

**Diversity Council Regular Meeting**  
Tuesday, August 27, 2024 at 6:30pm  
**Hybrid In-Person and Zoom Meeting**  
Meeting Room 1-2, City Hall, 111 N. Main St., Bristol, CT

**Attendees:** Council Members Kamens, Patton, Rackliffe, Israel, and Lopes, and City Council Member, Mark Dickau

**Absent:** Jordan Lopez

**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Council Member Patton at 6:35pm. A quorum was present.

**2. Approval of April 23, 2024 and May 28, 2024 Meeting Minutes**

Council Member Patton requested a motion to approve the minutes from both meetings. The motion was made by Council Member Rackliffe and seconded by Council Member Kamens. All were in favor to accept the both sets of minutes as presented and the Minutes were accepted into the record.

**3. Public Participation**

There was no Public Participation.

**4. Current Business – Future of Diversity Council**

Council Member Patton introduced the newly elected City Council Member Mark Dickau to the Diversity Council members. Mr. Dickau was elected to the Bristol City Council during a special election held to fill a vacancy on said Council, and has been appointed to the Diversity Council, taking on the role formerly held by Mr. Panioto.

Council Member Patton reviewed that the resignations of the Diversity Council's previous Chair, Jaymie Bianca, and Vice-Chair, Allison Willett at the Council's last meeting May 28, 2024. Tonight's is the Council's first meeting since May, with the discussion centered around the future of the Diversity Council.

Council Member Patton has been in discussion with Mayor Caggiano to better understand the Council's options which are listed on tonight's Agenda. A brief overview of each option was provided by Council Member Patton to the before a discussion was held.

**a. Option to continue under the city**

To remain under the City means the Council would continue as it has been. One question that remains is the Council's ability to raise and/or request funds for projects and events. There is not, nor has there been, city provided funding allocated to the Diversity Council.

Discussion among Council Members regarding Option A included the need for available funding, fund raising options, if any, use of City's marketing tools and social media outlets.

**b. Option to continue as a task force**

Mayor Caggiano provided Council Member Patton information on current Task Forces that started under the City that are currently doing well in their present configuration. Council Member Patton attended the West End Association's recent Rockwell Park Fest and was impressed by the momentum the Association has been able to build. It was his suggestion that David Habermeld, Vice President of the West End Association, be invited to a Diversity Council meeting to share best practices regarding operation of a Task Force.

Discussion among Council Members regarding Option B included learning more such as securing a tax status (which would relate to fundraising), opportunities for growth, and gathering more information to help develop a more structured plan should this option be chosen. Council Member Patton did advise that if they continued as a Task Force, they would not be held to the formalized processes currently required by the City.

**c. Option to disband Diversity Council**

The option to disband the Diversity Council was discussed in terms of need for the Council, and the support and effectiveness of it to, and for, the city.

Council Member Patton shared that the Mayor's believes the Diversity Council does good things for the community, and suggested moving to a Task Force to remove any political affiliation hinderances, real or perceived, from the Council's work.

At this time, Council Member Patton opened the floor for additional discussion.

Council Member Kamens expressed concern over available funding which was echoed by all Council members. Currently, any items needed such as pamphlets or contact cards, would be out of pocket costs. Her suggestion was to move to a Task Force model and not to disband.

Council Member Rackliffe inquired about financial options as a Task Force, such as opening a bank account to support the Council's endeavors. He feels there would be more mobility, flexibility and ability to attract and grow steady membership. He felt the panel discussions previously held were informative but attendance was low due to a lack of marketing for them. He is not in favor of disbanding the Council.

Council Member Lopes expressed a need for a pros and cons list of the options they want to explore to make the best decision. He also feels that some funding, and support, even a sponsorship in some form, would be beneficial and send a more positive message. He doesn't believe that disbanding is an option.

Council Member Israel indicated that he never felt the Diversity Council had the full support of the City Council and would like feedback from them on this. Council Member Patton was able to provide that information from his conversation with the Mayor. Council Member Israel feels the Council's strength is greatest when the community is involved and when all the Council members are working in unison. He would like to see a growing awareness about the Council and its purpose. He also stated that the term "diversity" means something different to everyone, and he believes the mission of this Council is to help people understand each other better. Council Member Israel doesn't want to see the Diversity Council disband.

City Council Member Mark Dickau advised that he would work as a volunteer with the Diversity Council if it did move to a Task Force Model. He also suggested bringing Bristol's youth on board. Council Member Patton reviewed the Youth Coalition process and the presence in the school which could be strengthened with a new approach.

In response to the concern about advertising the Council's programs and events, Recording Secretary Sharon Arsego advised the Council of the availability of the All Heart Submissions and the eSigns around town as a no cost resource. Notifications from the All Heart events calendar and meeting alerts on CivicClerk were also discussed. Council Member Rackliffe would like to see a message system that proactively pushes messages out to all Bristol residents.

## **5. New Business – Nominations**

### **a. Nominations – Chair**

### **b. Nominations – Vice Chair**

With the unanimous consensus not to disband, there was discussion of how to move forward with regard to nominating a Chair, a Vice Chair, and/or an Interim Chair. Recent meetings were not able to be held due to the absence of a Chairperson. With the understanding that a Chair is needed to continue meeting, it was agreed that a nomination for an Interim Chair would be accepted.

Council Member Lopes nominated Council Member Patton to be Interim Chair. This nomination was seconded by Council Member Rackliffe. Council Member Patton agreed to the nomination. The Recording Secretary called for a vote on the nomination. All members were in favor and the nomination passed into the record.

It was decided by the Council to revisit the nomination of a Vice Chair as the Council membership grows. All members offered the Chair their support in the meantime.

### **c. Meetings Day and Times**

The currently approved meeting times were outlined for the Council to confirm continuation of those dates and times. It was agreed to continue as scheduled

with a vote on the new 2025 Meeting dates at the November 2024 meeting. The Council will continue to operate under the City until a decision is made to do otherwise.

The remaining meeting dates for the Diversity Council are as follows:  
(the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the month beginning at 6:30pm at City Hall)

2024

September 24<sup>th</sup>

October 22<sup>nd</sup>

November 26<sup>th</sup>

No meeting in December (it would fall on Christmas Eve)

2025

January 28<sup>th</sup>

**6. Adjournment**

The Chair called for a motion to adjourn. The motion was made by Council Member Rackcliffe and seconded by Council Member Kamens. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 7:53 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sharon Arsego  
Recording Secretary