



**City of Bristol
Diversity Council
Tuesday, March 26, 2024
6:00 p.m.**

Meeting Room 1-2, Bristol City Hall, 111 North Main Street, Bristol, CT 06010

Attendance: (in person) Sandra Kamens, Antonio Lopes, Marcus Patton, Jeff Israel, David Rackliffe, Jordan Lopez, Jaymie Bianca, Alison Willette, Donna Osuch, Donna Koser, Maria Theam (recording secretary)

Via zoom: Cassie Lattarulo, Emily Anastasio

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Jaymie at 6:02 p.m., and she warmly welcomed all attendees. She proceeded to introduce the esteemed panelists, Emily and Cassie.

2. Public Participation

Donna Osuch and Donna Koser from the Bristol Childhood Alliance and United Way joined the meeting in person this evening. Their shared mission, focused on nurturing children from birth to age 8 to ensure they enter school primed for learning, has recently been bolstered by a significant \$3.5 million grant allocated towards subsidized care.

Central to their discourse is the imperative of diversity and inclusivity. The alliance seeks to forge partnerships with entities such as the Diversity Council, contemplating initiatives like a culture fair to celebrate Bristol's rich tapestry. Embracing a collaborative ethos, they aim to revitalize their resource list, translating it into multiple languages to cater to the diverse linguistic landscape of our community, with a notable prevalence of Spanish and Polish speakers.

Moreover, the alliance, cognizant of the Mayor's interest in fostering cultural exchange, is exploring avenues such as a cultural night. Their overarching goal is to create a supportive ecosystem wherein children thrive both academically and emotionally, with a keen focus on mental and behavioral health—an issue underscored by their upcoming family fun day slated for the end of June, with plans for June 29 or alternatively June 30th in the event of rain. Inquiring into potential avenues for collaboration beyond the family fun day, Jaymie, inquired about other initiatives, revealing plans for a maternal mental health event at Rockwell Park on May 5th. Recognizing the heightened vulnerability of parents from lower-income backgrounds to postpartum depression, the alliance has curated a comprehensive resource guide, now mandated for dissemination at WIC offices.

The discussion extends to the prospect of collaboration between various organizations, including the Bristol Early Childhood Alliance, United Way, and the BEST committee, underscoring a shared commitment to the holistic well-being of our community's children.

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3. Current Business

a. Panel Discussion with Bristol Public School Students

- i. Cassie Lattarulo, a recent high school graduate, now attending the University of Hartford, brings to our discussion a wealth of experience garnered from her involvement with Special Olympics.

Meanwhile, Emily Anastasio, who holds the titles of Miss CT Teen and former Ms. Bristol Teen, is currently pursuing her academic endeavors at Springfield College, actively volunteering within our community.

During the discourse, Cassie eloquently illuminated initiatives such as Culture Day at her alma mater, prompting a reflection on the commendable strides made by Bristol Central High School in fostering diversity while highlighting areas for growth. She lauds the school's efforts in fostering inclusivity through vibrant events like parades and communal gatherings filled with music, ensuring active participation and engagement across diverse cultural backgrounds.

Furthermore, Cassie underscores the importance of continued efforts toward diversity and inclusion, advocating for the expansion of cultural representation and the incorporation of educational opportunities to promote cross-cultural understanding. Drawing from her involvement in Special Olympics, she emphasizes the transformative power of unified sports in fostering inclusivity, signaling a pathway for further integration and celebration of diversity within educational settings.

- ii. Emily Anastasio, esteemed as Teen Miss Forestville, brings a profound commitment to diversity and inclusion, rooted in her extensive community engagement. Although hailing from Meriden schools rather than Bristol, Emily's impactful presence resonates through her current residence, where she takes part in initiatives such as a Diversity Equity and Inclusion Club and the Black Student Union and Gay/Straight Alliance at her college.

Emily shared that these organizations orchestrate transformative events, such as cultural fashion shows celebrating a mosaic of races, religions, and sexual orientations. Noteworthy endeavors like Pride Trivia Nights and Black History

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Month Trivia underscore the dedication to fostering awareness and understanding among peers.

Beyond her pageantry accolades, including Miss Bristol 2022, 2023, and Miss CT Teen 2023, Emily's advocacy transcends traditional platforms, as evidenced by her written contributions on inclusion in schools, including issues pertinent to Down Syndrome awareness. In a dialogue facilitated by Jaymie, Emily highlights the efficacy of seemingly small gestures—such as themed bingo nights—in catalyzing awareness and fostering a culture of learning.

