ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Regular Meeting Minutes
Thursday, January 9, 2025 5:00pm
Meeting Room 1-3 (Room 111), City Hall, 111 N. Main Street and on Zoom

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

ABSENT: Commissioner Provenzano

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

GUESTS: Charlie Talmadge of Development Planning Solutions, LLC
Attorney Timothy Furey of Furey, Donovan, Cooney & Dyer, PC
Meg Close, Andrea Keeney, and Jack McGovern of The Michaels Organization
Louis Silva of Community Investment Corp.

I. Call to Order

Mayor Caggiano called the meeting to order at 5:00pm, and led all present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Public Participation

Donald Palaia, 15 Magnolia Ave., Bristol, CT spoke regarding the property on East Main in Forestville. It's his understanding that three parcels of land will soon belong to the City of Bristol. This includes the area where Connecticut DEEP's fish hatchery stocks the Pequabuck River. Mr. Palaia owns land in the immediate area and provided suggestions for business groupings for Forestville, CT that could create a feel similar to the center of Collinsville, CT. Discussion followed with Mayor Caggiano suggesting that Mr. Palaia first reach out to the Real Estate Commission, followed by possible private sale and then also the city's Parks and Rec Dept.

Michael J. Dudko, 116 Lewis Rd., Bristol, CT spoke regarding the Southeast Bristol Business Park (SEEBP) with concerns about development on Lot #3 which he believes is too close to the wetlands. He also submitted, and read, a letter requesting Intervener Status per the Connecticut General State Statutes CGS 22a-19(a). Mr. Dudko had previously provided this letter to the ECD Industrial Committee on January 8, 2025, and stated he had provided it to the DEEP and the Inlands and Wetlands Commission.

There was no further Public Participation.

Mayor Caggiano called for a motion to move Agenda Item **VIII. Committee Reports, A. Industrial Committee Report** up for immediate discussion. The motion was made by Commissioner Schmelder and was seconded by Commissioner Mills. All were in favor and Item VIII. Committee Reports, A. Industrial Committee Report came into discussion.

VIII. Committee Reports

A. Industrial Committee Report

Mayor Caggiano advised, as he had at the Industrial Committee meeting, that Mr. Dudko's letter requesting Intervenor Status isn't appropriate for the ECD Board, but rather the city's Inlands and Wetlands Commission. For this Board, the discussion is about the proposed FORCE Automation building for Lot #3 in the Southeast Bristol Business Park (SEBBP) and it fitting into existing SEBBP Guidelines.

Justin Malley presented the Board with the building's minimum square footage which is the one guideline item that needs to be reviewed and why. Discussion followed regarding the lot size, as well as FORCE Automation's work with robotics with specs that support other manufacturer's requests and production. The proposed building façade was also shown and discussed.

Attorney Timothy Furey and Charlie Talmadge offered additional information to the Board on behalf of FORCE Automation. This included addressing the wetland concerns expressed by Mr. Dudko. They also clarified that all future requests and plans for Lot #3 would need to come before the Board for review. Attorney Furey and Charlie Talmadge asked the Board to approve the size and location proposed for the buildings.

Mayor Caggiano called for a motion to waive the reading of the five proposed motions on this item due to their lengthiness. These same motions had been presented, read, discussed, and voted on at the ECD Industrial Committee Special Meeting on January 8, 2025.

Commissioners not on the Industrial Committee read the motions before a vote was taken. Commissioner Goldwasser assured the Board that the Industrial Committee heavily vetted each motion. There were no additional questions and the vote was taken.

Commissioner Goldwasser (also on the Industrial Committee) made the motion to waive the reading of the five proposed motions. That was seconded by Commissioner Cowdell (also on the Industrial Committee). All were in favor and the reading of the motions was waived.

The proposed motions were as follows:

Proposed Motion #1

Motion to waive the minimum building coverage requirement of 20% as indicated in the Southeast Bristol Business Park Design Guidelines and Regulations for the site plan for FORCE Automation Inc. on Lot 3 of the Southeast Bristol Business Park, as the lot's significant percentage of wetlands limits the total buildable square footage, which is considered an "extraordinary circumstance" per the Guidelines.

Proposed Motion #2

Motion to approve the site plan, landscaping plan, lighting plan, and building elevation plan dated December 3, 2024 titled "Improvement Location Survey – Proposed: Lot 3-3 Force Automation Business Park Drive" representing the new construction project for FORCE Automation Inc. on Lot 3 of the Southeast Bristol Business Park that includes construction of an approximately 30,000 square foot building and associated parking/loading area known as Phase I and construction of an approximately 12,000 square foot building and associated parking/loading area known as Phase II.

Proposed Motion #3
Motion that Economic and Community Development staff must report to the Economic and Community Development Board details on final construction of Lot 3, including the mounting of building signage and final building façade materials, to ensure these activities align with the Southeast Bristol Business Park Design Guidelines and Regulations.

