

Diversity Council Regular Meeting
Tuesday, November 26 2024 at 6:30pm
Hybrid In-Person and Zoom Meeting
Meeting Room 1-2, City Hall, 111 N. Main St., Bristol, CT

Attendees: Marcus Patton – Interim Chair, Council Members Sandra Kamens, Tony Lopes (Zoom), Jeff Israel, and David Rackliffe.

Absent: City Council Member, Mark Dickau

Guests: Arianna Therriault - City of Bristol Arts and Culture Supervisor (Zoom)
Maxine Bowden – Executive Director, Paradigm Arts and Culture Foundation (Zoom)

1. Call to Order

The Interim Chair called the meeting to order at 6:34pm. A quorum was present.

2. Approval of Minutes

a. September 24, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes

b. October 22, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes

The Minutes from both meetings were discussed in regards to clarification on the item regarding which city groups were receiving city funding. It was initially recorded that the HIV/AIDS Task Force was. The Zoom meeting recording was reviewed again and the Minutes should be corrected to state that no city groups are receiving city funds. Mayor Caggiano had stated at the September 2024 Diversity Council Meeting that the HIV/AIDS Task Force had been the only group receiving funds when he came in as Mayor and he decided to not fund any city groups across the board.

Council Member Rackliffe made a motion to approve the September 24, 2024 meeting minutes with the correction as noted above. The motion was seconded by Council Member Kamens. There were no other changes noted for those minutes. All were in favor and the amended Minutes were accepted into the record.

Interim Chair made the motion to approve the October 22, 2024 meeting minutes. There were no changes requested. The motion was seconded by Council Member Kamens. All were in favor and the Minutes were accepted into the record.

3. Public Participation

Interim Chair Patton introduced Arianna Therriault - City of Bristol Arts and Culture Supervisor, who he had spoken with ahead of the meeting and invited to speak to the Council. Ms. Therriault emphasized the Rockwell Theater inside the Bristol Arts Innovative Magnet school on Memorial Boulevard, and the summer concert series and her role as liaison for the Arts and Culture Commission. Part of her role is to schedule theater events. She and Interim Chair Patton

has discussed welcoming the council members as volunteers at these events. Volunteers are welcome at all events, including the \$5 movie nights, and with these larger events. Ms. Therriault referenced the new downtownlive.com site and then introduced Maxine Bowden – Executive Director, Paradigm Arts and Culture Foundation who also joined on Zoom.

Paradigm is bringing a Jazz, R&B and Neo-Soul art event to the Rockwell Theater on January 18, 2025. Ms. Bowden spoke to the Council about their In My Element Series which is The Soul Session event in January. The group is not limited to any one area of the state, preferring to go where they are needed. This Soul Session event celebrates, highlights and authentically represents black and indigenous people of color and their culture. The music portion is also supported by visual arts and spoken word artists. There will also be a tribute to Dr. King with this event on Martin Luther King Day weekend. Volunteers are needed for the various event aspects such as setup, guest assistance and post event activities.

Interim Chair Patton encouraged the Council to reach out to him with their availability which he would share with Ms. Therriault. This opportunity to assist is part of the discussion the Council has had regarding strengthening connections within existing groups in the community. The Arts & Culture Commission Meeting is the first Wednesday of each month at 6:30pm in Room 1-3.

Mayor Caggiano joined the meeting at 6:54pm.

Council Member Israel spoke to an idea he'd like to revisit which was to provide canvases to various groups in the community and ask them to share what their idea of diversity is in an artistic rendering. This would help both with information gathering as well as creating an art installment, perhaps for the Rockwell Theater. The Council agreed this was an idea to pursue. Council Member Israel will write up a proposal for the project and a partnership with the Arts and Culture Council.

Mayor Caggiano mentioned the free Community Conversation in January 2025 with the return of 1 Degree of Separation. They're a comedy group that uses humor to reach people regarding mental health and suicide, both raising awareness and offering support to those with mental health concerns as well as their families and friends.

4. Current Business

a. 2025 Diversity Council Meeting Dates (Voting Required)

Fourth Tuesday of the Month:

Jan 28, Feb 25, Mar 25, Apr 22, May 27, Jun 24,
Jul 22, Aug 26, Sep 23, Oct 28, Nov 25, Dec 23

The proposed 2025 Diversity Council Meeting Schedule was amended to move the September 2025 meeting from the 23rd to the 30th as the original date coincides with Rosh Hashanah. They Council also decided not to hold a December meeting in 2025. It was discussed that if the Council needs to meet anytime between regular meetings, they can hold a Special Meeting where only the items on the agenda can be discussed. This

includes this year as well, as there is no December 2024 meeting but the January 18, 2025 event at the Rockwell Theater is a volunteer event.

