



NCDC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Meeting Minutes March 23, 2023

Via Zoom and at Foundry 66

MINUTES

1. **Call to Order:** Rebecca Alberts called the meeting to order at 8:15 am and established a quorum.

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

2. Ms. Alberts asked the members to review the minutes from the February 23, 2023 meeting. Ms. Alberts then asked for a motion to approve the minutes.

MOTION #1: Mayor Nystrom made a motion to approve the minutes. Bob Staley seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

3. **President's Report:** Kevin Brown reported that NCDC had been awarded \$11.39 Million the CIF grant application for the Business Park North Project. Next, he gave a brief review of the Norwich Revitalization Program. He said that NCDC had obligated \$1.8 Million in funds from the \$3.5 Million given to NCDC for NRP. There is \$800K remaining funds to award through NRP. The NRP Business Committee will be meeting next week to discuss allocating the next \$400K.

Mr. Brown gave an update on the Business Park North Project. He said that the \$11.39 Million recently awarded by the State's CIF grant would allow NCDC to begin bringing the project to life. He said that the Board should start thinking about a new name for BPN now that it is owned and zoned to move forward. The next step will be to start marketing the site through a commercial real estate agency such as Cushman & Wakefield.

Mr. Brown stated that NCDC, with help from the grant writer, turned in the federal RAISE grant application on February 28. He noted that our federal elected representatives and the Governor need to contact the Secretary of Transportation to support the BPN Project. Mr. Singh asked what the timeline for the RAISE grant was. Mr. Brown responded that we might hear something by the end of May or June but will confirm.

Mr. Brown gave an update on the cannabis market. He reported that there hasn't been much change since the Board meeting last month. He said that there was the potential for a third cultivator to become established in Norwich. The first cannabis retail store on West Main Street should be opening by the end of April.

Additionally, Mr. Brown said he expects to turn in the packet required by DECD in order to receive the \$500K that was awarded to NCDC last year for the BPN Project through the State's Urban Act Grant. The funds will be used for extraneous expenses related to the development.

Mr. Jewell asked Mr. Brown for an update on Shipping Street. Mr. Brown reported that it is listed in his top priorities. Mr. Brown also noted that we were recently informed that Congressional earmarks are back and that NCDC turned in grant requests to Senators Blumenthal and Murphy and Congressman Courtney. The grants included requests for funding to repair the bridge from West Town Street into the Stop and Shop Plaza; revitalize lower Broadway; and to purchase land adjacent to Mohegan Park and the senior center.

Mr. Jones asked about the current status of the Mercantile Building at 55 Main Street. Mr. Brown reported that the agreement with MPTN was finalized the end of January and soon after he sent a letter to the DECD Commissioner regarding the agreement. Mr. Block noted that it was probably time to follow up with DECD since NCDC has had no response to the letter.

Chairwoman Alberts asked if there was any update on the Chestnut Street Mill. Mr. Brown responded that the CIF Committee meets bi-weekly to discuss the priorities of projects that can be the focus of the next CIF grant round. He said that the CIF grant to demolish the Capehart Mill was denied even though it is a good project. It's just not enough economic development impact at the moment. The CIF grant for the Capehart Mill project will be resubmitted. Next will be a CIF grant application to repair and revitalize the Waterfront and Marina followed by a CIF grant application for the Chestnut Street Mill later this year. The Chestnut Street Mill is located in a known flood zone and so flooding issues will need to be addressed.

JP Mereen suggested that NCDC look at FEMA for funding to mitigate the flooding issues. He said federal monies are available for those types of issues. He also said that with proper engineering the City could have a pond there with a park. The Mayor said he was in favor of green space with a pond downtown. Mr. Jones said that we need to address the structural issues; the cost of not doing anything will be worse. Mr. Jewell concurred and said that

it will be a big lift to clean the site first. Mr. Brown said that he will look into the FEMA funding to address the flooding issues.

4. **Foundry 66 Report:** Mary Riley gave an update on Foundry 66. She reported that we have two new members and occupancy is 100% on the first floor. Seven out of the 8 private offices on the second floor are occupied and there has been a lot of interest in the new offices on the second floor. Currently Foundry66 is at 71% of its 75% goal for funding. There is a new retail tenant in the Sunlight Building and they expect to open the first of April. The Sunlight Building is now at 100% capacity. Additionally, there are fifteen new businesses in the pipeline working with seCTer and new businesses are coming to downtown Norwich.

Mr. Brown stated that hotels are built with an expectation of 60% occupancy in mind. He said that the 71% occupancy for Foundry 66 is very good in comparison and is earning more revenue than expected. Mr. Brown also remarked that the CIF grant has two funding streams – one for infrastructures and another for small businesses. He reported that the Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Connecticut received \$2Million in a CIF grant to purchase a building in New London to build a co-workspace. Mr. Brown is seriously considering looking at a CIF grant request for funding to keep doing Foundry 66. Mr. Whitescarver, Executive Director of seCTer said that seCTer has more capacity and acknowledgement.

Chairwoman Rebecca Alberts introduced Ms. Bobbie Braboy, the new Director of the Global City Norwich program. Ms. Alberts reported that Ms. Braboy had a great introductory GCN meet and greet event for the community last night. There was a great turnout.

