionally, and according the BOE's own budget presentation, it would still maintain current services and not cause any disruption to current employment.

The aggregate effect of my recommendations has the net effect, using the 2nd Referendum Budget as a basis:

	25/26 2nd Referendum	25/26 TKR Proposed	% Change	\$ Change
BOE Operational	\$ 40,507,242	\$ 40,007,242	-1.2%	\$ (500,000)
BOE Healthcare	\$ 6,594,790	\$ 6,594,790	0.0%	\$ -
General Government Operational	\$ 22,183,489	\$ 22,215,737	0.1%	\$ 32,248
General Government Healthcare	\$ 1,122,900	\$ 1,122,900	0.0%	\$ -
Total	\$ 70,408,421	\$ 69,940,669	-0.7%	\$ (467,752)

The proposed new total budget of \$69,940,669 represents an increase of 3.7%, or \$2,510,096 over the current year, with 100% of the increase due to healthcare cost increases and BOE budget increases.

Regardless of where the debate ends up, I strongly feel that we, the Town Council, owe the taxpaying citizens of Ledyard a budget that represents not only current financial and economic realities, but those that we will be facing in the very near future, including:

- **Property Revaluation:** While this does not impact the current budget, it WILL impact next year’s budget. As we have seen with revaluations in surrounding towns, the increase in assessments has rarely been uniform across all housing, with more moderate housing experiencing disproportionate increases in assessed value. The net result of this is that the housing that experiences this disproportionate increase will actually see an increase in taxes next year – even with the aggregate mill rate coming down and even if there or no budgetary changes.
- **Loss of Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation tax revenue on private business property:** Our own State Senator, Cathy Osten, included legislation into the recently passed State Budget (thereby avoiding a public hearing) that will eliminate this revenue stream for Ledyard –

creating a \$625,000 revenue hole for the town. While I have heard that this will be replaced by a \$800k stipend, that would only be for FY27 and FY28. After that, there is no guarantee of funding, nor would I expect that to change unless our state representation changes. Ledyard has to plan accordingly to eventually fill this revenue shortfall ourselves, or figure out a way to live without it.

- **Minimum Budget Requirement:** Per state statute, unless there is a reduction in enrollment or a reduction in state funds (ECS), Ledyard will be required to provide a budget to the schools that is *at least* equivalent to the prior year. In this way, we should be cautious as whatever we pass for the FY25/26 BOE budget will set the new bar.

Because of the above concerns, I would also recommend NOT utilizing additional Mill Rate Stabilization funding; it is clear we will need that not only available, but built upon, in the coming years.

In the end, I know comparisons will be made to other towns, and that is fine, but it’s what we do for taxpayers of Ledyard that matters. Let’s focus on that. Thank you.

Councilor Saccone stated as he has said at every meeting, he has begged residents to come to their Budget Work Sessions that were held on March 6, 10, 18, 2025; and to every meeting during the budget preparation process to listen to their discussion about why the budget is what it is. He stated last November, 2024 before they even began the budget preparation process that they were already looking at \$2.5 million deficit that was a result of a reduction in the Grand List; Loss of \$550,000 from the Veteran’s Tax Exemption Bill; Contractual Salary increases; and Healthcare Cost increases. He stated that this was what they were looking at before they even began to review operational expenses and how they were being impacted by inflation. He stated to help reduce the impact to the mil rate increase they were using \$1.5 million from the Mil Rate Stabilization Fund (Rainy Day Fund). However, he stated that both he and Councilor Ryan have recommended that they not use any more money from the Mil Rate Stabilization Fund, as they heard from Councilor Ryan’s written remarks that he submitted for tonight’s meeting, that Councilor Barnes read.

Councilor Saccone stated although he does not use Facebook that he has heard that there was a lot of misinformation on the internet and social media. He stated that by attending their meetings or watching the meeting videos or reading the minutes which were all available on-line that residents would have the correct information and the truth. He stated although the Finance Committee shaved about \$500,000 off the Mayor's proposed budget, which included reductions to Capital Plans for the replacement of Fire Apparatus, Public Works Heavy Equipment, Road Restoration, and Police Vehicles, that the First Budget submitted at the May 20, 2025 Referendum was very high. He stated after the Budget was voted down at the Town Council's May 27, 2025 meeting they voted to reduce the budget by \$653,819; this was comprised of General Government reduction of \$493,819 (\$233,829-Operating; \$40,000-Capital; and \$260,000 BOE Capital); and Board of Education \$160,000 Operating.

