

## **ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Regular Meeting Minutes

Thursday, November 7, 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, Goldwasser, Hick, and Cowdell

ABSENT: Commissioner Provenzano

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

GUESTS: None

### **I. Call to Order**

Mayor Caggiano called the meeting to order at 5:00pm and lead all present in the Pledge of Allegiance. The mayor updated the Board of the resignation of Commissioner Rasmussen-Tuller effective after the October ECD Board Meeting for personal reasons. Justin Malley shared a message of thanks from the Commissioner for his time on the Board.

### **II. Public Participation**

There was no Public Participation

### **III. Approval of Minutes**

#### **A. Minutes of the October 3, 2024 Regular Meeting**

Mayor Caggiano called for a motion to approve the Minutes from the October 3, 2024 ECD Board Meeting. Commissioner Mills made the motion which was seconded by Commissioner Hick. There were no changes or comments to the Minutes, all voted 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 put the motion forward, and it was seconded by Commissioner Mills. There were no comments or questions presented, all voted in favor and the Consent Agenda was accepted into the record.

The mayor called for a motion to move up agenda item **VIII. Committee Reports A. CDBG Policy Committee** for discussion. The motion was made by Commissioner Hick and seconded by Commissioner Mills. All were in favor and the agenda item was moved up for discussion.

Commissioner Schmelder and Dr. Dawn Leger presented the CDBG Residential Rehabilitation policy changes as discussed and voted forward at the CDBG Policy Committee Special Meeting held ahead of this ECD Board Meeting.

There has been a consistently growing demand for the Residential Rehab program which currently operates as a grant with a 10-year, prorated payback schedule to the city. Currently, if after 10 years the home remains under original ownership from the time the grant was awarded, none of the grant funds are owed to the city.

The Residential Rehabilitation program is federally funded by HUD. The amount awarded to the city has decreased each year, while the demand for the program continues to increase. In an effort to make the program more sustainable, the Committee proposed a change from a grant program to a no-interest loan program. As a loan, the homeowner only repays the city when the property changes hands. It was confirmed that the loan operates as a lien against the property, with the city being paid first, and in full, from the sale.

Additionally, the Policy Committee submitted the following guidelines for the Board's consideration:

- An initial loan award cap of \$15,000.00, with a lifetime cap of \$25,000.00
- A homeowner who received an initial loan may apply again within the following two years

Repaid loan funds would allow the Residential Rehabilitation Program to be self-supporting in addition to using the yearly awarded HUD funds. With the fully repaid loans, more projects can be completed, and narrow the gap between available funding and the high demand.

Mayor Caggiano read the following Proposed Motion regarding the change to the CDBG Residential Rehabilitation Program:

*Motion to move the Residential Rehabilitation Grant Program from one of a grant award process to a loan program process in which the full CDBG award is repaid upon transfer of the property, certain refinance, or other significant events, and the program has an individual program cap of \$15,000.00 and a lifetime program cap of \$25,000.00.*

*Motion to initiate program change for CDBG Housing Rehabilitation projects initiated on or after January 1, 2025.*

Commissioner Schmelder made the motion which was seconded by Commissioner Hick. All were in favor and the Motion passed into the record. Commissioner Mills expressed interest in the application response with the changes and encouraged monitoring to make adjustments as needed.

The mayor and Commissioner Schmelder also advised the Board of the change to the Consolidated Plan Goals to move item #4 up to #3 to focus more on economic and community development. Commissioner Schmelder praised the ECD Staff and Board for the previous Consolidated Plan Goals with no exceptions noted by the organizers when the report was filed.

Justin Malley provided a brief background on the 5-Year plan for the benefit of the new Board members. The CDBG Policy Committee, ECD Board and City Council work to decide on where to direct the CDBG funds over those five years and using the 5-Year plan. Dr. Leger advised the Board that the most recent Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) for HUD was accepted.

## **V. New Business**

### **A. 894 Middle Street**

Justin Malley advised the Board that the Request for Proposals (RFP) for 894 Middle Street is live, along with a Press Release about the property. The Hartford Courant was on site for a story in response to the Press Release. The RFP is being sent through the city and Goman & York, with a January 7, 2025 deadline. There is a pre-bid meeting in early December.

### **B. ARPA Update**

Dawn Nielsen shared with the Board that remaining ARPA marketing funds will be used to create a video series highlighting how Bristol used ARPA funds differently to make a transformative impact to the city and its residents. One ARPA Task Force member will be grouped with one ARPA recipient and one community member that was impacted by the ARPA funded project. There will be fifteen short videos in a podcast style, released to social media and compiled into one longer video. This project highlights how Bristol used the ARPA funds in the community vs. city projects as was done in many towns in the state. This is also a creative approach to sharing the information out. Support for the video project was expressed by fellow ARPA members, Commissioners Goldwasser and Schmelder.

*Commissioner Schmelder excused himself at 5:47pm.*

### **C. Industrial Update**

Justin Malley shared a detailed topical map of the Southeast Bristol Business Park (SEBBP) and nearby properties. Horizon Stone received an extension for obtaining Lot #2. The current SEBBP businesses have another month to reply regarding the request to change the guidelines as voted on by the Board in previous months.

Lot #3 is under due diligence with FORCE Automation which is planning two buildings on the site with parking. FORCE works with other manufacturers who need automated production with robots that FORCE designs and manufactures for them.

Lot #6 was last with HEXI Corp. who has since concluded they're not in a position to move forward. Another manufacturer is now under due diligence to provide the ECD with

materials, including a business plan and proof of financing, by the December 2024 ECD Board Meeting. There are other interested businesses if this one doesn't come through.

Further discussion included the interest and possible uses of the SEBBP and neighboring properties. The wetlands area was noted as maintained by the city.

**D. Incentives Update**

Justin Malley summarized the Community Investment Corporation (CIC) quarterly report regarding the Revolving Loan Program applications, and loans awarded. The city will start to see loan payments coming in which is designed to make this program more self-sustaining.

The Façade Grant Program and Small Business Grant Program are both doing well with interest from area businesses and available funding in the program accounts.

**E. Downtown Update**

Justin Malley shared a map of Centre Square while reviewing plans and possible ideas for use of the available spaces. The Post Office and Police Station were also discussed. The city is open to ideas for a new Police Station and the Post Office locations. Mayor Caggiano shared some additional information about possible road straightening and park enhancements in the downtown area, with a need for more housing. Additional discussion included police patrols, electronic red light and speed monitoring, parking, events, restaurants, and downtown lighting to assist the additional walking traffic that the new downtown will bring.

**F. 2025 ECD Board Meeting Calendar**

Mayor Caggiano noted the change in meeting schedule for July 2025 due to the first Thursday of the month falling on July 3<sup>rd</sup> which could be a long weekend for many. The new meeting date is now Wednesday, July 9, 2025.

The mayor requested a motion to approve the proposed 2025 ECD Board Meeting Calendar. Commissioner Hick made the motion which was seconded by Commissioner Goldwasser. All were in favor and the meeting was accepted into the record.

**VI. New Business by Commissioners**

There was no New Business by the Commissioners.

**VII. Old Business by Commissioners**

There was no Old Business by the Commissioners.

**VIII. Committee Reports**

**B. City Council Member Report**

There was no City Council Member Report.

**IX. Adjournment**

Mayor Caggiano called for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Mills made the motion which was seconded by Commissioner Hick. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 6:11pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sharon Arsego  
Recording Secretary