

**Community Development Advisory Committee (CDAC) Meeting  
Minutes  
Monday, March 24, 2025 – 5:30 PM  
Lower-Level Conference Room 23 Union Street Norwich, CT 06360**

**Members Present:** Angela Duhaime, Gemma Fabris, Valerie Gambrell and Mark Marcy

Members Absent: N/A

**Others Present:** Staff: Craig Kleman and Sandra Gaitan-Brown

1. The CDAC was called to order at 5:26 PM.
2. Approval of Minutes

Upon motion made by Gemma Fabris, seconded by Mark Marcy, the committee voted to approve the draft of the 3/5/25 meeting minutes; motion carried unanimously.

3. Subrecipient Presentations

**NHS – Norwich Works: \$70,000.00. Presented by Katherine Milde and Moira Deasy.**

Kate shared with the CDAC members that Moira Deasy is a new contractor, currently working with the NHS Norwich Works Program. A previous City employee was working with the program, but she left her employment with the City. Based on the current financial challenges the City could not afford to replace this position. Moira will offer comprehensive case management, job-searching assistance and resume development. The idea is not only to provide people with training but to try to help people become employed. Under this administration, Social Services are going to be hit and this is the way we are trying to close the gap. Gemma asked what is the largest amount that can typically be given to a client. Kate responded that they capped \$1,800 in the current program year but this proposal is to increase it to \$2,000. Most of the training programs are around \$3,000 to \$3,500. Mark asked if NHSNW goal was to serve 10 people. Kate responded that 10 people to complete training programs but to serve that would be more. Mark asked if these training programs are PACT eligible. Kate said she did not believe they qualify but between CDBG money and Three Rivers Foundation Scholarships, they were able to close gaps. The idea is to make sure that if the Norwich Works Program provides \$2000 the person can close the dollar gap. Moira sits on the Community Care team which has several organizations participating which helps to have information about people collaborating and resources. Valerie asked if people receive only \$2,000, do they have to come up with the rest, is that how this works. Kate responded that currently it is \$1,800. If people want to do a program that costs \$2000, they must come up with the other \$200. If they cannot, the NHS looks for potential alternatives such as help through another program with a utility bill for example. One of Moira's objectives is to expand the program possibilities. Moira stated that she has a long term relationship with Three Rivers Manufacturing pipeline and has seen several areas where the program could be expanded. Mark asked what the participants' ages are. Kate responded around 20 years old. Gemma asked if Norwich Works has a waiting list. Kate responded that they do not have a waiting list, but the process of qualification is involved.

**NHS – Norwich Housing Assistance: \$35,000.00 Presented by Katherine Milde.**

Kate started her presentation by sharing that this program was also awarded last year but it was very difficult to find a qualified contractor to do this work. Finally, a part-time contractor started last week, however this is not practical. As a result, this request was submitted for less money and in house staff will administrate the program. Mark asked what percentage is going to be used towards administration, Kate responded that for this program Zero funds would go to admin; everything would go to clients.

**NHS – Gemma E. Moran United Way Food Drop at Rose City Senior Center: \$30,000.00. Presented by Katherine Milde and Anne Stockton.**

Kate shared with the CDAC members that every six months she goes to the Senior Center to do an Ask Me Anything session. From this event, it was gathered that the biggest concern of the seniors is food. She asked if it was possible to have a mobile pantry at the Senior Center, which logistically and financially was not possible for the City. As a result, she asked Anne from Gemma E. Moran United Way if they could assist and this project is the result. United Way has the means and the Senior Center has people in need, the facility, and the volunteers. The Senior Center can collect the data to ensure the recipients are from Norwich and that they qualify based on their income as required by CDBG.

Per Gemma's request, Anne shared that this is a hybrid model between a regular pantry and the mobile pantry. She stated that the advantage of mobile pantry is that it is community driven; people receive food from people they know in a comfortable space. United Way would provide the food, transportation and the expertise to assist the process,

Gemma asked how much this project would increase United Way's output. Annie stated the increase in need for food is everywhere, it is not only this project; calls are received regularly from other towns as things are getting harder.

