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RODERICK L. BREMBY  
Commissioner

August 2, 2013

William Westcott, Esq., Chair  
Board of Directors  
Norwalk Economic Opportunity Now, Inc.  
98 South Main Street  
Norwalk, CT 06854  
Email: [boardofdirectors@neoncaa.org](mailto:boardofdirectors@neoncaa.org)

Dear Attorney Westcott and Board members:

I am writing to follow up on my letter to you dated July 24, 2013. It is my understanding that the Board meeting scheduled for last week was cancelled, and that it has been rescheduled for August 6, 2013. I want to take this opportunity to reiterate DSS's position regarding the need to conduct a national search in an expeditious manner for the next permanent Executive Director or President/CEO of NEON.

It may be helpful if I explain more about my perspective in this area. I believe that a strong leadership decision by the Board to commission a timely national-level executive search for the best possible candidate is necessary to inspire public confidence in the legitimacy of the 'new' NEON going forward.

The past years have been challenging times for NEON and the former CTE agency in Stamford. Two community action agencies struggling with myriad issues have now merged into one organization with the potential to move ahead in a refreshed environment of effective services, careful financial and ethical stewardship, and enhanced public image.

I submit to you in no uncertain terms that the notion of an 18-month or 12-month or even an eight-month timeframe for a national executive search would fly in the face of the public confidence the Board is seeking to instill on behalf of NEON throughout Norwalk, Stamford and surrounding communities. It simply should not take that long – and everyone knows it.

I have said from the outset that DSS does not seek to control "who" becomes the next Executive Director or President/CEO of NEON. Nor do we seek to control who the Board appoints in an acting capacity to temporarily succeed Patricia Wilson Pheanious next month. However, what we do seek to ensure is a *process* of succession that is impeccable and irreproachable – one that cannot be interpreted by any observer in the community as somehow reserved for any one individual candidate.

It is my understanding that some Board members fully share this perspective of ensuring that the process is conducted in a manner that is not vulnerable to these criticisms. We applaud you for this. On the other hand, we also are aware that some Board members are intent on appointing one individual for an inordinately long period of time on a supposedly interim basis.

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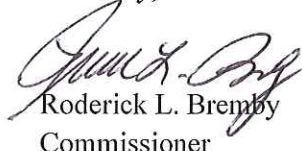
While acknowledging that unity is sometimes difficult to attain, I urge the Board as a whole to take good care to avoid any perception that the process is somehow being 'rigged' for any one individual. If such a perception is taken as fact by the communities served by NEON, I would submit that much of the progress achieved to date would be at serious risk. It is a time for NEON to be scrupulously careful about its public image. It must seek to inspire full confidence among its clients, the general public, municipal and private partners, and state and federal funding agencies – all vital to the success of our collective mission of service to the community.

In summary, DSS expects that, regardless of the outcome of your Board meeting on August 6, a national search for a permanent Executive Director will begin immediately. I am concerned that no apparent action has been taken to that end since I met with many of you on July 10. We expect that the search process, selection and appointment process take no longer than six months. Given NEON's current financial limitations, we are prepared to assist the agency by supporting this critical process with funding.

We are committed to helping NEON identify the best possible candidates for the Executive Director/CEO position from a national pool of interested persons. This may include, but would obviously not be limited to, persons from the greater Norwalk and Stamford area.

I sincerely hope that the Board will collaborate with us to move forward transparently and with the urgency that this situation demands.

Sincerely,



Roderick L. Bremby  
Commissioner

cc: Dr. Susan G. Weinberger, Vice Chair  
Dale Ferguson, Secretary  
Christopher Ruzzi, Treasurer  
Edith Pollock Karsky, Executive Director, CT Association for Community Action  
Patricia Wilson Pheanious, Interim President/CEO, NEON  
Kathleen Brennan, Deputy Commissioner  
Claudette Beaulieu, Deputy Commissioner  
Astread Ferron-Poole, Chief of Staff  
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Marisol Rodriguez