



Chairman Kevin J. Dombrowski

TOWN OF LEDYARD

CONNECTICUT
TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES
PUBLIC HEARING
LEDYARD TOWN COUNCIL
HYBRID FORMAT
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, TOWN HALL ANNEX
741 COLONEL LEDYARD HIGHWAY, LEDYARD, CONNECTICUT
REMOTE MEETING VIA ZOOM

PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES

7:00 P.M., APRIL 17, 2023

- I. CALL TO ORDER – The Public Hearing regarding the proposed Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Budget was called to order by Town Council Chairman Dombrowski at 7:00 p.m.

Chairman Dombrowski welcomed all to the Hybrid Meeting and he noted that the remote meeting information for the Town Council, Board of Education and members of the Public to participate in this evening’s public hearing was available on the Agenda that was posted on the Town’s Website – Granicus- Legistar Meeting Portal.

- II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

- III. PROCEDURE OF THE HEARING

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

Chairman Dombrowski stated they would begin the Public Hearing with budget presentations from Town Council Finance Committee Chairman Bill Saums and Board of Education Finance Committee Chairman Mike Brawner. He stated a Public Comment period would follow. He asked residents who were attending the meeting remotely and would like to speak this evening to type their name and address in the “Chat Box”. He stated that residents would be called on to speak in the order that they were signed up.

- IV. CALL OF THE PUBLIC HEARING

LEGAL NOTICE TOWN OF LEDYARD

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

The Ledyard Town Council will conduct a Public Hearing
at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, April 17, 2023
to receive comments/recommendations regarding a
Proposed Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Budget.

This Public Hearing will be Hybrid Format

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

In-person attendance will be at the
Council Chambers, Town Hall Annex Building
741 Colonel Ledyard Highway, Ledyard, Connecticut.

Remote Attendance: Via Zoom Video Conference at:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86714949658?pwd=S0NVSDRkWiszdHFSQkpDTnNtSmIyZz09>

or by audio only telephone +1 646 558 8656; Meeting ID: 867 1494 9658; Passcode: 754906

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

Copies of the proposed Budget will be available on April 11, 2023 in the
Town Clerks' Office and on the town's website at: <https://www.ledyardct.org/proposed-annual-budget>

For the Ledyard Town Council
s/s Kevin J. Dombrowski, Chairman

Please Publish on: Saturday, April 8, 2023

IV. PRESENTATION OF THE PROPOSED FISCAL YEAR 2023/2024 BUDGET

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

Councilor Saums stated that he and Board of Education Finance Committee Chairman Mike Brawner would present the proposed Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Budget noting that tonight's goal was to provide information to help residents understand the Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Budget that was being proposed for the coming year.

Councilor Saums provided a brief overview of the Annual Budget Process noting the Mayor submitted his proposed Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Budget to the Town Council on March 6, 2023 (first Monday in March) in accordance with the Chapter VII; Section 4, of the Town Charter. He went onto note the Finance Committee held three Budget Work Sessions meeting with the Mayor and Department Heads on March 9, 13, & 20, 2023. At their March 21, 2023 meeting the Finance Committee approved to forward the proposed budget for Town Council approval at their March 26, 2023 meeting to present at tonight's Public Hearing. He noted after tonight's Public Hearing the Finance Committee would have the opportunity to make additional budget adjustments at their Regular Meeting scheduled for April 19, 2023 to consider any new information that has come in, before forwarding the Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Budget to the Town Council for their final approval to be presented at the Annual Town Meeting scheduled for May 15, 2023 that would adjourn to a vote on the machines on Tuesday, May 16, 2023.

Councilor Saums stated in submitting his proposed Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Budget to the Town Council Mayor Allyn, III, noted the following:

- Grand List for the 2022 Valuation yielded a net increase of 1.28% compared to last year's overall increase in the value of 3.15%.
- 95% of Ledyard's Tax Revenue comes from residential property taxes.
- Budget Revenues from Grand lists for most of the comparable towns to Ledyard in the area were two to three times higher than Ledyard. Ledyard has historically been the leader in the area for having a heavy reliance on residential property taxes, with 95% of Ledyard's Tax Revenue coming from residential property taxes.
- Debt Service decreased \$350,810 compared to last year's increase of \$379, 313.
- Last year Ledyard's Pension Liability was more than fully funded at 100.3%, but, due to declines in the Market, they were now at about 80%; however, Ledyard was still one of the ten best funded pension liabilities in the state.

Councilor Saums proceeded to provide an overview of the proposed Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Budget in the amount of \$65,517,156 and represented a 3.16% increase over the current year’s budget. Which was comprised of a General Government Budget of \$29,608,788 an increase of \$679,886 or 2.26%; and a Board of Education Budget of \$35,908,368 an increase of \$1,353,048 or 3.92% higher than the current fiscal year (22/23) budget. He stated the proposed budget was responsible and resourceful, noting that although their labor-employee contract increases were in the 3% range that the Board of Education made other budget adjustments to minimize the overall budget increase to 3.92% over the current year. He stated they need to recognize that few new opportunities exist for continued consolidations and savings noting although salaries have increased, that year after year the Town and the Board of Education have continued to work to reduce the budget.

Councilor Saums stated the Board of Education’s proposed Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Budget in the amount of \$35,908,368, and included the following:

- Savings related to six (6.0) known teacher retirements (FTEs retained).
- Three (3) FTE District-Wide Interventionists for Literacy.
- One (1.0) FTE elementary level Instructional Coach.
- One (1.0) FTE District-Wide EL Teacher (English as an additional language).
- Two Kindergarten Paraprofessionals.
- Updated Athletic Trainer position transition from a stipend to staff.
- Out of warrantee replacements for SMART boards.
- Increase in required Special Educational

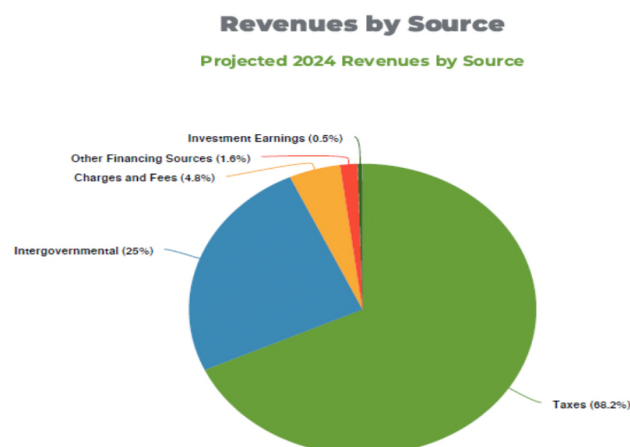
Councilor Saums noted that Mr. Brawner would provide more detail regarding the Board of Education’s budget during his presentation later this evening:

Councilor Saums continued by addressing the proposed General Government Budget in the amount of \$29,608,788 noting that it was an 2.26% increase over the current year’s budget (22/23).

