

**CITY OF NORWALK
AD HOC AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING
APRIL 29, 2025
VIA ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING**

ATTENDANCE: Nora Niedzielski-Eichner; Chair, Nicole Eaddy, Nicol Ayers, Jalin Sead, Darlene Young,

STAFF: Michelle Andrzejewski

OTHER: Barbara Smyth; Council President; Anne Wennerstrand, Steve Kleppin; Director of Planning and Zoning, Joshua Goldstein (6:05 p.m.), Lamond Daniels; Chief of Community Services (6:46 p.m.)

I. CALL TO ORDER

Niedzielski-Eichner called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm

II. ROLL CALL

Ms.Niedzielski-Eichner called the roll as reflected above.

III. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

A. Regular Meeting: March 20th, 2025

Ms. Eaddy stated Ms. Ayer's name was misspelled. She stated on page 2 preview had to be changed to perview. On page 3 paragraph 1, the prospect should be changed to process. O. paragraph 2 listy needs to be changed to lis. In paragraph 3 thew needs to be changed to the. In paragraph 5 NAKA needs to be changed to NACA. On page 4 Acquired needs to be changed to acquired. In paragraph 6 property should be changed to property. In paragraph 5 answers should be changed to areas. In paragraph 7, Constuents should be spelled constituents

- ** MS. AYERS MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES AS AMENDED.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No one wished to comment

Ms. Niedzielski-Eichner proposed changing the order of the agenda. She stated they would discuss the Affordable Housing Act first to give Ms. Estrella time to log in.

- ** MS. EADDY MOVED TO APPROVE THE MOTION.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. Goldstein joined the meeting at 6:05 p.m.

V. OLD BUSINESS

B. Affordable Housing Account - Next Steps

Ms. Niedzielski-Eichner gave some background on the item. She stated that last year the ordinance was passed establishing the housing account. She explained the account is a set-aside reserve fund that gathers the developer's payments to the city as a way of supporting workforce housing. She went on to say that under the planning and zoning regulations developers may build units offered at a certain affordability level or make a payment in lieu of the creation of such units. She noted they now need a mechanism by which to expend those funds. Ms. Nora Niedzielski-Eichner they established by ordinance the committee and they need to establish the committee and begin the request for proposal to expend the funds.

Mr. Kleppin provided a draft of an outline that covered possible approaches the committee might use. He produced a document from Planning and Zoning that covers the trust fund application criteria. He explained the process as it applies to developers. He stated at present the fund has an approximate total of a little over \$2 million. He discussed how the persons involved would access the funds. Mr. Kleppin said he was looking to get impute from the commission before producing the final draft to be sent to the council for approval.

Mr. Kleppin turned back to the document that described qualified expenditures and eligibility for submittal.

Ms. Eaddy asked if the money from the developer was in addition to the workforce housing they are providing or if the money they put in lieu of meeting the requirements. Mr. Kleppin said it was in addition to. He proceeded to explain the two paths developers can take when they go forward with an application.

Mr. Kleppin noted the need to determine the best way to leverage the available funds. He requested the commission also consider the size of the units. He continued saying they felt the best approach is probably a grant as opposed to a loan. He discussed what developers were required to do for submittal. The document described the scoring for the submittals.

Ms. Young asked if Planning and Zoning had given any consideration to working with the redevelopment agency. Mr. Kleppin said they had talked and as long as Redevelopment is not seeking funds they would be good to bounce projects off of. Ms. Young elaborated on the amount of money in the fund, noting how quickly the funds could be spent. She wanted clarification on loan programs mentioned in the draft. Mr. Kleppin discussed a proposed per-project cap. He talked about home ownership and suggested leveraging other organizations that already provide that service. Ms. Eaddy asked whether the funds could be used to repair existing affordable units. Mr. Kleppin said that was allowed under the ordinance.

Ms. Ayers asked how the fund is replenished. Mr. Kleppin responded that developers fees replenish the funds. Ms. Ayers proposed several ideas about disbursement and attention to developers who think outside the box.

