

ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Regular Meeting Minutes

Thursday, December 5, 2024 5:00pm

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

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

ABSENT: Commissioner Cowdell

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

GUESTS: Charlie Talmadge of Development Planning Solutions, LLC
Mike Goman and Brad Senft of Goman + York Property Advisors, LLC (Zoom)

I. Call to Order

Mayor Caggiano called the meeting to order at 5pm and led all present in the Pledge of Allegiance. Introductions were made, with the mayor welcoming new Board Member, Laquita Kearney-Gonzales.

II. Public Participation

There was no Public Participation.

III. Approval of Minutes

A. Minutes of the November 7, 2024 Regular Meeting

Mayor Caggiano called for a motion to approve the Minutes from the November 7, 2024 Regular Meeting. The motion was made by Commissioner Schmelder and was seconded by Commissioner Mills. There were no changes, corrections or additions noted. The Minutes were passed into the record with one abstention by Commissioner Provenzano as she was absent at the November meeting.

Mayor Caggiano called for a motion to move Agenda Item **V. New Business C. Industrial Update** up for discussion at this time. The motion was made by Commissioner Hick and was seconded by Commissioner Provenzano. All were in favor, and Justin Malley invited Charlie Talmadge to begin the discussion on the FORCE Automation plan for Lot #3 in the Southeast Bristol Business Park (SEBBP).

Charlie Talmadge advised the Board of the aggressive timeline for the project, and a desired completion date of November 2025. Their team is completing the required paperwork and

presentations to the various city boards and commissions. Mr. Talmadge explained the unique work that FORCE Automation does, which encompasses building machines for other manufacturers using a unique, specific technology and equipment. FORCE Automation is also the only business sanctioned to teach the technology, which will bring students from all over the country to Bristol to acquire the learning.

Commissioner Schmelder asked Mr. Talmadge about his experience working with the city, specifically if it had been smooth or if it had become easier. Mr. Talmadge advised it had not. Commissioner Schmelder wanted this on the record, and encouraged the city to make the process more business friendly. Mayor Caggiano assured this was the city's goal as well. Some discussion continued, with concerns raised and comments made by Commissioner Mills and Provenzano, and Hick. Further offline discussion was encouraged, as well as looking at best practices both within Bristol and other Connecticut towns.

Justin Malley and Mr. Talmadge addressed the proposed building appearance for FORCE Automation, and the work being done to ensure that it meets the SEBBP Guidelines.

Justin Malley provided a brief update on Horizon Stone, Lot #2 in the SEBBP. They're moving forward, having received their 60-day approval to the minor changes to the SEBBP Guidelines. Additionally, in regard to Lot #6, the previously interested business was unable to provide the necessary information in the allotted time. Justin is now in discussions with a different, well-established manufacturer currently located outside of Bristol.

Mayor Caggiano called for a motion to move Agenda Item **V. New Business A. 894 Middle Street & Sessions Building Update** up for discussion at this time. The motion was made by Commissioner Schmelder and was seconded by Commissioner Mills. All were in favor, and Justin Malley invited Mike Goman and Brad Senft from Goman + York to provide an update on the two properties. Justin confirmed that the RFP for 894 Middle Street is out for bid, and the bids are due by the end of January 2025. He also noted a difference in the process for 894 Middle Street from the 273 Riverside Avenue (the Sessions Building) RFP.

Goman + York shared a brief presentation that included their firm's history, services, client groups, and their experience with similar assignments as 894 Middle Street and 273 Riverside Avenue. They noted that market and financial feasibility are central to making projects successful, with related data being crucial to a project's development. An overview of the RFP Process from preparation and bid reviews, recommendations and negotiations, and the development process timeline was provided. Mr. Goman advised of potential business options for the 894 Middle Street site based on the site's attributes and the market demand and sustainability.

Questions from the Board included hotels which are a viable option for this location, vs. apartment living which is not, how anticipated market changes will support activity for this area, and the Connecticut standards for remediation and how they're enforced for development. Dr.

Leger and Justin Malley confirmed the property is zoned for commercial industrial, but is safe for development such as a hotel.

