ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Regular Meeting Minutes
Thursday July 11, 2024 5:00pm
Meeting Room 1-3, City Hall, 111 N. Main Street and on Zoom

ATTENDEES:	Mayor Caggiano, Council Member Panioto, Commissioners Goldwasser, Mills, Hick, Schmelder (Zoom), and Rasmussen-Tuller (Zoom)
ABSENT:	Commissioners Provenzano
STAFF PRESENT:	Justin Malley - Executive Director, Dr. Dawn Leger - Grants Administrator, and Dawn Nielsen - Marketing &Public Relations Specialist
GUESTS:	Lukasz Poplawski of FORCE Automation, Inc.

I. Call to Order

Mayor Caggiano called the meeting to order at 5:01pm and lead all in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Caggiano entertained a motion to move Agenda item VIII. Committee Reports A. Industrial Committee up for discussion. The motion was made by Commissioner Goldwasser and was seconded by Commissioner Mills. All were in favor and the motion to discuss Agenda item VIII. A. was approved.

VIII. Committee Reports

A. Industrial Committee Report

Mayor Caggiano reviewed notes from the Industrial Committee Special Meeting held at 4:30pm just prior to this ECD Board Meeting. The first item was the notice of corrected wording in the 229 Industrial Park Guidelines. The Committee Members had been provided the original vs. the correct wording for their reference.

The second item was the proposal brought to the Committee by Lukasz Poplawski and FORCE Automation, Inc. to purchase Lot#3 in the Southeast Bristol Business Park.

Commissioner Goldwasser read the proposed motion as follows before the Board:

Motion to authorize Mayor Jeffrey Caggiano, or Acting Mayor, to execute a Purchase and Sale Agreement and to complete the property transaction, subject to the approval of Corporation Counsel, with Force Automation, Inc. or its assigns, doing business as Force Automation, for the sale of the Southeast Bristol Business Park property known as “Lot 3” as reflected on the map known as Roadway Plan from Maguire Group Inc. dated January 9, 2006 for the purchase price of $288,000.

I further move that this matter be referred to the City Council, Planning Commission for completion of a C.G.S. 8-24 Report, and to the City Council Real Estate Committee for completion of a C.G.S. 7-163e Public Hearing for the sale of municipally owned property.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Mills.

The Board and Mr. Poplawski discussed FORCE Automation's current operations using robotics and their partnership with ABB Robotics in Europe. They are fully licensed and supported by ABB Robotics for their unique and specialized fabrication. That partnership includes a new training center in Lot #3 in the business park. Discussion included the number of employees, trainers, students both in person and online, length of the training program, the high level of skill that would be taught and the high demand for those skills. The location of Lot #3 is also desirable to FORCE Automation because of the nearby hotels and restaurants for their students.

After the discussion, Mayor Caggiano called for a vote. All were in favor and the Motion was accepted into the record.

II. Public Participation

There was no Public Participation.

III. Minutes: June 6, 2024

Mayor Caggiano called for a motion to approve the minutes from the ECD Board Meeting held on June 6, 2024. Commissioner Mills made the motion to approve the minutes, and the motion was seconded by Commissioner Hick. There were no changes for the proposed minutes. 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 approve the Consent Agenda. Commissioner Goldwasser made the motions to approve, and the motion was seconded by Commissioner Schmelder. All were in favor and the Consent Agenda was passed into the record.

IV. New Business

A. City & Town Development Act

Mayor Caggiano reviewed the requirement to put this item on the November ballot every five years as discussed at the June 2024 Board Meeting. Discussion continued with suggested wording of the question, advance notification to residents as to what it is and why it is on the ballot.

The question currently reads: “Shall the City of Bristol approve the City Council Resolution that adopts the Connecticut City and Town Development Act, which grants additional authority to aid and promote industrial and other forms of economic development?” Justin Malley spoke with Corporation Counsel for the city on the wording. They suggested leaving the existing wording which was reviewed and chosen five years ago. It should be noted that the item was passed each time it was on the ballot. Mayor Caggiano will review the previous vote counts on this item for reference.

B. 273 Riverside Avenue Update

Justin Malley provided an update on the four (4) developer interviews held at the ECD Downtown Committee meeting on June 4, 2024 in response to the Sessions Building RFP. Goman & York continues to assess the candidates for a followup presentation to the ECD Downtown Committee. Key factors remain the developer’s record of completing similar projects and their financial plan for funding the project.

