

ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Regular Meeting

Thursday, February 1, 2024 5:00pm

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

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

ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Justin Malley - Executive Director, Dawn Nielsen – Marketing & Public Relations Specialist, Dr. Dawn Leger - Grants Administrator, Andrew Armstrong – Assistant City Planner / Dev. Coordinator for Public Works, David Sgro – Project and Housing Director, and Sharon Arsego - Sr. Admin. Assistant

GUESTS: None

I. Call to Order

Mayor Caggiano called the meeting to order at 5:02pm and led all present in the Pledge of Allegiance. Introductions were then made by the ECD Board Members and the ECD staff at the request of the mayor.

II. Public Participation

There was no Public Participation

III. Minutes: January 4, 2024

Mayor Caggiano requested a motion for the Minutes from the January 4, 2024 ECD Board Meeting be accepted into the record. Commissioner Mills made the motion which was seconded by Commissioner Goldwasser. All were in favor and the Minutes were accepted into the record.

IV. Consent Agenda

A. Communications

B. Economic Development/Grants/Marketing Report

Dr. Dawn Leger advised that HUD hasn't released the funding amounts for FY50 yet. There are 10 applications for Public Service grants and 3 for Public Facilities Grants. Commissioner Goldwasser then made a motion to accept the Consent Agenda. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hick. All were in favor and the Consent Agenda was accepted into the record.

V. New Business

A. Brownfields Update

Justin Malley discussed the existing Brownfields Projects including 894 Middle Street. Dodge Village, 43 E. Main Street, 40 West Street and the Sessions Building. Goman and York is the consultant at 894 Middle Street. Discussion included pending RFP packages, city liability with regards to contaminants, and demo and development as applicable to the various properties.

With regards to the Sessions Building, Justin confirmed that the Land Bank currently owns the location. They are making great progress with the remediation. Vesta, the original developer, is unable to follow through with their plans due to a lack of financing. Justin has support to put out a new RFP, with other developers already interested. Goman and York would be the consultant on this property, too. Work force housing is the end goal for this location.

The Sessions Building will return to the city's ownership in June 2024. If a new developer can be secured in time, the property may not come back to the city's ownership. ECD Staff is preparing an RFP to be ready to go to bid as soon as possible.

In response to concerns about the utility payments, the mayor confirmed that the oil tank(s) has been removed and electricity is the only remaining utility. Both Justin and the mayor concurred that the cleanup will be a huge plus for any interested developers.

B. BOF Transfer Request

Justin Malley requested approval for a funds transfer to cover existing Downtown Grant commitments.

Mayor Caggiano read the following Motion:

To approve the transfer of \$6,000 from the Economic Development Expenses Account to the Development Grants – Centre Square/Downtown Account and to forward to the Board of Finance.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Goldwasser. All were in favor and the motion passed into the record.

C. Strategic Plan

Justin Malley revisited the move towards a long-term, over-arching look at the city's growth and development. He envisions much of these ideas coming before the ECD Board and/or using the member's expertise as a resource for other city planning and departments. Mayor Caggiano added the use of a consultant like Goman and York to run a workshop looking at a long-term plan for Bristol.

D. Downtown Update

Justin Malley reviewed Parcel 10 development that was presented at a previous ECD Board Meeting. Parking is currently under discussion and will need support from the city's Centre Square parking structure.

Wheeler Health Clinic's construction is coming along with visible progress as is the Centre Square building.

Commissioner Hick asked about the Centre Square parking structure. The project is over budget. Justin confirmed that bids have come in and are as expected. Discussion included funding solutions and parking garage capacity, including heavier electric vehicles.

New Cambridge Brewing Company plans to do a soft opening in the following weeks. They're in the former Firefly Brewing location and have included a seating area with plans to serve food. Mayor Caggiano shared some of the creative plans that New Cambridge has for the space.

Commissioner Verikas was invited to share about Yellow King Brews opening at the Bristol Bazaar. Verikas advised that Yellow King has trivia nights planned and promotes events using various social media pages. They're adjusting their hours based on demand, too. The support from the public has been great. Council Member Panioto inquired about the size of the space. Verikas advised the small space is welcomed and they've offered overflow seating in the Bazaar area. There is the potential for additional outdoor seating during the warmer months.

E. Façade Grant Project

Justin Malley reviewed the Façade Grant request from Thomas V. Positano for a front façade improvement to 184-186 West Street. The project is to install maintenance free siding with a slightly contrasting knee wall. Commissioner Hick suggested an acid wash of the existing sidewalk.

F. ECD Incentives Web Page

Dawn Nielsen reviewed the new ECD Incentives web page on <https://bristolallheart.com/incentives/>. The presentation illustrated the various programs and also messages and access to applications that businesses will receive as they go through the various questions. The applications can be filled out on line but, with one exception, need to be mailed or brought to the ECD Office in person as some of the submission information needs to be kept secure. Commissioner Mills suggested wording to advise applicants why online submission is not accepted at this time.

VI. New Business by Commissioners

There was no New Business by Commissioners

VII. Old Business by Commissioners

Commissioner Goldwasser reported that the request for concessions/alcohol at non-school and non-school hours events at the Rockwell Theater events passed at the last City Council Meeting. It now goes before the Board of Ed for a vote. Mayor Caggiano advised that the next Board of Ed meeting is February 7, 2024 and this may need to go before their Policy Committee as well.

VIII. Committee Reports

A. City Council Member Report

No new item for the City Council Member Report.

B. Budget Committee Report

Justin Malley advised that the 2024-2025 ECD Budget has been prepared with a few items being reduced or eliminated, and in some cases merged into the Advertising and Marketing line item due to their nature, such as Printing and Binding. He also noted that in the Housing Rehabilitation portion of the budget, the decision was made to increase the single-family housing budget due to demand. The ECD Staff is waiting on the FY50 grant numbers to come in from HUD.

Commissioner Goldwasser read the following Motion:

To accept the ECD FY 2024-2025 budget request as recommended by the Budget Committee on January 10, 2024 and submit to the Comptroller's Office and Board of Finance.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hick. All were in favor and the Motion passed into the record.

Mayor Caggiano advised that this will be a tough budget year with a burden shift to homeowners. This means lower grand list growth. Also, these new projects take time to appear on the grand list.

X. Adjournment

The mayor entertained a Motion to Adjourn. The motion was made by Commissioner Goldwasser and was seconded by Commissioner Hick. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 6:10pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Sharon Arsego
Recording Secretary