Justin Malley advised that the city has received The Michaels Organization's financials for 273 Riverside Avenue, which will be reviewed with Goman + York and brought to the Downtown Committee and then to the full Board.

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, which was seconded by Commissioner Hick. All were in favor with no changes, questions or comments, and the Consent Agenda was accepted into the record.

V. New Business

B. 2025-2026 ECD Budget Preview

Justin Malley advised the Board that ECD staff has begun work on the 2025-2026 budget with a focus on efficiencies. The budget worksheet will be brought to the ECD Budget Committee in January.

D. Brownfields Update

Justin Malley highlighted Dr. Leger's success for securing a grant for 43 East Main Street in Forestville. The land is ideal for much-needed parking. The grant allows for continued assessment and remediation funding.

The ECD Staff continues to talk with the owner of the property formerly known as the Chic Miller property. Mayor Caggiano confirmed that Mr. Patel, the owner of the property, has yet to accept the \$1.1M interest free loan and will have two years from the time it is received to move forward with the property. If the owner doesn't move forward, the city will step in.

Justin Malley confirmed that 273 Riverside Avenue doesn't require utilities, which has eliminated the need for those expenditures.

E. Downtown Update

Mayor Caggiano advised that the development of a 28-unit, mixed use building in the former Mafaldes Plaza has been approved. He also added that the Post Office wants to stay where they are. The mayor has reached out to congressional contacts for input. This news narrows the city's focus, knowing that moving the Post Office isn't an option. There is conversation about the highly developmental land in the area by the new Wheeler Clinic building. The parking garage installation in that area is moving quickly. Center Square rentals for both residential and commercial tenants are doing well, and the foundation for the second building is in progress. It was also noted that RBI Cafe is newly opened across from Muzzy Field as of Thanksgiving Eve.

F. ARPA Update

Mayor Caggiano advised that December 31, 2024 is the deadline for the ARPA funds to be obligated. Funds will be rescinded as needed based on projects that haven't met the ARPA guidelines. The current plan is to reallocate those funds to backfill the money used for the Hope Street garage, and general downtown infrastructure, both of which are ECD Board projects. The ARPA fund spending deadline is in 2026.

G. 2025 ECD Board Meeting Calendar

Mayor Caggiano clarified the amended change for the September 2026 meeting to be held in Meeting Room 1-3 as Council Chambers is currently reserved for early voting on what would be the ECD meeting day. The motion was brought by Commissioner Mills and seconded by Commissioner Schmelder. All were in favor, and the amended 2025 meeting schedule was accepted into the record.

VI. New Business by Commissioners

Commissioner Schmelder expressed his appreciation to the Board and ECD staff for their support as he navigated recent and difficult health issues.

Commissioner Hick encouraged the support of all the new and existing area businesses in Bristol and Forestville. Mayor Caggiano encouraged the Board and the public to share and highlight their visits to various city businesses and events through social media posts, and among their social circles.

Justin Malley highlighted Dawn Nielsen's instrumental involvement with a recent social media influencer's visit of choice to Bristol. NatalieXTravels posted her visits to Iron Horse, Cafe Real, Creative Art Jam, and others. Dawn Nielsen added that the visit was made possible by the State of Connecticut's Western CT Tourism District. NatalieXTravels specifically requested to visit Bristol, the agency set it up, and Dawn contacted the businesses to help facilitate. Additional reels of the interactions will be posted shortly.

Justin Malley also spoke to Dr. Dawn Leger successfully submitted the Open Space Grant for the land known as The Hoppers, and it was completed on a tight deadline. There is a letter of intent from the State regarding the purchase of the land with a contribution from the city to maintain the property going forward. The mayor praised the efforts of all who assisted in these efforts.

VII. Old Business by Commissioners

There was no Old Business by Commissioners.

VIII. Committee Reports

A. City Council Member Report

There was no City Council Member Report.

IX. Adjournment

Mayor Caggiano called for a motion to adjourn. The motion was made by Commissioner Mills which was seconded by Commissioner Hick. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 6:21pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sharon Arsego
Recording Secretary