**Children in Placement – Guardian ad Litem: \$30,000.00. Presented by Janet Freimuth.**

Janet read a statement from her organization's mission statement that describes their 46 years of experience ensuring that abused and neglected children have a voice in legal matters and access to safe permanent homes. Through this program, CIP trains volunteers to advocate for the best interest of the child. Trained individuals are assigned to individual cases and they go above and beyond to achieve positive outcomes. In addition, they provide emotional support and stability to navigate the system until the child transitions into adulthood. Gemma asked if there was any change since last year. The board is looking to extend the support to the child's family; mothers, grandmas or whomever. Mark asked if CIP needs to wait until the child goes to juvenile court. Janet stated that CIP receives cases from probate court and superior court. Technically, when the case closes, it is closed to CIP but there are times when people reach back out to the organization and that is the part CIP is trying to figure out how to help more.

**Madonna Place-COPE (Community Outreach Plus Education): \$15,000.00. Presented by Lance Bauer.**

Lance stated this program is sort of unique in the region because it does not have a waiting list and does not require appointments. It is capable of offering free screening for substance abuse and mental health problems. It provides case management for people that walk in with a housing crisis. It collaborates with several agencies that have representatives at COPE space. Every month Madonna Place hosts a health event for the neighborhood. It also receives support from other organizations such as the Community Foundation of Southeastern CT. COPE projects to serve about 200 families. Mark stated that the committee is very familiar with the program and has funded COPE many times.

**TVCCA- Homelessness Prevention: \$20,000.00. Presented by Ida Parker and Mary Milanese.**

Ida started her presentation stating that she has been working with TVCCA since 2005 and that they are asking for these funds to provide financial aid low-income individuals and families that are facing short-term housing crises. They might need rental assistance, repairs on their cars or anything else to help to stabilize their household. Situations that if not promptly resolved, could lead to eviction and entry into a homeless situation. The case management staff work with these families to achieve their goal to resolve their housing crisis. This year the program is working a lot on landlord mediation, and right now TVCCA is hiring a couple of housing locator individuals. The objective of the housing locators is to engage with landlords that are currently working with the program and to outreach for new landlords. There is a landlord engagement outreach event scheduled for April. Part of the mediation work is to address a situation seen out there right now; after Covid, having previous evictions in their background has become a barrier for some people to be able to rent an apartment and that is what the program will try to address. In addition, the staff are implementing a model that helps people to determine short term goals through a toolbox or list of resources. The hope is that people do not return to TVCCA when they are already in crises but return before they are at that point. Mark asked what percentage of the funds requested are going to admin. The response was zero; everything will go to clients. Mark asked how the clients are screened to

ensure that this grant money goes just to Norwich residents. Ida responded that they validate addresses, determine which school the kids go to, take referrals from organizations in the city, and through their landlords to whom the program pays directly. Gemma asked if the new housing locator position would be filled by the time of the Landlord Engagement event is held. Ida responded that she believes that would be the case. Ida also stated that the whole housing team will be attending. Gemma asked how many landlords are on the roster. Ida responded there are between 25 and 30 landlords in New London County and approximately 15 in Norwich; although some other people on her team might have contact with other landlords. Craig asked what the housing market is like in Norwich now. Ida responded that it is awful, very challenging. There is not strong availability, and it is hard to find fair market rent. Gemma asked what size units are in most demand. Ida responded usually one bedroom but lately 4 to 5 bedrooms. Recently a call was received regarding a family of nine living in a hotel for the last seven months. Ida stated sometimes they show to landlords that people have been able to afford hotel rooms for a while as proof that they can afford to pay rent if they're given the opportunity. Some people have to hop from hotel to hotel as they are not allowed to stay more than 28 days. The goal is to focus on stabilization to avoid spending money on evictions, security deposits and moving costs.

