

ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Regular Meeting

Thursday, January 4, 2024 5:00pm

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

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

ABSENT: None

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

GUESTS: None

I. Call to Order

Mayor Caggiano called the meeting to order at 5:05pm and led all present in the Pledge of Allegiance. Commissioner Schmelder provided a post-op update and advised he may need to excuse himself early from the meeting.

Mayor Caggiano mentioned the upgrade to Civic Plus coming on February 1, 2024. The new application will allow for more transparency and easier access to the meeting calendar and documents. He anticipates it will take some time to adjust to the new application.

The mayor introduced a short demolition video of the building known as Dodge Village. The video was shared for all present.

II. Public Participation

There was no Public Participation

III. Minutes: December 7, 2023

Mayor Caggiano called for a motion to approve the meeting minutes from December 7, 2023. The motion was made by Commissioner Hick and seconded by Commissioner Panioto. There were no requests for changes or revisions. All were in favor and the minutes were accepted into the record.

IV. Consent Agenda

A. Communications

B. Economic Development/Grants/Marketing Report

Mayor Caggiano called for a motion to accept the Consent Agenda. The motion was made by Commissioner Goldwasser and seconded by Commissioner Panioto. There were no comments or discussion. All were in favor and the Consent Agenda was accepted into the record.

V. New Business

A. BOF Transfer Request

Justin Malley presented a BOF Transfer request to move funds into the Small Business Grant account. The Small Business Grant program is constant in interest and activity, and the account balance is currently lower than the anticipated demand.

Commissioner Massarelli read the following Motion:

To approve the transfer of \$40,000 from the Economic Development Expenses Account 4109-589300 to the Small Business Grant Program Account 4109-589330 and to forward to the Board of Finance for action.

The Motion was seconded by Commissioner Panioto. All were in favor and the Motion was accepted into the record. There was a point of clarification that the Small Business Grant program is not the Start Up Bristol program moving to the Chamber of Commerce as discussed at the December 2023 Board Meeting.

B. Downtown Update

Justin Malley advised the Board that Yellow King Brews opened in the past week. The owners said their first weekend was a success. They extended their thanks, reported receiving a welcoming response from the public, that more of a grand opening is planned, and that they will be launching mobile ordering soon along with solidifying the hours. Commissioner Verikas confirmed Yellow King Brews is operating as a full coffee and cocktail bar with their provisional liquor permit and the large liquor permit sign is displayed outside.

Justin Malley reminded the Board of the Sowder's Speed Shop Downtown Grant approved at a previous meeting. Since then, the owner, Matt Sowder, has purchased the building and created an LLC. Mr. Sowder's attorney advised him to execute the grant under the name of the LLC if possible.

A Motion was presented to the Board and was read by Commissioner Hick as follows:

To revise the Downtown Grant approval made October 5, 2023 from Sowder's Speed Shop LLC to Sowder Development Inc. doing business as Sowder's Speed Shop.

The Motion was seconded by Commissioner Goldwasser. There were no questions or changes to the Motion. All were in favor and the Motion was accepted into the record.

Justin Malley provided an update on the Center Square construction. The Mayor, Gino Carrier and Justin met that afternoon. The retaining wall was among the items discussed during that meeting. Discussion among the Board members included the fourth floor and the steel construction first floor with the additional floors being built up from there. Mayor Caggiano noted the positive relationship between the Building Department and Carrier throughout this process. Justin noted that the ECD is making an onsite visit with Gino Carrier early next week to view the current progress.

Commissioner Goldwasser asked about the Police Station building and Police Memorial project. Mayor Caggiano advised that the initial estimate on the building updates came in at \$25M. The project is currently on hold as additional information is being gathered. The goal is to quantify the \$25M cost. The city has secured a consultant to review the current estimate and options. The Police Memorial will be better defined once the location and plan for the Police Department is decided.

C. ARPA Update

Mayor Caggiano advised that any ARPA project funds awarded without funds expended by January 30, 2024 will have the funds rescinded. Currently there are eight to nine projects that are in line for the funds to be returned and used for contingency. The ARPA Program is approximately 95% allocated with no new projects or ideas being accepted. The National average of ARPA dollars spent is 15% while Bristol is at 50%. The mayor is proud of the city's ARPA Task Force in reaching the goal for the funds to be used in the community. Commissioner Verikas expressed the positive impact of the ARPA funds on making the Bristol Bazaar possible. They're able to support close to 70 makers and one has taken their business full time as a result of their time at the Bazaar.

D. CDBG Program Year

Dr. Dawn Leger announced that the CDBG Program Year 50 has begun. The availability of applications has been announced by mass email plus additional avenues. Applications are due by 3pm on January 31, 2024. The HUD numbers advising how much funding the city is receiving have not been announced yet.

Justin Malley remarked on Dr. Leger's presentations to a number of city organizations advising them of the program and process. He has received positive feedback from groups she spoke to in regards to the presentations she made.

