



TOWN OF LEDYARD
CONNECTICUT
TOWN COUNCIL

741 Colonel Ledyard Highway
 Ledyard, CT 06339
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 Roxanne M. Maher
 860 464-3203

Chairman Kevin J. Dombrowski

HYBRID FORMAT
MINUTES
COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING

Wednesday, March 15, 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	7:38 pm
John Marshall	Town Councilor	Present	In-Person	6:30 pm	7:38 pm
Bill Saums	Town Council	Excused			
Mary McGrattan	Town Councilor	Present	Remote	6:30 p.m.	7:38 pm
S. Naomi Rodriguez	Town Councilor	Present	In-Person	6:30 pm	7:38 pm
Jennifer Smith	Library Director	Present	In-Person	6:30 pm	7:01 pm
Roxanne Maher	Administrative Assistant	Present	Remote	6:30 pm	7:38 pm

- III. **CITIZENS' COMMENTS** – None.

- IV. **INFORMATIONAL ITEMS** – None.

IV. **REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

MOTION to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of February 15, 2023

Moved by Councilor Paul, seconded by Councilor Marshall

VOTE: 2 - 0 Approved and so declared

V. **OLD BUSINESS**

1. **Black History Month 2023 Activity/Contest.**

Councilor Paul 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 and that he along with the town appreciated her hard work. He stated the town as a community was better because of the work Councilor Rodriguez has done. He stated he loved to see all the kids, noting that Sydney Loftus' poem said exactly what needed to be said.

Councilor Rodriguez stated that she was pleased with the number of students who participated in the 2023 Contest, and the number of families who attended the presentation of the awards at the Town Council March 8, 2023 meeting Town Council, noting that the kids and their families were proud of their accomplishment, as they should be. She went on to note that a few students were not able to attend the Town Council meeting; and so she planned to attend their schools Award Assembly to present their Awards. She also noted that there were a number of comments on Social Media stating that they were pleased to see that the Contest was available to all Students in Ledyard (Home School, Private School, Tech & Magnet Schools, etc.) and not only Ledyard Public School Students.

Councilor Rodriguez went on to state that the Judges were impressed with the students' work, noting that the essays and posters were uplifting and educational. She noted the following members of the community served as Judges this year: Library Commission Member Mr. Ralf Hightower who stepped in for Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Member Crystal Whipple, noting that Ms. Whipple was disappointed that she could not participate this year, for a number of reasons which included contracting Covid, and a death in the family, etc., Police Sergeant Michael McKinney, Board of Education Member Laurel Wiers, and herself.

Councilor Rodriguez went on to address areas for improvement for next year's Black History stating that unfortunately, due to a communication issue that no entries were submitted for the High School level essay contest. Therefore, she stated 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.

Councilor Paul provided the following suggestions for next year's Black History Month Contest:

- Board of Education/Schools – Councilor Paul stated it was suggested that the Board of Education and Schools be more involved with the Program.

Councilor Rodriguez stated the Teachers were very happy to see the kids participate in the Program. She stated they put the pictures in the weekly newsletters, etc.

- Ceremony – Councilor Paul suggested that perhaps a non-governmental organization would be interested in putting together a Ceremony at the Town Green for Black History Month. He stated the Community Relations Committee had discussed some ideas for a Black History Month Ceremony, however, he stated as the Committee discussed at their February 15, 2023 meeting that it did not materialize.

Councilor Rodriguez stated this past fall (2022) she spoke with the New London National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) President Jean Jordan and Secretary Juliet Parker, who was a Town of Groton Town Councilor, about some ideas to recognize Black History Month noting that they were very helpful. She stated that she could continue to communicate with both of these women in preparation for next year. She also commented on the importance to put a plan together early enough to have it approved in-time for February, 2023.

- Essay and Poster Contest – Councilor Paul stated both last year and this year that he loved to see the essays and posters on historical figures. However, he suggested that they ask the students to create a poster or write an essay using current events regarding someone who has made a difference in their life, noting that it could be someone’s parents, brother/sister, grandfather, relative, Troop Leader, or friend, etc.

Councilor Marshall noted that it would be good to bring awareness to the kids to keep this alive throughout the year, and not just during the month of February. He stated at each of the Town Council’s meeting that they could talk about a person of interest.

- Publicizing the Black History Month Program – The Committee discussed putting flyers in the Library and at local business for residents to pick-up for next year’s contest.

Councilor Rodriguez noted one suggestion was to start the contest a little earlier so they could present the students with their Awards during the month of February. She stated that they may want to consider kicking off the Black History Month Contest around Martin Luther King Day which was the third Monday in January and running the contest to about the second week in February. She stated although she liked the idea of starting the contest earlier, that she did not want the students to think that their essays and posters needed to be about Martin Luther King, noting that they were already receiving a lot of entries about Martin Luther King. Councilor Paul stated he did not see a reason to begin the contest too earlier, noting that they could publicize ahead of time when the contest was going to be so that the students could begin getting their ideas together and working on their project. He stated by letting the students know in advance that they could talk to a grandparent or church leader, or someone local.

Councilor Paul stated that the Committee would keep the Black History Month Contest on their agenda to continue to plan for next year’s contest.

RESULT: CONTINUED

Next Meeting: 04/19/2023 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 noted that the Committee has been discussing the following topics for Informational Forums:

- ***Land Use Processes*** – Councilor Paul noted at the LUPPW Committee’s March 6, 2023 that the Committee agreed to move this initiative to the Community Relations Committee.

Councilor Paul went on to note 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.

Councilor Paul suggested the Committee defer this discussion until Ms. Hodge was able to work the Informational Forum into her schedule.

