

ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Regular Meeting Minutes

Thursday, October 3, 2024 5:00pm

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

ATTENDEES: Mayor Caggiano, Commissioner Schmelder (Zoom), Council Member Dickau, Commissioners Mills, Rasmussen-Tuller (Zoom), Goldwasser, Hick, Provenzano, and Cowdell

ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Justin Malley - Executive Director, Dr. Dawn Leger - Grants Administrator, David Sgro – Housing & Project Director, and Dawn Nielsen - Marketing & Public Relations Specialist

GUESTS: Diego Contigo and Jessica Cabanellas of Horizon Natural Stone
Charlie Nyberg, Architect

I. Call to Order

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

II. Public Participation

Mr. Michael J. Dudko, 116 Lewis Rd., Bristol spoke to his concerns as expressed at the Industrial Committee Special Meeting earlier tonight regarding any industrial work being conducted near the wetlands within the Southeast Bristol Business Park (SEBBP).

Mayor Caggiano clarified for those new to this topic that the proposal for the new business in the SEBBP is not for a manufacturer or an industrial business, but as a wholesale stone distributor where storage is the key use of the space.

III. Approval of Minutes

A. Minutes of the September 5, 2024 Regular Meeting

Mayor Caggiano called for a motion to approve the Minutes from the September 5, 2024 meeting. Commissioner Mills made the motion to approve the meeting minutes, and the motion was seconded by Commissioner Hick. There were no changes or corrections to be made. 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 Schmelder made the motion to accept the Consent Agenda, and the motion was seconded by

Commissioner Rasmussen-Tuller. All were in favor and the Consent Agenda was accepted into the record.

Mayor Caggiano called for a motion to move item VIII. Committee Reports A. Industrial Committee up in the agenda. Commissioner Mills made the motion which was seconded by Commissioner Goldwasser.

Mayor Caggiano called on Commissioner Goldwasser to make the following motion:

I make a motion to approve the waiving of the reading of the modifications to the Southeast Business Park Guidelines in approval of Horizon Stone Modifications.

Mayor Caggiano asked the Board to refer to a list of motions provided as they pertain to the SEBBP Guidelines and the proposal from Horizon Stone to take ownership of Lot#2 in the business Park. These are the motions as they were presented to, and voted on, at the Industrial Committee ahead of this Board meeting. Justin Malley was called on by the mayor to review the necessity for each motion ahead of the Board voting.

Justin Malley first introduced Diego Contigo and Jessica Cabanellas of Horizon Natural Stone to the Board. They shared a brief history of their family-owned business and their plans for the SEBBP space going forward.

Justin Malley advised that the first motion was to address the current number of employees per square footage, not just for Horizon Stone, but also future businesses which may have a smaller staff per square foot than is currently outlined in the Guidelines:

PROPOSED MOTION: *To approve the following modification to the Southeast Bristol Business Park Design Guidelines and Regulations Section III.B.1.2:*

Modify the following language:

c. Third Priority: Distribution facilities employing 2 or more facility employees per 1,000 square feet of floor area. "Mini warehouses" for self-storage or long-term storage shall be excluded.

To read:

c. Third Priority: Distribution facilities. "Mini warehouses" for self-storage or long-term storage shall be excluded.

Justin then advised that the purpose of the second motion was to formalize approving Horizon Stone as an appropriate owner in, and user of, the park. The motion reads as follows:

PROPOSED MOTION: *Per Section IV. of the Southeast Bristol Business Park Guidelines, to notify all owners of property in the Southeast Bristol Business Park of the proposed modification of said Guidelines concerning Distribution Facilities. Pending consent by all property owners to said modification, to approve the purchase and occupancy of 101 Business Park Drive by Horizon Natural Stone, LLC, or its assigns, to conduct operations under its NAICS designation as a Brick, Stone, and Related Material Merchant Wholesaler.*

The purpose of the third motion recognizes the unique aspect of Horizon Stone with outdoor product storage. Outside storage is allowed in the SEBBP, but it still needs to be approved by the Board. Justin Malley referred to the site plan and the designated, organized pallet storage. The motion for this item reads as follows:

PROPOSED MOTION: *Per Section III.B.3.8.1a of the Southeast Bristol Business Park Guidelines, to approve the outdoor storage of finished goods - in the form of high-end stone and related material stored outside the building at 101 Business Park Drive in a clean, orderly fashion using pallets and similar structures – for Horizon Natural Stone, LLC.*

With regard to the outside pallet storage, Justin advised the Board that ECD Staff had worked closely with Horizon Stone and their Architect, Charlie Nyberg, with regard to the style, type and location of the chosen screening of the outdoor storage. Hours of operation were also discussed. The remaining motions previously approved by the Industrial Committee relate to the screening of the outside storage, and the stone facade on the existing building, and read as follows:

PROPOSED MOTION: *Per Section III.B.3.7.4 of the Southeast Bristol Business Park Guidelines, to approve the screening proposal of Horizon Natural Stone, LLC concerning the outdoor storage of finished high-end stone at 101 Business Park Drive to include appropriate vegetative buffer from residential areas and fencing of composite or other high-quality material to screen objectional views that may be visible from adjacent properties or the street.*

PROPOSED MOTION: *Per Section III.B.3.14 of the Southeast Bristol Business Park Guidelines, to approve Horizon Natural Stone LLC, or assigns, use of natural stone within a minimum of the first 8 feet of building elevation on street-facing sides as a building architectural treatment and to approve the use of all metal for portions of the building exterior that are not easily visible from the street.*

Mayor Caggiano called for a motion to approve all the above motions as presented to the Board, and as previously approved by the Industrial Committee. Commissioner Schmelder made the motion which was seconded by Commissioner Hick. All were in favor and the Motions in their entirety were accepted into the record.

Mayor Caggiano then requested a motion to move up Agenda Item V. New Business E. Downtown Update on the agenda. Commissioner Goldwasser made the motion, which was seconded by Commissioner Hick. All were in favor and the Downtown Update was moved up in the agenda for immediate discussion.

Robert Bylykbashi, one of the owners of the new Iron Horse Pub and People's Choice Pizza at 150 Main Street (the former Webster Bank building), provided an update on the renovations. The Bristol location will be their flagship store to their other current locations. Improvements to 150 Main Street include a newly paved parking lot, a drive through window for order pick up, and a walk-up take out window. Commissioner Schmelder inquired about the murals inside the building. He was assured that they have been preserved. The owners are looking to open October 29, 2024.

Mayor Caggiano advised of an inland wetlands application for the former site of the Mafales Plaza at 37 Main Street. The plans are for a mixed-use building with market rate studio apartments. They will need additional parking as well.

A brief update of the Hope Street garage was provided. The Mayor called for ideas on places that can house the Bristol police department. There are many moving parts with a real need for either a new police station or renovations. The needs and use of the Post Office currently on N. Main Street were also discussed.

Justin Malley provided an update on the Sessions Building at 273 Riverside Avenue. The Michaels Organization, the current preferred developer, continues to work on the funding, including speaking with the State of CT as needed. The State is connecting developers with possible resources. The roof was recently patched and a large tank is going to be removed.

Commissioner Hick asked if there was an update on the Fuel Cell location. None was available.

Justin Malley also advised of the new recreational business, Fork Plus Band Slingshot, with custom made slingshots, leagues, and competitions, and it is family friendly.

V. New Business

A. Rt. 72 Streetscape – Riverside Avenue

Justin Malley provided a progress report on the Rt. 72 Streetscape - Riverside Avenue. Dr. Dawn Leger had secured a \$6.8M grant from the State of CT to redo and create a streetscape all along Rt. 72 from Memorial Boulevard to Park Street. The State of CT is also providing \$12M for the Riverside Avenue corridor for their own improvements in that area. Public Hearings will be held for property owners to learn more. Park Street construction will be in 2025, and the Riverside Avenue corridor will be in 2026. Commissioner Goldwasser asked about the property once meant for Chicken and Waffles. Justin advised that it has reverted to the previous owner. Commissioner Provenzano asked about the fuel cell location and progress. Mayor Caggiano advised that it is in the State's control and is on hold while they work out the final pieces for the location.

