



## NCDC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### Meeting Minutes February 23, 2023

Via Zoom and at Foundry 66

#### MINUTES

1. **Call to Order:** Rebecca Alberts called the meeting to order at 8:04 am and established a quorum.

**Present:** Rebecca Alberts, John Harris, Chris LaRose, Bob Staley, JP Mereen, Chris Jewell, John Salomone, Mayor Nystrom, Stacy Gould, John Harris, Lynn Perry, Angy Gardner, Swarnjit Singh, Rev. Benjamin Green and Bryan Hayes. **Absent:** Jason Jones and John Mancini. **Other Attendees:** Kevin Brown, Mary Riley, Devin Schleidt, Lee Ann D'Ambrosio and Mark Block. **Guests:** Henry Resnikoff, Claire Bessette, Paul Whitescarver and Scott Lessard.

2. Ms. Alberts asked the members to review the minutes from the February 2, 2023 NCDC Annual and Regular Meeting. Ms. Alberts then asked for motion to approve the minutes.

**MOTION #1:** JP Mereen made a motion to approve the minutes. Stacy Gould seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

3. **President's Report:** Kevin Brown reported that the next NRP Business Board meeting was scheduled for March 31. They will be reviewing 3-5 more applications for NRP grants through NCDC. He noted that he had agreed to return \$400,00 of the NRP funding back to the City to use for the YMCA Building in order to get that renovation project started. Mr. Brown said that doing so was in the spirit of what the ARP-NRP was actually all about. Unfortunately that means those funds will no longer be available to use for other smaller NRP grant applicants.

Mr. Brown gave a quick update on cannabis in Norwich. He confirmed two individual cultivators in the City since the annual meeting at different stages of development and preparedness including agreements with NPU. Six other cultivators are talking with him and are interested in locating to Norwich but land and location are the two top issues they are dealing with. Two cannabis retailers are currently on track to open in Norwich. He said that the City needs to convene the Council of Stakeholders to come up with the appropriate public messaging as required by the State – this is a public health matter, not a health emergency.

Mr. LaRose reported that NPU is currently working on an agreement with one of the cultivators located on 8th Street; they will be using an additional 1-2 mega loads which will result in an additional \$100,000 in revenue to the City.

Mr. Brown continued his report with an update on the CIF 2030 grant program. He announced that there was a scheduled CIF Stakeholder meeting tomorrow and the group will start meeting again biweekly. He said that he recently had a telephone call with Representative Derell Wilson on direction and occasional meetings with State Senator Cathy Osten. Mr. Brown invited the Board members to attend any of the upcoming CIF Committee Meetings.

Mr. Brown gave a brief update on the Waterfront and Marina. He said that they will be the focus of the CIF Committee meeting tomorrow and that the committee wants to move their revitalization forward. Separately, Mr. Brown mentioned the stairwell between Jubilee Park and the Fairhaven Building. No one owns it and he said he asked the Yale Urban Design Workshop Group to include the Fairhaven into the space should the building be condemned and torn down. He also told the members that he has considered asking the Yale Urban Design Workshop to come up with a design for all of the lower Broadway project to help us move that long the right path.

Mr. Brown confirmed that a CIF Grant was submitted on February 10 for the demolition and restoration of the Capehart Mill and site. On March 14 we should have an idea of the next projects that the State will award CIF Grants to. He noted that State Representative Wilson has met with two of the chairs of the CIF Committee and is working to establish relationships with them.

Mr. Staley asked about the Capehart Mill site and what would happen after the Mill is demolished and the remains removed from the site. Mr. Brown stated that plans for the site include a community green space and possible options include a fishing pier, kayak launch, picnic area and similar options.

Mr. Brown reported on a telephone call yesterday with the Women's Business Development Council and they discussed coming together to help people find space to open a business in Norwich. He also stated that he and others have been working on a draft for a new Accounting and Financial Procedures Manual. Once the draft is completed it will be presented to the Board. Lastly, he mentioned that the last 3 parklets that were ordered last year were recently delivered to Public Works. Ten were originally ordered, seven were delivered last year and the remaining 3 were delayed until recently.

Mr. Singh asked Mr. Brown if NCDC had thought about providing very small business mini-grants with low barriers in the range of \$500-\$1,000 to meet specific needs. Mr. Brown said that none had been implemented just yet but were currently on the back burner for now and that its not too late to add those to the current NRP; potentially NCDC could set aside \$100,000 for those types of small grants and realizes there is a need for these types of grants.

Mr. Brown noted that all CIF conversations are currently all about infrastructure in Norwich; a different type of NRP application could be done for mini business grants and NCDC could request an addition \$2 Million for these types of grants in a future CIF grant application.

Mr. Whitescarver mentioned that seCTer currently offers these types of mini grants and there is also the Boost-CT low interest small business loan program. He will have additional information in a few weeks about the seCTer mini business grants.

4. **Foundry 66 Report:** Mary Riley gave an update on Foundry 66. She reported that she is receiving a lot of requests for small business assistance and is doing everything she can to support them with the information they need. Ms. Riley reported that Foundry 66 had four new members recently. Additionally, she said that the renovations to the cubicles on the second floor were now complete and are now all private offices. She will be running a special membership rate for about 3 months on these new private offices. Ms. Riley briefly discussed her Monday evening Educate and Motivate Business Series and recently had Mr. Jewell do a presentation and discuss building culture in your company and thanked him for his participation.

