

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS
NORWALK ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY NOW, INC.
REGULAR MEETING**

**WEDNESDAY, JULY 25, 2012
7:00 P.M.**

ATTENDANCE: Carvin Hilliard, Deidra Davis, Brian Baxendale, Douglas Hempstead, Greg Burnett, Stephanie Ragin, Patricia Pheanious

ABSENT: Douglas Burke

STAFF: Chiquita Stephenson, Mary Mann, Beverly Beavers
Danielle Watson-Yates

GUESTS: John Mosby, Norwalk Activist, Ernest Dumas, Norwalk Activist, Robert Koett, Norwalk Hour, Diane Cece, Norwalk Resident, Shirley Mosby, Norwalk Resident, Angela Harrison, Norwalk Resident

ATTENDANCE BY PHONE: Sherelle Harris

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Burnett (The Chair) called the meeting to order at 7:17 p.m.

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS / ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Ms. CeCe, Norwalk Resident, mentioned the NEON website still needs to be addressed. There is still a lack of program and line item budgets. Ms. Cece has a concern that the geographic area to service clients is too large. What are the financial and volunteer contributions of other service areas? Mrs. Pheanious stated to Ms. Cece that we have contracts from the State of Connecticut, and volunteer services are coordinated through NEON's agency services. Ms. Cece feels the summer food program for children is very good. Ms. Cece was informed by Mrs. Pheanious that the final total for the Bad Debt write off has been an accumulation over a number of years. Ms. Cece inquired about adequate replacement for the backup of credit cards. Mrs. Pheanious stated the Comptroller has the only credit card belonging to the Agency, and policies have been put in place for future use.

Mr. Mosby would like to have improvement on Board members' attendance. Mr. Mosby would like to have copies of the minutes and documents in advance of meetings. Mr. Mosby stated everyone does not have access to the internet and for those without internet access to be able to pick them up. Mr. Mosby wants more clarification regarding

Executive Session topics. Mr. Mosby stated there is a need for a Finance Committee on the Board. Mr. Mosby inquired if the state ever finished the audit.

Mrs. Pheanious stated Brown Buckly & Tucker have done a review of compliance. There is also an ongoing audit by J.H. Cohen our new auditors.

Mr. Dumas mentioned that NEON is trying to move forward to help the community. Mr. Dumas also inquired if we have received funding from the Mayor to help. Mrs. Pheanious stated that the July Board Estimates meeting we were scheduled to attend in July was cancelled, and that we would be going in August to seek the funding.

Shirley Mosby stated she has a petition circulating to stop mass incarceration and the stop and frisk method being used by the Police Department. She suggested a meeting with the Mayor of Norwalk. Would NEON have an interest in signing the petition. Mrs. Pheanious stated the Agency might not be able to sign up as a whole without review of the documentation. Ms. Harrison added community meetings are needed. Would it be possible to use the NEON building? Mrs. Pheanious stated permission can be granted for constructive meetings.

Ms. Cece inquired if the non-budget BET meetings allow public opinions. The next meeting date has been requested.

III. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Due to the lack of a quorum, Mr. Burnett asked Board members to review the minutes and give any items of corrections, to Mr. Burnett or Beverly.

IV. FINANCE

- Presentation of New Budget Format
- Review of Draft Early Childhood Department Budget

Mrs. Stephenson stated in the past NEON provided income statements as a form of budgets. To become transparent is to be able to show all revenues and all expenses line by line and broken down. This will assist us in planning for the next year and help with the over spending in all areas. We have to be very specific as to how we are spending within the contractual parameters of the contracts we receive and be responsible to the community. Going forward through the leadership of Mrs. Pheanious, all income statements for every contract will be announced. The revenues and how we receive funds have been inserted in the Board packets. Mrs. Stephenson is also showing the Board an overall projection of the budget. This budget is being presented to the Board so they will have the opportunity to read through and see if anything is needed to be added or if anything is missing.

V. Interim/CEO President Report

- Policy & Procedure Database and Process

Mrs. Stephenson indicated currently NEON does not have a real department of Policy and Procedures. Primarily when working with the Federal Government and going through the policy and procedures of their contractual obligations, there are areas we need to be in compliance with. Currently we are using a new system called BIZ Manuals, which is an on line program which allows us to stay in compliance while working with all of the federal and state guide lines. The system allows us to do our work flows, create drafts, approve, release, and manage policies. This system will also allow the Board, staff, public and funders to be informed. It will also improve the overall ability of the Agency to operate as a team.

