ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Thursday, April 2, 2026 at 5:00pm

City Council Chambers, City Hall, 111 N. Main Street & on Zoom

Present: Mayor Zoppo-Sassu, Chair; Howard Schmelder, Vice Chair; Council Member Susan Tyler, and Commissioners Marvin (Mickey) Goldwasser, Tom Hick, Louise Provenzano, LaQuita Kearney-Gonzalez (Zoom), and Commissioner John Paul Sirko

Absent: Commissioner Dave Mills

ECD Staff: Justin Malley - Executive Director, and Dr. Dawn Leger - Grants Administrator

Guests: JR Rusgrove, Owner – Pure Foods, 110 N. Main St., Bristol
Liz Englemann, 16 Hull St., Bristol

I. **Call to Order**

The Mayor called the meeting to order at 5:03pm and led all present in the Pledge of Allegiance. Board Member introductions were made, and there was a quorum.

II. **Public Participation**

JR Rusgrove, Owner of Pure Foods and city resident Liz Englemann spoke to the Board to raise parking concerns on N. Main Street. Ms. Englemann is a frequent customer of Pure Foods. She stated that while the growth and improvements downtown are wonderful, it means finding parking that allows for a quick or reasonable stop into the N. Main Street businesses is more difficult. This is discouraging to her and others.

Mr. Rusgrove echoed that sentiment with feedback from other patrons indicating that the walk to and from the Hope Street parking garage is prohibitive for them when picking up a to-go order. Both Ms. Engleman and Mr. Rusgrove were seeking a consideration for parking solutions that would be equitable to all the businesses on N. Main Street.

The Board members agreed about parking being an issue and acknowledged the need for better communication with the other businesses as well as with the public regarding parking options. Those options include the City Hall spaces after 4:30pm on weekdays, plus full use on weekends, the addition of 19 new spaces by the Post

Office, and the municipal parking garage after hours once it is renovated. The ECD Staff is also in communication with Ryan Carrier of the Carrier Company to address parking, including designating tenant employee spaces.

III. Approval of Minutes

A. Minutes of the March 5, 2026 Regular Meeting

The mayor called for a motion to approve the Minutes of the March 5, 2026 Regular Meeting. The motion to approve was made by Vice Chair Schmelder and was seconded by Commissioner Provenzano. The mayor noted one correction in paragraph 5 on page 4 that should read "the wall". All were in favor and the amended Minutes were accepted into the record.

IV. Consent Agenda

A. Communications

B. Economic Development/Grants/Marketing Report

The mayor called for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion was made by Commissioner Goldwasser and seconded by Vice Chair Schmelder. All were in favor and the Consent Agenda was accepted into the record.

V. New Business

A. Downtown Update

The N. Main Street streetscape approval was discussed during Public Participation. Justin Malley took this time to speak to the bridge overpass on Main Street with news that the State received a grant to address a stretch of the railroad and it includes the piece running through Bristol. The mayor is waiting on a response to her inquiry into how much of that grant is designated for Bristol.

The small data center and fuel cell project at 234 Riverside Avenue is proceeding through the Wetlands and Zoning Commissions. The rubble on site from the demolition was again addressed as unsightly and needing to be removed.

The ECD Downtown Committee will be meeting to discuss the two development proposals received for the final Centre Square parcel. More updates will be forthcoming.

The mayor spoke about Gino Carrier purchasing the right-away between Center St. and Main St. previously owned by Tom Zipp. The space will become industrial condos and storage. The round-about remains the property of Tom Zipp. Mr. Carrier is working with city offices for their assistance with cleanup of the property.

Commissioner John Paul Sirko joined the meeting at 5:27pm.

B. Incentive Budgets & Program Update

The Board was provided with the monthly update on the Incentive Budget balances listed by Grant type and included the Revolving Loan Program. Justin Malley shared with the Board that a business had inquired into the Revolving Loan Program with a note regarding the interest. Paying interest represents a religious piece for them which Justin and Community Investment Corporation (CIC) have taken into consideration and discussed. Discussion among the members followed. Justin noted the interest from the loan program pays CIC management fees, and options to the loan program will be considered and offered to the business in question.

