



City of Bristol
Economic and Community Development Board
INFORMATION TO ACCESS THIS MEETING

<https://bristolct-gov.zoom.us/j/88677210794?pwd=M2xITXBOVIRsSDROR1VlSmtnbmdudz09>

Meeting ID: 886 7721 0794

Passcode: 379107

The regular ECD Board Meeting will be held on Thursday, March 6, 2025 at 5:00pm in City Council Chambers, City Hall, 111 North Main Street, Bristol, CT.

- I. Call to Order
- II. Public Participation
- III. Approval of Minutes
 - A. Minutes of the February 6, 2025 Regular Meeting
- IV. Consent Agenda
 - A. Communications
 - B. Economic Development/Grants/Marketing Report
- V. New Business
 - A. Industrial Update
 - B. Marketing Report
 - C. BOF Transfer Request
 - D. Incentives Discussion
- VI. New Business By Commissioners
- VII. Old Business by Commissioners

VIII. Committee Reports

- A. CDBG Policy Committee
- B. City Council Member Report

IX. Executive Session

- A. 894 Middle Street Proposal

X. Adjournment

PER ORDER OF THE CHAIRPERSON

Jeff Caggiano
Mayor

ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Regular Meeting

Minutes

Thursday, February 6, 2025

5:00pm

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

- ATTENDEES:** Mayor Caggiano, Commissioner Schmelder (Zoom), Council Member Dickau, Commissioners Provenzano, Mills, Goldwasser (Zoom), Hick, Cowdell, and Kearney- Gonzales
- ABSENT:** None
- STAFF PRESENT:** Justin Malley - Executive Director, Dr. Dawn Leger - Grants Administrator, and Dawn Nielsen - Marketing & Public Relations Specialist (Zoom)
- GUESTS:** Attorney Timothy Furey of Furey, Donovan, Cooney & Dyer, PC
- I. Call to Order**
Mayor Caggiano called the meeting to order at 5:00pm, and led all present in the Pledge of Allegiance. A quorum was in attendance.
- II. Public Participation**
There was no Public Participation
- III. Approval of Minutes**
A. Minutes of the February 6, 2025 Regular Meeting
The mayor called for a motion to approve the meeting Minutes from February 6, 2025. Commissioner Mills made the motion to approve. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hick. Commissioner Provenzano abstained as she had been absent at the meeting. There were no changes or edits to the minutes. All were in favor and the Minutes were accepted into the record.
- IV. Consent Agenda**
A. Communications
B. Economic Development/Grants/Marketing Report
Commissioner Goldwasser called for a motion to file the Consent Agenda. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Schmelder. All were in favor and the Consent Agenda was accepted into the record.
- V. New Business**
A. Marketing Report
Dawn Nielsen shared an update on the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) testimonial videos project. Commissioner Goldwasser was impressed with the facilities at Urban Studios in Bristol

where the videos were recorded. All videos are part of the ARPA funding recap highlighting the transformative changes made in Bristol as a result of the awarded ARPA funds.

Dawn Nielsen then unveiled a new social media marketing campaign: “Home Based to Commercial Space”. The goal of this campaign is to give credit to the small businesses who start at home and move to commercial spaces. KA Matthias Cleaning Services and WorthWhile Reads are among the first in the posts. The list of businesses in this category is growing and the ECD staff welcomes additional listings be provided to them.

An update on the WORX Survey project was provided. The survey is a component of the city’s marketing focused on those 24 to 34 years old. The WORX team will be at the March 2025 ECD Board Meeting to share additional information on the survey results. High level items of note include key trends and insights, such as that demographics preferred sources of information, their preference for data and metrics, and lifestyle attributes such as culture, community and social connections. Discussion followed, including the beneficial uses of the results and how to best apply it to the marketing messages for this demographic.

B. Budget Updates

Justin Malley advised that there wasn’t an update as planned. His meeting to discuss the proposed 2026 ECD Budget was rescheduled to February 7, 2025.

C. BOF Transfer Request

The motion to approve the Board of Finance (BOF) Transfer Request was made by Commissioner Mills.

Mayor Caggiano read the following proposed motion:

Motion to transfer \$70,000 from the Residential Rehab – Single Family account #1044102-587100-G2025 to the Residential Rehab – Multifamily account #1044102-587105-G2025 and to forward to the Board of Finance.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hick. All were in favor and the Motion passed into the record.

D. Zoning Regulations

Justin Malley advised the Board that based on some projects that have been in discussion, businesses such as plumbers and security companies, aren’t easily defined when looking for business space in the city. The search for space applies to businesses in Bristol already, and those drawn to moving here. Justin is meeting with the Zoning Board to look at modifying the definition of those types of business, and then about opening up spaces in various zones.

E. Industrial Update

Justin Malley provided an update on various projects. The update included the lots for FORCE Automation, Horizon Stone, and a business most recently in talks for Lot #6. ECD Staff is helping connect interested parties to the private owner of property on Miner Rd. Justin has also been working with Mr. Damaris on a project for his lot in the industrial park that, as currently proposed, would include a portion of city land.

F. Downtown Update

Pure Foods will have a soft opening in their new Centre Square location on Monday, February 10, 2025. Dark Moon, the gift and home décor store next to Prue Foods, will have a soft opening Friday, February 7, 2025. Progress continues for Ventanas, the new Caribbean restaurant opening in the former Better Half Brewing location. Other new businesses are in talks with the ECD staff. Details will be made public when it is appropriate to do so. The mayor noted that the Chippanee Golf Club restaurant is more actively marketing to the public with a focus on an elegant dining experience.

VI. New Business by Commissioners

There was no New Business by Commissioners.

VII. Old Business by Commissioners

Commissioner Goldwasser asked about the Bridge encampment on Route 72. Mayor Caggiano said it is a work in progress. The State of Connecticut putting \$58.5 Million of opioid settlement funds into cleaning up encampments. Per the Governor, the State's program was mirrored after Bristol's. The mayor has hopes for more permanent clean up through housing and related services as spring arrives.

Commissioner Goldwasser also asked about the former Chic Miller location. Attorney Timothy Furey of Furey, Donovan, Cooney & Dyer, PC spoke, advising the Board that the property owner has returned from a trip, and Attorney Furey is hopeful close on the loan for the environmental cleanup within the next two weeks.

VIII. Committee Reports

A. CDBG Policy Committee

Dr. Dawn Leger advised the Board that the Policy Committee held a Public Hearing regarding the 5-Year Consolidated Plan. No members of the public were present, but there was a good discussion and a decision regarding a shift in the guidelines (used when the Policy Committee reviews the CDBG applications): Workforce Development was moved up to #3 and Public Facilities was moved down to #4. The shift was due to the lack of funding for the Public Facilities projects. The amount of HUD funding, and its status going forward, are not yet known. It was noted that a new Director has been named to HUD.

B. City Council Member Report

There was no City Council Member Report

IX. Executive Session

A. 894 Middle Street Proposal

The mayor called for a motion to move the Board into Executive Session. Commissioner Mills made the motion which was seconded by Commissioner Provenzano. All were in favor, and the Executive Session began at 5:43pm.

The mayor called for motion for the Board to return to its regular meeting. Commissioner Mills made the motion which was seconded by Commissioner Provenzano. All were in favor and the ECD Regular Board meeting returned to session at 7:01pm.

Note: A quorum was in attendance again after Executive Session. No votes were taken while in Executive Session.

Commissioner Cowdell put forward the following Motion:

I make a motion to table the offer from Carrier Construction Incorporated on January 7th for one month to explore further per square foot value.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Goldwasser. All were in favor, and the Motion was accepted into the record.

X. Adjournment

The mayor entertained a motion to adjourn. The motion was made by Commissioner Schmelder and seconded by Commissioner Mills. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 7:03pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Sharon Arsego
Recording Secretary



Southern Police Department
Seth Tichenor

West Hartford man arrested for impersonating Southington officer

BRIAN M. JOHNSON
@BRIANJOHNSONBP

SOUTHINGTON — A West Hartford man was arrested Sunday for impersonating an officer.

Southington Police officers responded Sunday at 3:57 p.m. to the Stop and Shop at 505 N. Main St. where there was a verbal argument between patrons in the parking lot.

“Officers determined an adult male, later identified as Seth Tichenor, of West Hartford, had left the scene prior to officers’ arrival,” the report states. “Statements were gathered from the adult victim and a witness that Tichenor had identified himself as a Southington police officer and provided a badge number to further identify himself.”

Tichenor was charged with impersonation of a police officer and breach of peace. He was taken into custody and released after posting a \$50,000 bond. He will appear in New Britain Superior Court on Feb. 14.

Plainville schools propose 4.75% budget increase

BRIAN M. JOHNSON
@BRIANJOHNSONBP

PLAINVILLE — Plainville Superintendent of Schools Brian Reas is proposing a 4.75% increase to this year’s education budget.