Ms. Niedzielski-Eichner said she was seeing two main areas of interest. One is the rehabilitation of existing affordable housing units which would result in deed restriction. The other is the prioritizing innovative approaches and the conversion of commercial to residential units.

Mr. Sead noted that a loan arrangement could have an adverse effect on potential home buyers. He felt grants would be more beneficial.

Ms. Niedzielski-Eichner stated the funds to her knowledge could not be used for individual down payment support. They must be used for hard costs.

Ms. Niedzielski-Eichner wanted the group to weigh in on what the group thought was most beneficial, giving a large amount to a large project or small amounts to smaller projects. She asked what was being constructed in the city right now. She noted larger projects have a greater return on the investment. She wanted some idea of how projects of various sizes would be

impacted. Mr. Kleppin responded by saying they should talk to developers who build all affordable housing because they would have a better answer to the question. He suggested speaking to Michele Conderino.

Ms. Ayers stated she didn't believe their constituents had an appetite for for developments of 100 units or more. She felt that should be taken into consideration when dealing with the distribution of these funds.

Mr. Goldstien said he didn't think they were going to luxury apartment their way out of their housing situation. He felt a more piecemeal approach to dispensing funds is a better strategy. He note the constituents were looking for projects that support family size living.

Mr. Daniels joined the meeting at 6:46 p.m.

Ms. Young reiterated that they were not considering potential first-time home buyers who need assistance. She stated that they were talking about building housing when they weren't taking care of the current housing people are living in. Ms. Niedzielski-Eichner said the funds can be used to do that.

A. Norwalk's Affordable Housing Action Plan - Next Steps (Community Service Department)

Chief Daniels presented a slide show on the Affordable Housing Action Plan. It covered the following topics:

- The community Services Department
 - Operating the Community Resource Hub
 - Supporting residents in meeting basic needs and navigating services
- The housing support approach
 - Proactive support of housing related services
 - Connecting residents to housing support programs
 - Streamlining access to housing resources through the Community Resource Hub
- Proactively Promoting Housing Resources
 - Eviction prevention
 - Mortgage assistance
 - Fair rent services
 - Home ownership programs
 - Providing targeted outreach alongside individual assistance
- Connecting residents to housing support
 - Referring residents directly to programs and services

- Offering educational resources to navigate housing options
- Help prevent displacement and housing instability.
- Streamlining housing access
 - Organizing and sharing housing resources through the Hub
 - Ensuring easy navigation of available services
 - Strengthening pathways to affordable housing opportunities

Mr. Daniels presented a slide showing the Housing Resources web page. He described what could be found on the page like the 211 navigator. He also presented a slide that showed flyers in both English, Spanish and Haitian Creole available on the website. He then discussed the following:

- The Regional Non-Profit Swing Space
 - Space available at City Hall for outside organizations
 - Support action to critical services within Norwalk
 - Enhanced outreach, education, and resource delivery
- Housing Resources they refer to
 - Bridgeport Neighborhood Trust
 - Housing Development Fund
 - Urban League of Southern Connecticut
 - Open Doors
 - Person to Person (P2P)
 - Norwalk Housing Authority
- The Community Resource Hub
 - Free assistance for Norwalk Residents
 - Located at City Hall room 202
 - Bilingual, multi-cultural team ready to assist
 - Call (203) 854-7999 or visit the Community Services page
 - Follow them: Norwalk Community Hub on Facebook

Ms. Ayers asked if they could get office hours for NACA. She stated their whole mission is home ownership. Chief Daniels said that was a resounding yes. He said he would love the opportunity to talk to the organization. Ms. Ayers asked if the Resource Hub had a list of available apartments. Mr. Daniels indicated not at present, but he saw his department has a role in being able to call if a resident calls about housing availability.

Ms. Smyth said Chief Daniels is the man for the job.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Andrzejewski stated Norwalk was hosting an affordable housing informational fair on May 22, 2025. He noted that different agencies from Norwalk and outside of Norwalk will be will coming to the community room. She said residents could come in and get matched up with services.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

- ** MS. NIEDZIELSKI-EICHNER MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted
China Mayhew
Telesco Secretarial Services