- ***Library Services*** – Councilor Paul thanked Library Director Jennifer Smith for attending tonight’s meeting. He provided some background explaining that after he met with her and learned about the many services the Library provided to the community that he wanted to help the Library get this information out to residents.

Councilor Paul stated the Community Relations Committee discussed hosting a booth to feature the Library Services at the August 30, 2023 Farmers’ Market, 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. He also noted that because it was a fifth Wednesday of the month that the Town Council/Sub Committees would not have any meetings that night.

Councilor Paul went on to note that during the Committee’s February 15, 2023 meeting that Councilor Saums suggested the Library hold an Open House at the same time the Community Relations Committee was hosting a booth at the Farmers Market. He stated the Community Relations Committee could provide some literature regarding the Library at their booth and then refer residents to stop by the Library Open House. He went on to note that once the Farmers’ Market ended at 7:00 p.m. that perhaps they could go to the Library for an Informal Gathering to tour the Library and to bring awareness to the many programs, services and resources the Library had to offer. He stated that they would also like to broadcast the Informal Presentation using Zoom. He stated although the Informational Presentations have not been well attended, that residents could view the zoom video recording at any time, noting it would be posted on the town’s website.

Library Director Jennifer Smith stated that the Library would be happy to participate in the event as Councilor Paul described, noting that she appreciated their efforts to bring awareness to the many programs and services the Library provided. She stated that the Children's Librarian has hosted a table at the Farmers' Market in the past, noting that they had tried to use their cell phones as a hot spot to issue Library Cards, however, they had issues connecting to their system due to internet. Councilor Rodriguez noted that because there was a dead spot in the area of the Town Green that the town allocated American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) Funding to provide internet for the Food Pantry and the upper and lower Town Green. Therefore, she stated that should have good internet connection this year.

Ms. Smith stated in past years the Children's Librarian has hosted a table at the Farmers Market at the beginning of the season and again at the end of the season to bring awareness to the children programs that families could participate in during the summer vacation such as the summer reading program, story-time, 1,000 books before Kindergarten which was a free program that ran all year, and to also provide information regarding the resources and programs that were available once the kids were back in school. She also noted that the Library had a number of on-going adult programs. Councilor Paul stated that he was sorry that he was not able to attend the Star Wars Trivia Night, noting that the Library also offered many other Trivia nights. It was noted that the Events Magazine Publication, that was mailed to everyone in town, listed the many programs the Library offered such as the Seed Library and Cooking Club. Ms. Smith stated that the Library also had an electronic monthly newsletter that was e-mailed to all library card holders.

Councilor Paul asked whether the Library would have literature available regarding the Bill Library and the Gales Ferry Library for residents to pick-up. Ms. Smith stated that the Library would provide literature for folks to pick-up. However, she stated rather than telling residents about the resources the Library offered that hosting a table at the Farmers Market was also a good opportunity for the Library to ask residents about the types of programs or services they were interested in and then they could tell them about resources they offered pertaining to their interest.

Councilor Marshall questioned whether the Library sponsored day trips. Ms. Smith stated that the Library has gone off-site to places such as the Historic Up-Down Sawmill where they would provide a program and a tour of the Sawmill.

Councilor Paul thanked Ms. Smith attending tonight's meeting, noting that the Committee looked forward to working with her in preparation for this summer's Farmers' Market and the Informational Presentation later this summer.

Library Director Ms. Smith left the meeting at 7:01 p.m.

The Community Relations Committee continued to discuss their upcoming schedule for Public Information Forums and agreed that they would like to target three Farmers' Markets this summer to feature the following programs:

- ***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 Paul asked Councilor Rodriguez to contact the Brian Dagle Healing Hearts Foundation to invite them to participate at the Community Relations Committee's Farmers' Market Booth and to check on their availability.

- ***August 30, 2023 – Library Services "Back to School"***(as discussed earlier this evening-see above).
- ***September 19, 2023 First Responders "Home Town Heroes"***

Councilor Paul stated perhaps they could have a kid's activity and set up a table for them to draw a picture of their hero. He stated that a kid's hometown hero could be a Police Officer, Teacher, Firefighter, or Nurse, etc. Councilor Rodriguez offered to talk to Farmers' Market Committee Chairman Lauriann Hary about Councilor Paul's idea.

Councilor Paul stated that the Committee would continue to discuss coordinating their Schedule for Public Information Forums at their April 19, 2023 meeting.

RESULT: CONTINUED

Next Meeting: 04/19/2023 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 noted that Councilor Saums was working with the Administrators of the Ledyard/Gales Ferry Forum on the idea of hosting a "*Whining Wednesday*" and a "*Thankful Thursday*". Therefore, he suggested they defer this discussion to their next meeting, when Councilor Saums could provide an update.

RESULT: CONTINUED

Next Meeting: 04/19/2023 6:30 p.m.

4. Joint meetings with the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation

Councilor Paul noted that Councilor Saums was working to coordinate an Informal Gathering between the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Council and the Town Council. Therefore, he suggested they defer this discussion to their next meeting, when Councilor Saums could provide an update.

RESULT: CONTINUED

Next Meeting: 04/19/2023 6:30 p.m.

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

Councilor Paul stated he did not have an update regarding the Park on East Drive. He stated that he would contact Parks and Recreation Director Scott Johnson, Jr., to discuss including the Parks and Recreation Commission members in the next Informal Gathering at the Park on East Drive.

The Committee discussed possibly doing a tour to visit all of the town's Parks.

The Community Relations Committee noted that they would like to schedule the Follow-up Informal Gathering in May, 2023.

RESULT: CONTINUED

Next Meeting: 03/15/2023 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

VOTE: Councilor Marshall, moved the meeting be adjourned, seconded by Councilor Paul.
2 – 0 Approved and so declared. The meeting was adjourned at 7:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gary Paul
Committee Chairman
Community Relations Committee