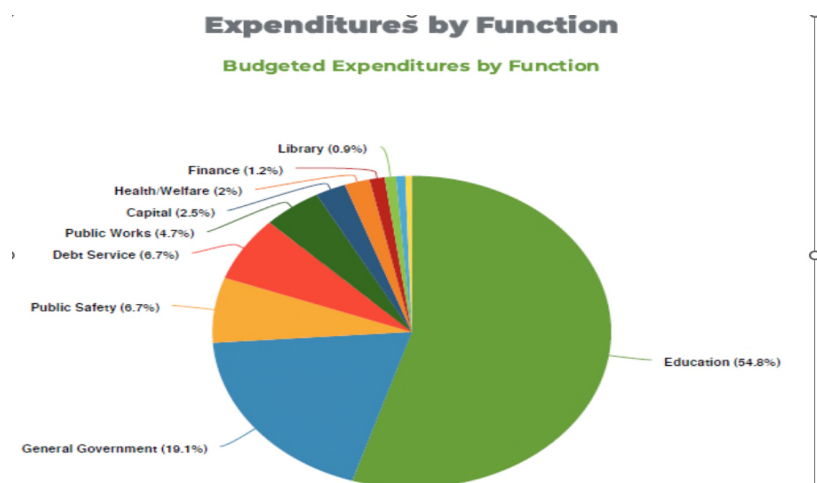
Councilor Saums provided an overview of the Revenues explaining with the 2022 property revaluation Ledyard saw a slight increase of \$16,194,771 or 1.28% in the Grand List (total net Grand List \$1,263,622,146). In the coming year, revenue from non-tax sources has been projected to decrease by 0.78% He noted Ledyard anticipated Education Cost Sharing (ECS) from the State would remain flat, and that there continued to be concerns over the funding methodology for Special Education (SPED). He also stated that Ledyard should continue to see the same level of funding from the State in areas such as Town Aid Road (TAR) and Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT).

Councilor Saums stated Finance Director Matthew Bonin worked with the Bank to earn a higher interest yield on the towns funds. He stated the projected interest earned revenue for the year would be more than \$200,000.

Councilor Saums provided an overview of the Revenues by Source as shown in the pie chart below:



Councilor Saums provided an overview the Budget Expenditures by function noting the General Government Budget in the amount of \$29,608,788 included approximately \$9,615,507 of Board of Education related expenses comprised of liability insurance, health care, workers compensation, retirement obligations, school nursing, youth services and other in-kind services. 54.8% of the total budget was allocated for Board of Education expenses, 13.4% was allocated for Public Health/ Safety/Services, 2.2% was allocated for Health and Welfare, 6.7% was allocated for Debt Service, 2.5% was allocated for Capital, and 19.1% was allocated for General Government expenses as shown in the pie chart below:



Councilor Saums provided an overview of the town’s Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) noting the General Government budget allocates \$1,653,735 in tax levy for the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). This funding, combined with state and federal grants, and other sources provides for a total CIP in the amount of \$5,285,423. The CIP continues to fund critical road repairs/maintenance, purchase of emergency radio equipment, and reserve fund allocations for emergency services equipment, future vehicle purchases, technology updates, improvements to the High School classrooms and bathrooms, Lantern Hill Road Bridge repairs, roof replacement for the Board of Education Central Office, the Gales Ferry School and Juliet W. Long School, including the installation of roof mounted solar array systems, Town Green, Multimodal Trail from the High School to Ledyard Center and sewer line from Ledyard Center to the Waste Water Treatment Facility.

	Council Proposed	Council Proposed	Council Proposed	Council Proposed
Description	Tax Levy	from Grants	Other	Total
Capital Improvement Plan 2022/2023	\$1,282,285	\$2,172,057	\$166,732	\$4,632,004
Capital Improvement Plan 2023/2024	\$1,653,735	\$2,836,438	\$795,250	\$5,285,423
Capital Improvement Plan Change	\$371,450	\$664,381	\$628,518	\$653,379

Major Town Projects	Cost	Funding Source
Road Restoration	\$982,000	Grants \$681,438 Tax Levy: \$300,562
Multi-Model Pathway	\$1,080,000	Grant: \$1,80,000 Tax Levy: \$0
Lantern Hill Bridge	\$1,075,000	ARPA Funding \$1,075,000
Fire Apparatus	\$315,769	Tax Levy: \$315,769

Councilor Saums noted the proposed Fiscal Year 2023/2024 included \$4,403,850 for Debt Service, a decrease in the amount of \$350,810 continuing the payment of bonds for the police headquarters, school renovation projects, as well as school roofs, Building Management Systems (BMS) and HVAC Systems.

Councilor Saums reviewed the status of the capital projects the Town has been working on this year, noting that the construction work on some of these projects would continue into the coming year as follows:

- Ledyard Community Town Green and Parklet– Upper and Lower Town Green as well as the Pole Barn improvements work has been completed and included new electrical wiring and power supply to all facilities, lights, and poured concrete floor. Nearly all of the work has been completed by Public Works employees.



West Entrance to Upper Town Green



North Entrance to Upper Town Green

- Ledyard Town Green
 - New electrical wiring and power supply to all facilities (complete)
 - Upgrades to Morgan Barn for conversion to Food Pantry (complete)
 - Parking area for events using reclaimed millings (complete)
 - New lighting (complete)
 - Parklet for events (complete)
 - Pole Barn renovation (complete)
 - Nearly all work completed by Public Works employees
- Bill Library and Town Hall Buildings roof replacement (complete)
- Multimodal Trail LHS to Ledyard Center (in process)
- Sewer Line Ledyard Center to Treatment Facility (in process)
- GFS & JWL roof replacement and solar projects (in process)



