



Hartford NEXT Virtual Meeting Minutes 11/17/2022

Time: 6:00– 7:30 pm Board Meeting

Mission: A collective voice of Hartford residents and stakeholders working to strengthen and grow our community

Expected Outcomes:

- **Learn about Hartford Talks & Share with NRZs**
- **Hartford Tax Alternative Workgroup Update**
- **NRZ Collaboration**

Time (est.)	Agenda Item	Facilitator Presenter	Purpose/Action	Activity/Essential Questions
6:00 pm	Welcome	Board Chair	Call to Order	
<p>Marion Griffin, Chair, Frog Hollow NRZ; Eileen Noonan, Interim Secretary, SW/BTR; Jack Antonich, Associate Member; Elizabeth Davis, At-Large, Hartford Public Library; Randal Davis, City of Hartford; Kiesha Dickenson, Upper Albany; Lindsay Ewing, West End; Mary Falvey, At-Large, Hartford Preservation Alliance; Jeanne Holloway, CSS/CON; Emely Lugo, MARG and South End; David MacDonald, Asylum Hill; Jackie McKinney, Asylum Hill; Mary Pelletier, West End; Frank Sentner, SoDo; Jeffrey Stewart, At-Large; Charles Teale, Northeast; Lawrence Williams, Upper Albany; Sharmeen Wright, Blue Hills; Shirley Surgeon, Hartford City Council</p> <p>The meeting began at 6:09 pm and Marion Griffin welcomed us all.</p>				
6:00– 6:15 pm	Meeting Protocol & Introductions	Mary ALL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What should we know • Let’s get acquainted 	<p>Best Practices for meeting participation</p> <p>Name & Organization</p>
<p>The meeting began at 6:06 pm.</p> <p>Marion Griffin began the meeting by welcoming everyone and asking each person present to introduce themselves with their name and organization.</p>				
6:15 – 6:20 pm	HNXT Overview	Marion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission and Purpose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why HNXT?
<p>Marion read the Hartford NEXT mission, purpose, and framework.</p>				
6:20 – 6:30 pm	Board Business	Marion Violette	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approval of October Board Minutes • Financial Report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vote on Board Minutes • Review Financial Report
<p>Marion asked if there were any questions on or corrections to the October board minutes. There were not and, so, Jeff Stewart made a motion to accept the minutes and Chief Teale seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.</p> <p>In Violette Haldane’s absence, there was no financial report.</p> <p>Marion then asked whether we should have our December meeting in person or online by asking for a show of hands of who would like to do it in person; there was only one person who favored an in-person meeting. Lindsay Ewing reported that the West End NRZ had their first in person meeting. It was not a hybrid meeting; some</p>				