Mrs. Stephenson gave a review of the new agency web site that is in the process of being created. One will be able to see all of what NEON, Inc., is doing and offers. Applications will be processed on line. Energy applications will be taken electronically by Wilton, Westport, New Canaan, Darien, Stamford and Greenwich for the first time electronically. We are working with Fairfield County Bank and Reliance, to provide a direct link for making contributions to NEON. The system will also provide electronic receipts for individuals who have made a contribution for their records.

Mrs. Pheanious informed the Board of problems over at Ely School due to the last storm, in which our electrical system was knocked out. There is approximately a \$40,000 loss of equipment, and there are still some telephone lines, and computers that are still not operable. The building will also need to be re-grounded to prevent any future problems.

Mrs. Pheanious has been attending CAFCA (Connecticut Association for Community Action) meetings. The Community Action Agencies are working on a report for the state. It is being worked on by CAFCA, Connecticut Center for Economic Analysis at the University of Connecticut and BWB Solutions. It will be an advocacy tool to look at the face of poverty. We will be asked to contribute stories as to how we have helped people in poverty and this will be a state wide effort. There will be future funds to help with medical issues. Mrs. Pheanious would like to have a future school based health clinic at the Benjamin Franklin site.

Mrs. Pheanious added, Commissioner Bremby handed out a circular, transmittal #116, How to Defund Community Action Agencies. Mr. Bremby stated Community Action Agencies that are not in compliance will not exist.

There are two upcoming trainings the Board needs to be aware of Board Roles and Responsibility training which has been moved to November 3rd; and the Finance Director's quarterly meeting on August 14th at HRA in New Britain. There will be meetings scheduled for our Planners on a quarterly basis. The ROMA Conference (Results Orientated Management Accountability) will be held on August 16th. Customer Care and Case Management Conference will be on August 14th at NEON. Southern New England Conference at the Hilton in Providence in December.

Mrs. Pheanious went to New Britain to interview and select a new CFO. Mrs. Pheanious has made an offer to a candidate that she is pleased with. Details will follow soon.

Mrs. Pheanious informed the Board that she is working on selecting a specific person to work on ensuring contract compliance, goal setting, and monitor performance targets. There will be a team to work on grants. The individual will report to the CEO, Chief Operating Officer and Chief of Staff. The individual will also be responsible to report to the Treasurer, Audit Committee, Executive Director and develop relationships with the state.

- NEON/CTE Merger Update

Mrs. Pheanious stated we cannot change our name yet until we know if we will receive the Headstart Grant. We have to do a walk around the CTE building with the City of Stamford so the lease terms can be refined for CTE. Hopefully this will be finalized next week.

- Recruitment Process of New Board Members

Mrs. Pheanious stated we will be working with GE to help with the new Board selection. The Board had previously requested a scale. Mrs. Pheanious reviewed the scale presented and inquired if the Board has any input or would like to have changes. The Board went into a lengthy discussion.

- NEON University/NEON U

Mrs. Pheanious informed the Board about NEON University. NEON University is a concept paper the way the agency should go; in not just fighting poverty from outside the agency but to invest in ourselves. Staffs in the Child Care area initially have certain requirements that must be met under state and federal law. Mrs. Pheanious has set forth a methodology to turn NEON into a learning environment where our employees and staff can work with us to educate themselves to meet the requirements that are needed for the State of Connecticut. We would establish a pool of funds from NEON and private dollars raised. Mrs. Pheanious is working with NCC (Norwalk Community College) and Charter Oak to set up a program that would allow employees to use distance learning at night to take courses that are needed. The name for the concept will be called NEON U.

- Head Start

Mrs. Pheanious announced our grant application is still pending. As we were transmitting our application a technical error occurred at about 11:30 p.m. Congressman Himes office is helping us to secure the fact that our application was actually submitted. We do not have an answer yet if the application has been accepted.

VI. EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Board entered into Executive Session at 10:50 p.m.
The Board came out of Executive Session at 11:53 p.m.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 11:55 P.M.