



NCDC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Meeting Minutes September 28, 2023

Via Zoom and at Foundry 66

MINUTES

1. **Call to Order:** Chairwoman Rebecca Alberts called the meeting to order at 8:06 am and established a quorum.

Present: Rebecca Alberts, Chris Jewell, John Harris, JP Mereen, Chris LaRose, Bob Staley, John Salomone, John Mancini, Mayor Nystrom, Stacy Gould, Rev. Benjamin Green, Lynn Perry, Swarnjit Singh, and Bryan Hayes. **Absent:** Angy Gardner and John Harris. **Other Attendees:** Kevin Brown, Mary Riley, Devin Schleidt, Lee Ann D'Ambrosio, Bobbie Braboy and Lucas Kaiser.

Guests: Mark Block, Paul Whitescarver and Bill Kenny.

2. Chairwoman Becca Alberts asked the members to review the minutes from the August 24, 2023 meeting. Ms. Alberts asked for a 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 began his report with a review of his Priorities List and the Norwich Revitalization Program. He said that no additional monies will be awarded in order to plan for current projects cost overruns and delays. No NRP Business Committee meetings are currently scheduled. He reviewed the large projects currently taking place around the City including the Reid & Hughes Building, the Norwich Luxury Apartments (new name will be Water Street Lofts) and the groundbreaking at the old YMCA Building.

Additionally, Mr. Brown reported there were no new updates on the Norwich Revitalization Program (NRP). He reminded the Board that NCDC has until December 31, 2024 to obligate the funds and the deadline to expend them is December 31, 2026. Eighty-two percent of the funds allocated to NCDC have been obligated; only 2-3 of the NRP projects are complete and a handful have not yet started.

Mr. Brown stated that the NEPA and SEPA review process is underway along with the OSA process of the Business Park North Project. So far, he has only received 2 comments from DEEP. Currently there is a City Inland/Wetlands Committee meeting scheduled for October 5, 2023 with more to follow. He said he expects that by February all required reviews and decisions will be completed and that NCDC will be able to send out an RFP for a construction firm. Mr. Brown also noted that the Line of Credit established at Chelsea Groton Bank had been approved and was currently in place to start paying for BPN development expenses. He briefly reviewed the process that had been set up to record the invoices, process them for payment and finally reimbursement from DECD out of the Urban Act Grant funds.

Mr. Brown informed the members that the State had recently acknowledged that they set up a too aggressive timeline for cannabis licensing applicants. The State's Social Equity Council has indicated that they might redraw the districting sites the previously approved municipalities. He noted that a potential third grower has secured a site in Norwich.

Mr. Brown reported that he and Mary Riley along with Devin Schleidt attended the second Hartford Business Journal Cannabis Conference the previous week. He said that Norwich was the only town represented at the previous conference. This time there Bristol was the only other town represented. All of the cannabis retailers in Connecticut are limited in their ability to market and advertise. They have collectively reached out to the State on this issue. Mr. Brown stated that 2-3 other cannabis retailers are interested in coming to Norwich. Statewide there are still only a few cannabis retailers.

Mr. Brown discussed the Round-3 CIF Grant for the redevelopment of the Norwich Waterfront. It was not selected even though he had heard NCDC's grant application was in a great place. He indicated that there was a potential buyer for the Norwich Marina and the City Council had already approved the potential purchase. He has already spoken with the potential buyer and discussed another CIF grant application to renovate the Waterfront and Marina with a new and real plan.

Mr. Brown gave a brief update on the current renovation of the Reid & Hughes building. Work is being done inside and the DECD Commission signed off on the funding. The Round-4 CIF grant application is due in November and the CIF Committee has been discussing what request should be submitted next.

Mr. Brown reported that the Yale Urban Design Workshop had completed their work on designs for renovating lower Broadway and Jubilee Park. The next phase will be construction which would be a feasible grant application for the next CIF round. Additionally, Mr. Brown reported that he had a meeting yesterday with a potential developer interested in the Chestnut Street Mill; he noted that it might be time to start putting some pressure on the mill owners. He added that the developers of 77-91 Main Street – Water Street Lofts – are also very interested in the Chestnut Street Mill.

Mr. Brown indicated that Mary Riley had secured a marketing agent for the Water Street Lofts Apartments and they are working on a website; she has provided the marketing agent with a lot of information. The developer is in the final stages of finishing the model apartments. Mr. Brown stated that marketing the apartments is a collective responsibility; NCDC and the City need to help the developer succeed and have an attractive area around the apartments including the Main Street Garage. It currently looks, feels and smells awful. We need to do whatever we can to clean it up before potential tenants start showing up.

Mr. Brown reported that the demolition and site abatement at the Ponemah Mill South Mill is complete with most of the brownfield grant having been spent.