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<p>attendees wore masks, some practiced social distancing. There were no complaints. We discussed the possibility of having a hybrid meeting, using the Hartford Public Library or ECCO facilities but having a satisfactory hybrid meeting is a real challenge. Especially because our meeting is right before Christmas, a holiday when we will be gathering with our families, it just makes sense to wait some more before meeting in person. Also, since we are heading into a season with a lot of bad driving weather, we may as well keep on Zoom until spring weather. And, so, the consensus is that we will continue to meet on Zoom until spring.</p>																										
6:30– 6:35pm	Hartford Talks	Magdalene Garcia, Dept of Families, Children, Youth & Rec	Introduction of : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hartford Talks • LENA Grow/LENA Start 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is this? • Why is it Important to Hartford? • What can we do/How can we help? 																						
<p>Our guest speaker was Magdalene Garcia, the Hartford Talks coordinator from the city Department of Families, Children, Youth, and Recreation. In the Hartford Talks program, they work with families of children up to age 5 to increase language development, thus promoting lifelong literacy. Ms. Garcia went through the pillars and the organizational design of Hartford Talks and explained the three programs — Start, Grow, Home, and how they educate the children and the parents. She explained that there is a citywide early learning network with several committees and working groups. They meet monthly and people are encouraged to join in. Right now they are enrolling children in the two Early Learning Communities, the Hyland Center and the Metzner Center. There is an Early Learning Parent Cabinet that meets monthly at the Hartford Public Library. Their next meeting, a hybrid Zoom meeting, is December 14.</p>																										
6:35 – 6:55	Roundtable	NRZ Reps & Board Members	Sharing of One Key Initiative/ Accomplishment/or call for support (Send Additional Items to Eileen Noonan)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What has been accomplished? • What are the new initiatives? • What support do you need? What opportunities are there for NRZ collaboration? 																						
<p>For the NRZ Roundtable, Marion summarized, specifically as to NRZ priorities and themes, the results of our last month’s Roundtable on the topic of what we like most about our neighborhoods:</p>																										
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	Porch sitting			1
	Architecture/historic buildings/houses			4
	Close to bus routes			2
	Restaurants			2
	There's a lot to do			1
	Diversity of population			1
	Workplaces			1
<p>Marion then asked us what we think would work for outreach effort and what would our neighborhood find engaging.</p> <p>Chief Teale responded that what could interest people is anything involving an appreciation of the long history of the City of Hartford. The city is coming up on 400 years since its founding. He said that he was involved in giving a history tour of the city 3 or 4 times a year and it worked very well. It doesn't take much in terms of resources; just a bus and someone who knows the area well enough. Until 1967, the Hartford Public Schools included a history of the city in its curriculum. This year was the 200th anniversary of the birth of the landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted who was born in Hartford and is buried in the Old North Cemetery. The artist Frederick Church was born in Hartford and is buried in Spring Grove Cemetery.</p> <p>Mary Pelletier added that most people in the city don't realize how much there is and how many places are free to Hartford residents. Nature is available to residents in Hartford parks, beside its rivers, in its cemeteries. There is no charge to residents visiting the Wadsworth Atheneum. We need to understand more about our local neighborhoods. Everyone should go online and look into the 15-minute city concept.</p> <p>Jackie McKinney added that DominGO was a real plus in seeing residents of the neighborhoods. At the Farmington Avenue DominGO, she saw people from every nook and cranny of the neighborhood from all walks of life just walking down Farmington Avenue and socializing. Jackie said that she used to do historical tours, too; Asylum Hill is full of historical places and things. They are now bringing back the old Aetna Diner/Comet Diner. For the spring, just walk down Farmington Avenue.</p> <p>David MacDonald added that he seconds what has been said; that we need more walking tours. We can apply to the Connecticut Office of Tourism to get resources.</p> <p>Frank Sentner thought that the Program Development Committee could be working on this. There could be an outdoor gathering in each of the NRZ's who are interested, to educate residents on the work of the NRZ's and Hartford NEXT. Janice Castle could probably get funds for refreshments. This would get the neighborhood out and we could maybe add some historical interest to the occasion.</p> <p>Chief Teale mentioned that historical tours have a practical side. There was a problem with vandalism in one of the city's cemeteries; but, after a presentation on who was buried there, the vandalism stopped. From his own experience, what he learned at GHCC from Bill Edmunds about those buried in these places, some of whom gave their lives for a cause, changed his life.</p> <p>Mary Pelletier does walking tours and she has found the program Jane's Walk, which is not strictly historical, very interesting (janejacobswalk.org). She can touch base with them and see and if she can put together a presentation for January. It is something that would tie into asset mapping.</p>				