Councilor Saccone stated he could not in good conscience cut any more funds from the Board of Education Budget. He stated that he and his wife had four kids attend Ledyard Public Schools, noting that it was a great school system. He stated nobody wanted to have taxes go up, noting when he bought his home 37 years ago, that his first tax bill was \$1,800; and now his tax bill was more than \$5,000. He stated based on the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget and projected mil rate that a home with an assessed value of \$200,000 would see about a \$32.00 tax increase per month. He stated although he understands the challenges of any increase on residents who were living on social security or on a fixed income that he thought the projected tax increase was fair and reasonable.

Councilor Saccone continued by addressing the salary adjustments for the Administrators /Department Heads to bring them up to the mid-range of the market rate for their positions, stating that it would cost taxpayers about .33 cents a month to have the some of the best people in these fields in Southeastern Connecticut, noting that he thought .33 cents a month was worth it. He concluded his remarks by stating that he would vote in favor of the budget adjustments presented this evening, noting that he thought it was the best case for the town. Thank you.

Councilor Brunelle stated that she just wanted people who were not involved in the process to prepare the budget to know that it takes a lot of time. She noted the effort that all these people put in, noting that she would admit that it was far more time than she put in. She stated that they put their heart and souls into the First Budget; and into the Second Budget, and right now. She stated they sweated over the minuscule little things because they care. She stated that she feels for the people who were on the lower end of the income, noting that she was on SNAP Program (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) for a while in her lifetime; and that she was homeless but that she was able to live at a family house, stating that she gets it. She stated it was really hard to sit here knowing all those things and knowing they have to have a budget. She stated that she supported this budget because as Councilor St. Vil said they have to make the best decision they can. She stated that it was a challenge because she does not want to see the town crumble, or disintegrate, or be underfunded, and fall apart; so she thought that this was the best budget they could do.

Councilor Garcia-Irizarry stated that she would support the budget cuts and the budget additions that they were putting in the budget right now. She stated that it was a very difficult year, not just for Ledyard but also for many towns. She stated that she tried to give as much information as she could on social media, in person, answering questions left and right; and that she tried to be as transparent as she could. She stated a lot of times she had to say things that she did not like to say, but she said it. She noted the saying "*Sometimes you're going to make some people happy, and sometimes you're going to make some people mad*". She stated unfortunately, she felt like they were making everyone mad, and they were not going to be able to make people feel comfortable with whatever budget they have. She stated that they have to cut things that were near and dear to some people including the \$5,000 for Food Waste Compost Program, Town Council Contingency, Mayor Contingency, Winter Operations Sand and Salt, which was painful, stating that she hoped they do not get a lot of snow next winter. She stated that she supported the cuts presented in this Motion so they could try to make it work.

Councilor St. Vil stated that he agreed with the proposed Motion; and that he hoped it would bring clarity to the Administrators/Department Heads who sent emails. He stated that he wanted to address the Administrators/Departments Heads comment that they did not receive a response, noting that he verbally told some that they were working on it. He stated that he hoped that they would see that they have been working very diligently for the town and for the residents, similarly. He stated that he does not agree with removing risk and certain budget line items, but that was what they were essentially doing with reducing their Contingency Funding and other line items. He stated that he did not necessarily agree with reducing the Board of Education Capital, however, he stated that they all need to make compromises. He stated that he believed this Motion, as stated by Chairman Rodriguez was a compromise that he could back and stand behind. He stated that his final thought was that if this budget gets approved, it was not the end; that it was the beginning for many of them. He stated that he hoped and prays, because he believes in God; that they can work together to make some incremental improvements going forward; so that as a town they were better aligned on where their dollars go in the future; and that means involvement. Thank you.

Councilor Dombrowski stated that unfortunately, he did not think they were really listening to what the voters told them. He stated that he appreciated the changes in the Motion on the floor, however, he stated that he still did not think that they were listening to the voters, noting that both the May 20, 2025 Referendum; and the June 10, 2025 Referendum did not pass. Therefore, he stated that he would like to propose an amendment to the Motion on the floor:

MOTION to amend the Motion to reduce the Board of Education's proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Operating Budget by \$500,000.

Moved by Councilor Dombrowski, seconded by Councilor Barnes

Discussion: Councilor Dombrowski stated the Motion on floor restored the budget lines for the salaries for the Administrators/Department Heads; and it made some non-substantive cuts to basically equal the amount of money that was restored. Therefore, he stated that the proposed budget adjustments basically resulted in a Net -\$0- change from the Second Budget that was presented to the voters on June 10 2025. He stated then they took another \$45,000 out of the Capital Budget, noting that these budget adjustments did not move the needle on the budget, noting that they were right back to the point of a 3% budget increase that the voters rejected at the June 10, 2025 Second Referendum. He stated the reason he was proposing cutting \$500,000 from the Board of Education's Operating Budget was because they have already cut over \$500,000 from the General Government, noting that his proposed Amendment would be an equivalent cut; and would result in a reduction to the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget.

