Chairman Kevin J. Dombrowski

TOWN OF LEDYARD
CONNECTICUT
TOWN COUNCIL

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HYBRID FORMAT
MINUTES
COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMITTEE
REGUALR MEETING

Wednesday, April 19, 2023 | 6:30 PM | Town Hall Annex-Video Conference

DRAFT

I. CALL TO ORDER – The Meeting was called to order by Councilor Paul at 6:30 p.m. at the Council Chambers - Town Hall Annex Building.

Councilor Paul welcomed all to the Hybrid Meeting. He stated for the Town Council Community Relations Committee and members of the Public who were participating via video conference that the remote meeting information was available on the Agenda that was posted on the Town's Website – Granicus-Insite Meeting Portal.

II. ROLL CALL-

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Location	Arrived	Departed
Gary Paul	Committee Chairman	Present	In-Person	6:30 pm	7:01 pm
John Marshall	Town Councilor	Excused			
Bill Saums	Town Council	Present	In-Person	6:30 pm	
Mary McGrattan	Town Councilor	Present	Remote	6:30 p.m.	7:01 pm
S. Naomi Rodriguez	Town Councilor	Present	In-Person	6:30 pm	7:01 pm
Roxanne Maher	Administrative Assistant	Present	Remote	6:30 pm	7:01 pm

III. CITIZENS' COMMENTS – None.

IV. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS – None.

IV. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of March 15, 2023
Moved by Councilor Paul, seconded by Councilor Saums
VOTE: 2 - 0 Approved and so declared

V. OLD BUSINESS

1. Black History Month 2024 Activity/Contest.

Councilor Paul stated at their March 15, 2023 meeting he thanked and recognized Councilor Rodriguez for all the work she did noting that she organized the entire Black History Month Essay and Poster Contest this year. He noted the success of the program

was because of all the work Councilor Rodriguez did. He stated he loved the essays and seeing the kids posters. He addressed the importance for the Community Relations Committee to begin discussing ideas for next year's event.

The Community Relations Committee noted that based on their work to date regarding the Black History Essay and Poster Contest they have found the following:

- Getting an earlier start was critical (August/September timeframe).
- Local government may not be the right forum for some ideas, but that perhaps the Community Relations Committee could serve in a supporting role.
- Recognizing the kids at a Town Council meeting was important and a positive experience. Councilor Rodriguez noted that she would be attending the Middle School Awards Assembly the first week of May, 2023 to present Awards to the students who could not attend the Town Council's March 22, 2023 meeting. She noted that she would be reaching out to High School Principal Amanda Fagin to discuss where the disconnect in communication may have occurred to avoid this from happening again next year
- Would like to see more research done on Black Ledyard Residents' History
  - This was a good fit for a school project.
  - Board of Education involvement would be needed.
- High School Students did not participate in the 2023 Essay Contest - Councilor Rodriguez stated that she did not know where the disconnect occurred, noting that she was in communication with High School Principal Amanda Fagin.

Councilor Paul asked the Community Relations Committee to continue to bring their ideas forward as they continue to prepare for the 2023 Black History Month Essay and Poster Contest.

RESULT: CONTINUED	**Next Meeting: 05/17/2023 6:30 p.m.**

2. Draft a Schedule for Public Information Forums to present to residents the types of services the town offers; how to access services, and the authority residents should direct concerns regarding services.

Councilor Paul stated the Community Relations Committee had previously agreed that they would like to host a Booth at three Farmers' Market's this summer as follows:

- ***June 21, 2023 or July 19, 2023 – Mental Health Awareness***
  - ✓ Brian Dagle Healing Hearts Foundation
  - ✓ Home heating fuel through Thames Valley Council for Community Action (TVCCA) and other assistance programs.
  - ✓ Utilities – Electric/Water Assistance.
  - ✓ Homeowners Assistance program that provided no interest loans to help people replace their furnace, roof or septic system, etc.
  - ✓ Home meal delivery available for those who cannot get out to grocery shop

through Thames Valley Council for Community Action (TVCCA)

- ✓ The Linda C. Davis Food Pantry located in Ledyard Center.
- ✓ United Way located in Gales Ferry was a great resource.
- ✓ Connecticut's Paid Family Medical Leave Program
- ✓ Police Department "*Green and/or Blue Envelope*" for drivers with Autism or Hearing Impaired.