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<p>Here Marion interjected that we need to identify which of the NRZ's have not done asset mapping and begin to get a couple of the neighborhoods going on this. Violette Haldane and her students did some valuable work on this. NRZ's should think about it and let Marion know if they want to go ahead with it. There is funding for asset mapping through the Neighborhood Training Institute.</p>				
6:55–7:05	Hartford Tax Alternative Workgroup	Amilcar Hernandez SW/BTR	Introduction	What will this cross NRZ work group do? Who will join this workgroup?
<p>Marion then introduced Amilcar Hernandez, from the Southwest/Behind the Rocks NRZ, who is leading the Hartford Tax Alternative Work Group. People who are interested should contact him (see the chat); the group is still open to new members. Amilcar knew that the issue of the recent reassessment was an important one when he realized that everywhere across the entire city, residents were talking about it — coworkers, family members, and friends. Everyone seemed uncertain as to why and how much. Nobody really knows how it is calculated and what are the different factors. He thought that, not only is it something that he wishes to understand, but that he should share what he finds out. One metric that he came across is that Hartford is the #2 metropolitan area in the country in terms of highest effective tax rate. Westchester, NY is #1.</p> <p>Property taxes directly affect homeowners but landlord's pass along this cost in the rent they charge their tenants. It's complicated and it makes sense to take the time and effort to understand it. He has been hearing from people on the challenges and possible solutions to high property taxes; there is a range of sentiment. Right now the group is in its research phase.</p> <p>The first goal is to create an educational power point that is easy to read to educate residents on Hartford's tax code. Second, they will look into any areas that may yield workable alternatives to what we have now. For example, if the state agreed to modify the PILOT program, what would that look like? Third, as a group they would determine exactly what are the viable alternatives. And, finally, they would create a plan setting out exactly what the group would like to see happen and send that to all stakeholders.</p> <p>A great part of what makes Hartford's tax situation complicated is the amount of state property in the city. A recent article stated that 59% of all Hartford property is owned by the government (whether city, state, or federal). What the city receives under the PILOT program is only 45% of what property the tax would be. How much are we getting from the state through PILOT is not clear. In 2010 what was paid over was underfunded by \$60 million. PILOT is voluntary. The state is not required by law to pay it and the state has not been paying the full amount every year. We need to know about all of this not to complain but in order to find alternatives and to offload the burden from residents.</p> <p>David MacDonald said that the structure of the local tax systems is always controlled by the state government. Back in the Nick Carbone days, the council shifted more of the burden to businesses by raising the mill rate. But, then, it got too high. It was not sustainable for new businesses and inhibited economic growth. Consequently, the subsidy for homeowners was reduced but as more pressure is put on homeowners, we have to get vocal. Also, PILOT is a statewide system; if one were to add up what is at stake in all the different cities, it would be a tremendous amount of money statewide.</p> <p>Randall Davis said that the PILOT program is statewide but it impacts urban areas more. The committee should reach out to the City Assessor with their questions. David MacDonald added that the goal of the state is to equalize the assessed value of commercial and residential property. Right now, assessed value of commercial</p>				



