



**NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION ZONE ADVISORY BOARD
MINUTES OF MEETING**

March 10, 2022

The State Neighborhood Revitalization Advisory Board (advisory board) held a remote meeting on Thursday, March 10, 2022, at 9:00 AM. A [videorecording](#) is available.

Board Members or Designees:

Laura Brown, [City of New Haven, City Plan Department](#)
Linda Brunza, [CT Dept. of Energy & Environmental Protection](#)
Jonathan Cabral, [CT Housing Finance Authority](#)
Julie Carmelich, [CT State Historic Preservation Office](#)
Janice Castle, [City of Hartford, Office of Community Engagement](#)
William Coleman, [City of Bridgeport, Office of Planning & Economic Development](#)
Kathy Crees, [City of Norwich, Office of Community Development](#)
Steve Dombrowski, [CT Dept. of Labor](#)
Mike Gilmore, [Waterbury Development Corporation](#)
Marion Griffin, [Hartford NEXT](#)
Martin Heft (Chair), [CT Office of Policy & Management](#)
Margaret Malinowski, [City of New Britain, Neighborhood Preservation Program](#)
Marlon Pena, [CT Dept. of Transportation](#)
Laura Watson, [CT Dept. of Housing](#)

Others:

Matthew Abbott, [City of Bridgeport, Office of Planning & Economic Development](#)
Cynthia Bowser, West Side and South End Civic Action Coalition, Stamford
Ginne-Rae Clay, [CT Social Equity Council](#)
Maya Donald
Eric Dorsey, [CT Dept. of Transportation](#)
Jennifer Edwards, [CT Social Equity Council](#)
Lynn Haig, [City of Bridgeport, Office of Planning & Economic Development](#)
Madelyn Hart, [Institute for Municipal & Regional Policy](#)
David Lukens, [CT Office of Policy & Management](#)
Kevin Pisacich, [CT Dept. of Energy & Environmental Protection](#)
Tyler Roth, [CT Dept. of Transportation](#)
Bruce Wittchen, [CT Office of Policy & Management](#)

1. Welcome, Introductions, Adoption of Minutes

Martin Heft, Chair of the [Neighborhood Revitalization Zone](#) (NRZ) Advisory Board, called the meeting to order at 9:05 and everyone introduced themselves.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the draft Adoption of [June 23, 2021, Meeting Minutes](#) and the motion was approved unanimously.

2. [Broadband Mapping and NRZs](#)

David Lukens shared his screen to begin the presentation on broadband mapping and NRZs. Referencing Slide 3, he said [FCC 477](#) is considered the gold standard for showing broadband availability but used Slide to 4 to illustrate how that measure can be misleading, with mapping for Hartford showing how high data speeds associated with Trinity College bias the results.

Slide 5 lists problems and David identified potential solutions. He provided an overview of the survey for which the state is seeking assistance from NRZ leaders. He noted the availability of federal funds for broadband and provided an overview of targeted data collection, referencing Slide 7.

David introduced Kevin Pisacisch of DEEP, who described the federal and state approaches and the Governor's proposal to increase funding. Kevin highlighted that the data to be collected now can be used to overcome erroneous FCC mapping. He explained how Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Acts (IIJA) funds will be deployed and highlighted that the 1st priority is to address unserved areas and then underserved areas. Data can refute FCC mapping. Martin Heft said NRZs should also be aware that this kind of work would be eligible for the federal funds municipalities received in 6/2021 and the additional funds expected in 6/2022.

3. [Bus Stop Enhancement Program](#)

Tyler Roth said this work is in an early stage and described the objectives identified on Slides 2 & 3. He proceeded to Slide 4 and pointed out that federal funds will cover up to 80% of the costs other than for design costs, which the state is responsible for. Work on bus stops prioritized through this work may result in no local or transit agency contribution. The consultant is still in the first stage of this work and it is not yet known how many locations can be prioritized is not yet known.

Tyler provided an overview of the project timeline and current status, as listed on Slides 5 & 6, and said the agency has already reached out to municipalities through transit service providers and the councils of governments (COGs), as detailed on Slide 7. He added that they still have to develop design guidelines and standards as well as maintenance requirements.