Councilor Barnes stated there were a lot of people here this evening, and he noted that he has had some conversations with friends and neighbors who have asked "*How could you take a half a million dollars out of the Board of Education Budget?*". He stated although he did not know how it would affect the Board of Education, what he could say was with the Referendum vote not passing by such a wide margin; that the Town Council approving a budget with only 0.04 reduction was not acceptable. He stated that the Town Council needed to demonstrate to the voters who came out twice and broadly rejected the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget saying that it was *Too High*; that they were doing something more than a 0.4% reduction.

Councilor Brunelle stated after the First Budget Referendum on May 20, 2025 failed they all worked hard to lower the budget, and they believed that it was the best they could do; but then the Second Referendum that was held on June 10, 2025 failed. She stated it was clear from the emails and from feedback they received that there was a lot of wrong information out there. She stated they received a lot of emails in which people did not want the Board of Education Budget cut. She stated that these were our children, our town's children, our future. We want our kids to grow, raise their families here, and stay here. Just like we do not want our town employees to run to other towns; we do not want our children to run out of town. She stated that they cannot keep kicking them down the road. She stated that she would not make any more cuts.

Councilor Buhle stated that she would vote “No” on Councilor Dombrowski’s Amendment to cut the Board of Education’s Operating Budget by \$500,000. She stated that she was going to finish her comments that she began earlier, noting that Budget struggles were not a surprise, and it was not a year of reckless spending that got them here. This was a year of essentially maintaining the status quo. She stated Ledyard’s budget problems were the result of over a decade of poor planning for the financial needs of a successful town.

Councilor Buhle continued by stating that there have been years of opportunity to speak in Hartford about the underfunding of education in their town. She noted that New London Mayor Michael Passero was able to secure \$2,000,000 in added ECS funding for their School District. She stated that Ledyard could have made a healthy case to ask for additional funding from the State over the last decade, but prior administrations have found it easier to not ask and then complain about the State.

Councilor Buhle stated this 27th Town Council, was able to apply for a grant for a new CAD/RMS system through Congressionally Directed Spending. While the funding for the initial appropriation was destroyed by the “Continuing Resolution,” they remain hopeful it would be awarded in the next federal budget year. But let it be known that it was the first time Ledyard has ever applied for this program, which has left eligible capital needs on the backs of taxpayers instead of seeking external funding.

Councilor Buhle stated in 2025 this Council worked with Ledyard Parks and Recreation to apply for a \$1 million STEAP Grant, which was awarded to Ledyard in the amount of \$892,000 to replace four playscapes in town. She stated that this grant has been awarded to North Stonington 9 times, East Lyme 9 times, Montville 6 times, compared to Ledyard’s 4 applications and awards. Again, years of opportunity to seek capital funding for our town squandered.

Councilor Buhle continued by stating when they want to talk about not receiving funding appropriately, inevitably, the comment would be that Ledyard was about to lose \$625,000 from the changes in taxation on tribal lands. However, she stated that information was incorrect at best and intentionally misleading at worst. Yes, there was a Bill that prevents taxation on tribal land; Yes, it would reduce tax revenue. However, she stated what no one has mentioned yet was that the State Budget already accounts for it with an additional \$800,000 to the town to make the town more than whole. She stated let’s talk about that a bit more for one second, because she needed to express how ridiculous this complaint was with the math. She noted that \$625,000 in revenue amounts to about \$16.8 million dollars in taxable Grand List Value at the current proposed mil rate of 37.2. Considering that almost all of this taxable revenue was personal property, it would not see the increase in value that residences would be seeing in the upcoming Property Revaluation, especially because personal property was subject to a depreciation schedule. Therefore, she stated if the mil rate was reduced to, say, 27 next year (as a very conservative estimate that she think was higher than it will be), the projected revenue would only be \$453,600, not \$625,000. Regardless of that, she stated that Senator Osten has written in \$800,000 for the Town of Ledyard and the Town of Montville. She stated that it was not \$800,000 between the two towns, but \$800,000 for each town. This means the Town of Ledyard would benefit by nearly \$350,000, and the tribes would no longer be subject to *Dual Taxation*. Councilor Buhle stated that it was a great win all around, and another way Senator Osten has been doing the right things.