Bill Library Roof &
Beautification Committee
Daffodils



Concrete Floor Pole Barn
Lower Town Green



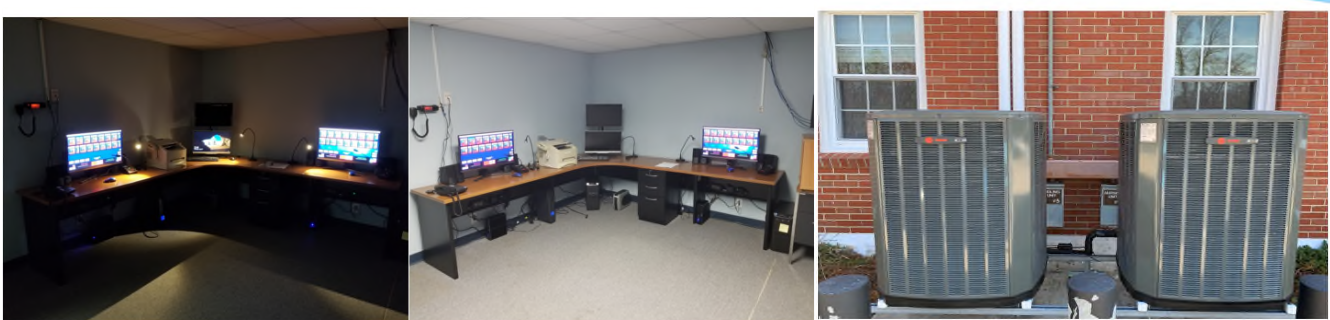
New Roof
Linda C. Davis Food Pantry

Councilor Saums stated as part of this year’s annual budget preparation the Finance Committee continued to spend many hours reviewing the status of the projects that were approved at the Fiscal Year 2022/2023 Budget Referendum for the use of the \$4,327,000 Federal American Rescue Act Funding (ARPA) Ledyard received. The federal guidelines require the ARPA

funding to be obligated by the end of the 2024 calendar year; and spent (liquidated) by the end of the 2026 calendar year. The town has made good progress with eleven projects being completed to date, eleven projects were in-progress, and ten projects have not been started. The projects that made the ARPA List ranged from infrastructure projects such as the Ledyard Center Sewer Line Extension project to supporting our Regional Agency Partners, to facility maintenance projects, preservation of historical landmarks and park improvements, software upgrades and many others.

The following ARPA Funded Projects have been completed:

Town Green Upgrade Project	Public Works	75,000
Replace 2 Dispatch Stations in Emergency Ops Center	Emergency Management	75,000
Concrete Floor - Pole Barn	Public Works	100,000
Ledge Light Health District - support COVID initiatives	Finance	43,270
Replace Food Pantry Roof	Mayor’s office	25,000
TVCCA - Commissary project	Finance	15,000
Added ClearGov Modules	MIS	10,500
Homeless Hospitality Center of New London	Finance	10,000
Replace Firehouse software	AES	8,000
Replace brackets on streetlight poles	Public Works	2,520
Install WI-FI in Food Pantry	MIS	2,500
		\$482,506



Dispatch Stations Emergency Operations Center (EOC)

New AC Units Town Hall

The following ARPA Funded Projects were currently in-process:

Sewer Line Extension Phase I	WPCA	1,200,000
Funding for youth mental health clinicians	Youth Services	190,000
Skid mounted sewer pumps	WPCA	175,000
Ledyard Up/Down Sawmill	Historic Districts	125,000
Housing Rehab Grant - additional funding	Land Use / Planning	100,000
Emergency Services Building HVAC system replacement	Public Works	200,000
Park & Rec / Senior Center HVAC system replacement	Public Works	155,000
Town Hall HVAC system replacement	Public Works	80,000
Playscape Replacement at 13 Winthrop, Gales Ferry	Park & Rec	60,000
Nathan Lester House repairs	Historic Districts	40,000
LED Sign Panel, Gales Ferry	Mayor’s office	35,000
LED Sign Panel, Ledyard Center	Mayor’s Office	35,000
Solar Charging Stations	Mayor’s office	12,000
Parks and Rec Summer Scholarships	Parks and Recreation	10,000
TOTAL		\$2,417,000



New Skid Mounted Sewer Pumps
Wastewater Treatment Facility



New playscapes
13 Winthrop

The following ARPA Projects have not yet been started:

Sewer Line Extension Phase III	WPCA	950,000
Erickson Park Enhancements	Park & Rec	55,000
Police Radio Interoperability	Police	46,125
Sidewalk Infill in Ledyard Center	Public Works	35,000
Add Sidewalks in Gales Ferry	On Hold	35,000
Exterior Doors (TH and Annex) w/ Electronic Locking Systems	Public Works	23,000
Electric Vehicle charging stations	Mayors Office	20,000
Vinyl Re-siding of Food Pantry	Mayors office	17,500
Gales Ferry Corridor Study	Land Use / Planning	15,000
Automated Doors - Senior Center	Public Works	5,000
TOTAL		\$1,201,625

Councilor Saums addressed the projected 34.91 mil rate required to support the proposed Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Budget as presented this evening in the amount of \$65,517,156 noting the following factors:

- Grand List for the 2022 valuation yielded a net increase of 1.28% compared to last year’s overall increase in the value of 3.15%.
- Revenue from non-tax sources decreased 0.78%.
- Healthcare cost projections continue to increase, driving a nearly 0.5 mil rate increase alone.
- The town’s healthcare consultant recommended an 8% increase, and the Town is actively seeking alternative plans.
- Last year’s pension liability was more than fully funded at 100.3%, but due to declines in the Market, it was now funded at about 80%; however, they were still one of the ten best in the state.
- Inflation caused increases in utilities, materials, labor costs, and contracted services.
- Projected mil rate increase: 1.09 mils

Councilor Saums noted the proposed 1.09 mil increase would increase property owners tax bill as follows:

House Assessed Value	Annual Tax Bill Increase
\$100,000	\$109.00
\$200,000	\$218.00
\$300,00	\$327.00

Councilor Saums noted the following options to try to minimize the increase in the projected/proposed Mil Rate:

- Continue to seek lower healthcare cost alternatives.
- Finance Committee was actively discussing where cuts could be made to the proposed budget.

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

- Senate Bill 1240 - Mil Rate Tax Cap would apply to all commercial and industrial properties. Councilor Saums explained the Mil Rate Tax Cap has been proposed for 31.25 mils, noting Ledyard's mil rate was currently slightly higher than the proposed Bill's Mil Rate Cap. He deferred to Mayor Allyn, III, to provide some additional background.

Mayor Allyn, III, stated Senate Bill 1240 - Mil Rate Tax Cap came out of Committee *Joint Favorable*, which meant that it had support of both parties. The proposed Bill would work similar to the car tax cap, explaining that the State would create a New Revenue Sharing Account to cover the loss of revenues for Municipalities. He stated the State would provide funding to make up the delta between the Mil Rate Cap and the Municipality's mil rate from the new Revenue Sharing Account.

Councilor Saums stated the proposed Mil Rate Tax Cap was of concern, noting if the State funded the gap in the loss of tax revenue to the Municipality for a year or two that would be great. However, he stated that they would not see commercial business expand in only two years. He stated after two years the responsibility to make up the gap in tax revenue would fall to the residential property owners.

