

ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Regular Meeting
Thursday December 1, 2022 5:00pm
City Hall West Meeting Room 1 – 111 North Main St.

ATTENDEES: Mayor Caggiano, Council Member Panioto, Commissioners Schmelder, Goldwasser, Mills, Verikas (Zoom), Hick, and Rasmussen-Tuller.

ABSENT: Commissioner Massarelli

STAFF PRESENT: Justin Malley, Executive Director; Dawn Nielsen, Marketing and PR Specialist; Dawn Leger, Grants Administrator; Andrew Armstrong, Assistant City Planner; Sharon Arsego, Sr. Admin. Assistant

GUESTS: Dale Kroop (Zoom) from New Colony Development

I. Call to Order

Mayor Caggiano began the meeting at 5:00PM and led the room in The Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Public Participation

Mayor Caggiano invited members of the public to address the Board. No one on Zoom or present in the room requested to speak.

Mayor Caggiano requested a motion to move to item **V. New Business B. Downtown Update** to allow for Dale Kroop to present on Sessions. The Motion was made by Commissioner Mills and seconded by Commissioner Schmelder and approved with no objections.

V. New Business B. Downtown Update

Justin Malley introduced Dale Kroop who runs New Colony Development Corp. and has been working with the City on the Sessions building for the past few years. Dale provided an update on the various facets of the project starting with the State Grant. The paperwork has been submitted to the State and they are reviewing it. The \$2M is secure and in the closing phase.

The remediation process included soil and building testing over the past year and that is completed. The Remedial Action Plan (RAP) was submitted to the State and quantifies all the work that has to be done. This has been approved and allows the building to go into a Voluntary Remediation Program. That program means the eventual property developer will have limited liability for past exposure. The remediation work goes out to bid end of December 2022 and the bidding process can take up to a month. A contract is expected to be in place by early February 2023. The land remediation work will start in March or April 2023 but the building remediation can be started earlier. The building work is projected to be done by July 2023 and the land work by the Fall of 2023. Dale expressed confidence in the work going smoothly with the cooperation received from the State.

The City has signed over the tax liens to New Colony Development as part of the foreclosure process which will clear the title for the future developer. This will start around January 2023. Once the contractor is in place, projected for February 2023, the Grant will pay for all the costs related to the building. This includes utilities and security. The building will be shut down, insured and the contractor will have it. The foreclosure will run parallel to the remediation timeline and is dependent on the Courts. The plan is for the land and title to be cleared by Fall 2023.

Discussion including the cooperation of all parties, the timeline, possible repayment of building expenses the City covered, and possible recouping of lost tax revenue. It was noted that the property will be free of back taxes and no contamination which gives the City leverage going forward. Justin Malley recapped the transitioning of the Sessions building project from ECD to New Colony Development who will have control of the building which isn't a factor ECD has had.

III. Minutes – November 3, 2022

Mayor Caggiano entertained a motion to approve the Minutes from November 3, 2022. The Motion was made by Commissioner Schmelder and seconded by Commissioner Mills. The Motion was approved by all and the Minutes were accepted into record.

IV. Consent Agenda

A. Communications

B. Economic Development Grants/Marketing Report

Commissioner Hicks made a motion to accept the Consent Agenda into record. The Motion was seconded by Commissioner Rasmussen-Tuller. The Motion was approved and the Consent Agenda was accepted into record.

V. New Business

A. 234 Riverside Avenue

Justin Malley updated the Board on this proposed fuel cell site which would involve the generation of up to 4 megawatts and include a data center to be constructed onsite. A packet included with the agenda has a proposed letter addressed to the State of CT Siting Council from Mayor Caggiano. The letter provides input the State has asked from the City regarding the fuel cell only portion of the development though the City's impact is limited. Aesthetics and the project's impact on the Riverside streetscape are the main concern of the City and the limit of the City's input as the host of this development. This letter allows the City's concerns to be a matter of record as the site planning moves forward. Discussion included additional concerns about aesthetics, impact on the community, use of the fuel cells to support the data center, and the potential tax benefits of the project for the City.

Commissioner Mills read the proposed motion as follows:

Proposed Motion: To authorize Mayor Jeffrey Caggiano to sign and submit the letter known as “PETITION NO. 1540 – City of Bristol comments concerning the ReNew Developers, LLC petition for 234 Riverside Ave., Bristol.”

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Schmelder. The Motion passed with no objections.

C. 2023 Board Meeting Calendar

Mayor Caggiano requested a motion to accept the proposed 2023 Board Meeting Calendar. Commissioner Goldwasser made the motion which was seconded by Commissioner Hick. The motion was passed without further discussion.

D. Incentives Discussion

Justin Malley proposed time to review the current business grant processes and the opportunity to partner with the community, lenders and leaders to assist businesses in addition to the City’s grant programs. The plan is to simplify the process and make it more efficient as well as make the program more helpful to the businesses over the long term.

E. ARPA Update

Justin Malley advised that bi-weekly meetings have been held with UHY (the ARPA Consultant group). The Mayor, Comptroller Diane Waldron, Purchasing Director Roger Rousseau and himself to address issues. They’re also trying to streamline this process. Building Bristol is beginning to roll out more extensively with UHY updates. Most businesses have met their requirements for the application process. The goal is to avoid backlog and keep the forward movement.

Commissioner Verikas was asked to lead the discussion about the Bristol Bazaar modeled after similar Maker’s Markets in Boston and Las Vegas. Benefits include an outdoor feel to an indoor shopping experience and support of artisans including marketing, networking, and the ability to sell and grow in a well-planned environment. Signage and further marketing were discussed. Currently at 33% vendor occupancy for their opening. There will be a site visit on December 14, 2022 to which the board is invited.

Commissioner Schmelder attended the ARPA meeting webinar held for the non-profits. It was informative and helpful.

F. Marketing Update

Dawn Nielsen provided an update on the Telemundo commercials promoting the BristolWORKS! manufacturing classes starting in January 2023. The commercials will be available to the City for use after the World Cup games conclude (which is when these ads are running). Springfield Spring is featured in the ads which are in Spanish with English subtitles. Additional marketing updates included the number of business visits, ribbon cuttings, anniversary acknowledgments with press, and social media coordination.

VI. New Business by Commissioners

There was no new business.

VII. Old Business by Commissioners

There was no old business.

VIII. Committee Reports

A. City Council Member Report

There was nothing to report.

Justin added that while not on the Agenda, the revisiting of the remaining available CDBG Covid relief funds brought in two applications which will be reviewed by the CDBG Policy Committee at their next meeting.

IX. Adjournment

Mayor Caggiano requested a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Schmelder made the motion and it was seconded by Commissioner Hick. All members approved the motion and the meeting adjourned at 6:41PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Sharon Arsego
Recording Secretary