

**CITY OF NORWALK
AD HOC AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES - OCTOBER 23, 2025
VIA ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING**

ATTENDEES: Nora Niedzielski-Eichner, Jalin T. Sead Sr., Nicolé Eaddy, Heather Dunn, Nicol Ayers.

STAFF: Michelle Andrzejewski, Steve Kleppin.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Niedzielski-Eichner called the meeting to order at approximately 6:00 PM and confirmed a quorum as noted above.

II. ROLL CALL

Roll call was conducted as noted above.

III. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

A. Regular Meeting: July 24th, 2025

****MS. NIEDZIELSKI-EICHNER CALLED FOR A VOTE TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF THE JULY 24, 2025, REGULAR MEETING.**

****THE VOTE WAS UNANIMOUS. THE MINUTES WERE APPROVED AS PRESENTED.**

B. Regular Meeting: September 18th, 2025

****MS. NIEDZIELSKI-EICHNER CALLED FOR A VOTE TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 18, 2025, REGULAR MEETING.**

****THE MOTION PASSED. MR. SEAD ABSTAINED. THE MINUTES WERE APPROVED AS PRESENTED.**

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Ms. Lisa Britton, of 19 Shorefront Park, expressed support for more housing but raised concerns as a financial overseer in the city about tax abatements matching the city's bank account and funding schools. She stated she supports senior housing and housing for singles that does not strain the school system, emphasizing that housing funds schools and that adding families in poverty without school support compounds issues. Ms. Britton referenced the POCO project from 20 years ago, noting low AMIs made it financially unviable initially, with changes like reduced parking and added apartments, but stressed sustainability for the city, particularly schools. She clarified she aims to protect city resources without seeming uncaring.

Ms. Diane Cece confirmed she could be heard and stated she joined to listen to updates but, having heard Ms. Britton, agreed with everything Ms. Britton said and would be brief.

V. OLD BUSINESS

A. Status on affordable housing tracker.

Ms. Niedzielski-Eichner introduced the item and asked Ms. Andrzejewski for updates. Ms. Andrzejewski noted some repetition from the prior meeting but proceeded, acknowledging that not all attendees may have heard it previously. She summarized zoning amendments from May, including a density bonus for projects over 10 units with 5% increase if units are at 80-90% AMI; an income increase for recertifying workforce housing units to maintain at least 12-13% city affordability; and counting 3-bedroom units as two workforce units to address family-sized dwellings. She mentioned the department's future review of ADU regulations, which has not been approved. Ms. Andrzejewski referenced a June tax abatement presentation by Don Poland, noting a YouTube link is available. She discussed ongoing legislative proposals, including changes to encourage condo-to-homeownership by addressing developer barriers; incentives for grocery stores to improve food access in SoNo; and tax sales on delinquent properties, modeled after a successful Massachusetts example. Ms. Andrzejewski stated these are still in development. Mr. Kleppin added that the legislative items and ADU work are being revisited after summer projects. Ms. Niedzielski-Eichner thanked them and suggested aiming for an ADU presentation in November. Ms. Niedzielski-Eichner flagged the recent Norwalk Redevelopment Agency study on South Norwalk, expressing disappointment that it generated no new ideas, had thin recommendations, and highlighted complex challenges without sufficient funding or creative pursuit of community input on underutilized properties. She suggested this underscores the need for continued committee work to leverage local knowledge and targeted investments.

B. Affordable Housing Account Ordinance

Ms. Niedzielski-Eichner introduced the item and asked Mr. Kleppin and Ms. Andrzejewski for an overview. Mr. Kleppin stated he reviewed the prior meeting recording and, finding no consensus, met with Ms. Andrzejewski and Jay Habansky to develop evaluation criteria for eligible projects. He noted challenges in weighting large versus small projects and presented two options in a shared document. He apologized for the late distribution and offered to screen-share for discussion, noting no decision was needed that evening. Ms. Niedzielski-Eichner agreed to review it on screen, acknowledging the difficulty in determining effective uses and the variety of member thoughts. She noted the committee for reviewing applications has not been appointed, creating a chicken-and-egg issue, and requested recommendations for members who are renters or owners of affordable housing, complying with minority party representation, particularly those in such housing. Mr. Kleppin screen-shared the criteria, including project scale, affordability depth and duration, location and integration, community impact, innovation and sustainability, readiness and feasibility, compliance, financial need, and leverage of other funds. Discussion ensued on prioritizing small-scale projects like duplexes or triplexes at low AMIs to build stock without school strain, using funds to offset market competition, incentivizing safer construction over demolition, avoiding subjective criteria, excluding tax-delinquent or violation-plagued properties, rewarding new acquisitions of blighted properties rather than long-term neglect, considering equity impacts on deed-restricted units, and applicability to commercial-to-residential conversions to increase inventory and lower rents given limited land. Ms. Niedzielski-

Eichner suggested expanding programs like Home Front for individual fixes. Ms. Ayers raised converting vacant commercial spaces.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Committee Priorities (Tax incentive ordinance, education topics, capital budget)

Ms. Niedzielski-Eichner introduced discussion on committee priorities, focusing on recommending a capital budget appropriation for affordable housing to the mayor. She recalled prior appropriations of around \$250,000, often to the Norwalk Housing Authority for planning new or redesigned projects, a cost hard to fund otherwise. She asked if the committee wished to recommend reinstating such an appropriation, the amount, and specification to an agency like the Housing Authority, Redevelopment Agency, or the existing fund. Ms. Ayers supported an allocation but sought more discussion on destination, expressing reservations about the Housing Authority given its heavy subsidies and the needs of middle-income residents ineligible for such housing. Ms. Eaddy agreed, emphasizing middle housing for seniors downsizing who wish to stay in the area. Ms. Dunn supported the idea in principle but questioned effectiveness with limited funds and a large tax bill, preferring uses like senior center relief for heating, though noting capital restrictions limit to construction; she stressed ensuring no diversion from more effective areas. Ms. Niedzielski-Eichner clarified the capital focus for construction investments and noted the lack of a middle-housing entity, suggesting November discussion. Mr. Kleppin suggested inviting Michelle Condorino to the next meeting to discuss the Maple Street four-unit project and its financing stack for insights. Ms. Niedzielski-Eichner agreed and requested a presentation on it.

VII. DISCUSSION

No additional items were raised under general discussion.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

****MR. SEAD MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.**

****THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:05 pm.

**Respectfully Submitted,
Courtney Baldwin,
Recording Secretary**