Councilor Saums continued to note that one of the problems they were having with Affordable Housing was because Short-Term Rentals were causing the housing market to heat up, with people buying residential homes as investments for Short-Term Rentals. He stated because Short-Term Rentals were considered *commercial* property, that their local property taxes would go down because they would be capped at under the State's Mil Rate Cap, making Short-Term Rentals an attractive business and making residential homes more valuable to be purchased for Short-Term Rental use. He stated taking the Short-Term Rentals off the residential tax role would leave a larger burden for the residential property owners. He stated he had concerns regarding the State Legislature's proposed Mil Rate Tax Cap.

- Senate Bill 1242 – Waste Management would impose a \$5.00 per ton surcharge for all waste that originated from your town that was being hauled out of state. Councilor Saums stated that currently the State was planning to haul 800,000 – 900,000 tons of waste out of Connecticut to landfills in Pennsylvania and Ohio. He explained for the household waste that does not go to the incinerator Municipalities would be required to pay the \$5.00 surcharge per ton and a \$2.00 in-State charge.
- Taxation on Indian Lands – Councilor Saums stated Legislative efforts continue to be discussed that would prevent towns from taxing private companies operating on tribal lands. He stated there was a piece of Legislation that did not pass last year; and so they were now going to have a Working Group to further study the issue.
- Budget Transformation Committee – Councilor Saums stated the Town Council established a new Committee to Transform the Budget Process to review the town's budget process, and to develop future contingency plans in the event the State had budget problems that would impact State or Federal funding to Ledyard. He noted the last Committee to Transform the Budget Process submitted its final report to the Town Council on October 16, 2016. He stated during the past seven years many of their recommendations and goals have been implemented/and or considered. Therefore, he stated the Town Council felt that it was time to once again conduct another review of the town's budget process and the role of local government. He stated this was a short-term project noting that the Committee would be asked to complete their work in four months. He stated the nine-member Committee included four residents from the community-at-large, along with representatives from the Board of Education and Town Council. He encouraged residents interested in working on this assignment to contact the Town Council Office at (860) 464-3203 or email: council@ledyardct.org or their respective parties.

Councilor Saums provided a recap noting the proposed Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Budget in the amount of \$65,517,156 represented a 3.16% increase over the current year’s and would require a mil increase in the amount of 1.09 mils or a proposed Mill Rate of 34.91 to support the budget.

Councilor Saums concluded by stating the Town Council was interested in hearing residents comments and suggestions regarding the proposed Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Budget.

Councilor Saums deferred to Board of Education Finance Committee Chairman Mike Brawner to present the education budget for the upcoming year.

Board of Education Proposed Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Budget \$35,908,368

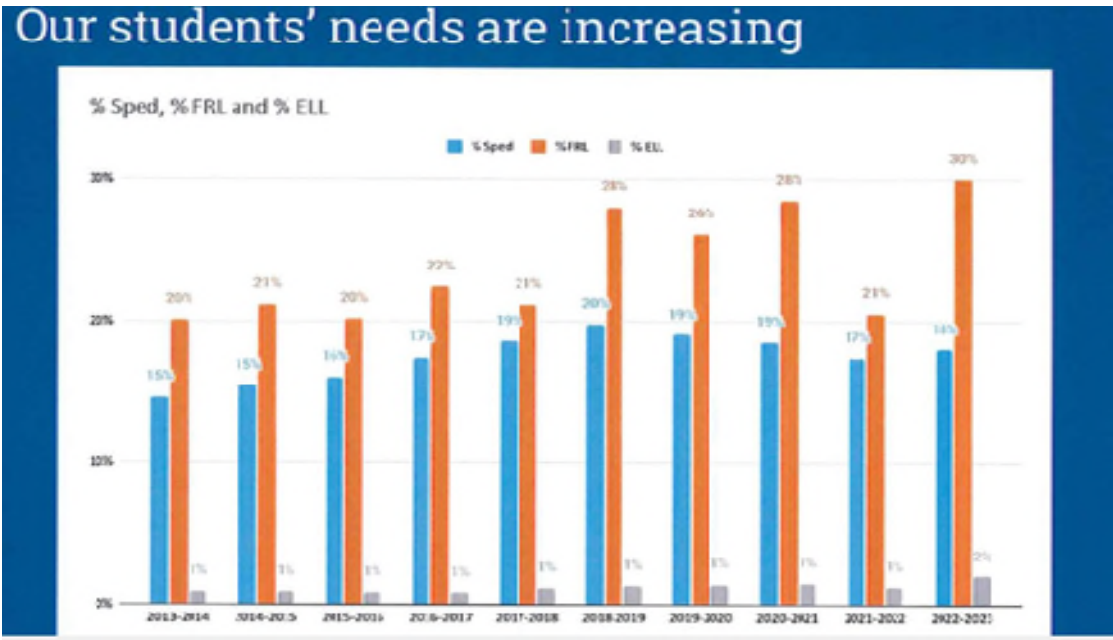
Board of Education Finance Committee Chairman Mike Brawner thanked Superintendent of Schools Jason Hartling, the Administration, Staff, and the Board of Education for their hard work on preparing the proposed Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Budget.

Mr. Brawner provided an overview of the Board of Education’s Budget Process noting that they start working to prepare the annual budget in October. He stated they held a number of meetings at which they reviewed things that may not have been funded in the current year but were needed and projected expenses for the coming. He stated tonight’s budget presentation was a culmination of all the hard work that was done, and that he appreciated everyone’s support in developing the proposed education budget.

Mr. Brawner began by providing an overview of the Board of Education’s proposed Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Budget in the amount of \$35,908,368, noting that it was an increase of \$1,353,048 or 3.92% higher than the current fiscal year (22/23) budget. He noted the Board of Education’s Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Budget Goals were focused on the following:

- ✓ Improve Achievement.
- ✓ Meet the needs of all Ledyard Public School Students.
- ✓ Balance the increasing students’ needs, staffing and scalability with the overall financial ability of the District, recognizing that they could not fund everything.

Mr. Brawner stated over the last ten years, there has been a significant change of the profile of the students entering Ledyard Public Schools. He stated the District had to reformulate how they were approaching the needs of the students entering into the school system, beginning with Kindergarten and continuing thru their years in Ledyard Public Schools. He reviewed the chart below:



Blue Metric – Illustrated the work Ledyard has done to stabilize the increase of needs by appropriately identifying their students and providing them with the services that would eventually allow them to exit out of the special education program if appropriate.

Orange Metric: Illustrated the Free or Reduced Lunch population which was over 30% for this current school year.

• **Student Achievement**

Mr. Brawner stated Ledyard had a persistent number of students who were not meeting Grade Level Standards; and the projection was that this trend would continue to increase.