Slides 8-10 outline expectations for and the expected approach of the customer feedback survey and Tyler highlighted steps being taken to broaden the reach of the survey. He noted that the survey content on Slide 10 is not an exhaustive list. With Slide 11, Tyler explained what DOT will request of NRZs. He said the survey will be open for a few months but said an earlier response would be better.

Janice Castle said Hartford is doing bus shelter artwork and it is very difficult to standardize. She noted that some are very old. There was a discussion of responsibility for maintenance and Tyler said he was familiar with Hartford's work and noted that DOT wants to offer choices. He said the lists of stops prioritized by municipal and transit service providers will include some replacements. He added that the program can also be used to make existing stops accessible and information will be provided regarding municipal maintenance obligations.

4. [The CT Social Equity Council Cannabis & Community Reinvestment Initiative](#)

Jennifer Edwards showed her screen and provided some background regarding the creation and purpose of the [Social Equity Council](#) (SEC). She identified the responsibilities, as listed on Slide 2, and Ginne-Rae Clay described the ongoing work regarding licensure of cannabis businesses. She highlighted the advantages granted to social equity applicants and described the criteria and expectations. She also provided further background regarding the council and noted that additional information is available on the SEC website.

Slide 5 outlines the social equity applicant lottery application process, Slide 6 lists relevant deadlines, and Slide 7 lists webinars produced by the SEC to assist applicants. Recordings of those are available on the SEC website and on YouTube. Referencing Slide 8, Ginne-Rae and Jennifer pointed out that this initiative creates opportunity, jobs, and reinvestment, but does not provide guarantees, entitlements or promises. Slide 9 lists key contact information.

Ginne-Rae said broad-based reinvestment will be an important aspect of the SEC's work. The new tax revenue is expected to generate \$60 million annually and she is floating the idea of directing funding to the most-grassroots level. The NRZs could have that role. She described her experience with NRZs and pointed out that they rely on volunteers, and she highlighted the difficulties experienced when state funding ran out.

Ginne-Rae said the concept she has in mind is to re-establish NRZs with community development corporations (CDCs) to provide staff support and be fiduciary for NRZs. The reinvestment funds could be used to implement NRZ plans. She highlighted that funding is not available yet and said they must be ready when it is. She said work must begin now and mentioned the need for trainings, charettes, and analysis. The SEC's current priority is to open businesses, and she sees its focus shifting to this in the fall. Ginne-Rae said Jennifer will be the contact for reinvestment issues and briefly described Bridgeport's process for NRZ-oriented project funding.

5. Updates, Questions, and Comments

- Local Updates and/or Questions

Cynthia Bowser said she lives in Stamford's West Side Neighborhood and said there is a [West Side NRZ](#), which is a [501\(c\)\(3\)](#) organization but is dormant. She has tried to reach out to people involved with that organization and mentioned assistance provided by Bruce Wittchen at OPM. Bruce said it is an unusual situation because there are many officially-recognized NRZs that have not become a 501(c)(3) but this organization is a 501(c)(3) and he has no documentation of the city ever establishing the NRZ or of a strategic plan being developed. The state does not consider it an NRZ and they will likely have to go through the full process, the key steps in creating a state-recognized NRZ. He added that 501(c)(3) status is usually established later and he is curious if there are additional informal NRZs.

Margaret Malinowski said New Britain established four NRZs and pointed out the availability of community development block grant funding. Funding can support capacity building and recommended people speak with their grants people. She added that consultants can be hired to help in preparing strategic plans.

- State Updates and/or Questions
- Public Comments

6. Next Steps

- Revision of [Guidelines for developing an NRZ strategic plan](#)

Bruce Wittchen said he had offered to start the update process last year but didn't get very far. He said this is more important now because of the potential future role of NRZs described by Ginne-Rae Clay. He welcomed people's assistance and said input from the local level could be especially helpful.

- Future presentation/discussion topics

Bruce Wittchen pointed out that each of this meeting's presentations was from the state level. All were important but future meetings will also include locally-oriented presentations.

- Next meeting: tentatively 5/12/2022 and 9/8/2022

Bruce Wittchen pointed out that someone had posted a question in the meeting chat asking who to contact about beginning an NRZ and he said people can contact him and he can refer them to the right people in each municipality.

7. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 10:15.