Ms. Braboy reported that she is currently developing an events calendar for the Global City Norwich program. Currently there is a Greek Flag Raising scheduled for Saturday, March 25 and a soft grand opening for the new retail business in the Sunlight Building, called “Three Sisters.” Additionally, Ms. Braboy listed several other upcoming events including a fundraiser for the Puerto Rican Festival at Canggih’s on Sunday; April 8 is the National Sikh Day and on April 11 there is a Norwich Family Recreation Services Event. Ms. Braboy also said she is looking at additional grant opportunities so that the Global City Norwich program can be funded for several years to come. Mr. Brown said he noticed a pent-up demand at last night’s GCN event for GCN to continue.

Mr. Brown asked Chairwoman Rebecca Alberts if he could change the order of a couple of items on the agenda. He asked to discuss the Resolution on the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee. He said that the Board owes it to the City and not just GCN to have this type of committee.

Mr. Brown said that all the cannabis growers in Connecticut are required by the State to turn in a Social Equity Plan and Workforce Development Plan to the State. As a result, the cannabis growers coming to Norwich reached out to NCDC for letters of support to submit on their behalf to the State.

Mr. Jones asked to make a change to the DEI Resolution 14-23.

5. Chairwoman Rebecca Alberts read out loud **Resolution 14-23: BE IT RESOLVED** – The Board of Directors for the Norwich Community Development Corporation (“NCDC”) will form a subcommittee called “The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee” made of up its members to assist the new Global City Norwich Coordinator in planning and executing Global City Norwich events as well as community outreach to the groups represented by this committee.

Ms. Alberts asked for a motion to approve Resolution 14-23 as presented.

MOTION #2: Stacy Gould made a motion to approve Resolution 14-23. Jason Jones seconded the motion and asked to amend the resolution to “remove the word new” and add the phrase “to govern and assist” the Global City Norwich Coordinator. Mr. Brown asked to strike the word “Coordinator.”

MOTION #3: Chris Jewell made a motion to accept the proposed edits to Resolution 14-23. Angy Gardner seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

The corrected Resolution 14-23 reads as follows: BE IT RESOLVED - The Board of Directors for the Norwich Community Development Corporation (“NCDC”) will form a subcommittee called “The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee” made up of its members to govern and assist Global City Norwich in planning and executing Global City Norwich events as well as community outreach to the groups represented by this committee.

Chairwoman Rebecca Alberts asked for a new motion to approve the amended Resolution 14-23.

MOTION #4: Stacy Gould made a motion to approve the amended Resolution 14-23. JP Merreen seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

6. **Treasurer’s Report:** Chris Jewell gave the Treasurer’s Report. He said that for the purpose of keeping all the BPN funds separate from the operating budget, a few changes were made to the P&L. Mr. Jewell noted that there was some confusion because of the BPN land purchase and the value of the land as determined by the City’s calculations. He will have more information at the next Board meeting in April.

Mr. Jones asked about the 2024 budget for NCDC. Mr. Brown said that he requested \$250K from the City for the next fiscal year beginning July 1. The budget will be drafted and submitted to the Board at the June meeting. Mr. Brown also reported that the City budget presentations will start in April after the City Manager presents his budget to the City Council.

Mr. Brown also discussed that NCDC is doing all the community outreach through the Envision Norwich 360 platform as well as all leading all the CIF Committee meetings. He noted that NCDC is managing all this for the City with no other humans to assist with the work. Mr. Jones said that we need to highlight what is going into the \$250K budget ask to the City. He asked if NCDC should have a public announcement or presentation. This is an investment into the City not just a line-item expense.

City Manager John Salomone reported that NCDC's budget request for \$250K is not going to be included but there is a double digit increase in the budget that will be in the City budget presented to the City Council. He said that the budget states that the general fund revenue is status quo (no increase). It is very supportive of NCDC and NPU will be doing their own part. Mr. Brown stated that the increases from the City and NPU for next year's budget are not going to be enough to hire another full-time staff member but possibly a part-time person or intern to allow for growth and capacity.

Chairwoman Rebecca Alberts said that NCDC needs to have someone to work with the City (an NCDC employee) to do public information and get the City's message out. She noted that Kevin Brown, Mary Riley and Lee Ann do not have time to answer all the questions and put out the necessary information that is needed.

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

MOTION #5: Mayor Nystrom made a motion to enter into Executive Session. Jason Jones seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously at 9:19 am.

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

MOTION #6: Mayor Nystrom made a motion to exit Executive Session. Jason Jones seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously at 9:32 am. No votes were taken.

9. Following a brief discussion, Ms. Alberts read Resolutions 15-23 and 16-23 into the record:

RESOLUTION 15-23: 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 grant from the State of Connecticut, pursuant to Conn. Gen. Statute Section 4-66c, and award of Urban Action Grant under the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development (“DECD”) for the purpose of the development of the Business Park North Project in the City of Norwich, Connecticut.

Ms. Alberts asked for a motion to approve Resolution 15-23.

MOTION #7: Stacy Gould made a motion to approve Resolution 15-23 as read into the record by Chairwoman Rebecca Alberts. JP Mereen seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

RESOLUTION 16-23: 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 comply with all rules, conditions and obligations as required by the State of Connecticut’s Nondiscrimination Certification when acting as its agent in applying for a Urban Action Grant with the State’s Department of Economic and Community Development (“DECD”) for the purpose of the development of the Business Park North Project in the City of Norwich, Connecticut.

Ms. Alberts asked for a motion to approve Resolution 16-23.

MOTION #8: Chris Jewell made a motion to approve Resolution 16-23 as read into the record by Chairwoman Rebecca Alberts. Stacy Gould seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

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

MOTION #9: Jason Jones made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Chris Jewell seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously at 9:37 am.

Respectfully submitted:

Lee Ann D’Ambrosio
Executive Assistant