The previous education budget for fiscal year 2024-2025 totaled \$45.28 million. The proposed education budget for fiscal year 2025-2026 is \$47.43

million. This is an increase of \$2.15 million or 4.75%.

Reas said one of the main drivers of the increase were changes to health insurance. Before the health insurance change, the proposed budget for 2025-2026 would have been \$46.91 million. This would have been a \$1.64 million or 3.61% increase. Health insurance costs increased from \$6.86 million in the 2024-2025

budget to \$7.37 million in the 2025-2026 budget. This is an increase of \$514,481 or 7.5%. Other area school districts are also seeing major increases in insurance costs.

“On Nov. 18, the state projected the fiscal year 2026 increase at 8 to 10% plus or minus a county adjustment ranging between (-3%) to +2%, so worst case projection is

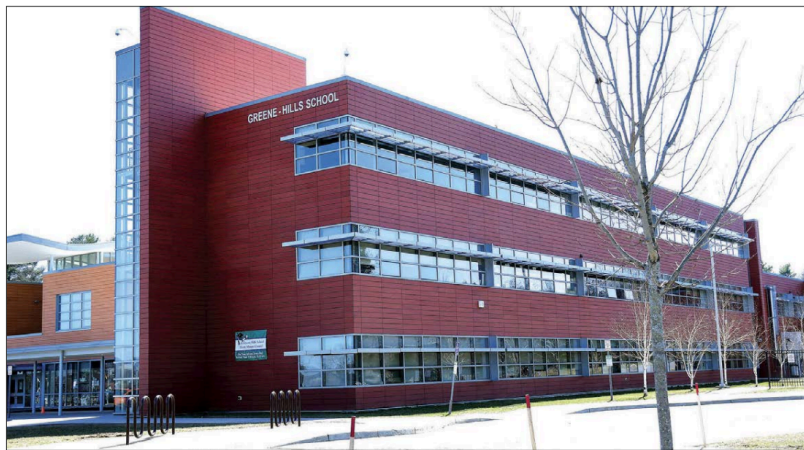
See INSURANCE ON PAGE 4



Plainville High School

FILE

RISING COSTS



The Greene-Hills School in Bristol. Bristol Public Schools has proposed a 12.58% budget increase.

FILE

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Bristol Schools propose 12.58% budget increase

BRIAN M. JOHNSON
@BRIANJOHNSONBP

BRISTOL — Acting Superintendent of Schools Iris White has proposed an education budget with a 12.58% increase, which she acknowledged is “higher than what is typically

seen” but said is “a necessary investment” for success in the district.

White has proposed a school budget of \$146.95 million, which is an increase of \$16.41 million or 12.58% over the 2024-2025 budget of \$130.53 million. She elaborated on the

logistics that went into shaping this year’s budget in a letter to the Board of Education.

“This proposal underscores the need for additional resources to address the team’s best plans to accelerate teaching and learning in the 2025-2026 school year,”

she said. “It is a necessary investment to ensure the continued success and growth of our students and the community, and it promises a brighter future for all.”

White acknowledged that the increase is higher than what is typically seen in Bristol. She said

that there were several drivers for the increase, including fixed costs and program improvements. The following are the top five drivers:

— 58.65% of the total budget is comprised of salaries and benefits. The wage line item increased

See BRISTOL ON PAGE 4

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Dark Moon at 102 N. Main St. in Bristol.

Dark Moon

Dark Moon gift shop opening in new downtown Bristol space

BRIAN M. JOHNSON
@BRIANJOHNSONBP

BRISTOL — A new gift shop, Dark Moon, is opening this weekend downtown, offering a variety of unique gifts and showcasing the talent of area artists.

Dark Moon is located

in Centre Square Village at 102 N. Main St., across from city hall and next door to Pure Foods’ new location. The shop is owned by Dorothy Perkins, who said that the development downtown made her want to open in Bristol.

“I did a lot of search-

ing and decided that with Centre Square Village opening and more residential units coming to Bristol, I wanted to join in on the revitalization,” she said. “I live close by and I wanted to be a part of Bristol’s vibrant community.”

See DOWNTOWN ON PAGE 4



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Insurance spike driving Plainville budget up

Continued from Page 1
a 10% increase," Reas said.

Reas said the higher projection is based on use of the plans in the first quarter of fiscal year 2025, which he said has "increased significantly" for both medical and prescription costs. Overall rates will be finalized in March.

Salaries are proposed to increase from \$29.16 million to \$30.55 million in this year's proposed budget. This is an increase of \$1.39 million or 4.78%. Salaries account for 64.4% of the budget.

The next highest category in the budget, benefits increased from \$9.28 million in the last budget to \$9.76 million in this year's education budget proposal. This is an increase of \$483,467 or 5.21%. Benefits account for 20.6% of the operating budget.

The other line items for the education budget include professional services, repairs and other property services, transportation, tuition and other services, utilities, instructional building supplies, equipment and dues and fees. These items each represent less than 10% of the budget.

"Throughout the 25-26 Plainville Community Schools budget preparation process, our school district remains steadfast in aligning our financial planning with our

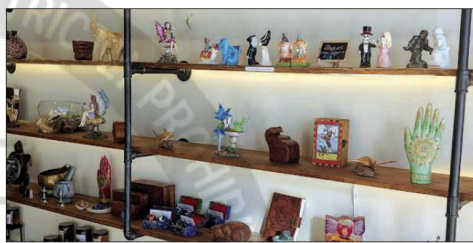
strategic plan and core priorities of Mastery, Equity, Community Connections, and Systems and Operations," Reas said. "Our decisions are guided by our commitment to ensuring equitable opportunities and experiences for all students, while providing the resources and support necessary to help them thrive now and in the future."

Reas added that, through a "collective focus" and "careful stewardship of resources," the town's education leaders "strive to strengthen and enhance the tenets and systems that drive success in our classrooms, in our schools, and in our community."

"By maintaining an equity lens on the budget process, we ensure that our investments reflect our district's goals and beliefs, and meet the diverse needs of our students, families and staff," he said.

The next steps with the budget include a Board of Education discussion and vote on Feb. 10, followed by a presentation to the Town Council and Board of Education on March 3. If the budget is approved by the Town Council, a date will be set for the all day budget vote, during which residents can vote on the budget.

Brian M. Johnson can be reached at 860-269-0822 or bjohnson@bristolpress.com.



Items on the shelves at Dark Moon, which is opening at 102 N. Main St.

Dark Moon

Downtown development drew new business to Bristol space

Continued from Page 1

Perkins said that this will be her first business. She has prior experience working in art-related retail and worked for Geek Squad for the last five years as an in-home PC service technician. During that time, she said that she "loved connecting with people over their tech troubles and art."

"When Best Buy did a massive layoff last summer, I decided to go back to what I really enjoy: connecting with artists and collectors of the com-

munity," she said.

Perkins said that she was "raised by hippies" and always enjoyed art, especially figurines of mystical creatures like fairies. Her shop will offer these types of figurines as well as jewelry, puzzles, greeting cards, candles, stuffed animals, kitchenware and more.

"We'll be trying to highlight local artists in Bristol," she said. "I also have a lot of friends from Maryland, where I used to live, and I know artists who live up and down the

cast coast. We will have a lot of fun items - a bit of everything you can think of."

Dark Moon will be open from Tuesday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Sunday from noon to 6 p.m. They are closed on Mondays.

For more information on Dark Moon, visit darkmoonllc.com or email info@darkmoonllc.com.

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Bristol faces budget pressure from insurance, special education costs

Continued from Page 1

by 7.4% or \$5.63 million, accounting for more than a third of the total proposed increase. Benefits increased by 19.15% or \$3.99 million.

Non-certified union contracts increased by 8.73% or \$1.21 million. The first year of the Bristol Federation of Teachers' three-year union contract includes an increase of \$3.22 million, a 6.32% increase.

"Human capital is The most significant investment in our students' learning," White said.

Increases related to special education tuition, transportation, and services amount to \$6.3 million. That includes an increase of \$594,403 for tuition, \$2.27 million for special education transportation, and \$2.25 million for contracted professional technical services.

Regular transportation and fuel costs are proposed to rise by \$292,035 or 6.58%.

"The increase is due to

contractual obligations and the loss of significant federal ARPA funding for housing-insecure students," said White. "These are beyond our control but necessary to ensure our student's safe and efficient transportation."

The Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference revised its bylaws, allowing high school coaches to conduct summer coaching and training. This has an anticipated budget impact of \$36,341.

"We will open summer coaching and training to continue equitably supporting our athletes as they compete with peers across the state," said White.

White said that the budget represents the district's "unwavering commitment" to the four pillars of the district's five-year strategic plan, which she said is a "testament to our excellence." These pillars are: future ready and globally prepared students, devel-

oping and supporting the whole child, family and community engagement, and innovative and strategic operations

White said the budget was crafted with "a steadfast focus on equity and relationships with and among students and staff."

