

Diversity Council Meeting

Tuesday, February 24, 2026 at 6:30pm

Meeting Room 1-2, City Hall, 111 N. Main Street & on Zoom

Present: Interim Chair Marcus Patton, Council Members Anthony Lopes (Zoom), Sandy Kamens, Jeff Israel, David Rackliffe, Carolyn Palmquist, and Danny Palmquist

Absent: None

Guests: Iris White – Superintendent, Bristol Public Schools
Lea McCabe - BAIMS Principal (Bristol Arts and Innovation Magnet School)

I. Call to Order

The Interim Chair called the meeting to order at 6:34pm.

II. Council Attendance

The Council took attendance. All members were present and there was a quorum.

III. Public Participation

Interim Chair Marcus Patton introduced guests Iris White, Superintendent, Bristol Public Schools, and Lea McCabe - BAIMS Principal (Bristol Arts and Innovation Magnet School) to the Council. Each guest provided a brief history of their careers and associations in education.

They then spoke in more detail regarding the Equity Leadership Team which the Interim Chair and Council Member Rackliffe had met with at one of the Team's meetings and reported to the Council about at the January meeting. The current focus of the Team is on student voices and making connections with all the students in all schools.

Discussion followed and included feedback from Team volunteers regarding guidance, as well as adding new teachers and their desire to start taking action. The dynamics of an inclusive event designed in response to special needs students and families who don't feel like they're part of the community was also discussed. It was noted that in an effort to make an event all inclusive, it can actually lead to exclusion of the very demographic the event was meant to reach.

IV. Approval of Meeting Minutes

a. November 25, 2025 Regular Meeting

Council Member Rackliffe made a motion to approve the Minutes from the November 25, 2025 meeting. The motion was seconded by Council Member Kamens. There were no changes noted. All were in favor and the minutes were accepted into the record.

b. January 27, 2026 Special Meeting

Council Member Israel made a motion to approve the Minutes from the January 27, 2026 meeting. The motion was seconded by Council Member Lopes. There were no changes noted. All were in favor and the minutes were accepted into the record.

V. Current Business

a. Mantel Clock Canvas Donation

The Interim Chair noted that a decision about the future of the mantel clock from the Mantel of the Seasons display at the Clock and Watch Museum has yet to be decided. It is in discussions with the mayor, and also with the museum.

b. “Words Matter” Event Update

- Date/Room

- Current Guest List

- Format Structure

- Promotion

Council Members Rackliffe, Lopes and Kamens provided an update on the event scheduled at the Bristol Public Library on Tuesday, March 31, 2026 from 6pm to 8pm.

The panel format was chosen along with panelists who are: Tom Lagasse, Bristol’s Poet Laureate, Bristol author and the city’s grant writer, Dr. Dawn Leger, and a teacher from the Bristol school system, Joanne Paluso. A member of the media has also been approached and may also serve as the event host.

Discussion followed regarding marketing of the event, and the Diversity Council’s regular meeting on March 24, 2026 will take place. It was noted that the confirmed panelists have agreed to meet ahead with the event planning team to discuss the event format and the flow of the discussion. Word selection for the event was also discussed.

c. Cash Mob Rollout Cadence

Council Members were reminded to reply individually to the Interim Chair with their votes on who to put forward for the next Cash Mob by the end of this week. The Interim Chair spoke to the city's Economic and Community Development Department (ECD) to confirm the list of businesses was still current.

VI. New Business

a. West End Association/Rockwell Festival

- Diversity Council Options

The West End Association will not be holding the Rockwell Festival this year. Discussion followed with known interest from Melina Floyd to see not for profits and volunteer organize to create a new event, even if it's not on the same scale. Some possible event partners include Bristol Pride, Bristol Parks and Recreation, Youth and Community Services, the Arts Council, and the Bristol Creative.

Mayor Zoppo-Sassu joined the meeting at 7:37pm.

Mayor Zoppo-Sassu spoke about this being an opportunity to be creative and make a difference while continuing to reach the community. The Interim Chair agreed that a new group doesn't need to recreate the exact event. The idea of a block party was mentioned as an alternate event.

Further discussion followed and included possibly holding a fact-finding meeting with the West End Association to better understand the scope of previous events and exploring how the event would look as a new program. A special meeting may be held to bring all the key players together at one time.

Mayor Zoppo-Sassu offered the assistance from her office in coordination with the Council's Recording Secretary to compile a contact list of possible departments and organizations to reach out to about joining this venture.

Council Member Carolyn Palmquist excused herself from the meeting at 7:49pm.

b. United Way Resource Sheet (Optimization Ideas)

The mayor advised the Council that the United Way Resource Sheet that had previously been provided to the various city departments is incomplete and isn't be used at this time.

c. Council Roundtable News and Notes

There were no Council Roundtable News or Notes.

IX. Adjournment

The Interim Chair called for a motion to adjourn. The motion was made by Council Member Rackliffe and was seconded by Council Member Kamens. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 7:51pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Arsego

Recording Secretary