Mr. Brawner reviewed the Smarter Balance Achievement Consortium English Language Arts and the Math (SBAC Charts) below:

Student Achievement SBAC ELA, Spring 2022			
Grade	Does Not Meet Achievement Standard	Approaching Achievement Standard	Meets/Exceeds Achievement Standard
3	31%	25%	44%
4	27%	21%	52%
5	26%	15%	59%
6	31%	30%	39%
7	32%	21%	47%
8	17%	30%	53%

Student Achievement SBAC Math, Spring 2022			
Grade	Does Not Meet Achievement Standard	Approaching Achievement Standard	Meets/Exceeds Achievement Standard
3	28%	24%	50%
4	15%	31%	54%
5	27%	29%	44%
6	35%	38%	27%
7	34%	31%	34%
8	38%	30%	34%

Mr. Brawner noted these Charts were a representation of Student Achievement as measured by the State Assessment. He explained the following:

- **Purple Column** showed the percentage of students that were *At or Above the Achievement Standard*.
- **Yellow Column** showed the percentage of students that were *Approaching Achievement Standard*.
- **Red Column** showed the percentage of students *Not Meeting the Achievement Standard*.

Mr. Brawner stated in many of their grade levels they were seeing almost 50% of their students not at Standard by the State’s Measure. He stated the proposed Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Education Budget strategically addressed the need by increasing the number of Instructional Coaches and Interventionists for the students that need extra help.

• **Staffing**

Mr. Brawner presented the following a Staffing Comparison Chart below regarding other towns in Southeastern Connecticut:

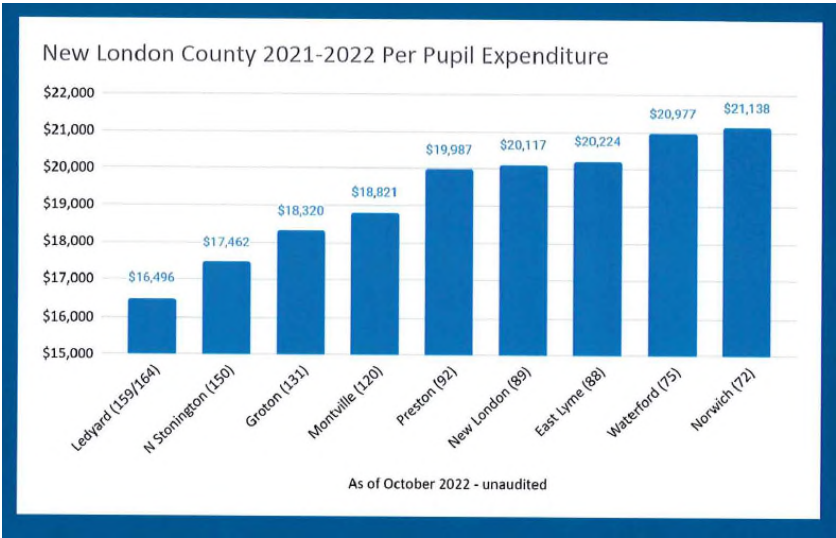
Staffing Levels Comparison								
District	# Students	NCEP Rank	NCEP \$ FY22	Certified Student Support	Certified General Education	Paras	Other	Students per adult
Ledyard	2450	159	\$16,496.00	57.3	158.1	64	100.9	7.6
Montville	1999	120	\$18,821.00	57.9	150	78.9	160.7	5.1
East Lyme	2644	88	\$20,224.00	70.5	199.9	110.8	144.4	5.8
Stonington	1831	69	\$21,216.00	54	149	73	101.2	5.7
Norwich	3287	72	\$21,138.00	114.2	210.9	156	274.2	5.1
Waterford	2348	75	\$20,977.00	62.1	174.9	81	99.4	6.6

Mr. Brawner stated the chart above was broke out based on Staff. He stated during the past five-years Ledyard has adjusted staff in key areas; and have continued to target and take deliberate actions to address the needs of the students. He stated although the students’ needs change from year to year that there were some areas where students consistently needed help, noting the additional issues and complexities that were caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic. He explained during the time the students could not be in the classroom; and the time that a number of students continued to learn from home, or were being home-schooled, they found that it was not the same as being in the classroom; especially in the areas where the students were not getting in-person support from the Interventionists and Instructional Coaches.

• **Per Pupil Expenditure**

Mr. Brawner continued by explaining the requests in the proposed Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Education Budget were designed to meet the long-term needs of the students that existed prior to the Covid-19 Pandemic. He stated they had issues that they were trying to address for years and he stated the last few years with the effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic has added additional challenges to the list of needs. He stated the proposed Board of Education Budget was a responsible budget that tried to balance what was needed and what the town could afford.

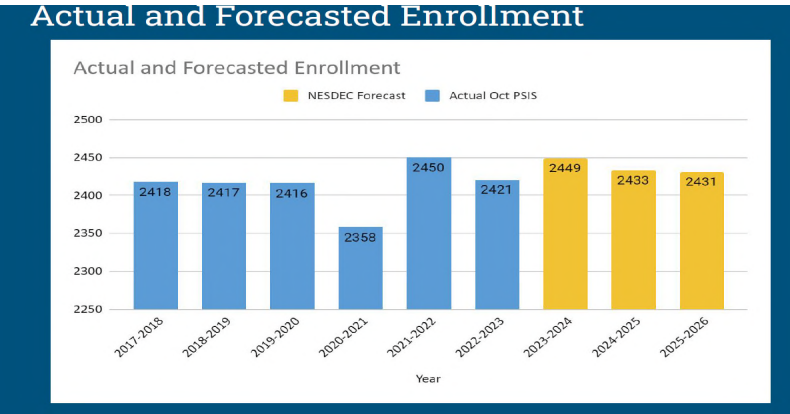
Mr. Brawner provided an overview of the New London County 2021-2022 Per Pupil Expenditure Chart below:



Mr. Brawner stated Ledyard’s Per Pupil Expenditure Ranking was 159 out of Connecticut’s 164 towns, which was at the low end of the funding towns spend on education. He commented that he was not saying that more money makes better for better education. However, he stated there were areas where Ledyard definitely needed to improve over the next five-years. He stated that the Board of Education was working to revise their next *Five-Year Strategic Plan*, noting that they would be looking at areas where they could improve what they spend on students without blatantly increasing the budget. He stated bringing in the Interventionists and Instructional Coaches has brought services back-into the schools and has allowed them to better control costs, opposed to when they were sending students out for services. He stated that it also allowed them to adapt and tailor the services students needed. He stated from an expenditure perspective they were running a very lean Board of Education program in Ledyard.