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<p>property is 70% of the fair market value of that property; whereas, assessed value of residential property is 36% of its fair market value. The state’s goal is to equalize these rates.</p> <p>Councilwoman Shirley Surgeon raised the issue of the CIS, the Community Investment Fund 2030, which the state established to fund underserved communities. The old Salvation Army building on Homestead Avenue was in the Upper Albany NRZ. They moved out of the city and they wanted to sell the building. The prospective buyer was not favored by the residents. So the residents got together — 100 turned out at a meeting — saying they did not want that organization to have the building and why can’t the NRZ buy the building. They were able to buy it this past September. One idea for the building is to enhance opportunities in the neighborhood for healthy eating. They did not want a farmer’s market because it operates only part of the year. They wanted a market like in New York and Philadelphia. The NRZ applied for and were awarded \$1 million that will be funded when the bonding takes place. If you are an NRZ, you can do it. Nick Carbone was one of those behind the creation of the concept of an NRZ. He had the insight that residents would push for the development that they want.</p> <p>Lawrence Williams added that there is plenty of residential property in Upper Albany but not a lot of businesses. The NRZ wants businesses, businesses paying taxes and not getting tax abatements. Randal Davis added, though, that tax abatements to businesses do not lower their taxes.</p> <p>David MacDonald spoke up that the Upper Albany story is awesome, that the CIS funds are awesome and that Representatives McCrory and Ritter are to be thanked for this program. CIS funds could assist in the reopening of the landmark Comet Diner on Farmington Avenue.</p> <p>Marion remarked that we should all keep up with these AHNA, Upper Albany and Blue Hills initiatives, where they are doing stuff that we should all be doing.</p> <p>Mary Pelletier added that a bike trail initiative could be considered in these neighborhoods, if it hasn’t already been.</p> <p>Marion thanked Amilcar saying that the charge to the committee is to bring back from their study and work, the answer to how to educate residents on this.</p>				
7:05 – 7:20 pm	Board Committees	Committee Chair or Member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance • Development • Marketing & Communication • Program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee meeting schedules • What will we do to help HNXT achieve our Mission, Vision, Values and Purpose? • Who will lead? • Next Steps
<p>Mary Falvey announced that the Communications & Marketing Committee has been working with Leadership Greater Hartford to make a toolbox for marketing available to the NRZ’s. The toolbox allows you to put together “shorts” that can go on, for example, the NRZ’s Facebook page. Just putting together 3 to 5 photos and adding the NRZ logo is attention getting. Mary will send out an email to remind us of this resource.</p>				
7:20 – 7:25 Pm	Old Business New Business	All	Quality of Life Workgroup	Additional members and leader needed



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<p>Mary Falvey announced that for the December meeting, we want the NRZ's to update everyone on what they have done during the year. She will send out to each NRZ chair the slide from the last annual meeting as a template and asks that we update it and send it back.</p> <p>Elizabeth Davis announced that there are still COVID test kits and vaccine clinics at the library. Also that Hartford's Got Talent auditions are coming up this Saturday.</p> <p>Marion reminded us that our next meeting is December 15 at 6 pm on Zoom and wished everyone a wonderful Thanksgiving.</p>				
7:25 - 7:28 pm	Follow up and Assessment	All	Agenda Items for November Board Meeting Continuous Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What did we miss discussing today? Does anything need to be documented and voted on? What guests should be invited? What do we need to address? How am I doing as a Board Member? What went well? What did not go well? What needs to change?
The meeting adjourned at 7:34 pm.				
7:30 pm	Close			

Next Board Meeting - November 17, 2022

Objectives, Actions, & Decisions:			
Objectives	Action Steps	Accountability	Timeline
Outstanding Items			
Quality of Life Committee	Establishment of Committee, schedule meeting, determine objective	SW/BTR	
Property Taxes/PILOT/.....	Establishment of Committee, schedule meeting, determine objective	SW/BTR – Chair Amilcar Hernandez	In Process
Submission of Conflict of Interest Forms	Complete and submit to Jeff Stewart	HNXT Board Members	In Process 11/30/22
HNXT How to take a Position	Send to HNXT Board	Marion	Delivered with 10.20.22 Agenda



VIRTUAL MEETING PROTOCOL

Mute your audio until you are ready to speak

Add your NRZ or organization's name after your name

HARTFORD NEXT GROUND RULES

- 1. We come prepared.**
- 2. We think before we speak.**
- 3. We listen to each other.**
- 4. We share and respect diverse points of view.**
- 5. We don't attack each other personally.**
- 6. We don't shout.**
- 7. We stay for the whole meeting.**
- 8. We avoid side conversations in and out side of the meeting room.**
- 9. We are guided by the meeting chair or facilitator.**
- 10. We turn off our cell phones during the meeting.**
- 11. We keep our microphone on mute unless called upon to speak.**
- 12. We raise our virtual hand to be recognized to speak.**
- 13. We speak briefly and to the point.**
- 14. We do not make inflammatory statements or accusations.**
- 15. We work together to adhere to times noted on the agenda.**
- 16. We help each other to stay on topic and on agenda.**
- 17. We enjoy ourselves.**