C. Department Interns

The ECD Department will welcome two college interns this summer. Projects are being decided for assignment. Suggestions included the Giamatti Little League event and the younger demographic marketing piece. The internships will provide the students with both work experience and college credits.

D. Grants: Congressionally Directed Spending

Dr. Dawn Leger reported that an application was submitted to Senator Murphy's office requesting $6.72M to refurbish the parking garage at the Police Station. Two options were provided to the Senator's office in regard to project phases and costs. This parking garage renovation would renew the existing structure and provide additional after-hours parking to the public.

BristolWORKS! and the Bristol Boys & Girls Club (BBGC) also submitted funding requests in support of their operations. Justin Malley noted this is a yearly opportunity provided by Senators Murphy and Blumenthal, and by Representative Larson. ECD Staff also reported that due to the request deadline, the mayor signed a letter of support for BristolWORKS! and the BBGC on behalf of the Board with the understanding that the Board would approve of the action. None of the Board Members objected to the letter.

E. Additional Development Projects

ECD Staff updated the Board on the progress of development projects including Horizon Stone and FORCE Automation. Discussion of additional projects followed including the purchase of the Chippanee Golf Course. The mayor advised of the various pre-planning steps taken and in progress in a lead up to making an offer on the golf course. Discussion followed.

VI. New Business by Commissioners

There was no New Business by Commissioners.

VII. Old Business by Commissioners

There was no Old Business by Commissioners.

VIII. Committee Reports

A. City Council Member Report

There was no City Council Member Report.

Commissioner Goldwasser advised that in response to the City Council Member's previous communication, the Mum Festival Board had been made aware of the need for better communication about road closures for the festival, and a Mum Festival member has been designated as a contact person to assist with this process.

The mayor reported that the annual car show will be moving to the Hope Street loop in August for better traffic flow and will allow more access to area restaurants in the process.

City Council Member Tyler and the mayor have been visiting area businesses to see how the city may be of assistance to them. The ECD Grant Programs have been shared with these businesses and they may be reaching out to ECD Staff for follow up. Discussion followed, specifically with the geographical guidelines for eligibility regarding the city's Façade Grant program.

Residents appeared at the latest City Council Meeting expressing concern over the number of vape shops in the city. At the April 7, 2026 Ordinance Meeting the Commission will be addressing the possibility for new operational guidelines and possible ordinances as they relate to vape shops doing business in Bristol.

IX. Executive Session

A. Redevelopment of 273/296 Riverside Avenue

The mayor called for a motion to move into Executive Session. The motion was made by Commissioner Goldwasser and was seconded by Commissioner Provenzano. The Executive Session is for the purpose of discussing the redevelopment of 273/296 Riverside Avenue. Present during the Executive Session will be the ECD Board, The ECD Executive Director, the city's Purchasing Agent, and Recording Secretary, Sharon Arsego. All were in favor and the motion to move into Executive Session was approved.

X. Take Any Other Actions
A motion to end the Executive Session and return to the regular ECD Meeting was requested. The motion was made by Vice Chair Schmelder and was seconded by City Council Member Tyler. All were in favor and Board returned to their main meeting.

It should be noted that no votes were taken while the Board was in Executive Session.

The following motion was then read by Commissioner Goldwasser:
Motion to select JHM Group as the preferred developer for 273/296 Riverside Avenue, and to refer to Corporation Counsel.

Commissioner Provenzano moved that the motion be approved and was seconded by City Council Member Tyler. There was no discussion. All were in favor and the motion was approved into the record.

XI. Adjournment
With no additional business before the Board, the mayor called for a motion to adjourn. The motion to adjourn was made by Vice Chair Schmelder and seconded by Commissioner Goldwasser. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 6:25pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Arsego
Recording Secretary