Embracing the challenge of translating these initiatives to high school environments, Emily draws from her own experiences, emphasizing the pivotal role of education in nurturing inclusive communities. Reflecting on her formative years amidst the omnipresence of social media, Emily acknowledges its dual impact, advocating for its constructive utilization in amplifying voices and fostering global awareness.

When queried by Jeff Israel on strategies for fostering engagement beyond the confines of established circles, Emily emphasizes the power of storytelling in evoking empathy and catalyzing interest. Through this approach, Emily underscores the imperative of inclusive education as a conduit for dismantling barriers and nurturing authentic connections, both within educational institutions and beyond. She shared that offering stories can help gain others interest into learning and educating themselves on different topics.

b. Sub-Committee Discussion

Following a hiatus since their last meeting in January, the council reconvened to review progress and delve deeper into the initiatives outlined by the formation of three subcommittees: Religious Diversity, Racial Diversity, and Outreach. Led by a spirit of active participation, members demonstrated their commitment by expressing willingness to contribute to specific subcommittees.

Jaymie initiated the discussion by inviting members to align with the subcommittees of their choice, facilitating a collaborative approach to their shared objectives. Jeff promptly volunteered to contribute to the Religious Diversity subcommittee, signaling his dedication to fostering understanding and inclusivity across religious lines. Meanwhile, Dave exhibited



his versatility by offering his assistance across all three subcommittees, underscoring his commitment to the council's overarching mission.

Alison, demonstrating an interest in outreach, stepped forward to lend her time to the Outreach subcommittee, expressing her flexibility to contribute to any facet of the council's work. Marcus, echoing a sentiment of engagement, sought clarification on the parameters of outreach, emphasizing the need for targeted strategies to maximize impact and engagement. With a particular focus on fostering diversity in local businesses, Marcus and Jaymie articulated a shared interest in leveraging partnerships with local businesses to promote an inclusive economic landscape.

As discussions unfolded, Antonio introduced the concept of an anti-racism subcommittee, acknowledging the importance of framing and direction in navigating this critical issue. Inspired by the insights shared by Emily, Antonio expressed optimism regarding the growing interest among younger generations in effecting positive change. The discourse transitioned to the transformative power of mentorship in nurturing personal growth and fostering inclusivity, with Jaymie offering insights from her experiences spearheading a summer internship program for women with disabilities.

c. Resource List Update

The council aims to further enhance its endeavors by exploring additional avenues for contribution. To facilitate this process, Jaymie will distribute a Google link to all members, providing a platform for collaborative input and suggestions. With the goal of maximizing efficiency, the council plans to finalize this endeavor in time for discussion at the upcoming meeting.

d. Attendance Updates

Jaymie reiterated a reminder that members are permitted a maximum of three absences from meetings within a calendar year, whether in person or via Zoom. Emphasizing the importance of consistent attendance, she explained that participation in Zoom sessions is equally accounted for. Furthermore, Jaymie reminded everyone of the fixed scheduling of meetings, which occur on the fourth Tuesday of each month.



4. New Business

a. Upcoming Events

- Mental Health Event: May 5th
 - Family Fun Day: June 29th (with June 30th as a rain date)
 - Jordan Lopez: April 9th, 6:30 PM (Bristol Library) Discussing his book following by a Q&A Session
 - Men and Boys Fund Breakfast: June 6, 2024, featuring speaker Dave Stevens (DoubleTree by Hilton Hotels in Bristol, 8:00 AM) Proceeds from the event support programs that improve the lives of men and boys in Bristol, Burlington, Plainville, Plymouth Southington and Wolcott.
 - Peace March: May 18th, Federal Hill, 1-3 PM
- Jaymie shared that she will be attending the National Disability Policy Seminar in Washington, DC from April 8th to 10th.
- Jaymie encouraged everyone to share upcoming events for promotion.
- A participant shared a poignant memory from her teachers, emphasizing the importance of embracing differences. She shared that a teacher of hers used to tell the students, "It's not weird, it's different."

5. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was proposed by Antonio Lopes and seconded by Sandra Kamens at 7:30 p.m.
All in favor, none opposed.

Respectfully Submitted,

Maria Theam
recording secretary