B. Brownfields Update

An update was provided for 894 Middle Street with a commitment that an RFP would be submitted ahead of the November 2024 ECD Board Meeting.

43 East Main Street is currently a grass field and needs to move through the assessment process before additional work can be done. Dr. Dawn Leger submitted a grant for the Phase II remediation piece. This is slated to become a parking lot which businesses in the area need and are looking forward to utilizing.

The Trudon Platt Motor Lines property at 15 Downs Street was also discussed. It needs to be revisited as part of the bike path coming to the West End.

C. CDBG Housing Rehab Agreement

Justin Malley provided a brief refresher of the CDBG Residential Rehabilitation Program to the Board. The CDBG Policy Committee provided approval to look into changing the Residential Rehab Program from a grant process to a no interest loan with the advisement of the city's Corporation Counsel. Projects are mainly for roofs and heating systems. Currently, the homeowner pays back a portion of the grant if the home sells within a 10-year span.

Dr. Dawn Leger shared that the demand for projects has been greater than the supply of funds, and a loan vs. a grant is how most of the other cities in the state are operating. It would be a no interest loan that is paid back in full to the city with the sale, transfer or refinancing of the home. The loan option would provide a constant source of income vs. the current grant option which does not.

Discussion included allowable timespans for returning applications for new projects, with many homes needing more than one project. Lead and asbestos are also project possibilities. Commissioner Provenzano requested more information before making a decision. Commissioner Schmelder suggested this item be brought back to the CDBG Policy Committee to further discuss and address.

Mayor Caggiano accepted the following motion from Commissioner Schmelder:

Motion to defer the CDBG Housing Rehab Agreement to the CDBG Policy Committee for further discussion. Commissioner Schmelder, as the Chair of the CDBG Policy Committee, will schedule a meeting with Dr. Dawn Leger as soon as possible to address this.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Goldwasser. Commissioner Cowdell followed up with a question regarding the payback of the loan in a short sale situation. Commissioner Hick asked about a homeowner's option to pay back the loan in full ahead of time. Commissioner Provenzano requested the ECD Board review the Residential Rehabilitation Guidelines and provide questions to the CDBG Policy Committee Chair ahead of the next meeting.

A vote on the motion to table the vote on the CDBG Housing Rehab Agreement changes was taken. All were in favor, and the Motion was accepted into the record.

D. Marketing Videos

Commissioner Schmelder excused himself from the meeting at 6:14pm

Dawn Nielsen introduced a new Pardon Our Appearance video produced to highlight timelapse images of the Downtown construction and what is to come as a result of the work. The city appreciates everyone's patience with the process.

Two additional videos from BristolWORKS! were then shared. These are student testimonials sharing the life-changing impact the attending classes at BristolWORKS! is having on them and their families. Highlights include students securing new jobs even before they've completed their training. Commissioner Goldwasser emphasized BristolWORKS! is ARPA funded and meets

the ARPA Committee's goal of the funds being used for transformative work. Discussion included how and where these and additional, longer video will be aired and shared to build awareness and continue to keep enrollment up. Dr. Dawn Leger took the opportunity to ask the Board to consider their priorities for the CDBG 5-Year Plan goals.

F. Façade Grant Program Update

Justin Malley advised the Board of the awnings and signage for 150 Main Street for Iron Horse Pub which are being supported by an ECD Façade Grant.

G. Committee Assignments

Mayor Caggiano announced that Commissioner Cowdell would be joining the ECD Industrial Committee, and Commissioner Provenzano would be joining the CDBG Committee.

VI. New Business by Commissioners

There was no New Business by Commissioners

VII. Old Business by Commissioners

Commissioner Goldwasser spoke on behalf of the Mum Festival Committee with Thanks to the city for their support and participation of the 2024 festival. Mayor Caggiano noted that the city's Parks and Rec Dept. was named as Employee(s) of the Month for their work with the festival and also their attention to the Veteran's Memorials on the Boulevard.

VIII. Committee Reports

B. City Council Member Report

There was no City Council Member Report.

IX. Adjournment

With no other business to address, Mayor Caggiano entertained a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Hick made the motion which was seconded by Commissioner Provenzano. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 6:31pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sharon Arsego
Recording Secretary