"These pillars guide our efforts to provide a comprehensive and equitable education for all students, regardless of their background or circumstances," White said. "Developing a budget to meet the learning needs of all students and staff while being sensitive to the economic challenges facing a community is particularly difficult."

White said in her letter that she attempted to balance her "primary role as an advocate for our students" with "being sensitive to the economic health of a community."

Brian M. Johnson can be reached at 860-269-0822 or bjohnson@bristolpress.com.

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Dark Moon gift shop opening in new downtown Bristol space

The Bristol Press · 6 Feb 2025 · BRIAN M. JOHNSON

BRISTOL – A new gift shop, Dark Moon, is opening this weekend downtown, offering a variety of unique gifts and showcasing the talent of area artists.



Dark Moon is located in Centre Square Village at 102 N. Main St., across from city hall and next door to Pure Foods' new location. The shop is owned by Dorothy Perkins, who said that the development downtown made her want to open in Bristol.

"I did a lot of searching and decided that with Centre Square Village opening and more residential units coming to Bristol, I wanted to join in on the revitalization," she said. "I live close by and I wanted to be a part of Bristol's vibrant community."

Perkins said that this will be her first business. She has prior experience working in art-related retail and worked for Geek Squad for the last five years as an in-home PC service technician. During that time, she said that she "loved connecting with people over their tchotchkes and art."

"When Best Buy did a massive layoff last summer, I decided to go back to what I really enjoy: connecting with artists and collectors of the community," she said.

Perkins said that she was "raised by hippies" and always enjoyed art, especially figurines of mystical creatures like fairies. Her shop will offer these types of figurines as well as jewelry, puzzles, greeting cards, candles, stuffed animals, kitchenware and more.

"We'll be trying to highlight local artists in Bristol," she said. "I also have a lot of friends from Maryland, where I used to live, and I know artists who live up and down the east coast. We will have a lot of fun items – a bit of everything you can think of."

Dark Moon will be open from Tuesday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Sunday from noon to 6 p.m. They are closed on Mondays.

For more information on Dark Moon, visit darkmoonllc.com or email info@darkmoonllc.com.



Barnes Museum

Barnes Museum plans showcase of 'romantic artifacts'

BRIAN M. JOHNSON
 @BRIANJOHNSONBP

SOUTHINGTON — The Barnes Museum has announced two upcoming programs this month, one showcasing romantic artifacts in the collection and a "History Pints" event at Kinsmen Brewing highlighting curator Christina Volpe's book on The Barnes Family.

Volpe said that the program "Affection: Sentimental Keepsakes and Tokens" Feb. 12 at 6 p.m. will guide guests through a collection of some of the museum's most "romantic and heartfelt artifacts." These include love letters, Victorian keepsakes, and "treasured family heirlooms that have connected generations."

The Barnes Museum is the historic home of The Barnes Family at 85 N. Main St. After the death of Bradley Barnes

See TOUR ON PAGE 3

New Asian and Indian grocery store opening

BRIAN M. JOHNSON
 @BRIANJOHNSONBP

BRISTOL — Desi Mandi, an Asian and Indian grocery store, will be opening on Farmington Avenue next week.

Mayor Jeff Caggiano recently met with Mahesh Kumar, the owner of the new business moving into the former EBLens location

at 1290 Farmington Ave. The grocery store will offer fresh produce, halal meat, and a food court featuring a variety of prepared Asian and Indian cuisine that can also be made to go.

Desi Mandi translates to "from the country" and "marketplace."

Kumar said Desi Mandi is set to open Monday, Feb. 10. The store will be open Monday through

Sunday from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Kumar described Desi Mandi as "your one-stop-shop for all household food needs in one convenient location."

"Desi Mandi is a unique retail store that offers a combination of international and Asian groceries and authentic, delicious Indian halal

See STORE ON PAGE 4



The butcher counter inside Desi Mandi at 1290 Farmington Ave.

NEW PRINCIPAL



Erika Coleman on her first day as principal of Ivy Drive School.

Bristol Public Schools

Interim Coleman appointed to lead Ivy Drive elementary

BRIAN M. JOHNSON
 @BRIANJOHNSONBP

BRISTOL — The Bristol Board of Education has appointed Erika Coleman as the new principal of Ivy Drive School.

Iris White, interim superintendent of

schools, said Coleman has been serving as interim principal at the elementary school at 160 Ivy Dr. since last fall.

"Mrs. Coleman managed daily building operations to maintain continuity and stability and ensure that school operations ran smoothly

during the interim period," White said.

White said Coleman has spent her entire career serving the Bristol community in various educational and administrative roles. She previously served as Assistant Principal at Greene-Hills and West

Bristol schools, as well as District Assessment Coordinator, Supervisor of Elementary and Pre-K-5 Literacy, and K-8 District Literacy Coordinator.

"Mrs. Coleman has been praised for her data-driven decision-making skills, budget man-

agement and resource allocation, staff supervision, and curriculum development and implementation knowledge in each of these roles," White said.

White added that Coleman also serves on multiple professional

See COLEMAN ON PAGE 4

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Seed packets at the Bristol Seed Library.

Bristol Public Library

Get the garden started at the Bristol Seed Library this March

BRIAN M. JOHNSON
 @BRIANJOHNSONBP

BRISTOL — The Bristol Seed Library will open for the season March 10 and Bristol Public Library has announced several free upcoming programs for gardeners.

Scott Stanton, assistant director and program director at Bristol Public Library at 5 High St., said the seed library will be open starting at 5:30 p.m. March 10. The seed library is stored in the library's former card catalog cabinets.

"The Seed Library

consists of flower, herb and vegetable seeds," he said. "Seeds are available to Bristol residents free of charge. Residents may receive up to 5 seed packets per season per adult resident."

A valid adult Bristol Public Library card is

See SEED ON PAGE 4



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Coleman has been interim principal since the fall

Continued from Page 1

committees, including the District Continuous Improvement Team and District Culture and Climate Committee. She also previously served as a Bristol Public Schools TEAM Mentor.

"Mrs. Coleman is committed to promoting a culture of high expectations," continuous professional growth, and a shared vision for success," White said. "Her approach to leadership is rooted in active listening, problem-solving, and an unwavering dedication to the well-being of all students."

Coleman's educational background includes a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Art History and Graphic Communication, a Minor in Art History and

K-12 Art Education, and an M.S. in Curriculum and Instruction. She also holds Administrative 092 Certification and Connecticut Professional 102 in Remedial Reading.

Former Ivy Drive Principal Emily Gomes was placed on administrative leave last May after state officials identified "testing irregularities" in standardized tests at the school. An investigation by law firm Pullman and Comley, LLC, on behalf of the state found "no direct evidence" but "overwhelming circumstantial evidence" that Gomes had manipulated student test scores.

Brian M. Johnson can be reached at 860-269-0822 or bjohnson@bristolpress.com.

SOUTHINGTON ARREST BLOTTER

Michael R. Badgley, 36, of 450 West St., was charged Jan. 30 with violation of a protective order.

Kevin Daniel Ortiz-Rivera, 22, of 204 Collins St., Apartment 1E, Hartford, was charged Jan. 30 with sixth degree larceny, conspiracy to commit sixth degree larceny, first degree robbery with serious physical injury, conspiracy to commit first degree robbery

with serious physical injury, two counts of conspiracy to commit second degree robbery, criminal possession of a pistol revolver, third degree assault, first degree reckless endangerment, two counts of first degree larceny, two counts of conspiracy to commit fifth degree larceny, conspiracy to commit sixth degree larceny and two counts of second degree breach of peace.



Mayor Jeff Caggiano with Desi Mandi owner Mahesh Kumar.

Store will offer fresh produce, halal meat and prepared foods

Continued from Page 1

food," he said. Kumar added that Desi Mandi has more than 50 items on the menu to choose from. These include "a wide variety of quality spices and retail groceries" including fresh produce such as fruits, herbs and "a wide range of vegeta-

bles." There is also a butcher shop, which will offer halal meat and chicken. "It's a large market where you can get everything under one roof - groceries, produce, food to go, international food and spices," Kumar said.

Kumar said there will

be seating for customers who want to dine-in as well.

Caggiano described the new store as a "crazy dramatic change of space."

Brian M. Johnson can be reached at 860-269-0822 or bjohnson@bristolpress.com.

Seed library is free to Bristol residents with a library card

Continued from Page 1

required. Library cards are free to Bristol residents and are available at the Circulation Desk at Bristol Public Library or at Manross Memorial Library at 260 Central St. in Forestville.

Also on March 10, at 6:30 p.m., Bristol Public Library will host a program titled "Splendid Seeds to Sow this Spring: Tips and Experiences with Direct Sowing." The program will feature Susan Eisenhandler, a certified advanced master gardener and Rosemary Circle member of the Herb Society of America. She is also a member of the local Bristol Garden Club.