4. **Foundry 66 Report:** Mary Riley gave an update on Foundry 66. She reported that there has been a slight seasonal change in the number of members and visitors to Foundry 66. There is a 100% occupancy of the private offices on the first floor and 79% in the Sunlight Building. She is continuing the “Educate and Motivate” business series; it has been very popular. Lucas will be covering Foundry 66 while Mary is out on medical leave and Bobbie will be covering the Halloween Strut.

Additionally, Mary reported that she continues to help members and small business owners apply for the Boost and RISE grants. Mr. Whitescarver, Executive Director of seCTer stated that seCTer has not done any of this in the past but offering the grants has been a great addition to seCTer’s role in the area.

Lucas Kaiser gave an update on renovating and freshening up the Main Street Garage. He reported that the windows and stairwell need to be upgraded along with the lights in the garage. He is working on window decals/pictures to cover the windows of the garage; you will still be able to see inside but they will improve the appearance of the garage. Lucas is also working on new signage for the garage. Additionally, Lucas reported on Peacock Alley. The concrete needs repair and the area of the staircase needs new lighting. He is working out a solution to the trash problem in the alley with the developer of 77-91 Main Street. The issue is primarily trash from the Strange Brew Pub and grease disposal from La Stella’s Pizzeria.

Mr. Brown noted that NCDC and the City have about 6 weeks to implement improvements before people start showing up to view the model apartments at 77-91 Main Street. He has looked into using some of the art funds that NCDC received from the Southeastern Cultural Coalition art grant.

Lucas reported on improvements to Lower Broadway and the Pocket Park underneath the mural facing City Hall. The site needs upgraded electrical to support a stage for community events and festivals; a new sidewalk has been installed in front of Billy Wilson’s on Broadway. He also stated that they will be testing the soil at Jubilee Park and submitting the design from the Yale Urban Design Workshop to Leading Edge Construction for a bid. Mr. Jewell asked about the Fairhaven Building next to Jubilee Park.

Mr. Brown said they asked the Yale Urban Design Workshop to include the Fairhaven Building in their design rendering for the park. Mr. Brown also noted that NCDC would integrate the Pocket Park into the Lower Broadway Project into a future CIF grant application, possibly the Round-4 CIF.

5. **Global City Norwich Report:** Bobbie Braboy gave an update on current Global City Norwich activities. She presented the Board with a brief video with highlights. She reported that she is currently working on a Working Lab 2.0 plan. Ms. Gould asked Bobbie where the video will be shown. Mr. Brown responded that it will be available primarily on social media but will be available to anyone to use to market the City. It will also be provided to anyone that provided funding to Global City Norwich.

6. **Treasurer's Report:** Mr. Jewell gave an update on NCDC's financials. He noted that the monies from the Urban Act Grant, NPU and Reid & Hughes will show up in the next couple of months. He also reported that the Foundry 66 membership is high because one member pre-paid \$12,000. Devin Schleidt gave a brief overview of the new electronic automated check request processing system called Jotform. The system is cloud based and will replace the manual system to assist NCDC with all the Business Park North expenses as well as all other NCDC expenses. NCDC is processing 40% more transactions (invoices and payments) than three years ago. Mr. Mereen asked Devin about the security for the cloud-based documents. After a brief discussion, it was agreed that Mr. Mereen will touch base with Devin on keeping all this information secure. Mr. Brown followed that admin fees from the ARP/NRP will be done in another year and NCDC needs to focus on a strategic plan and secure additional funding.

7. Chairwoman Becka Alberts asked for a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report.

MOTION #2: JP Mereen made a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report. John Mancini seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

8. Before voting on **Resolution 20-23**, Mr. Brown gave the Board a brief introduction. He said that NCDC is currently acting as a non-profit partner for the Thermos on the Thames Condominium Association. NCDC assisted the condo association with a brownfield grant application earlier in the year to demolish two old Thermos buildings on the property. They received the brownfield grant from the State. The condo association is currently working on a second brownfield grant application to address a second segment – the remediation and roof repair on the Charter School. The building was part of the original Thermos Factory.

Chairwoman Becka Alberts read **Resolution 20-23** into the record:

Resolution 20-23: - 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 support the Thermos on the Thames Condominium Association and Charter School's brownfield grant application to the State of Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development (“DECD”).

Chairwoman Becka Alberts asked for a motion to approve **Resolution 20-23**.

MOTION #3: JP Mereen made a motion to approve **Resolution 20-23** as presented. Chris Jewell seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

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

MOTION #4: Chris Jewell made a motion to enter into Executive Session. Stacy Gould seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously at 9:43 am.

10. Ms. Alberts asked for a motion to exit Executive Session and adjourn the meeting.

MOTION #5: Stacy Gould made a motion to exit Executive Session and adjourn the meeting. JP Mereen seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously at 10:03 am. No votes were taken.

Respectfully submitted,

Lee Ann D'Ambrosio