Proposed Motion #4
Motion to approve the occupancy of FORCE Automation, a high technology design and manufacturing firm, for the Phase I building.

Proposed Motion #5
Motion that future tenants other than FORCE Automation occupying Phase I and/or Phase II of Lot 3 seek approval to occupy these spaces by the Economic and Community Development Board to ensure alignment with the Southeast Bristol Business Park Design Guidelines and Regulations

Mayor Caggiano asked the Board to entertain a motion to approve the five proposed motions as they have been reviewed and were approved in the Industrial Committee. Commissioner Schmelder put forward the motion to approve. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Mills. All were in favor and the motions were accepted into the record.

Mayor Caggiano called for a motion to move to Agenda Item **V. New Business, A. 273 Riverside Avenue Update.** Commissioner Schmelder made the motion which was seconded by Commissioner Mills. All were in favor and Item V. New Business, A. 273 Riverside Avenue was moved up for discussion.

V. New Business

A. 273 Riverside Avenue Update

Meg Close, Andrea Keeney, and Jack McGovern of The Michaels Organization attended and presented on Zoom. The Michaels Organization is the current developer of interest for 273 Riverside Avenue aka The Sessions Building. They have been in discussion with the State of Connecticut regarding funding for the affordable workforce housing proposed for that location.

The state advised that funding is dependent on the flexibility of adjusting the proposed percentage of the Average Medium Income (AMI) deck. This means a balance of approximately eighty-one (81), 1- and 2-bedroom units from 30% to 100% AMI which expands the AMI range from the original project. The AMI is calculated using Hartford County AMI numbers which are higher than those for Bristol alone. Among benefits of this AMI deck change is more State funding available which would reduce the city's portion of funding for the project. Discussion followed.

Consensus among the Board was that expanding the AMI range was a good idea, and should be pursued further. Justin Malley and Mayor Caggiano will speak with Corporation Counsel regarding clarification of the RFP parameters in regards to the change.

Commissioner Goldwasser excused himself at 6:00pm.

Mayor Caggiano requested a motion to continue with New Business. The motion was made by Commissioner Hick and was seconded by Commissioner Cowdell. All were in favor, and the Board continued with **V. New Business, B. Revolving Loan Fund Program Update.**

V. New Business

B. Revolving Loan Fund Program Update

Louis Silva, President and CEO of Community Investment Corp., and partner with the City of Bristol, joined on Zoom and presented a report on the Revolving Loan program applications and awards activity.

Highlights from the report include 46 loan inquiries with 5 closed transactions totaling $157,500, representing an average loan size of $35,000. Industries and businesses assisted include Edgewood Liquors (liquor retailer), Alloy Welding (manufacturer), 10 Main Street Cafe (food service), Amy Chase - State Farm (insurance agency), and Dark Moon (a specialty goods retailer). Two of those businesses are located in the City of Bristol's Enterprise Zone.

Some applications were either denied, withdrawn by the borrower, or deemed ineligible. The most common reason for not moving forward was the applicant not meeting the minimum credit score of 675. Other ineligible applicants included those not located in Bristol with no plans to relocate here, home businesses not interested in moving to a commercial space, and landlords looking for funds to improve their investment properties.

Additionally, there is approximately $495,000 remaining for FY25 and there are no payment delinquencies. Everyone is being responsive and receptive to the program. The bulk of the application volume was in the last calendar quarter of 2024. A 4th quarter report will provided for future review.

The mayor requested a motion to move to **Agenda Item VIII. Committee Reports, B. Budget Committee**. Commissioner Schmelder made the motion which was seconded by Commissioner Hick. All were in favor and the Board continued to Agenda Item VIII. Committee Reports, B. Budget Committee.

VIII. Committee Reports

B. Budget Committee

Commissioner Schmelder advised the Board that the Budget Committee met prior to the ECD Board Meeting, and reviewed each budget line item. All were in agreement with the proposed ECD Budget for the 2025-2026 year with a mostly flat budget from the prior year. Salaries are the only items with expected to increase based on contract negotiations. The employee health benefits line item shows an increase per notification from the Office of the Comptroller after meeting with providers. There were no questions from the Board.

Commissioner Schmelder made the motion to approve the proposed budget as follows:

Motion to approve the ECD FY 2025-2026 budget request as recommended by the Budget Committee on January 9, 2025 and to submit to the Comptroller's Office for revisions if necessary.

Commissioner Mills seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed into the record.

Justin Malley commented that the budget review includes the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) projects and funding (HUD provided grant money). Commissioners Hick and Schmelder added that CDBG funds subsidize staff salaries as well as the residential rehabilitation and community service grants. Mayor Caggiano added that the CDBG program adds value to the city and the grand list.

Commissioner Schmelder excused himself from the meeting at 6:18pm.

