



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

April 18, 2024

The State Neighborhood Revitalization Advisory Board (advisory board) held a remote meeting on Thursday, April 18, 2024, at 11:00 AM. The [agenda](#) and [video](#) are available online.

Board Members or Designees Attending in Person:

Jennifer Edwards, [CT Social Equity Council](#)
Kayla Giordano, [CT Housing Finance Authority](#)
Marion Griffin, [Hartford NEXT](#)
Sarah Huang, [CT Dept. of Energy & Environmental Protection](#)
Mark Polzella, [CT Dept. of Labor](#)
Pete Procko, [Greeneville NRZ](#), Norwich
Deanna Rhodes, City of Norwich

Board Members or Designees Attending Remotely:

Julie Carmelich, [CT State Historic Preservation Office](#)
Janice Castle, [City of Hartford](#)
Martin Heft (Chair), [CT Office of Policy & Management](#)
Sheila Hummel, [CT Dept. of Economic and Community Development](#)
Margaret Malinowski, City of New Britain
Ken Mysogland, [CT Dept. of Children & Families](#)
Heba Naqvi, , [CT Dept. of Transportation](#)
Matt Pafford, [CT Dept. of Administrative Services](#)
Alexis Steele, [CT Dept. of Emergency Services & Public Protection](#)
Laura Watson, [CT Dept. of Housing](#)

Other Participants Attending in Person:

Cynthia L. Bowser, West Side Stamford
Kevin Brown, [Norwich Community Development Corporation](#)
Karen Colebut, [CT Social Equity Council](#)
Dan Coley, Building Official, City of Norwich
Dan Daniska, City Planner, City of Norwich
Tanice Doman, Assistant Zoning/Blight Enforcement Officer, City of Norwich
Sandra Gaitan-Brown, Community Development Office, City of Norwich
Maureen Goulet, Capitol Region Council of Governments
James Harriott, Blight Control/Housing Code Enforcement Officer, City of Norwich
Craig Kleman, Director of Community Development, City of Norwich
Vera Lembrick, [CT Social Equity Council](#)
Rista Malanca, Northwest Hills Council of Governments
Debi Martin, [LISC CT](#)
Patrick McLaughlin, Director of Public Works, City of Norwich
Peter A. Nystrom – Mayor – City of Norwich
Nancy Procko, [Greeneville NRZ](#), Norwich

Kathleen Strenkowski, [Greeneville NRZ](#), Norwich

Other Participants Attending Remotely:

Jack Benjamin, [City of New Britain](#)
Rhodee Gine, [UBS Realty Investors](#)
Kristen Lopez, [Eversource](#)
Marcus Ordonez, [Hartford Land Bank](#)
Carey Shea, [Frog Hollow NRZ](#), Hartford

Staff:

Justine Phillips-Gallucci, [CT Office of Policy & Management](#)
Phil Shattuck, [CT Office of Policy & Management](#)
Bruce Wittchen, [CT Office of Policy & Management](#)

1. Welcome, Introductions, Adoption of Minutes

Martin Heft called the meeting of the [Neighborhood Revitalization Zone](#) (NRZ) Advisory Board to order and everyone introduced themselves. A motion was made and seconded to approve the draft [1/18/2024 Meeting Minutes](#) and the motion was approved unanimously.

2. NRZ/Community Group Resources Document (in preparation)

Bruce Wittchen mentioned the widespread interest in providing better guidance for NRZs and described the effort underway to develop such materials. One aspect is to explain expectations at the neighborhood, municipal, and state level. He highlighted that NRZs must follow state statutes and the guidance material being prepared is intended to help NRZs, municipalities, and state agencies do that. Other guidance material will focus on specific topics that individual NRZs and municipalities might be interested in, such as blight, historic preservation, public safety, or other topics. State agencies can also benefit, due to the local perspective on their activities that NRZs can provide.

Bruce said this effort is at the beginning stage and a few people have begun outlining points to be included in various guidance documents. Maureen Goulet said the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) is working on a toolkit that aligns well with this effort and there was a discussion of collaborating in such efforts.

3. Norwich Presentation

Peter & Nancy Procko, Greeneville Neighborhood Revitalization Zone
Kevin Brown, Norwich Community Development Corporation

Pete Procko welcomed everyone to Norwich and said he is chairman of the Greeneville NRZ and explained that it is a little neighborhood with a very rich history and people from many backgrounds. He described Greeneville's businesses, churches, and organizations, but noted that not everything is perfect. A priority of the Greeneville NRZ is to change the perception of the neighborhood and he added that every NRZ should work to change people's perception of their neighborhoods.

Pete said it is harder to get people to participate now, but listed a number of neighborhood activities and described how the NRZ encourages participation. He

highlighted the support of city government and of the [Norwich Community Development Corporation](#) (NCDC), adding that its executive director Kevin Brown reached out to the NRZ and has been phenomenal. He pointed out that the NCDC's role in the [Foundry 66](#) building, in which this meeting is being held in, and introduced Kevin.