5. **Treasurer's Report:** As Chris Jewell was attending the meeting remotely, Devin Schleidt gave the Treasurer's Report. He noted that a lot of money is coming in for the NRP projects and that Foundry 66 is trending a loss of about \$12,000 but overall, because of the NRP projects and fees, we currently have a surplus of \$33,000.

6. Ms. Alberts asked for a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report.

**MOTION #2:** Mayor Nystrom made a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report. Stacy Gould seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Brown announced that he would discuss applicants for the position of Coordinator for the Global City Norwich Program in Executive Session. He wants to hear from the Board about what they want to see or do in regards to the Global City Norwich Program. Mr. Brown said that he believes that lowering the barrier for minorities to come to Norwich and start a business or contribute to the community should be at the top of the list.

Mr. Brown said that we need someone to lead the festival planning and programs as well as lead discussions on the Working Lab Program but not actually do the Working Lab Program itself. He also said that the Vanilla Box Project makes more sense under NCDC because that is what NCDC does.

Mr. Singh asked whether we should stick with the Global City Norwich Program as it has been or should it be recalibrated. NCDC now has more oversight of the program and the opportunity to provide more guidance. He said he doesn't want to see the GCN Program go away, something is better than nothing even if resources are limited. Ms. Alberts asked about future funding and Mr. Singh responded that the City should provide consistent funding in its approach. Mr. Brown noted that the GCN program has been primarily a grant funded program

and that we will need to go after additional grant funding. Chelsea Groton Bank Foundation started the GCN grant funding and had hoped that other Norwich banks would follow suit. The Chelsea Groton Foundation's vision of Global City Norwich was more than just festivals; they were hoping the program would stimulate more minority owned businesses opening in Norwich.

Ms. Alberts noted that other event organizations in Norwich are also looking for grant opportunities. The members agreed that if the Global City Norwich Program is to continue, NCDC needs to come up with a plan and strategy to sustain the program. It would be detrimental to the City to lose the GCN program.

Ms. Gardner noted that she worked with GCN on the Cape Verdean Festival last year and thought having a large international festival to include all nationalities and ethnicities over a weekend – Friday through Sunday – would be better than having separate ethnic festivals every other weekend. Ms. Alberts also noticed that the First Friday events fell off and people noticed; including downtown businesses in the discussions are important to make sure everyone is on board.

Mr. Brown asked the Board if they want to continue the Global City Norwich program. The Mayor asked if the Global City Norwich Coordinator position would be part-time or full-time and if part-time, then some of the funds awarded by the City for the program last year should be distributed to other groups to support them.

Mr. Staley asked if the Global City Norwich Coordinator is expected to do business development, then who should organize the festivals. Mr. Brown stated that the Puerto Rican Festival is moving from Norwich to New London this year. He also reported that NCDC still has a quarter of the remaining grant from Chelsea Groton Bank awarded last year and NCDC could use those funds to get started on coordinating at least one festival this year.

Mr. Singh asked if Mosaic/LEAD should take the lead on doing events and festivals in Norwich. Mr. Brown said NCDC could shed the GCN funding over to Mosaic and let them take the lead on doing the events and festivals. The Board also discussed taking an assessment of all the funding available including what Mosaic and the Women's Business Development Council might have to add to doing the events and festivals.

Mr. Brown informed the Board that at the Tuesday City Council meeting a vote was taken on the Business Park North Project and the vote ended up being deadlocked. He said NCDC has a couple of options to proceed.

7. Ms. Alberts asked for a motion to enter into Executive Session.

**MOTION #3:** Stacy Gould made a motion to enter into Executive Session. JP Meren seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously at 9:15 am.

8. Ms. Alberts asked for a motion to exit the Executive Session.

**MOTION #4:** JP made a motion to exit Executive Session. Mayor Nystrom seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously at 9:34 am. No votes were taken.

Before Resolution 13-23 was read into the record, Mr. Brown informed the Board that the grant is due on February 27 and he was just waiting for some letters of support including one from CTDOT. He also stated that the Connecticut statute states that a non-profit can apply for a grant on behalf of a municipality. The Mayor added that the grant can also be used to correct short comings and safety issues like those currently present at Exit 18 on I-395 which has already been given a “D” by the State and is heading for an “F” rating.

9. **RESOLUTION 13-23:**

Chairwoman Rebecca Alberts read Resolution 13-23 into the record: Be it Resolved, the Board of Directors for the Norwich Community Development Corporation (“NCDC”) authorizes the President, Kevin Brown as its representative, and on its behalf, to apply for a RAISE Grant through the United States Department of Transportation (“USDOT”) in the amount of \$15,927,362 for the purpose of supporting the development of road and utility infrastructure to furtherance the Business Park North Project on behalf of the City of Norwich.

Ms. Alberts asked for a motion to approve Resolution 13-23.

**MOTION #5:** JP Mereen made a motion to approve Resolution 13-23 as read into the record by Chairwoman Rebecca Alberts. Angy Gardner seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Alberts asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

**MOTION #6:** Stacy Gould made a motion to adjourn the meeting. JP Mereen seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously at 9:51 am.

Respectfully submitted:

Lee Ann D’Ambrosio  
Executive Assistant