Dr. Leger noted that she is proud of the community efforts the city has been able to positively impact with the CDBG HUD Entitlements Funds that fuel this program. St. Vincent De Paul Shelter and Recourse Center was cited as a specific example of this impact. Commissioner Panioto inquired as to the remaining funds available for St. Vincent De Paul which Dr. Leger advised is \$16,562.00.

Justin Malley also spoke to Dave Sgro's Housing Rehabilitation Program efforts citing a great demand and Dave's dedication to the process. All the funds for the current year are committed to current projects with interest already growing for this new grant program year.

Mayor Caggiano asked for a motion to accept the CDBG Program Year Report. The motion was made by Commissioner Panioto and seconded by Commissioner Hick. All were in favor and the Motion was accepted into the record.

Commissioner Schmelder excused himself from the meeting at 5:33pm.

E. Marketing Update

Dawn Nielsen reported that the newly developed All Heart website has been up for two months. The city partnered with NBC CT for a local campaign to raise awareness of the site. Results of the campaign were shared with the Board. The response from businesses to be listed on the business directory portion of the site.

The first edition of the Bristol All Heart Newsletter has been released with a campaign set to promote the Rockwell Theater and sign ups for the All Heart Newsletter. This campaign is in partnership with the Bristol Park and Rec and Arts and Culture Commission. It was confirmed that the events at the Rockwell Theater have been promoted on the All Heart site's Event's page with a request by Commissioner Mills to drive more traffic to the theater directly.

Mayor Caggiano asked for a motion to accept the Marketing Update. The motion was made by Commissioner Mills and was seconded by Commissioner Goldwasser. All were in favor and the Motion was accepted into the record.

F. 2024 ECD Goals

Justin Malley introduced a discussion for a yearly review each January to establish long term economic development goals for the Board and ECD Staff. Justin and the Mayor cited the Capital Improvement and Strategic Planning Committee process where major projects and economic and community development growth is reviewed. Justin believes the ECD Board is in the position to bring their expertise to these conversations and would like to hold a workshop with consultants, such as Goman & York whose services ECD has used before. The workshop would be an open public meeting, with a focus on how to best develop the city for businesses and residents. Commissioner Goldwasser expressed support for this idea. Commissioner Mills encouraged that signage be a part of these discussions to drive traffic to what the city offers.

VI. New Business by Commissioners

Commissioners Goldwasser and Mills attended the January 2, 2024 Ordinance Meeting with regards to allowing alcohol at the Rockwell Theater. The support was overwhelmingly positive. Commissioner Goldwasser noted that alcohol service would be at non-school type events, in the evening, and it would be monitored. Continued support by the Board was encouraged.

Mayor Caggiano reviewed upcoming events at the Rockwell Theater with January 20th being a free show and a Community Conversation event. The program is comedy and a focus on educating and building community in regards to mental health. The mayor encouraged all members and the public to attend the various events being offered in the coming months as well.

Mayor Caggiano next entertained a motion to appoint Commissioner Verikas to the Industrial Committee. The motion was brought forward by Commissioner Goldwasser and it was seconded by Commissioner Hick. All were in favor and the motion to appoint Commissioner Verikas to the Industrial Committee was accepted into the record.

VII. Old Business by Commissioners

Commissioner Goldwasser asked for an update on Rooster's Chicken and Waffles and also Café Real in Forestville. Justin Malley has spoken with Lou from Rooster's and he remains committed to the Bristol location. There was no update about Café Real in Forestville.

Commissioner Hick asked if there have been any applications received for the Revolving Loan Program. Justin Malley advised that the loan program isn't live yet but will be after the end of January 2024. There are five or six businesses interested in applying when it becomes available.

VIII. Committee Reports

A. City Council Member Report

Commissioner Panioto reiterated the Ordinance Meeting discussion of serving alcohol at the Rockwell Theater and that it will be part of the next City Council Meeting.

Justin Malley made a note that the ECD Department hours have changed. The Department is now open Monday through Thursday from 8am to 4:30pm and on Friday from 8am to 1:30pm.

Mayor Caggiano entertained a motion to move the Board into Executive Session. The motion was made by Commissioner Panioto and was seconded by Commissioner Hick. All were in favor and the Board moved to Executive Session at 5:59pm.

IX. Executive Session

A. Downtown Grant

Mayor Caggiano requested a motion to return from Executive Session. Commissioner Panioto made the motion which was seconded by Commissioner Hick. All were in favor and the Board returned to regular session at 6:05pm.

Commissioner Goldwasser read the following motion:

To approve a Downtown Grant of up to \$60,000 – comprised of up to \$60,000 representing the maximum match available for a total project cost of approximately \$582,396 to Golden Years Homemakers & Companions, Inc. or its assigns for building improvements to establish a corporate office and adult daycare facility at 118 Main Street.

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

X. Adjournment

Mayor Caggiano requested a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Goldwasser made the motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hick. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 6:06pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Sharon Arsego
Recording Secretary