It is confirmed that the City of Bristol now owns the Sessions Building. The land bank will continue with working the remediation plan on behalf of the city. A security fence is being installed to deter trespassers after a couple instances of illegal dumping occurred.

C. Brownfields Update

Dr. Dawn Leger advised the Board of funding available for assessment of 43 East Main Street from Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments (NVCOG). The ECD received approval from City Council to apply for a grant of up to $75,000.00 for the assessment. Justin Malley advised the Board that the assessment still needs to be done even though a parking lot is the only feasible option for that location.

Mayor Caggiano advised the Board that the former Chic Miller property is owned/managed under a new corporate name. Bhrugesh Patel is now the only stake holder and has been approved by the regional brownfields program to do the remediation with a the $1.4M loan program. The Federal government will be holding the timeline for the work to be completed once the paperwork portion is done.

Justin Malley advised that the city is gearing up to release an RFP for 894 Middle Street. Commissioner Hick asked about the Fuel Cell property. Justin Malley advised that the current situation may be a code enforcement issue now.

Commissioner Schmelder made a motion to move up Agenda Item VIII. Committee Reports B. CDBG Policy Committee Report for discussion at this time. This motion was seconded by Commissioner Hick. All were in favor and the item was moved up in the discussion.

VIII. Committee Reports

B. CDBG Policy Committee Report

Commissioner Schmelder advised the Board of the CDBG Policy Committee Meeting held on June 18, 2024 regarding the Residential Rehabilitation program. At the meeting, the committee discussed, and ultimately changed, the median income eligibility levels with adjusted, corresponding grant percentages. The meeting had also included discussion about changing the funding format from grants to loans.

Dr. Dawn Leger advised that the suggested changes in income eligibility thresholds and grant percentages were based on the high demand for the program exceeding its available funding. The goal is to stretch the funding to help complete more projects. Dr. Leger advised that it is rare for a municipality to have a grant program vs. a loan program, and clarified that if they change to a loan program, it would be in the form of a lien. This change is being investigated as a long-term solution.

Commissioner Hick read the following proposed motion:

Motion to approve the recommendations of the CDBG Policy Committee to revise the Residential Rehabilitation Grant award amounts based on income limit from the current 100% for Extremely Low, 100% Very Low and 50% Low to 100% for Extremely Low, 80% Very Low and 50% Low. This would be effective as of July 1, 2024.

The motion was seconded by Council Member Panioto. All were in favor, and the Motion was approved into the record.

The Board decided that the ECD Staff could, without objection continue to research the loan program option for the Residential Rehab Program. No motion was made for the change at this time while additional information is being gathered.

D. Downtown Update

Mayor Caggiano updated the Board about the change in available downtown parking now that the lease between the Post Office and the Carrier Group has ended. Post Office employees have been made aware there is parking available in the new parking garage on Meadow Street for city employees and residents visiting City Hall.

Additionally, 150 Main Street is being renovated for two restaurants with a September 1, 2024 opening date planned. Justin Malley advised the Walgreens on Main Street will become a Dollar Tree store. Additional discussion included intake at the KindCare senior living community.

V. New Business by Commissioners

Commissioner Goldwasser suggested a marketing video to address that the road conditions will be improved on North Main Street as construction is completed.

Discussion included the new traffic pattern and the expected growth of foot traffic in the area.

VI. Old Business by Commissioners

Mayor Caggiano advised the Board that Commissioner Verikas had tendered her resignation to him due to time constraints on her schedule. The Board will need to find a new Commissioner to serve in her place.

Commissioner Hick asked about the new gas stations in progress. Justin Malley advised that supply chain issues and changes in the construction are being addressed.

Discussion concluded with questions about the building on Riverside Avenue that had once been intended for Rooster's Chicken and Waffles.

VIII. Committee Reports

C. City Council Member Report

There was nothing to report.

I. Adjournment

Mayor Caggiano called for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Rasmussen-Tuller made the motion to adjourn, and Commissioner Hick seconded the motion. All were in agreement and the meeting adjourned at 6:25pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sharon Arsego
Recording Secretary