



## NCDC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### Meeting Minutes February 22, 2024

Via Zoom and at Foundry 66

#### MINUTES

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

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

**Guests:** Scott Lessard and Mark Block.

2. Chairwoman Becca Alberts asked the members to review the minutes from the February 1, 2024 Annual Meeting.

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

After the vote, Mr. LaRose noted that Mr. Jewell and Mayor Nystrom had abstained from voting during the February 1, 2024 meeting in order to establish a quorum. Ms. Alberts asked the Executive Assistant, Lee Ann D'Ambrosio to make this change to the minutes

Ms. Alberts then asked the Directors for a new motion to approve the minutes of the February 1, 2024 Annual Meeting as amended.

**MOTION #2:** Mayor Nystrom made a motion to approve the minutes from the February 1, 2024 Annual Meeting as amended. Shiela Hayes seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

3. **President's Report:** Kevin Brown reported that the Hotel Callista is doing well with 24 of the 27 rooms booked for the upcoming weekend. Mr. Brown asked Scott Lessard to give the update on the Norwich Revitalization Program, with Hotel Callista being one of the recipients of an NRP grant.

Mr. Brown reported that the OSTA Level 1 was complete at the Occum Industrial Center and that the OSTA Level 2 was currently being worked on. He stated that work should begin on the Exit 18 interchange sometime in November/December. He also reported that NCDC was nearing the end of the \$500K through the Urban Act Grant. The CIF \$11.4 Million should be open soon to NCDC.

The City Council passed a resolution on February 20 that the City Manager will be the submeter of the Federal RAISE grant. The City's Comptroller will be submitting the RAISE Grant application next week on behalf of the City Manager.

Mr. Brown gave an update on the cannabis industry in Norwich. He noted that the tax revenue from Zen Leaf is currently flat because not enough cultivators are growing plants to provide the product. The primary reason is that there is a shortage of real estate for the cultivators. This is affecting all the retailers in the State. He anticipates that Norwich will eventually end up with 2 cannabis retailers and 2 cultivators.

Moving forward, Mr. Brown gave an update on the Waterfront and Marina. He stated that he, Mayor Nystrom, Consultant Scott Lessard and Representative Wilson met directly with the CIF Committee in Hartford. The new Marina owners are moving forward with plans for a restaurant that will be open year-round and recently met with all the required City officials. The City has committed \$300K to help move this project forward including a temporary festival tent/canopy. The CIF Committee will be making their decision on the CIF grant awards sometime in mid-March.

Mr. Brown reported on the Water Street Lofts at 77-91 Main Street. The developer met recently with the Fire Marshall and Building Official and has a list of items that need to be completed before a COO will be issued. Additionally, he stated that the window clings for the stairwell at the City garage across the street are ready but need a good weather day to be installed. A lighting study of the garage is also under way along with an engineering assessment of all City parking garages as requested by Public Works. 77-91 has 2 tenants committed to 2 of the 5 retail spaces.

Mr. Brown noted that work on the Reid & Hughes Building is ongoing with much of the demolition and remediation complete. During his trip to Hartford with the Mayor and Scott Lessard, they were urged by the DECD leadership to submit and brownfield grant application for the Reid & Hughes Building renovation as well as one for the Capehart Mill.

The next CIF Grant Application deadline is in mid-June. Mr. Brown said the CIF Working Committee was debating about whether or not NCDC should re-submit their previous grant applications for the Lower Broadway Project and the Cape Hart Mill site.

Mr. Brown said he met with Charlie Butler, a staff member of Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro's office in Connecticut. He is currently working as the grant's writer coordinator for the Congresswoman and wants to write grants for other organizations as well. Mr. Brown hopes to have Mr. Butler work on one or more grants for NCDC.

4. **Foundry 66 Report:** Mary Riley gave an update on Foundry 66. She reported that there were 3 new members in process, one of which is a local skin care company that wants to rent the last space in the Sunlight Building. She reported on the results of the satisfaction survey she sent out to Foundry 66 members. The major complaint was that the Wi-Fi service needs to be upgraded/improved. Ms. Riley also noted that she continues to have a wait list for the glass enclosed cubicles. She and Mr. Brown have discussed enclosing the cubicles at the back of the first floor. They will cost about \$7,000 each for a total of \$21K for three. Other capital improvements are being planned.

Ms. Riley and Mr. Brown gave a brief update on the small business grants that were given out to the Norwich businesses affected by the Yantic River flood in late January. This has opened doors to better relations between these local businesses and NCDC. A total of 36 businesses were affected by the Yantic River Flood with 20 grant applications approved. Ms. Riley noted that none of the affected businesses are willing to relocate somewhere else in Norwich. The businesses told Ms. Riley that they had never received any support from the City previously. Ms. Alberts stated that she would like to help these businesses move to another location rather than leave the City entirely. The Mayor noted that resources will be needed to assist these businesses with any potential moves.

5. **Global City Norwich Report:** Bobbie Braboy gave an update on current activities in the Global City Norwich Program. She reported that Puerto Rican Festival will be coming back to Norwich this year (last year the festival moved to New London). Ms. Braboy stated that she would like to see the DEI Committee hold meetings again; it is vital to the City and should only require 1-2 hours a month by the committee members. Ms. Braboy would like to see another member added to the committee to replace former committee member Jason Jones. Mr. Brown committed to making a decision at next month's board meeting on a new DEI Committee member.

Ms. Braboy gave an update on the GCN project through the CT Main Street Center's Accelerator Program. She met with Congressman Courtney yesterday and discussed her project. She reported that he seemed really excited and interested in her project to change the public's perception of downtown Norwich. Once the project is completed, she said that GCN may receive a \$5,000 grant from the CT Main Street Center to implement the project. Board member Ms. Hayes asked Bobbie if she had looked into any previous City surveys or documents on rebranding downtown Norwich. Mr. Brown noted that the outcome of the project must be a sustainable solution with permanence and actually stick. Mayor Nystrom suggested that Ms. Braboy reach out to Brian Kobelar, a videographer who had once been involved with a

downtown revitalization program in the 1990's. Unfortunately, that effort failed.

6. **Treasurer's Report:** Mr. Mancini reviewed NCDC's most recent budget report and P&L. He stated that NCDC's finances are currently in good shape month over month. He and Mr. Brown both noted that NCDC was still transitioning with the new bookkeeper following the resignation of NCDC's bookkeeper Patty McManus at the end of 2023.

Mr. Mancini asked for a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report.

**MOTION #3:** Mayor Nystrom made a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report. JP Mereen seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

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

**MOTION #4:** Chris LaRose made a motion to enter into Executive Session. Shiela Hayes seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously at 9:19 am.

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

**MOTION #5:** JP Mereen made a motion to exit Executive Session and adjourn the meeting. Rev. Green seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously at 9:45 am. No votes were taken.

Respectfully submitted,

Lee Ann D'Ambrosio