



*City of Bristol
Arts & Culture Commission*

INFORMATION TO ACCESS MEETING

<https://bristolct-gov.zoom.us/j/86280576918?pwd=iQ7DubdYbSAm0Dse5qszhgaOeTG2Z1.1>

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The regular meeting was held on Wednesday, January 7, 2026, at 6:00 PM in Meeting Room 1-3 in City Hall, 111 North Main Street, Bristol, CT 06010.

1. Call to Order

Chair Walter Lewandoski called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

a. Pledge of Allegiance

b. Attendance

Members Present:

Chair Walter Lewandoski
Vice Chair Andrea Adams
Commissioner Julie Carensa-Crist
Commissioner Juliet Norton
Commissioner Maria Salice
Commissioner Nigel Wynter
City Council Liaison Greg Hahn
Arts and Culture Supervisor Arianna Therriault

Absent:

Commissioner E. Brad Yancy

2. Approval of Minutes

a. Approval of Minutes: December 3, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes

MOTION: Made by Vice Chair Adams to approve the November 19, 2025, Special Meeting Minutes.

Seconded by Commissioner Salice; all in favor; motion carried.

3. Public Participation

Andrew Collins, Chair of the Historic District Commission, attended the meeting on behalf of the Historical Society to express concerns about the Holiday Stroll sponsored by the commission, stating that it appeared to be planned with limited lead time and minimal advertising. The Historical Society stayed open extra hours to participate but saw no visitors, raising questions about the event's effectiveness and purpose. He suggested that tying the effort to an established event, such as Small Business Saturday, might have produced better results and noted his interest in the commission's later discussion of the matter.

The commission explained that the Holiday Stroll originated with the Economic and Community Development team and was planned on very short notice as part of promoting the Cultural District. Because ECD could not put its name directly behind the event, they asked the commission at the last minute to sponsor and present it, so there would be a downtown holiday activity. The commission agreed, acknowledged the rushed planning, and stated that they share the concerns raised. They noted that for this year, the plan is to start much earlier—likely in March—and to align an event with Small Business Saturday, emphasizing that feedback is necessary to improve future efforts.

Maxine Bowden, owner of Paradigm Events, presented an update about the upcoming Soul Sessions Show at Downtown Live at the Rockwell Theater. Maxine confirmed that Soul Session is active and continuing this year, supported through a combination of City of Bristol funding, artist fees, and creative cost-saving approaches. The event will continue its mission of supporting 15 local artists across music and visual arts, and will expand this year to include dancers, fashion designers inspired by the 1960s and 1970s, and a live podcast, reflecting strong momentum and growth.

4. Arts and Culture Supervisor's Report

a. Supervisor's Report

Arts and Culture Supervisor Arianna Therriault presented the Supervisor's Report. Supervisor Therriault included a break-down in ticket sales for each upcoming show, reported continued financial improvement, reducing its deficit from approximately \$85,000 to around \$70,000, with projections suggesting a move toward profitability within the next few months, and marketing efforts. The commission also discussed options for adding a plaque to the Locks at Stocks Heart Sculpture, ruling out concrete engraving and high-cost granite solutions due to health, accessibility, and budget concerns, and instead favoring an affordable, weatherproof engraved plaque mounted discreetly on or near the sculpture, with follow-up planned with local engraving vendors.

b. Project Spreadsheet

Arts and Culture Supervisor Arianna Therriault presented the Project Spreadsheet. There was nothing new to report.

c. Year to Date Financials

Arts and Culture Supervisor Arianna Therriault presented the Year-to-Date Financials. There was nothing new to report.

5. Chairman's Report

a. Heart Project Location Suggestions

Chair Walter Lewandoski presented the Heart Project Location suggestions. The commission reviewed potential locations for the public art heart installation, emphasizing visibility, accessibility, and alignment with the cultural district. Suggested sites included the Federal Hill green (near the geographic "Heart of Bristol"), the Board of Education area, Riverside Avenue near the bridge, Page Park, and the Urban Garden on the Veteran's Memorial Boulevard; Discussion followed.

MOTION: Made by Vice Chair Adams to place the Heart Sculpture on the Federal Hill Green. Seconded by Commissioner Wynter; all in favor; motion carried.

MOTION: Made by Vice Chair Adams to have the Urban Garden on the Veteran's Memorial Boulevard, as a second choice for the Heart Sculpture. Seconded by Commissioner Salice; all in favor; motion carried.