"The presentation is sponsored by our Gardening Discussion Group," Stanton said. "Many plants grow well via direct sowing of seed and we will share experiences and tips about how to achieve optimal outcomes for annual flowers, herbs, and vegetables."

Next, on March 19, the library will host another program, "Extend

Your Growing Season: Mastering Fall, Winter, and Spring Crops" at 6:30 p.m. This program will be presented by Mark Gostkiewicz of Tri Gable Lea Farm in Colchester. "Come join us at the Bristol Public Library for a fun and informative event all about extending your growing season," Stanton said. "Learn tips and tricks from expert gardeners on how to keep your plants thriving longer."

From cold frames to row covers, Stanton said the program will cover all the ways people can make their garden last well into the fall and even winter months.

"Don't miss out on this opportunity to expand your gardening knowledge and enjoy a day filled with like-minded plant enthusiasts," he said.

Bristol Public Library will also host a Gardening Discussion Group meeting on Monday, April 14 at 6:30 p.m. and Monday, May 12 at 6:30 p.m. Visitors will receive handouts

and light refreshments. There will also be a raffle.

"If you have a green thumb or just love being outdoors, join us at the Bristol Public Library for our upcoming event," Stanton said. "Our group meets regularly to share tips, tricks, and stories about all things gardening. From planting flowers to growing your own vegetables, we cover it all."

Stanton encouraged people to attend, whether they are "seasoned pros" or beginners.

"Everyone is welcome to come and chat with fellow garden enthusiasts," he said. "Don't miss out on this opportunity to connect with like-minded individuals and expand your gardening knowledge."

For more information, or to RSVP for these programs, stop in to the library at 5 High St., visit bristollib.com or call 860-584-7787, Ext. 3.

Brian M. Johnson can be reached at 860-269-0822 or bjohnson@bristolpress.com.

LUNAR NEW YEAR AT WHEELER ELEMENTARY



Students in Frank T. Wheeler Elementary School's Multicultural Club recently learned about the Chinese Lunar New Year. The club is an after school program run by kindergarten teacher Emma Bartley. Students created Lunar New Year lanterns and lit them with flashlights.



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Bristol Public Library FILE

Friends of Bristol Public Library to hold annual book sale

BRIAN M. JOHNSON
@BRIANJOHNSONBP

BRISTOL — The Friends of the Bristol Public Library will hold their annual Winter Used Book Sale from Wednesday, Feb. 26 to Sunday, March 2.

Rose Ann Chatfield, of the Friends of the Bristol Public Library, said the Winter Used Book Sale will be held in the meeting rooms in the lower level of the library at 5 High St.

All of the items in the sale were donated by community members.

The sale opens with Preview Night, for a \$5 admission, on Wednesday, Feb. 26 from 3 to 7 p.m. The regular sale hours, which are free admission, are Thursday, Feb. 27 from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., Friday, Feb. 28 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Saturday, March 1 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

See BOOK ON PAGE 4

Bristol Farmer's Market gets nonprofit designation

BRIAN M. JOHNSON
@BRIANJOHNSONBP

BRISTOL — The Bristol Farmer's Market, Inc. has received an official 501(c)3 nonprofit designation and has created a new website.

The Bristol Farmers Market will be held in the parking lot of 10 Main St. again this year. Dates for the 2025 season will be announced soon.

Dawn Nielsen, board

chair of the Bristol Farmer's Market, said the Board of Directors of the organization have been working to "grow, enhance, and fully focus on taking the market to the next level as a new nonprofit."

"With the success of the first season as a new nonprofit organization, the Board of Directors is thrilled to be entrusted with the responsibility of continuing to be able to manage the

Bristol Farmers Market," said Nielsen. "The 501(c)3 designation will allow us to uphold the market's legacy while enhancing its accessibility and offerings for the entire community."

The new website for the Farmer's Market, bristol-farmersmarket.com, will allow the community to access information about market hours, vendors and the latest changes.

See FARMER'S ON PAGE 4



The Bristol Farmers Market will be held at 10 Main St. Dawn Nielsen

FEATURING FITZ



Brian Johnson

Dick Fitz stands in front of a display case at the Bristol Public Library that features his wood carvings and items from his service in World War II.

Bristol WWII vet's carvings on display at library

BRIAN M. JOHNSON
@BRIANJOHNSONBP

BRISTOL — Bristol Public Library has a new display case honoring 99-year-old World War II veteran Dick Fitz, showing his artwork and items from his military service.

Fitz, who turns 100 on

March 4, served in the Navy Armed Guard during World War II, protecting supplies as they were transported to Russia on "liberty ships." The display case features Fitz's Norman Rockwell-inspired basswood and white pine carvings of early American scenes, and a medal he received from

the late former President of Russia, Boris Nikolayevich Yeltsin, in 1993. Other items include a copy of the captain's log of the most dangerous trip he was on, transporting supplies to Murmansk, Russia.

Neal Supranovich, historian with American Legion Post 2, said 79 "liberty

ships" were sunk during that run.

After the war, Fitz learned that the 12 ship convoy he was part of at the time was used as bait to draw out a pocket battleship — The Scharnhorst.

"Before they left Scotland, the crews were given their last rites aboard

ship," Supranovich said. "They sailed a North Arctic route. Due to an arctic storm with waves of over 50 feet, the Scharnhorst never came out."

Fitz said the Murmansk Run, which he undertook in 1943, was known at the time as "The Death

See DISPLAY ON PAGE 4

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Care Verikas

The Bristol Bazaar decorated for "Candytopia."

'Candytopia' at Bristol Bazaar

BRIAN M. JOHNSON
@BRIANJOHNSONBP

BRISTOL — The Bristol Bazaar invites people to attend their "Candytopia Shopping Experience" now through March 25.

Eric and Care Verikas, owners of The Bristol Bazaar at 67 Race St., are inviting people to indulge their "sweet tooth and

ignite their imagination."

"The Bristol Bazaar is thrilled to announce its highly-anticipated transformation into a life-size Candytopia Shopping Experience, back and bigger than ever for 2025," Care Verikas said. "This sugary spectacle will transport visitors of all ages into a vibrant world of gumdrops, licorice,

lollipops, and more."

Verikas said the "immersive experience" will offer a "unique and Instagram-worthy" destination for families, friends and fans of the classic childhood game from which they drew inspiration.

"Our goal is to create an enchanting atmosphere that inspires joy, See BAZAAR ON PAGE 2

FIVE-DAY FORECAST FOR BRISTOL

TODAY	TONIGHT	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
					
HIGH 32 LOW 12	HIGH 32 LOW 12	HIGH 33 LOW 16	HIGH 30 LOW 22	HIGH 41 LOW 20	HIGH 32 LOW 13
Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Rain & Snow Likely	Partly Cloudy

ALMANAC

Temperature	
Record Saturday	33
High	24
Low	20
Normal high	30
Normal low	20
Last year high	40
Last year low	18

24-HOUR TEMPERATURE FORECAST

As reported from Hartford-Bristol Airport

Precipitation

Month to date

Normal month to date

Year to date

Normal year to date

As reported from Hartford-Bristol Airport

Sun and Moon

Sun today

Moon today

Moon Tuesday

Rise

Set

Full

Last

New

First

21/2

2/20

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2/12

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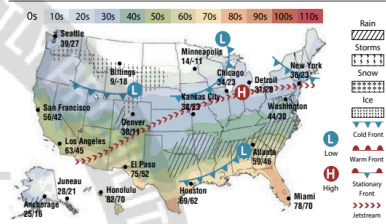
2/12

2/20

2/27

3/6

NATIONAL WEATHER



NATIONAL CITIES

City	Hi	Lo	Wx	City	Hi	Lo	Wx
Albuquerque	67	34	mc	Chicago	41	30	pc
Anchorage	25	16	pc	Cincinnati	39	26	pc
Atlanta	59	46	sh	Cleveland	31	22	pc
Boston	32	13	pc	Dallas	49	46	sh
Charlotte	51	37	mc	Denver	58	44	sh
Chicago	41	30	pc	Honolulu	82	70	mc
Cincinnati	39	26	pc	Houston	68	62	mc
Cleveland	31	22	pc	Indianapolis	39	29	pc
Dallas	49	46	sh	Kansas City	38	23	cl
Denver	58	44	sh	Las Vegas	66	41	s
Honolulu	82	70	mc	Los Angeles	63	45	s
Houston	68	62	mc	Miami	79	71	pc
Indianapolis	39	29	pc	Minneapolis	14	-11	mc
Kansas City	38	23	cl	Nashville	51	39	pc
Las Vegas	66	41	s	New Orleans	71	62	mc
Los Angeles	63	45	s	Orlando	83	64	s
Miami	79	71	pc	Phoenix	79	51	pc
Minneapolis	14	-11	mc	Portland, ME	30	9	s
Nashville	51	39	pc	San Diego	61	48	mc
New Orleans	71	62	mc	Seattle	56	45	pc
Orlando	83	64	s	St. Louis	39	27	pc
Phoenix	79	51	pc	San Francisco	56	45	pc
Portland, ME	30	9	s	Seattle	56	45	pc
San Diego	61	48	mc	Washington, DC	44	30	pc
Seattle	56	45	pc	West Point, NY	33	15	pc
St. Louis	39	27	pc	West Point, NY	33	15	pc
San Francisco	56	45	pc				
Seattle	56	45	pc				
Washington, DC	44	30	pc				
West Point, NY	33	15	pc				