• **Enrollment**

Mr. Brawner presented the Actual and Forecasted Enrollment Chart, as noted below, noting that the enrollment dropped slightly this year, however, he stated enrollment numbers have been projected to go back up next year. He stated these numbers were a snapshot, and that the numbers change, noting that the School Districts gets late enrollments, etc. However, he stated the current and projected enrollments were fairly consistent and that these projections help the District determine their staffing needs. He explained the delta becomes the special needs of the students and how to fill those with additional specialized staff.



• **Budget Priorities :**

Mr. Brawner continued by explaining the requests in the proposed Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Education Budget were designed to meet the long-term needs of the students, noting that they worked to their Strategic Plan. He provided an overview of the Budget Priorities as follows:

- ✓ Continue the evolution of K-5 literacy and numeracy instruction and the professional growth of their educators.
- ✓ Continue enhancements and evolution of the intervention model and expand service capacity to make sure all Ledyard Public School Students who need services get those services; and that the services adapt as student needs change over the years.
- ✓ Professional Development - Mr. Brawner stated Ledyard Public Schools invests time and resources in the professional development of their staff. He stated as their staff continues to grow and become more capable they find new ways to be innovative to help their students, rather than outsource students for services, as was being done in some areas.
- ✓ Continue to address and improve achievement gaps and the number of students below Smarter Balance Achievement Consortium (SBAC) Numbers. Mr. Brawner stated this year’s budget targets included finding where students were having problems and working to improve services to help students do better on the tests.

❖ **District Needs & Priorities**

Mr. Brawner stated as they have been doing for the past few years the Board of Education has continued their “Needs Assessment” activities with the Administrators of each school prioritizing their request and needs. He stated although many of items in the yellow area were important, that they: (1) May not be able to secure funding; (2) May not be able to secure staffing; or (3) May not have the structure in place to fully utilize the program.

Mr. Brawner explained in working to prioritize these needs they look to see where they would get the *Best Bang for the Buck*, explaining that the order of each of the colored sections were not directly prioritized. However, he stated they were mapped to gaps and known needs. He stated as they move thru the year that they may have the opportunity to fund one of the items on the Priority List should there be a savings somewhere else.

Mr. Brawner stated the School District has invested in improvements to make sure that they had the leadership, instructional coaching, and training in place so that they were successful interventions. He presented the “District Needs” list noting that they were color coded to identify their priority as follows:

2023/2024 Budget Requests by Tier

- (1) GREEN -Recommended for inclusion in budget
- (2) YELLOW Considered tor inclusions in budget
- (3) RED considered tor future inclusion in budget

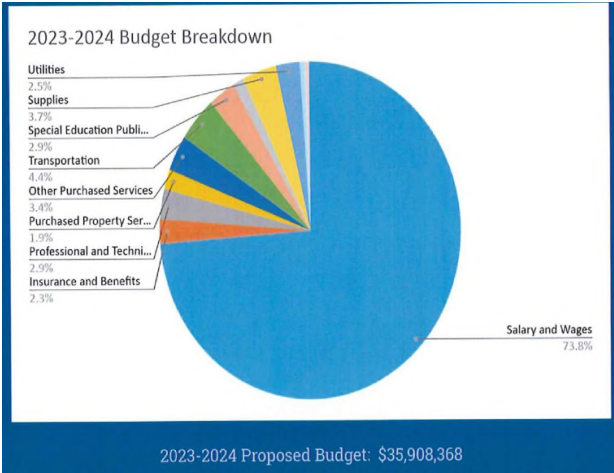
Building or Department	Request. Narrative	Amount	Type
GFS/JWL, GHS	Instructional Coach (1)	\$85.000	Salary
District Wide	ELA Interventionists (3)	\$255.000	Salary
District Wide	EL Teacher (1)	\$75.000	Salary
GFS, JWL	Data team workshop	\$8,400	Salary
GFS	Kindergarten paraprofessional	\$16,115	Salary

Building or Department	Request. Narrative	Amount	Type
GHS	Kindergarten paraprofessional	\$16,115	Salary
GHS	Summer Safety Care training	\$3,600	Salary
LHS	World language lab licenses	\$4,000	Professional Services
LHS	Athletic trainer	\$30,000	Salary
IT, LMS, GMS	Projectors/SMART Boards - out of warranty replacements -LMS/GHS	\$46,000	Equipment
Special Education	Increased required special education services	\$90,000	Professional Services
LHS	Increase agriscience supplies	\$10,000	Supplies
GFS/JWL, GHS	Elementary after school program stipends	\$6,000	Salary
Special Education, District	Behavior interventionist (2)	\$72,772	Salary
Special Education, District	BCBA	\$85,000	Salary
District Wide	MTSS Coordinator (1)	\$95,000	Salary
GFS/JWL, GHS	Instructional Coach (I)	\$85,000	Salary
LMS	Grade Level field experience	\$15,500	Professional Services
District Wide	ELA Interventionists (2)	\$170,000	Salary
District Wide	Math Interventionist (I)	\$85,000	Salary
GFS/JWL	Increase art supplies	\$1,600	Supplies
Special Education, District	Behavior interventionist (2)	\$72,772	Salary
Special Education, District	BCBA	\$85,000	Salary
LHS	General interventionist, MA3	\$57,620	Salary
Special Education	Increase Preschool Supply Budget	\$1,000	Supplies
GFS	Transition Kindergarten teacher, est MA3	\$57,520	Salary
GHS	Transition Kindergarten teacher, est MA3	\$57,520	Salary
GFS,GHS,JWL	Math Coach (2)	\$190,000	Salary
Special Education	Increase SES Staffing (2)	\$250,000	Salary
Special Education	Inclusion training professional development	\$30,000	Professional Services
District Wide	Cross bridge magnet school bus reduction	-\$26,000	Professional Services
District Wide	Assistive Technology Coordinator	\$75,000	Salary
District Wide	Director of Curriculum	\$140,000	Salary
District Wide	Substitutes by 20%	\$56,362	Salary
District Wide	Increase Paraprofessionals	\$245,319	Salary
LHS	Increase 0.5 FTE Counselor to 1.0 FTE	\$48,203	Salary
GFS, GHS	State Mandated Reading program K-3 Software	\$270,000	Supplies
GFS, GHS	Elementary instructional music teacher	\$65,000	Salary
GFS, GHS	World Language Teacher (2)	\$130,000	Salary
District Wide	Late Bus	\$65,000	Professional Services
District Wide	Musical Instrument Updates	\$75,000	Equipment
District Wide	Expanded Pre-K 3 Teachers and 6 Paraprofessional	\$345,00	Salary
LHS	Virtual learning Proctor	\$65,000	Salary

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 Budget Expenditures:

Mr. Brawner reviewed a pie chart regarding the Budget Expenditure Breakdown noting the following:

- 73.8 % Salary and Wages
- 2.5% Utilities
- Supplies 3.7%
- 2.9% Special Education
- 4.4% Transportation
- 3.4% Other Purchases Services
- 1.9% Purchases Property Services
- 2.9% Professional Technology
- 2.3% Insurance and Benefits *(This does not include Healthcare costs. The healthcare costs are carried on the General Government side of the Ledger)*

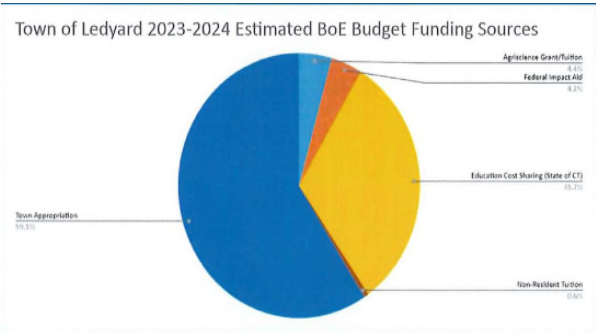


❖
 Projected Revenues – Funding Sources:

Mr. Brawner reviewed the Board of Education’s Projected Funding Sources as follows:

- 59.1% Town Appropriation (Tax Revenue)

- 31.7% Education Cost Sharing – Mr. Brawner noted they would see a slight increase in the ECS Funding.
- 4.2 % Impact Aid – Mr. Brawner stated Ledyard has maximized their Impact Aid working hard to increase awareness in the value of completing the request forms to identify eligible families.
- 4.4% Agri-Science
- 0.6% Non-Resident Tuition



❖ **Key Budget Changes:**

Mr. Brawner reviewed the Key Education Budget Changes, as Councilor Saums briefly noted at the beginning of tonight’s Public Hearing as follows:

- Savings related to six (6.0) known teacher retirements (FTEs retained).
- Three (3) FTE District-Wide Interventionists for Literacy – This would bring the staffing level back up to the 2015 staffing level to target students that need additional help and make sure that help was available.
- One (1.0) FTE elementary level Instructional Coach.
- One (1.0) FTE District-Wide English Language Teacher (English as an additional language) - Mr. Brawner stated there were more students this year who were learning English as their second language.
- Two Kindergarten Paraprofessionals.
- Updated Athletic Trainer position transitioning from a stipend to staff – Mr. Brawner explained with their Athletic Trainer taking another position, that making the Athletic Trainer a staff position allowed the Board of Education to fill the position properly and ensure they had an Athletic Trainer on-site at events, noting that trying to fill the position from a stipend perspective was difficult.
- Out of warrantee replacements for SMART boards/projectors – Mr. Brawner stated about \$30,000 was included in the Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Budget to replace failing technology in the classrooms that was out of warrantee.
- Increase in required Special Educational Services – Mr. Brawner stated they have had some changes relative to the services for their youth *in-need* that they were working to manage their profile; and therefore, additional special education services were needed for some of their high need out placements.

Mr. Brawner concluded his presentation by providing a recap stating the Board of Education’s proposed Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Budget in the amount of \$35,908,368, was an increase of \$1,353,048 or 3.92% over the current Fiscal Year 2022/2023 Budget.

V. PUBLIC COMMENTS –

Chairman Dombrowski thanked Mr. Saums and Mr. Brawner for their informative presentations, and he opened the floor for in-person public comments. He asked residents to keep their comments to three-minutes.

Chairman Dombrowski asked those attending the Public Hearing via video conference to type their name and address in the “Chat Box” if they would like to provide public comments.

Mr. Eric Treaster, 10 Huntington Way, Ledyard asked the following questions:

Question: Electricity Costs - Has the Town and Board of Education considered purchasing electricity from providers other than Eversource?

Response: Mayor Allyn, III, stated for a number of years the Town has used multiple vendors for electricity. He noted as an example the Water Pollution Control Authority was using Trans-Canada for their electricity at the Wastewater Treatment Facility. He stated Finance Director Matthew Bonin handles the purchasing of electricity, noting these utilities were paid out of the Finance Department on the General Government side. He stated they were not beholden to Eversource from the perspective of purchasing power.

Superintendent of Schools Jason Hartling stated the Board of Education has gone out for commercial bidding, noting that they were in a favorable position thru December, 2023. He stated the Board of Education included a slight increase in the upcoming fiscal year budget for electricity utilities expenses.

Question: Electric Vehicle Charging Stations - Mr. Treaster questioned the location of the two EV Charging Stations and who would pay for the electricity that would be charging the electric vehicles? He noted the EV Charging Stations located behind the Groton Town Hall were available to the public for free.

Response: Mayor Allyn, III stated there would be two EV Charging Stations, noting that one charging station would be on Ledyard side of town and one charging station would be on Gales Ferry side of town. He stated the EV Charging Stations in the Town of Ledyard would require the users to pay for the electric charging by credit card, ApplePay, etc., stating that the EV Charging Stations would not be free. He stated in attending a Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) regarding EV Charging Stations that some towns were providing the charging of electric vehicles for free. He stated that he was not a proponent of offering the charging stations for free.

Question: Solar Panels – Mr. Treaster addressed the solar panels that were removed from the Town Hall and Bill Library when the roofs were replaced. He questioned whether any thought has been given to having a big solar panel installation at the High School?

Response: Superintendent of Schools Jason Hartling stated the High School already had a solar panel array on the roof. He stated as the new roofs were being installed on the Juliet W. Long School and Gales Ferry School that solar panel arrays would also be installed.

Mr. Treaster questioned whether the promised savings in electrical costs has been achieved by having the solar panels. Board of Education Director of Human Capital and Finance explained because the existing solar array panels were installed right before the Covid-19 Pandemic hit that they have not actually had a full year of normal use of the school buildings. She stated that they would have better data after this year.

Councilor Saums stated the Town has considered a large solar panel array installation (solar farm) on town land. However, he explained none of the solar companies were interested in the small pieces of land Ledyard had to offer. He stated the only solar farm installation the town was able to do was at the Wastewater Treatment Facility on Town Farm Road. He noted as Mr. Treaster mentioned the solar panels on the Town Hall and Bill Library were removed when the roofs were replaced. He went on to state that every Solar Power Purchase Agreement was different, and he explained usually the Solar Panel Company would cap rates. He stated they have found that they usually do not save money because there were program increases, however, they tend to flatten out what they were spending. He stated that they have had a difficult time with the solar panel arrays at the Wastewater Treatment Plant, including trying to find out what the savings the electrical cost were.

Question: Students not meeting testing grade levels – Mr. Treaster questioned whether the Board of Education would be providing Summer School to help bring students up-to-level.