Councilor Buhle went on to state, but let’s get back to this year’s budget because that was what they were focusing on. This year’s budget was responsible, realistic, and representative of the needs of their town to maintain the quality of services and education that their residents deserve and moved here to Ledyard for. It has become abundantly clear to her that many of those in opposition to this year’s budget were always going to find a reason to vote “No”, regardless of the number. She stated that part of this falls on the misinformation (such as the *Dual Taxation* misinformation presented above) and the poor communication many of their voters received. The demands to slash the budget until there was no increase at all was unreasonable and unrealistic, and more information should have been provided to those voters to set their expectations better. She stated that this was never, ever, going to be a year with no increase, and they all knew it. She stated that she was disappointed in the lack of effort to inform voters responsibly to set their expectations. However, she stated that it was abundantly clear that the strategy of “*Do nothing and blame someone else for it*” was only the one playbook here.

VOTE

Councilor Saccone stated that he would be brief, noting that \$500,000 was a lot of money on the backs of the taxpayers; and \$500,000 was a lot to cut from the Board of Education Budget. He stated by leaving the \$500,000 in the Board of Education’s Budget that it would cost taxpayers about \$6 a month for a home with a \$200,000 assess value. He stated he thought it was worth it for their kids and that he thought most of their residents would say the same. Thank you.

2 – 6 Motion Failed (Brunelle, Buhle, Garcia-Irizarry, Rodriguez, Saccone, St. Vil, not in favor)

MOTION FAILED 2- 6	
MOVER:	Kevin Dombrowski, Town Councilor
SECONDER:	Jessica Buhle, Town Councilor
AYES:	Barnes, Dombrowski
NAYES:	Brunelle, Buhle, Garcia-Irizarry Rodriguez, Saccone, St. Vil
EXCUSED:	Ryan

Chairman Rodriguez called for a vote on the Motion as follows:

- ❖ MOTION to approve the following adjustments to the proposed Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget:

Account #	Title	Salary	(change from 6/10/2025)
1011-2101-51600	Finance Director	\$133,000	\$17,083
1011-0311-51600	Town Clerk	\$ 77,400	\$ 7,639
1011-4301-51600	Land Use Director	\$108,150	\$ 6,084
1011-0205-51606	Human Resource Director	\$ 97,850	\$ 1,442
Total General Government Increase:			\$32,248

In addition, Adjust the following Accounts:

Account # 6/11/2025)	Title	Reduction	(New Amount
10110101-5879	Contingency-Town Council	\$4,000	\$ 3,000
10110201-58790	Contingency- Mayor	\$5,000	\$ 1,000
10110201-51305	Town Hall Floater	\$9,692	\$ 19,000
10120301-5611	Fire Marshall Oper	\$2,000	\$ 6,000
10140107-56301	Sand and Salt	\$10,000	\$125,000
Total General Government Operating Decrease			\$30,692

Board of Education Capital	
Title	Reduction
Board of Education Capital	\$45,000
Total Board of Education Decrease	\$45,000

VOTE

6 – 2 Approved and so declared (Barnes, Dombrowski, not in favor)

APPROVED 6 - 2	
MOVER:	S. Naomi Rodriguez, Town Councilor
SECONDER:	Jessica Buhle, Town Councilor
AYES:	Brunelle, Buhle, Garcia-Irizarry Rodriguez, Ryan, Saccone, St. Vil
NAYES:	Barnes, Dombrowski
EXCUSED:	Ryan

3. MOTION to approve to set Fiscal Year 2025/2026 a Real Estate and Personal Property Mil Rate of 37.16 and a Motor Vehicle Mil Rate of 32.46.

Moved by Councilor Brunelle, seconded by Councilor Buhle

VOTE

6 – 2 Approved and so declared (Barnes, Dombrowski, not in favor)

APPROVED 6 - 2
MOVER: S. Naomi Rodriguez, Town Councilor
SECONDER: Jessica Buhle, Town Councilor
AYES: Brunelle, Buhle, Garcia-Irizarry Rodriguez, Ryan, Saccone, St. Vil
NAYES: Barnes, Dombrowski
EXCUSED: Ryan

*****POST MEETING NOTE*****: 6/18/2025 Town Council Meeting: Real Estate and Personal Property Mil Rate was corrected to **37.14**.

XV. ADJOURNMENT

VOTE: Councilor Buhle moved to adjourn, seconded by Councilor Garcia-Irizarry.
8 - 0 Approved and so declared. The meeting adjourned at 9:37 p.m.

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

I, S. Naomi Rodriguez, Chairman of the Ledyard Town Council,
hereby certify that the above and foregoing is a true and
correct copy of the minutes of the Regular Town Council
Meeting held on June 11, 2025.

S. Naomi Rodriguez, Chairman