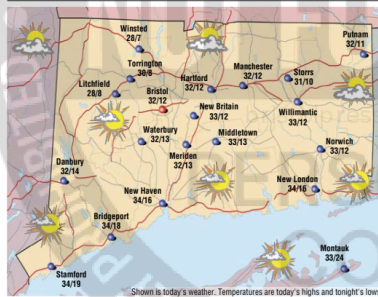
REGIONAL CITIES

City	Hi	Lo	Wx	City	Hi	Lo	Wx
Ambler, MA	31	8	pc	Providence, RI	33	18	mc
Cattaraugus, NY	31	9	mc	Poughkeepsie, NY	32	10	pc
Hartford	33	15	s	Springfield, MA	32	10	pc
Hyannis, MA	32	18	pc	Wallingford, MA	33	14	s
Newport, RI	34	20	pc	Westfield, MA	33	15	pc
New York City	36	23	cl	West Point, NY	33	16	s
Pittsfield, MA	25	4	pc				
Providence, RI	33	18	mc				
Poughkeepsie, NY	32	10	pc				
Springfield, MA	32	10	pc				
Wallingford, MA	33	14	s				
Westfield, MA	33	15	pc				
West Point, NY	33	16	s				

WORLD CITIES

City	Hi	Lo	Wx	City	Hi	Lo	Wx
Beijing	34	17	s	London	41	38	ra
Cairo	65	52	pc	Los Angeles	63	45	s
Hong Kong	62	57	pc	Moscow	30	23	s
London	41	38	ra	Paris	42	39	cl
Los Angeles	63	45	s	Rio de Janeiro	87	75	ra
Moscow	30	23	s	Rome	58	47	ra
Paris	42	39	cl	Sydney	76	68	ra
Rio de Janeiro	87	75	ra	Tokyo	46	36	pc
Rome	58	47	ra	Toronto	24	10	pc
Sydney	76	68	ra				
Tokyo	46	36	pc				
Toronto	24	10	pc				

REGIONAL WEATHER



Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.

MOON PHASES

Full	Last	New	First
21/2	2/20	2/27	3/6

CONDITIONS TODAY

UV Index for Today	8 a.m.	10 a.m.	12 p.m.	2 p.m.	4 p.m.	6 p.m.
0-2: Minimal	0	1	2	2	1	0
3-4: Low	1	2	3	3	2	1
5-6: Moderate	2	3	4	4	3	2
7-8: High	3	4	5	5	4	3
9-10: Very High	4	5	6	6	5	4

TIDES

Saybrook Point	Today	Wednesday
High	8:48 a.m. - 3.4 ft.	9:33 a.m. - 3.4 ft.
Low	2:23 a.m. - 0.1 ft.	3:14 a.m. - 0.2 ft.
High	9:01 p.m. - 2.7 ft.	9:47 p.m. - 2.8 ft.
Low	3:08 p.m. - 0.3 ft.	3:52 p.m. - 0.3 ft.

New Haven

Today	Wednesday
High	9:24 a.m. - 6.3 ft.
Low	3:08 a.m. - 0.1 ft.
High	9:52 p.m. - 5.8 ft.
Low	3:48 p.m. - 0.3 ft.

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The Bristol Press
BEST OF
2021

Connecticut panel denies early parole for man convicted in 1991 slaying of state trooper

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WATERBURY — A Connecticut panel denied early parole Friday for a man convicted in a notorious 1991 ambush-style killing of a Connecticut State Police trooper during an early morning burglary of a gun shop.

Members of the state's Board of Pardons and Paroles questioned whether Duane Johnson, who was 18 years old at the time of the crime and is now 52, has done enough to rehabilitate himself while in prison. They also cited the heinous nature of the shooting and how it

has affected the family of Trooper Russell Bagshaw, who was 28 when he was killed, as well as the state and the nation.

"This has had a profound impact," said board member Robert Cizauskas of the case, noting the panel received an unusually large number of letters from across the country, urging members to deny Johnson's request under a state law which allows a parole hearing for those who commit crimes when they are under 21.

Bagshaw was on routine patrol when he was shot and killed inside his police

cruiser by Johnson's older brother Terry, who is serving a life sentence. On Friday, Duane Johnson acknowledged his culpability in the crime, saying his actions contributed to Bagshaw's death even though "I never pulled the trigger that day."

Bagshaw's widow, Carol, who opposed Johnson's early parole, noted that he had alerted his brother that a trooper had shown up at the scene that morning.

"If not for this action, perhaps my husband wouldn't have been murdered because guns were

loaded in anticipation of a confrontation," she said. Russell Bagshaw's twin brother Robert spoke of how his brother's life was needlessly cut short and how the loss devastated the family, which was already reeling from the death of their mother a couple months earlier. He said the murder also impacted the greater police community.

"This was a horrific yet avoidable crime, not only committed against my twin brother, but against Connecticut law enforcement, which he was so proud to represent," he said.

Bazaar promises 'Instagram-worthy' display

continued from Page 1

creativity and community connection," she said. Verikas encouraged people to "join the sweet

adventure" and explore the Candytopia Shopping Experience at The Bristol Bazaar. Beyond the "whimsical candy

theme," she said The Bristol Bazaar "remains a treasure trove of handmade delights, featuring thousands of unique items crafted by many artisans."

"Visitors can also enjoy delicious treats & drinks from Yellow King Bristol

and a diverse range of workshops and classes, catering to various interests and skill levels," she said.

For more information visit TheBristolBazaar.com or call 860-222-0922.

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TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Monday, Feb. 10, the 41st day of 2025. There are 324 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Feb. 10, 1962, on the Glienicke Bridge connecting West Berlin and East Germany, the Soviet Union exchanged captured American U-2 pilot Francis Gary Powers for Rudolf Abel, a Soviet spy held by the United States.

Also on this date:

1736, the treaty ending the Seven Years' War was signed in Paris, with France ceding its territory in Canada to Great Britain.

In 1936, Nazi Germany's Reichstag passed a law investing the Gestapo secret police with absolute authority, exempt from any legal review.

In 1959, an F4-intensity tornado tore through the St. Louis area, killing 21 people and injuring 345.

In 1967, the 25th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, dealing with presidential disability and succession, was adopted as Minnesota and Nevada ratified it.

In 1981, eight people were killed when a fire set by a busboy broke out at the Las Vegas Hilton hotel-casino.

In 1996, world chess champion Garry Kasparov lost the first game of a match in Philadelphia against an IBM computer dubbed "Deep Blue." (Kasparov ended up winning the match, 4 games to 2; however, he was defeated by Deep Blue in a rematch the following year.)

Today in sports:

1908 — Tommy Burns knocks out Jack Palmer in the fourth round to defend his world heavyweight title in London.

1952 — The Baltimore

Bullets play the 48-minute game without making a single substitution and beat the Fort Wayne Pistons 82-77.

1962 — Jim Beatty becomes the first American to break the 4-minute mile indoors with a 3:58.9 in Los Angeles.

1968 — Peggy Fleming wins the women's Olympic figure skating gold medal in Grenoble, France.

1971 — Former first baseman Bill White becomes the first black announcer in major baseball league history, signing to join the Yankees' WPIX broadcast team.

1989 — K.C. Jones of the Celtics and Lenny Wilkens of the Cavaliers are elected to the Basketball Hall of Fame. Also elected is William "Pop" Gates, who played during the game's barnstorming years in the 1930s and 1940s.

Today's birthdays:

Opera singer Leontyne Price is 98. Actor Robert Wagner is 95. Singer Roberta Flack is 88. Olympic swimming gold medalist Mark Spitz is 75. Golf Hall of Famer Greg Norman is 70. Basketball Hall of Fame coach John Calipari is 66. Filmmaker Alexander Payne is 64. TV host-political commentator George Stephanopoulos is 64. Sen. Lisa Blunt Rochester, D-Del., is 63. Political commentator Glenn Beck is 61. Actor Laura Dern is 58. Writer-producer-director Vince Gilligan (TV: "Breaking Bad") is 58. Football Hall of Famer Ty Law is 51. Actor-filmmaker Elizabeth Banks is 51. Basketball Hall of Famer Tina Thompson is 50. Reggae singer Don Omar is 47.