At this time the mayor returned to the regular scheduled meeting agenda order.

III. Approval of Minutes

A. Minutes of the January 9, 2025 Regular Meeting

Mayor Caggiano called for a motion to approve the Minutes of the January 9, 2025 Regular Meeting. Commissioner Hick made the motion which was seconded by Commissioner Cowdell. 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

The mayor called for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion was made by Commissioner Mills and was seconded by Commissioner Hick. There were no questions or comments. All were in favor and the Consent Agenda was accepted into the record.

V. New Business

C. 894 Middle Street Update

Justin Malley advised the Board that one proposal from the Carrier Group was received in response to the 894 Middle St. RFP. The project is an industrial condo with units available to a range of businesses from electricians to sports. The goal is to work with the Carrier Group to vet the project details and consider next steps.

D. CDBG Year 51 Report

Dr. Dawn Leger reported that the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) applications for the FY51 grant season are currently available online. They are a fillable PDF document. The application deadline is 1:00pm on Friday, January 31, 2025. The first public hearing for applicants to speak to their requests is scheduled for February 10, 2025. ECD is often made aware of awarded funds from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) late in the process, and the applications are accepted and reviewed now for when the funds are awarded.

Dr. Leger advised that the 5-Year Consolidated Plan is in progress. A public meeting is scheduled for January 21, 2025 to begin the FY51 conversation and process. The first rough draft of the plan is available online. The draft is built with information from various sources and then submitted to HUD in August 2025.

Dr. Leger also shared a summary of approved grants for the city and various departments.

The mayor called for a motion to approve the CDBG Report. The motion was made by Commissioner Mills and was seconded by Commissioner Hick. There were no additional questions or comments. All were in favor and the report was accepted into the record.

E. BOF Transfer Request

Mayor Caggiano called for the reading of the motion for the BOF Transfer Request. Commissioner Hick read the proposed motion as follows:

Motion to transfer $3,000 from the Fair Housing/Planning account #1044103-587902-G2025 to the Advertising account #1044103-557700-G2025 and to forward to the Board of Finance.

Commissioner Cowdell seconded the motion. Dr. Leger clarified that they hadn't accounted for the additional advertising needed for the 5-Year Consolidated Plan process this year. She found $3,000 in an account that is not needed in the line item where it currently sits, making this BOF Transfer Request possible.

There were no additional comments and no questions. All were in favor and the Motion was accepted into the record.

F. Strategic Plan

Mayor Caggiano shared that the city is working to bring together a five, ten, fifteen-year strategic plan that includes the city departments of Planning, the ECD, Board of Finance, and the CIP Strategic Group. The plan includes Forestville and areas outside downtown Bristol. Justin Malley added that they're working closely with the Comptroller on this as well. Next steps would be to bring in other departments. Each Department Head would be tasked with working with their Boards and Commissions to look at long range goals. Ideas are welcome and should be brought to Justin Malley for consideration.

The mayor called for a motion to accept the Strategic Plan report. The motion was made by Commissioner Hick and seconded by Commissioner Mills. All were in favor and the report was accepted into the record.

VI. New Business by Commissioners

Commissioner Kearney-Gonzales spoke regarding The Soul Session event scheduled for Saturday, January 18, 2025 at Downtown Live at the Rockwell Theater on Memorial Boulevard. This is a one-of-a-kind cultural celebration with musicians, visual and spoken word artists. The event is sponsored by both Downtown Live and Paradigm Arts and Culture, with great support from the Arts and Culture Commission. Marketing has included online pieces as well as an interview with TV's Ann Nyberg. City Council Member Cheryl Thibeault also spoke, requesting the Board members share out the event details and also attend.

Dawn Nielsen announced that John Beardsley is returning to perform his well-received performance, a tribute to Elvis, at Downtown Live December 13, 2025. There is also a Downtown Live Sponsorship package piece available to help support the theater in the community. She also invited Board members to join them at Stop and Shop on Farmington Avenue in Bristol at 1:00pm to welcome CLYNK to Bristol. CLYNK is a new way for residents to more easily recycle bottles and cans, and Bristol is their first Connecticut location. There will also be a short tour of Recycle X that day, as the sole redemption center for all the Connecticut CLYNKs. Discussion about the CLYNK process and benefit to both residents and the city followed.

There was no other New Business by Commissioners.

VII. Old Business by Commissioners

There was no Old Business by Commissioners.

VIII. Committee Reports

B. City Council Member Report

City Council Member Mark Dickau reported that he had attended that morning's Regional Economic Development breakfast with the mayor and Justin. He shared that it was encouraging to hear what's happening in surrounding towns. Discussion about some of those projects were discussed.

IX. Adjournment

With no further items to discuss, the mayor called for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Mills made the motion which was seconded by Commissioner Hick. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 6:48pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sharon Arsego
Recording Secretary