Councilor Rodriguez stated that she reached out to President Anne Dagle to see if she would be available for either of the two dates the Committee would like to feature Mental Health Awareness. She stated that she has not heard back from Ms. Dagle yet and would reach out to her again and report back to the Committee.

- ***August 30, 2023 - Library Services***

  Councilor Paul stated Library Director Jennifer Smith attend the Community Relations Committee's March 15, 2023 meeting and that she was on-board with the Committee's ideas to feature the Library Services as follows:

  - ✓ Community Relations Committee to host a Booth at the August 30, 2023 Farmers Market's noting that the Market Theme that week was ***"Back to School***" and that the Committee felt that the Library services would be in-keeping with the Market Theme. At their Booth the Community Relations Committee would provide literature regarding the services the Library offered and refer residents to stop by the Library Open House.

  - ✓ Open House – The Library would hold an Open House at the same time the Community Relations Committee was hosting a booth at the Farmers Market. When the Farmers' Market ended at 7:00 p.m. there would be an Informal Gathering at the Bill Library during which time Library Director Jennifer Smith would give a short presentation and then provide a tour of the Library to bring awareness to the many programs, services and resources the Library had to offer.

    Councilor Paul stated the Community Relations Committee was hoping to broadcast live Library Presentation and Tour using Zoom. He stated although the Informational Presentations have not been well attended in the pasta, that residents could view the zoom video recording at any time, noting it would be posted on the town's website, as they did with the Public Works Department Presentation.

- ***September 19, 2023 First Responders – Volunteers "Home Town Heroes***"

  Councilor Paul stated the Farmers Market Theme for September 19, 2023 was "***Home Town Heroes***". Therefore, he suggested that the Community Relations Committee use that week to promote the many organizations and committees that are operated with volunteers from the community. He stated that perhaps they could provide information on how people could get involved and volunteer to serve on the Ledyard or Gales Ferry Fire Department, or on a town committee/commission or board or become a Police Officer, etc.

Councilor Saums suggested the Community Relations Committee invite the following to attend their Booth that day:

- ✓ Representative from the Police Department
- ✓ Representative from the Ledyard Center Fire Company
- ✓ Representative from the Gales Ferry Fire Company
- ✓ Chairman from each of the town's committees/commissions/boards.

Councilor Saums stated that this would provide residents the opportunity to talk to someone from the Organization they were interested in to find out what that organization did, the time commitment, and how they could get involved.

- ***Land Use Processes*** - Councilor Paul commented on the Committee's interest to provide information to the community regarding the Land Use Process. He noted at their February 15, 2023 meeting the Community Relations Committee discussed with Land Use Director Juliet Hodge scheduling an Informational Forum to present to residents the Land Use processes relative to the approval of applications, in an effort to help residents understand the complexities involved as they relate to Regulatory, State Statutes, and the Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD), etc. He stated because the Land Use Department has been short staffed that the Land Use Informational Presentation would be deferred until Ms. Hodge could work it into her schedule.

Councilor Paul concluded by stating that he would like to have a confirmation from the Brian Dagle Foundation regarding the date they could participate before he reached out to others such as Chief Rich and Farmers' Market Committee Chairman Lauriann Hary to reserve space for a Booth on the dates the Community Relations Committee has targeted as noted above.