**Thames River Community Service – Employment Support Program: \$25,000.00. Presented by Michael Vaz.**

Michael stated that the purpose of this application is to provide support to low-income individuals by giving them the opportunity to get out of their situation by improving their financial literacy. Many of the residents are between 18 and 24 years old. They have no job experience, a lack of confidence and terrible or no credit. The goal of the program is to provide them with training opportunities, employment opportunities and financial literacy. The unemployment rate has gone up to 4.8 in Norwich. Nationally, the unemployment rate for this age bracket is 9.7. There is a need to provide these young people with opportunities to build their confidence and their credit history, if the desire is to stop the cycle of homelessness. Ideally, TRCS helps young people to find apartments, but the idea is that they are able to stay in these apartments. For an 18, 19 and 20-year-old it is almost impossible to come up with two months security deposit and one month of rent. There are individuals that come from dramatic situations that prevent them from advancing. The idea is to create a streamlined process where employers and organizations provide them with resources to put them on the path to be employable for industries such as customer service and health care. Basically, the purpose of the program is to buy opportunities for these individuals as an entryway, because if this continues, especially with what is going on in Washington, there will be more unemployment and a lot more young people in the streets looking for opportunities that no one will give to them. It is important to keep in mind that the majority of these residents come in with a child and that is why it is important to stop the cycle. Mark asked what type of training is provided to create the skills. Michael responded that the proposal includes area employers and American Job Center. Currently, financial literacy classes are being taught. Ideally a sustainable relationship with American Job Center and local employers would be created. Craig asked to confirm that TRCS also has couples. Michael confirmed that.

**Safe Futures – Norwich Domestic Violence Response Team; \$15,000.00. Presented by Margaret Soussloff and Julie St Jean.**

Margaret stated that Safe Futures is asking for funds to continue counseling service and the Victim Advocate Law Enforcement Program. About 2,500 people are served in Norwich and 10,000 within Southeastern CT. Safe Futures provides services in Norwich at the courthouse, Katie Blair House and Floral O'Neil Housing. Currently, Safe Futures is working in a partnership with Backus Hospital, which will start in May. Services will be available a couple of days a week. In addition, the hotline is available 24x7. The courts receive about 5,000 cases a year and about 35% to 37% are criminal domestic violence cases so the need for this service continues. The Victim Advocate Law Enforcement Coordinator, Julie St. Jean, works with the Norwich Police Department. Julie shared with the CDAC the process and her experiences as she visits domestic violence scenes and does follow-up visits. Julie stated that follow-ups are crucial to ensure that the victims feel and are safe. Some of the victims are very hesitant to speak to police and that is why having an advocate is so important. Margaret mentioned that the Victims Advocate is the bridge between the victims and the police. Gemma asked if appointments are made for the follow-ups. Julie responded no, she works to accommodate her visits with the police officer's availability. Mark asked if Julie goes on those visits alone. Julie responded that she doesn't go alone for safety reasons. Julie also shared that based on her experience, the strangulation charges are very high right now and on the rise. Margaret told the CDAC that Safe Futures has been working with the Justice Education Center's Gun Program,

helping victims and their families. Julie added that the opportunity presented by going door to door is that people learn that they can access the Domestic Violence Service; even before there is an arrest. People learn that they can be assisted in getting a restraining order and can be educated about this service. Gemma asked Safe Future representatives if they could share an experience that made them feel that they are making a difference. Julie shared a positive experience with a victim, where they had the opportunity to help her to make a case, so the authorities were able to seize the abuser's guns and put him away, while the victim received counseling. Now this person and her children are safe, and she has a job and is on a good path. In general, the success is in every little thing they can do for these victims.

4. Adjournment

Motion was made by Gemma Fabris and seconded by Mark Marcy to adjourn the meeting at 7 pm. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra Gaitan-Brown,  
Community Development Assistant