FILE
 Yarde Metals was one of the largest taxpayers in Southington.

Southington grand list dips after change to car assessments

BRIAN M. JOHNSON
 @BRIANJOHNSONBP

SOUTHINGTON — The Southington grand list dropped by less than one percent after statewide changes to how motor vehicles are valued dropped about \$53 million off the tax rolls.

The grand list decreased by \$6.22 million to \$4.681 billion — a drop of about 0.13% from 2023.

Town Manager Alex Ricciardone said a new state law changing the way motor vehicles are assessed took about \$53.62 million off the town's grand list — dropping the grand list for motor vehicles in town by about 10.26%. Ricciardone said Southington was "fortunate" to only see a 10% decrease in this area. He said that

See **SOUTHINGTON** ON PAGE 4

Joseph's Steakhouse opens at Chippansee

BRIAN M. JOHNSON
 @BRIANJOHNSONBP

BRISTOL — Joseph's Steakhouse has opened a Bristol location at Chippansee Golf Club, promising high-quality steak and a variety of other dining options.

Joseph's Steakhouse, located at the golf course at 6 Marsh Rd., opened on Jan. 25 and is now taking reservations for dinner.

Although Chippansee is a private golf club, Joseph's Steakhouse is open to the public. The Lorimar wedding and banquet hall can also be reserved for events.

Joseph's Steakhouse is named for founder Joseph Kustra, who started Joseph's Steakhouse in Bridgeport in 2000. He sold the business to Frederick "Fritz" Blasius, an automobile dealer

from Waterbury, in 2019. Erald Menalla, part owner and chef at Joseph's Steakhouse, said the restaurant is looking to expand to many locations in the near future. The owners decided that Bristol would be a good match.

"So far we've had a very good response and feedback; we've been very busy," Menalla

See **BRIDGEPORT** ON PAGE 4



Inside the new Joseph's Steakhouse at 6 Marsh Rd.

Dawn Nielsen

REX FORGE CLOSING



FILE

Plantsville manufacturer Rex Forge announced it is shutting down after losing its only client, Dana Incorporated.

Company to lay off 103 workers at plant

BRIAN M. JOHNSON
 @BRIANJOHNSONBP

SOUTHINGTON — Local manufacturing company Rex Forge will permanently close and lay off its 103 workers after losing its only customer following a legal dispute.

Rex Forge, also known as the J.J. Ryan Corporation, is located at 355 Atwater St. in the Plantsville section of town.

Controller Colleen Hedges sent a letter to Town Manager Alex Ricciardone and the state Department

of Labor on Feb. 3 to inform them of the decision to close-down their manufacturing facility and lay off their workforce. The decision was made after Dana Corporation, their sole customer, terminated their contract on Jan. 29.

"On the evening of Wednesday, January 29, and with no advance notice or implication, Rex Forge was notified by Dana Incorporated, its sole customer, that it has exercised its right to terminate its contract with Rex Forge to supply forgings to Dana,"

said Hedges in her email. "The termination of the contract was unexpected and unforeseen. Rex Forge had every reason to believe and expect, from the daily actions and communications with Dana, that future business would continue."

See **REX** ON PAGE 4

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8 0805 93316 1



The 46-unit apartment complex was sold.

Northeast Private Client Group

Plymouth Village apartments sold to Wallingford company

BRIAN M. JOHNSON
 @BRIANJOHNSONBP

PLYMOUTH — The 46-unit Plymouth Village was recently sold for more than \$5 million to LYP Management of Wallingford. Northeast Private Client Group said the multi-fam-

ily property at 282 Main St. in the Terryville section of town sold for \$5.05 mil to the Wallingford-based owner and operator.

Taylor Perun, vice president, investments at Northeast Private Client Group, represented the seller and procured the buyer. Perun said the

buyer is "strategically growing their Connecticut portfolio and recognized the inherent value in Plymouth Village due to its legacy ownership."

The seller, he said, is a Hartford County-based owner-operator who, "after a

See **NEW** ON PAGE 2



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Rex Forge had been in legal dispute with Dana

Continued from Page 1

Dana Incorporated is a Maumee, Ohio-based drivetrain supplier, which Rex Forge said was its only customer.

In November, U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of Ohio James Garr upheld an arbitration award where Dana was awarded \$965,358 after claiming Rex Forge had breached its "delivery and supply" obligations in their contract.

In that arbitration, Rex Forge was awarded \$144,382 for its claim Dana had improperly charged the Southington company.

Despite the legal dispute, Hedges said in her letter that it was "shocking" that Dana no longer wished to do any business with Rex Forge.

"Without the Dana contract, which represents the sole business for Rex Forge, the company has no ability to continue on and will be shutting down its operations permanently," Hedges said.

Hedges said employees were advised on Feb. 3 that the fac-

ility would be closing between Feb. 10 and Feb. 24, and that this would result in "separations of employment."

Copies of the notice were posted throughout the facility and delivered by hand to employees, she said.

"We have also advised that this action is expected to be permanent," she said. "No bumping rights exist that would allow employees to retain their employment, as there is no collective bargaining agreement in effect and this is a complete plant closure."

In operation since 1867, Rex Forge specialized in design and engineering services, tool and tie making, closed die forging, forging finishing operations and forging quality management.

They got their start in the 1800s forging armaments, oxen shoes and forgings for horse drawn carriages before switching to automobiles in the early 1900s.

Brian M. Johnson can be reached at 860-269-0822 or bjohnson@bristolpress.com.

Southington expects commercial property value to rise in years ahead

Continued from Page 1

in speaking to assessors statewide, municipalities are seeing an average decrease between 9% and 15%.

"Previously, motor vehicle assessments were derived by using 70% of market value," he said. "When motor vehicle values saw an unprecedented increase in market value due to the Coronavirus pandemic, legislators debated changing the decades-old valuation technique. They drafted changes to the statute that now call for using vehicle MSRP and applying a 15-year straight line depreciation schedule."

Ricciardone said that he expects the motor vehicle grand list to "level out" next year.

"Although we lost a great deal of motor vehicle assessment this year, we should generally see that level out next year, especially with all the new vehicles we gain in town each year," he said. "It is our expectation that the assessment of all the new vehicles will outweigh the depreciation applied to older vehicles each year."

SOUTHINGTON TOP 10 TAXPAYERS

1. Eversource — \$5,298,106
2. Yankee Gas — \$1,379,410
3. Yarde Metals — \$706,878
4. RK Queen Plaza — \$384,750
5. Target — \$383,248
6. Southington/Route 10 Associates — \$361,102
7. Lowes — \$304,723
8. Walmart Plaza — \$300,645
9. Executive Equity Partners, LLC — \$268,732
10. Briard Lodging Group Southington — \$264,900

The Real Estate Grand List increased by \$27.46 million to \$3.86 billion in Oct. 2024, — increasing about 0.72%.

"The majority increase in the real estate grand list this year is due to residential development," Ricciardone said. "That development continues to near completion at Apple Gate, Highland Ridge, Winchester, and Lavender Lane."

He said about 48% of the real estate increase was a result of commercial development, notably the A. Duie Pyle expansion on Aircraft Road and the Livewell facility on South Main Street. The Personal Property Grand List increased by \$19.95 million to \$352.39 in Oct. 2024 — an increase of about 6%.

"Unfortunately, the only noteworthy personal property increases were due to declared assets of Yankee Gas Services Co. and Connecticut Light and Power Co. (Eversource)," Ricciardone said.

Ricciardone said that there are many commercial projects that remain "in the pipeline." "It is expected that commercial assessment growth will continue over the course of the next couple years," he said. "That commercial real estate activity would also increase the personal property aspect of our grand list as new companies correlate with new assets."

Brian M. Johnson can be reached at 860-269-0822 or bjohnson@bristolpress.com.

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Bridgeport-based steakhouse looking to expand statewide after sale to Blasius

Continued from Page 1

said. "A lot of people have been raving about our steak; they say that it melts in the mouth. They also enjoy the ambiance and the nice view of the golf course."

According to Joseph's Steakhouse's website, josephssteakhouse.com, Joseph's Steakhouse serves USDA Prime dry aged beef.

"USDA Prime is the most tender and flavorful grade of beef available," the website states. "Less than 3% of beef inspected by the USDA earns the prime grade as there are strict age and marbling requirements to earn the Prime grade."

In addition to steak, Menalla said Joseph's Steakhouse's menu also

includes Chilean sea bass, lobster rolls, burgers, and a variety of chicken dishes such as Chicken Marsala. They will also be introducing a bar menu this week.

"There will be plenty of options; something for everyone to enjoy," Menalla said.

Caggiano, who recently visited the new restaurant with city Economic Development leaders, said that Joseph's is "a great option for anyone looking for a high end steakhouse." However, he added it will still offer golfers and others the more casual dining experience that they may have had at Chippance.