Council Member Rackliffe made the motion to accept the 2025 meeting calendar with the noted changes of no December 2025 meeting and moving the September 2025 meeting to the 30th. The motion was seconded by Council Member Kamens. All were in favor and the schedule was approved into the record. The Recording Secretary will amend the form needed for the Town Clerk and provide it to the Interim Chair for his signature.

b. Upcoming Bristol Events and Celebrations

Where and How Can Diversity Council Assist?

Melina Floyd was in attendance and joined the discussion at this time. Ms. Floyd is a human rights activist recently returned to Bristol and has a deep desire to foster inclusive conversation and communication for the community, especially in speaking out against racism, colorism, white supremacy, individually and as a whole, and how they affect one's mental health. She especially wants to hear from people regarding their daily experiences while living and working in Bristol and ways that can be improved upon. Ms. Floyd has plans for an event in December or January and will share the finalized details with the Diversity Council.

Interim Chair Patton gave a brief overview of where the Diversity Council has been since the summer and moving forward. The Diversity Council's Facebook page was discussed as well as access to the Diversity Council's email. Discussion continued regarding partnering with Ms. Floyd regarding marketing and fundraising, and the idea of holding a conference with dignitaries of the city. The overall goal of connecting the Council with existing city groups and organizations, both as volunteers and with a common goal of building community even further was also discussed.

Additional events of note:

December 6th and 7th – Evangelism Boot Camp at Bridge Community Church, Bristol
December 8th - Bristol Brass is holding Sounds of the Season at Bristol Eastern High School
December 15th - Bristol Chorale is presenting Love & Joy at Bristol Central High School
January 5th – Bristol Forestville Trivia at the library
January 18th – The Soul Session at the Rockwell Theater
February 1st – The Legacy of Bristol Resident Philip Jenkins at the Bristol Public Library

Mayor Caggiano noted that the tree lighting event previously held by the Bristol Parks and Recreation Department will not be held this year.

Interim Chair Patton was unable to locate details on the annual NAACP Bristol, CT Chapter's annual MLK Day event usually held at the New England Carousel Museum.

These events were highlighted both to encourage general attendance, but also as opportunities for the Diversity Council members to attend and represent the Council. This is part of the volunteering efforts the Council is looking to implement. T-shirts were discussed as a means to show Council member recognition when at these events.

c. Liaison Assignments (Examples)

- West End Association
- Pine Lake Association
- Arts and Culture
- Interfaith
- Parks, Rec, Youth and Community Services
- More

Interim Chair Patton referenced previous discussions of Council members attending city meetings, using the Public Participation time in those meetings to introduce themselves and make an inquiry into how the Diversity Council could be of service to the community. Interim Chair Patton will be attending the monthly City Council Meetings, and the remaining Council members were asked to look at the available lists of meetings and see what works best for their schedules.

5. New Business

a. Constructing a Mission/Value Statement (Service Examples)

- Resource Guide
- Community Expansion
- Platform for Celebration and Worship
- Community Resource Groups (CRGs)

Council Member Israel asked how the Council members should present themselves. This led to the discussion of the Council's Mission/Value Statement, the Resource Guide, community expansion, celebration of all Bristol residents, and uniting the various groups already functioning in town.

The Diversity Council's current Mission, Vision and Purpose Statements as they appear on the City's website:

MISSION:

The Diversity Council will engage the community of Bristol as ambassadors of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

VISION:

To cultivate an environment that embraces multi-cultural differences in a welcoming and open space.

PURPOSE:

Our purpose is to engage with the Bristol community and City Departments to create

awareness, access and opportunities that will support an inclusive environment for all Bristol residents and business owners.

OBJECTIVES:

- * Connect with residents and business owners of Bristol to provide them opportunities to voice their experiences.
- * Coordinate with City Departments and staff on justice, equity, diversity and inclusion best practices they should be considering when making decisions.
- * Identify inequities in City policies and procedures and coordinate with City leaders to dismantle systematic barriers.
- * Create opportunities for cultural awareness and bringing the community together to celebrate diversity.

Guest Melina Floyd suggested the following as a possible mission statement:

To unite leaders and residents for initiatives that will enhance multicultural understanding and appreciation of diversity.

Council Member Rackliffe added the motto: “Unity in the Community”

Mayor Caggiano excused himself at 8:10pm

Additional discussion included fundraising, following city ordinances for party representation on the Council, member attendance, and that becoming a Task Force is still under consideration.

6. Adjournment

At this time a motion to adjourn was made by the Interim Chair. The motion was seconded by Council member Lopes. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 8:18pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sharon Arsego
Recording Secretary