6. Old Business

a. Update and Final Decision on the Location of the New Heart Sculpture Donated by the Broad View Fund

The update and final decision resolved in Section 5, item a. No additional discussion required.

b. Creative Jam Art Co. Outstanding Community Engagement Certificate

Arts and Culture Supervisor Therriault presented the Creative Jam Art Co.'s Outstanding Community Engagement Certificate. The commission reviewed the overall design and purpose of the Creative Jam Outstanding Community Engagement Certificate, agreeing it should remain generic for yearly use and focused on recognizing community engagement through the arts. It was decided to keep the recognition to one certificate for Creative Jam at this time, particularly in connection with Open Mic Night. Minor layout adjustments were agreed upon, including centering the City of Bristol logo, improving balance, and adjusting the signature area, so Chair Lewandoski could sign above his printed name before final printing.

c. Cultural District Map

Chair Lewandoski presented the Cultural District Map. The commission reviewed the final high-resolution Cultural District map. Discussion focused on next steps, including whether to print and distribute the maps, budget considerations, and possibly adding a fully illustrated boulevard with monument locations on the back, potentially supported by advertising; Discussion followed.

MOTION: Made by Vice Chair Adams to move Section 8, Item a., City Council Liaisons Report up on the agenda.

Seconded by Commissioner Salice; all in favor; motion carried.

a. City Council Liaison Report

Greg stated that photos could be placed on a photo runner/display rails in the hallways for 11x18 artwork to be framed. He also mentioned that this could be open to all schools in the city and have the art teachers select one piece of artwork from each grade to be displayed. This could be yearly or quarterly, whatever the commission decides, and this could include an art show/ reception to recognize the selected student's artwork and invite their teachers. Mr. Hahn was looking for someone to put a proposal together with all the details. How the children are selected, cost, what the art teachers suggest in the art selection, how much the rails and frames would cost, etc.

Additionally, an upcoming free high school jazz concert on April 24 at BAIMS was shared, featuring two local high school bands and the Stanley Street Big Band, with an invitation for involvement and community support rather than financial contribution.

d. Holiday Stroll Outcome

Chair Walter Lewandoski presented the outcome of the Holiday Stroll. The commission reflected on a downtown cultural district event that was approved at the last minute with limited planning or input, noting some positive feedback from restaurants and businesses due to increased foot traffic, though it didn't reach its full potential. There was strong interest in planning much earlier this year to create a more cohesive, festive experience, with ideas such as a trolley connecting businesses, themed characters, business participation, contests, window art, and alignment with other city events. Overall, the consensus was to choose a date well in advance and continue developing ideas collaboratively in future meetings to build a larger, more coordinated annual event.

e. By Commissioners

Commissioner Salice presented the idea of hosting an ACE Awards for the community. Commissioner Salice discussed upcoming and ongoing arts initiatives, including the restart of monthly open mic nights, renewed interest in the ACE Awards fundraiser tied to the Carousel Museum, and ideas for supporting established arts organizations through small sponsorships, once the budget is approved. There was strong emphasis on increasing the visibility and presence of the Arts and Culture Commission through better coordination, shared calendars, community events, simple promotional efforts, and low-cost interactive ideas such as selfie challenges or scavenger-style activities. Overall, the focus was on being more proactive, collaborative, and visible in promoting arts and culture across the city without significantly increasing costs.

7. New Business

a. Cultural District Stipend from CT Office of the Arts

Arts and Culture Supervisor Arianna Therriault presented the Cultural District Stipend from the CT office of the Arts. The commission was awarded \$1100.00 to use towards the Cultural District; Discussion followed.

b. Approve the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Proposed City Arts and Culture Commission & Arts and Culture Fund Budget and refer to the Comptroller's Office

Arts and Culture Supervisor Arianna Therriault presented the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Proposed City Arts and Culture Commission & the Arts and Culture Fund Budget and refer it to the Comptroller's Office; discussion followed.

MOTION: Made by Vice Chair Adams to approve the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Proposed City Arts and Culture Commission & the Arts and Culture Fund Budget and refer it to the Comptroller's Office.

Seconded by Commissioner Wynter; all in favor; motion carried.

c. By Commissioners

None.

8. Reports and Committee Reports

9. Adjournment

MOTION: Made by Commissioner Wynter to adjourn at 7:40 p.m.
Seconded by Vice Chair Adams; all in favor; motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amaris Estrada
Recording Secretary
City Arts and Culture Commission