"This is a very exciting addition to Bristol — worth a trip," he said.

In the spring and summer, Menalla said Joseph's Steakhouse will be open seven days a week for lunch and dinner. The restaurant is currently open Tuesday through Saturday from 4 to 10 p.m. and on Sunday from 1 to 9 p.m.

"When we get into the spring and summer we'll be looking to hire servers, bussers and hostesses," he said.

The Joseph's Steakhouse currently employs about 25 people. For more information on Joseph's Steakhouse, visit josephssteakhouse.com or call 860-589-5645.

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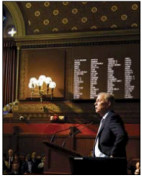
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The Bristol Press

Serving the Communities of Central Connecticut



Gov. Ned Lamont

Lamont proposes endowment to expand preschool access

NICOLE ZAPPONE
@THEBRISTOLPRESS

The preschool crisis could be lessening for families in Connecticut after Governor Ned Lamont's latest proposal to expand preschool access across the state.

Lamont has urged the Connecticut General Assembly to approve the legislation. He proposed this session to implement the largest expansion of preschool access in Connecticut's history. This proposal will enable thousands of additional children to enroll in high-quality early childhood education services, which have been unattainable for many families.

"I want Connecticut to lead on early childhood education, and that means making preschool affordable and accessible for all of our kids," Lamont

See PLAINVILLE on PAGE 2

Thomaston Savings donates \$27k to local orgs

BRIAN M. JOHNSON
@BRIANJOHNSONBP

PLYMOUTH

Thomaston Savings Bank recently donated more than \$27,000 to local and area organizations with their "Denim Days" initiative.

Thomaston Savings Bank donated a total of \$27,375 for local organizations through their Denim Days initiative over the past twelve months.

According to a post on the Bank's Facebook page, the employees raised an "outstanding" \$15,375 last year. The bank then contributed an additional \$12,000 to "help broaden the reach."

"Denim Days allow employees to wear jeans on Fridays throughout the month for a small donation to a preselected local nonprofit which provides vital services to the communi-

ty," Jillian Gurry, public relations specialist with Thomaston Savings Bank, said. "If employees donate a total of \$1,000 or more throughout the month, the Bank contributes an additional \$1,000 to that month's cause."

The following local organizations received donations from the Denim Days initiative:

— Brian's Angels
See DENIM on PAGE 4



The Thomaston Savings Bank on Route 6 in Terryville.

Rotating History



Brian Johnson

Morgan Fippinger, executive director of the New England Carousel Museum, Mayor Jeff Caggiano and City Councilor Jacqueline Olsen hold a congratulatory plaque.

Carousel Museum celebrates 35 years

BRIAN M. JOHNSON
@BRIANJOHNSONBP

BRISTOL — City and Chamber leaders congratulated The New England Carousel Museum on reaching 35 years, thanking them for their efforts to preserve history and art over the decades.

The New England Carousel Museum's building at 95 Riverside Ave. was built in 1901 and was formerly home to a manufacturing company. In 1990, the New England Carousel Museum was started as a nonprofit educational organization. It originally only had one

carousel horse, and now has more than 400 hand-carved, wooden carousel animals, most of which are more than 100 years old.

These have been donated and acquired from private collections throughout the country. The museum's second floor has a ballroom, used for special

events and weddings, as well as a museum of Greek culture and The Museum of Fire History.

Current Museum Executive Director Morgan Fippinger first came to the New England Carousel Museum in 2016 and she became its director in 2019, following the

retirement of her predecessor Lois DeMars.

DeMars was part of the original board of directors that founded the museum and became its first director in 1991.

Fippinger spoke about the museum's history and carousel history to Mayor

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Katie Bernardin and Monty, a giant schnauzer.

Giant schnauzer from Connecticut wins Best in Show at Westminster

TRACHASTINGS
@THEBRISTOLPRESS

Monty — and his team of people from Chaplin — have done it again.

Monty, a giant schnauzer, won Best in Show at the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show Tuesday. Monty was shown by

his handler, Katherine Shepard Bernardin, who owns Bernardin Show Dogs with her husband, Adam. Bernardin co-owns Monty, with Sandra Nordstrom of Ocean City, New Jersey, and with his breeder, Cherlann Ambrose, of Pemberton Township,

New Jersey.

"They've captured the biggest award on the dog show circuit," Chaplin First Selectman Juan Roman III said in a town-wide announcement.

Monty has plenty of other accolades under his

See AFTER on PAGE 3



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'Denim Days' fundraiser raised more than \$27k

Continued from Page 1

Homeless Outreach, of Bristol
– St. Vincent DePaul Mission of Bristol
– Friendship Service Center, Inc., of New Britain
– Plainville Food Pantry
– Plymouth Community Food Pantry
Other recipients included:
– Greater Waterbury Campership Fund
– Caring for Bethlehem, Inc.
– St. Vincent DePaul Mission of Waterbury
– Brian O'Connell Homeless Project, of Oakville

– FISH/Friends in Service to Humanity, of Torrington
– Thomaston Community Pantry
– The Eagles Nest, of Wolcott
Established over 150 years ago in 1874, Thomaston Savings Bank is a state-chartered mutual savings bank, owned by its depositors, not shareholders.
Headquartered in Thomaston, the Bank operates 16 full service branches throughout Western Connecticut.

Brian M. Johnson can be reached at 860-269-0822

'SOUP-ER BOWL' FOOD DRIVE



The Louis Toffoloni Elementary School Student Council recently held their annual "SOUP-ER BOWL" food drive, collecting donations for the Plainville Community Food Pantry.
The student council, led by faculty member and advisor Shayla Quirion, brought in non-perishable food items to donate to the Plainville Community Food Pantry during the week of Feb. 3. They placed their donation into their respective "team's bins" and voted for who they thought would win the big game this year.



A new display at the New England Carousel Museum features the signet ring of the Bushnell family, which Executive Director Morgan Fippinger said dates back to approximately 1590.

Bristol museum aims to become 'the major carousel museum in the U.S.'

Continued from Page 1

Jeff Caggiano, Economic Development Director Justin Malley, city marketing specialist Dawn Nielsen, City Councilor Jacqueline Olsen and Johnny Burnham, the vice president and marketing and operations with the Central Connecticut Chambers of Commerce.
"Carousels date back to the 1400s and were part of European mounted tradition," Fippinger explained. "It was a form of military training. Knights would ride around a pole and try to put the tip of their lances or swords through a ring. That is where the idea of grabbing the ring while riding a carousel comes from. After knights fell out of favor, Carousels became associated with German beer gardens. They were considered a men's thrill entertainment ride."

Olsen remarked that seeing the carousel animals reminded her of her childhood.

Caggiano presented the museum with a congratulatory plaque, honoring their 35 year milestone. The plaque said that the museum had become a "beloved cultural institution" and had become a "valuable educational and cultural center" for Bristol and beyond.

"You've been here for 35 years and there's something new to see every day," he said.

Nielsen said the New England Carousel Museum is a "huge asset" to the city and its arts and culture.

Fippinger said people don't always realize there is "so much to do in our own backyard," referring to the city's six museums.

Fippinger said she was recently going through old Bristol Press news-

paper clippings about the museum, reading about how the museum received a \$100,000 Urban Action Grant from the state in 1998. This, she said, helped the museum to really begin growing its collection. One of the items acquired around that time was a band organ.

"It is really exciting to reach this 35 year milestone," Fippinger said. "Our plan for this year is to focus on becoming the major carousel museum in the U.S."

Fippinger said the museum has recently begun to receive a lot of national attention. They recently received a donation of 33,000 photos and historical documents. The museum received 72 carousel animals from a collector in California in 2020, and another 5 pieces from a collector in Arizona in 2024.

"We are hearing all too often stories where these pieces have been in a family forever and collectors' children do not want to keep them," she said. "I recently spoke to a 96-year-old man who was upset because his daughter told him that she would leave his carousel animals on the side of the road if he didn't get rid of them. Places like ours are becoming more and more important for the preservation of this unique art form."

The museum has an "Adopt-A-Horse" program where people can pay to name the carousel animals and help support the museum's maintenance. Fippinger said she is looking to restore a couple horses from the 1920s. They were from the Wadsworth Athenaeum collection before being given to the museum. They were created by "Stein &

Goldstein."

"They were Russian Jewish immigrants who owned 17 carousels and operated all of them," she said. "We actually have receipts which show that, at the time, the carousel animals cost about \$34 to make – for 700 plus hours worth of work. They charged a nickel a ride and they could easily make \$500 a day."

Last week, the museum brought out a signet ring which has been in their collection since 2008. Fippinger said it belonged to the Bushnell family and dates back to around 1590, the time of King Henry IV of France and the Battle of Ivry. The ring was passed down from generation to generation in the Bushnell family until the last male heir died, at which point it was given to the museum. The New England Carousel Museum had been taking care of the Bushnell Park Carousel at that time.