Response: Superintendent of Schools Jason Hartling stated Ledyard does run an extended program for students who were allocated. He explained the challenges pertaining to summer school for the students that needed the extra support included things such as transportation, childcare, staffing, etc. He stated the District was working to try some different innovative ways to attack the issue.

Mr. Whit Irwin, 2 Winfield Way, Ledyard, Town Councilor, thanked everyone for their work to put together the budgets for next year. He asked the following questions:

Question: Actual Versus Projected Enrollment – Councilor Irwin questioned how well the Actual School Enrollment met the Projections; and how useful was this data?

Response: Superintendent of Schools Jason Hartling stated the Actual Enrollment were within 2% - 3% of the Projections. However, he stated the challenge was not the total enrollment numbers, it was where they sit. He stated they cannot always predict where the increases or decreases would occur. He explained they could have a increase or decrease of twenty students spread over nine different grade levels, noting that they would not actually see an impact. However, he stated one year they had an increase of about 20 students all in Grade 3 at the Juliet W. Long School, which was challenging to address.

Question: Per Pupil Spending – Councilor Irwin noted that Ledyard’s Per Pupil Spending Ranking was 159 out of Connecticut’s 164 towns, noting the higher the number the lower the town was spending per pupil for education. He stated the testing results show that 50% of their students were not at grade level. He questioned whether there was any concern the Ledyard’s low spending per pupil was a detriment or hampering their student learning achievement in Ledyard?

Response: Superintendent of Schools Jason Hartling stated “Yes”. He stated the per pupil spending was a significant challenge point. He noted Ledyard’s Per Pupil spending included all spending on the town side of the ledger as well, explaining not only did it include what the Board of Education was spending that it also included some allocation of town expenses such as Ledyard Youth Services, Youth Librarian, etc.

Mr. Hartling went on to explain Ledyard experienced a large enrollment decline prior to 2015, noting that their enrollment numbers have remained somewhat stable since that year. He stated with the 2015 decline in enrollment that the approach was to adjust the staffing model based purely on the enrollment decline. However, he stated what was missed was the increasing Student Need Profile. He stated as the need profile of their students increased that the enrollment decreased and they were cutting staff. He stated today’s challenge was how do they continue to ramp up with the existing infrastructure and knowledge they had. He stated he did not know if the District could just hire themselves out this challenge or at least not in one year. He stated many School Districts have used the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) they received to hire staff and to give 10% salary increases. He stated Ledyard Public Schools wanted to make sure they had sustainable change over a period of time that would impact their kids.

Mr. Hartling addressed the District Needs & Priorities Chart explaining that the items listed in the **yellow** area were critical elements for them. He explained all of the items on the District Needs & Priorities List were an investment and would cost \$2.8 million (including the items in the red section), which was roughly where they be if they were funding the education budget at the same level as Stonington. He stated if Ledyard funded their education budget at the same level as Preston that they could everything on the District Needs & Priorities List and double.

Chairman Dombrowski asked again whether there was anyone in-person that would like to provide a comment regarding the proposed Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Budget. Hearing none, he asked residents who were attending the meeting remotely and would like to speak this evening to type their name and address in the “Chat Box”. He stated that residents would be called on to speak in the order that they were signed up.

Ms. Joanne Kelly, 12 Thames View Pentway, Gales Ferry, Board of Education Member, attending remotely, provided a correction to Councilor Saums’ presentation regarding the estimated cost to property owners that the projected 1.09 mil increase would have on tax bills. She stated the mil rate would be on the property’s “assessed” value (was 70% of market value) not the “appraised” value. Councilor Saums thanked Ms. Kelly for the clarification, noting that he would update his presentation.

Ms. Eleanor Murray, 16 Chapman Lane, Gales Ferry, attending remotely, addressed the Board of Education’s Goals noting that she was able to find the Goals from 2017 – 2022.

Question: Ms. Murray questioned where she could find the Board of Education’s updated Goals and she asked if they could direct her to where she could find them to review.

Response: Board of Education Member Brawner explained that the Board of Education’s Goals were part of their Strategic Plan, which was reviewed every five-years. However, he stated the Board of Education extended current Strategic Plan by one-year, therefore, he stated the Goals that were developed in 2017/2018 remain valid for this year. He stated a new Strategic Plan was being developed for execution that would start in the Fall, 2023; and that it would pertain to the next five-years.

Question: Textbook Budget – Ms. Murray stated in reviewing the proposed Board of Education Fiscal Year 2023/2024 it did not look as though they were planning to spend any money for Textbooks.

Response: Superintendent of Schools Jason Hartling explained that the Board of Education’s Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Budget has allocated \$74,300 for Textbooks. He explained instead of allocating \$100,000 each year for Textbooks that Assistant Superintendent of Schools Anne Hogsten along with the School Principals and the Curriculum Team review the District’s textbook needs based on the cycle and needs of specific programs and curricular revisions. Therefore, he stated the textbook budget fluctuates from year to year. He stated the textbook budget line was down 56% from the previous year because they made a larger textbook purchase last year, based on the textbook cycle.

Ms. Jessica Cobb, 7 Whippoorwill Drive, Gales Ferry, attending remotely – Councilor Saums stated Ms. Cobb typed the following in the Chat Box: *“Raising revenue from non-residential tax sources and the Town’s Fees Market Rates was missing from the Budget”*

Response: Councilor Saums stated the Revenue Budget has included a line for Revenue from Fees. He stated periodically the Town Council does approve to adjust Fee Schedules. He explained the Town’s Ordinances pertaining to setting fees were structured in a way that Fee Schedules were an Appendix to the Ordinance; which would allow the Fee Schedules to be updated from time-to-time, as needed, without having to amend the Ordinance each time fee adjustments were needed. He also noted that staff worked to review fees in area towns to ensure that Ledyard’s Fee Schedules were in-keeping with surrounding towns. He stated Revenues from Fees was not a large portion of the town’s revenue but were important source of revenue.

Chairman Dombrowski explained that Fees were only supposed to cover the cost of the work/professional services required, such as conducting a building inspection, to review applications, site plans, cost to publish legal notices in the newspaper, etc. for land use issues and other town services. He stated the Fees Structures were supposed to be set up not to be a profit for town but to cover the cost to do the work.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Hearing no additional public comments, Chairman Dombrowski adjourned the public hearing at 7:50 p.m.

Chairman Dombrowski thanked everyone for attending tonight’s Public Hearing.

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

I, Kevin Dombrowski, Chairman of the Ledyard Town Council,
hereby certify that the above and foregoing is a true and correct
copy of the minutes of the Public Hearing held on April 17, 2023.

Attest: _____
Kevin Dombrowski, Chairman