Kevin Brown described the relationship between the NCDC and NRZ and that they work closely together without duplicating each other and meet monthly. He highlighted the benefit of the focus on the small area of an NRZ because change in a small area can lead to change everywhere. He also pointed out that the NCDC emerged from the now-defunct Downtown NRZ.

Kevin pointed out that the NCDC, with its city-wide community and economic development responsibilities, would not be able to provide the right level of focus on the Greeneville neighborhood without the help of the NRZ. He showed a brief video and explained that it captures the scale of public and private investments in the city, pointing out that an NRZ cannot do everything by itself.

Kevin introduced Mayor Peter Nystrom, who noted that his family was in Greeneville when he was born. He described the creation of the NCDC from the Downtown NRZ, which had fallen by the wayside, and explained the city's efforts in Greeneville and other neighborhoods. There was further discussion of efforts to energize neighborhoods and other initiatives the city, including a violence reduction effort funded by a social equity grant. Bruce Wittchen said these results show what can be done when an NRZ, community development corporation, or similar organization is active in a neighborhood.

Jeff Layman introduced himself and described his Norwich-based national skateboard company and described why his business is in the neighborhood and what the business does for the city. He also highlighted the leadership and actions of the NRZ that make it better. There was further discussion of what NRZs can do for neighborhoods when the people, businesses, and institutions work together. Martin Heft summarized some of the points that had been made, pointing out the benefits of such collaboration, and thanked the speakers.

4. Presentation: Statutory Tools Available for Addressing Vacant and Blighted Properties

Rista Malanca, AICP, Northwest Hills Council of Governments

Martin Heft introduced Rista Malanca and she explained that she now works for the Northwest Hills Council of Governments (NHCOG) but had previously worked for the City of Torrington for ten years. She said Torrington relied on partnerships and working with property owners, like Norwich, but sometimes they've needed to go to enforcement. The available enforcement tools sometimes are appropriate but sometimes they are not. Two recent pieces of legislation have created new tools.

Rista explained CGS Sec. [8-169aa](#), which was passed in 2019 and modified in 2023 and enables a receiver of rents to be appointed for a blighted building. She described a blighted downtown hotel that occupies a full block of downtown Torrington and where previous redevelopment stalled after a new owner gutted the interior. She listed the factors that must be present to apply the law and the benefit of people in the neighborhood being able to provide information about the condition of a building and lack of activity. She pointed out the property must be found to be a nuisance leading to

public safety and public health concerns and noted the impact on the well-being of neighboring businesses.

Rista Malanca said each municipality has the authority to define blight and one of the factors Torrington considers is repeated police calls. When people got tired of calling, the city encouraged them to keep calling regarding legitimate problems to document it. Rista described the steps that must be followed and the procedural challenges Torrington faces. It is just the second case filed since the law went into effect and is still in the court system. The city partnered with the Torrington Development Corporation and, even though the TDC could not have filed the case on its own, it has the organizational capacity to manage such a property.

Rista provided further details of what is required of a receiver under the law and also described other blight work by the city, highlighting the importance of working with partners. There was a discussion of sharing the presentation and Martin Heft read a question asked by one of the people attending remotely, who had asked if it is difficult to obtain insurance for property that is not actually owned. Rista said Torrington is looking into that but has not reached the point that it has tried to get insurance for the property. She noted that it might be possible to take over the owner's current policy.

There was a discussion of the ways in which nearby residents, businesses, and institutions can contribute to such municipal efforts, where or not they are an NRZ. Jennifer Edwards highlighted additional options available when there is an NRZ and there was further discussion of tools available for actions included in NRZ strategic plans.

Pete Procko said the Greeneville NRZ had become weak for a while and they made it active again. It is a great conduit to city government. He described relationships the NRZ has developed to get things done, mentioning the city's public works, public utilities, and the neighborhood watch. We live here and we want to do the best we can. He said people's perceptions of the city are important and he described some of the NRZ's recent activities. There was a discussion of community beautification projects improving the neighborhood and getting people involved in their neighborhood.

5. Other NRZ, Municipal, State Agency, or Other Updates, Comments, or Questions

Vera Lembrick announced that the Social Equity Council has selected the grant managers that will handle the \$22 million being made available for violence prevention actions in the state's disproportionately impacted areas (DIAs), including Norwich. Actions can include programs that strengthen families and that can provide additional grassroots community services and programs. Enrichment programs for young people are also included, such as providing workforce and life skill opportunities, as well as programs that support formerly incarcerated individuals. The Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut is one of the grant managers.

6. Next Meeting July 18, 2024 & Adjourn

Martin Heft noted the date of the next meeting and mentioned that the hosts are providing lunch and a tour of the Greeneville neighborhood for people who were able to attend in person. A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting and the motion was passed unanimously.