RESULT: CONTINUED	**Next Meeting: 05/17/2023 6:30 p.m.**

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

Councilor Paul stated that he spoke with Director of Senior Citizens and Park & Recreation Scott Johnson, Jr., about touring/visiting the many recreational parks in town in May, 2023. He stated they could advertise that the Parks & Recreation Commission along with the Community Relations Committee would be conducting a tour of the Towns Recreational Parks:

- Aljen Heights Park - Councilor Saums stated noted that some residents had questions regarding the Park at Aljen Heights. He stated that he did not know if the questions were regarding the condition of the equipment or the condition of the field. He also noted that a new playscape was put in near the Community Center in Gales Ferry.
- Erickson Park
- Highlands Lake

- Bush Pond – Lantern Hill Waterfront Park (Graham Property)

Councilor Saums suggested because they would not know when they would be at each of the Parks that they could post on Facebook or other social media sites when they were heading to the next park location, for residents that would like to join them.

Councilor Paul stated visiting the Recreational Parks would be a good opportunity for residents to see the great Parks the town has; and for residents to ask questions or to bring issues of concern to the Community Relations Committee's attention. He stated when they had the July 20, 2022 Informal Gathering at the Park on East Drive he was amazed to learn that a lot of residents did not know that they could contact the Parks & Recreation Director to discuss the issues at the Park such as the lighting or condition of the equipment, which was the reason residents were contacting the Mayor's Office, the Town Council, and the Police Department.

Councilor Paul stated having the opportunity to talk to residents in-person and for residents to talk with their elected officials in-person was a win-win. He stated that it gave them the opportunity to let residents know if they had concerns about what was happening at the Park that they had a great Parks & Recreation Director, who had also attended the July 20, 2023 Informal Gathering to hear the residents' concerns, suggestions, and to answer their questions. He stated that was what he believed the Community Relations Committee was about, to bring the community together and to help them by directing them to the appropriate department and staff that could address their concerns.

Councilor Paul stated if they could obtain comments on other topics that he would be open to hosting an Informal Gathering at other locations such as the Historic Up-Down Sawmill.

RESULT: CONTINUED	**Next Meeting: 05/17/2023 6:30 p.m.**

4. Joint meetings with the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation

Councilor Saums stated in communicating with Mashantucket Pequot Tribal (MPTN) Council Member Crystal Whipple that she was going to put out to the MPTN Secretary the Community Relations Committee's interest to schedule an Informal Gathering with the MPTN Council. However, Councilor Saums stated that he had not heard back from Ms. Whipple, noting that he would like to see them plan something in May, 2023. He stated that he would reach out to Ms. Whipple again.

Councilor Paul commented on all of their busy schedules and he suggested that the Informal Gathering could be something as simple as morning coffee.

RESULT: CONTINUED	**Next Meeting: 05/17/2023 6:30 p.m.**

5. Review status update regarding the progress of improvements at the Park on East Drive.

Councilor Paul stated that he spoke with Director of Senior Citizens and Park & Recreation Scott Johnson, Jr., about the Parks & Recreation Commission holding one of their meetings at the Park on East Drive in May, 2023; which the Community Relations Committee could attend.

Councilor Paul went on to note at the July 20, 2022 Informal Gathering the Community Relations Committee told residents that they would follow-up with them about the park improvements. He stated the new lights looked great, the fields were looking great and that they have provided some other safety measures. He stated although they would not be able to stop all the illicit activities, that they would continue to remain vigilant.

Councilor Paul stated during the winter months there was not much activity at the Park, noting that Mr. Johnson stated that he had received some feedback from residents that they were pleased with the work that has been done at the Park. He stated as they were heading into Spring that activity at the Park would increase; and so, the Committee would keep this item on their agenda.

RESULT: CONTINUED	**Next Meeting: 05/19/2023 6:30 p.m.**

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

VI. NEW BUSINESS

1. Any new business proper to come before the Committee – None.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Paul moved the meeting be adjourned, seconded by Councilor Saums.
VOTE: 2 – 0 Approved and so declared. The meeting was adjourned at 7:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gary Paul
Committee Chairman
Community Relations Committee