"In the Battle of Ivry, a member of the Bushnell family was a standard bearer," Fippinger said. "As the story goes, the King found him dead, holding the flag, surrounded by dead enemy soldiers and remarked 'loyal to the death.' This became the family motto, which is written on the reverse of the ring. The ring is adorned with the symbol of a wyvern. The family came to the U.S. in the 1600s, shortly after the Mayflower arrived. They originally lived in the Old Saybrook area."

For more information about the New England Carousel Museum, visit thecarouselmuseum.org or call 860-585-5411.

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On Tap

1. **FIREFLY HOLLOW GLOW**
Hazy IPA - 6.5%
Tee Draft \$3 • 12oz Draft \$7
2. **FIREFLY HOLLOW LUST QUAVA**
Beer Ale - 6.5%
Tee Draft \$3 • 12oz Draft \$8
3. **BEAUFIGHTER**
IPA - 4.5%
Tee Draft \$3 • 12oz Draft \$8
4. **BOONDOGGLE DEPARTURE**
Hazy Pale Ale - 6.4%
Tee Draft \$3 • 12oz Draft \$7
5. **WILDCAT**
Hazy IPA - 6.5%
Tee Draft \$3 • 12oz Draft \$8
6. **A-OKAY HALLO DAG (HELLO, GOODBYE)**
Belgian Pale Ale - 6.8%
Tee Draft \$6 • 12oz Draft \$8
7. **THE NCP • EVENING SKY CAROUSEL**
Imperial Stout - 6.5%
Tee Draft \$7 • 12oz Draft \$9
8. **FIRST STRIKE**
Caramel Stout - 6.4%
Tee Draft \$8 • 12oz Draft \$7
9. **NCP NOT SO DARK SECRETS**
Wheat Beer - 6.5%
Tee Draft \$6 • 12oz Draft \$8
10. **BOONDOGGLE BAGGAGE**
Caramel Pilsner - 6.4%
Tee Draft \$5 • 12oz Draft \$7
11. **A-OKAY WILD GOOSE CHASE**
Hazy Double IPA - 6.5%
Tee Draft \$7 • 12oz Draft \$9

On Tap Continued

- Can Pours**
- BOONDOGGLE FESTBIEN
 - BOONDOGGLE JET LAG
 - BOONDOGGLE TEST FLIGHT #1
 - SKELETON IN THE TEA PORTER
 - THE NCP TRACTOR
- 5th State Spirits**
- BARREL STRENGTH WHISKY
 - BEER KNEES (GINLEMONHONEY)
 - CHOCOLATE OLD FASHIONED
 - ESPRESSO MARTINI (RUM)
 - HAPLE WHISKY
- Hawk Ridge Wine**
- CABERNET SAUVIGNON
 - PINOT GRIGIO
 - REISLING
- Athletic NA Beer**
- FREE WAVE HAZY IPA
 - RUN WILD IPA

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City of Bristol

Target Audience User Personas

Understanding Our Target Audience



To help the City of Bristol attract and retain young professionals, WORX conducted a survey of 238 individuals between the ages of 24-34, gathering insights on their living situations, financial challenges, motivations for relocating, and media preferences. Survey takers ranged from current Connecticut residents, to young professionals in the surrounding states such as New York and Massachusetts.

From this data, **five diverse user personas** were developed to represent different demographics, income levels, career paths, and housing preferences. These personas help illustrate who Bristol should target, what they value, and how to effectively market to them.

Each persona reflects real survey findings, **ensuring data-driven strategy development** for Bristol's marketing and economic growth initiatives.

Why Personas Matter



User Personas provide a clear understanding of Bristol's potential residents - current, and prospective.



User Personas help tailor messaging, incentives, and city improvements to meet real needs.



User Personas ensure marketing efforts align with the lifestyles and priorities of young professionals.

The Young Professional Saving For Independence



Jackson

Age: 24

Hartford, CT

Occupation

Marketing Coordinator at a mid-sized agency

Income

\$45,000/year

Current Housing

Living at home with parents and two siblings

Relationship Status

Single

Life Planning & Moving Goals

I've been living at home since graduating college because rent is too expensive right now. My goal is to move out within the next year or two, but I want to make sure I can afford a decent place without living paycheck to paycheck. Ideally, I'd love to stay close to my family, but I need to find an area where rent is reasonable.

Main Concerns

Even though I have a stable job, I don't feel financially ready to move out yet. With my student loans and the cost of rent these days, saving for a security deposit and furniture feels overwhelming. I also don't want to end up somewhere that's too far from work or where I feel isolated.

Decision Influencers

Affordability, proximity to work, and the ability to meet new people and build a social life outside of my family home.

Media & Research Preferences

I do most of my research on Zillow and Apartments.com. I trust word-of-mouth recommendations from friends.

Pain Points

I want my own space and independence, but I can't justify spending so much of my income on rent right now.

Preferred City Type

A suburban area with affordable apartments, a young professional crowd, and easy access to restaurants and bars.

What Resonates With Jackson

Jackson values real stories from people—this builds trust and makes relocation feel achievable. **Real testimonials** from other young professionals would resonate well.

What to Avoid

Marketing Bristol as only a family-oriented town—while long-term stability is a goal, Jackson is currently looking for independence and a young professional lifestyle.

The Remote Tech Worker Considering Relocation



Eric

Age: 26

📍 Brooklyn, NY

Occupation

Remote Software Developer at a startup tech company

Income

\$115,000/year

Current Housing

Renting an apartment with partner in Brooklyn

Relationship Status

In a relationship

Life Planning & Moving Goals

I love living in Brooklyn, but my partner and I are starting to feel like we're paying way too much for little space. Since I work remotely, I can live anywhere, and we're thinking about moving somewhere quieter where we can actually afford a home. Connecticut seems like a good option, but I don't know much about the different cities.

Main Concerns

I don't want to feel isolated or bored. I love the convenience of city living, so I'm looking for a place that still has a decent social scene, restaurants, and things to do.

Decision Influencers

Housing deals, reputable online reviews, and something online where I can get a sense of the city visually will help, since I am out of state.

Media & Research Preferences

I like YouTube city walk-throughs and Reddit threads. I am also constantly browsing Zillow to compare home prices.

Pain Points

Brooklyn is expensive to live in, so while I am comfortable with my salary, I essentially break even in the city with my rent.

Preferred City Type

A mix of urban and suburban; something with good restaurants, coffee shops, etc. Walkability would be a plus, but I own a vehicle too so it's not a high priority.

What Resonates With Eric

Eric values the social and lifestyle aspect of cities —he needs affordability, but also an experience that is dynamic and engaging.

What to Avoid

Failing to provide digital-first strategies—Eric relies on online research more than in-person visits, so Bristol needs a strong online presence with informative content.

The Growing Family Planner



Amara

Age: 29

Naugatuck, CT

Occupation

Nurse at a local hospital

Income

\$78,000/year

Current Housing

Renting a house

Relationship Status

Engaged

Life Planning & Moving Goals

My fiancé and I are ready to buy our first home and move on from renting, and we're looking for a place where we can eventually start a family. We noticed Bristol's affordability compared to other parts of Connecticut, but we want to make sure we're in a safe, family-friendly neighborhood with good schools.

Main Concerns

The housing market feels so competitive right now, and interest rates are high. We're trying to be smart about when and where we buy, but it's frustrating seeing homes disappear so quickly.

Decision Influencers

School district ratings, affordability, and recommendations from family and friends.

Media & Research Preferences

I use Zillow daily and follow real estate accounts on Instagram. I also trust our real estate agent and people I know who have recently bought homes.

Pain Points

Despite my years as a nurse, affording stable housing has been a challenge. I also am dealing with student loan debt and paying off an auto loan.

Preferred City Type

A quiet suburban neighborhood with parks, good schools, and a strong community feel.

What Resonates With Amara

Amara values a family-oriented lifestyle —real stories from parents in the community resonate well. She also highly considers safety initiatives and quality of life.

What to Avoid

Ignoring digital platforms where families engage—Facebook, real estate forums, and local online parenting groups will be more impactful than Instagram or TikTok.

The Career-Driven Professional Seeking Long-Term Stability



Jess

Age: 32

West Hartford, CT

Occupation

Senior Financial Analyst at an insurance company

Income

\$95,000/year

Current Housing

Renting a high-end apartment

Relationship Status

Single

Life Planning & Moving Goals

I've been in West Hartford for a few years now, and while I enjoy the convenience of being closer to work, I'm starting to think about buying a home instead of throwing money into rent. I want to stay somewhere that has an active social scene, but I also want to make a smart financial decision for my future. I'm open to looking at places like Bristol if the price and amenities are right.

Main Concerns

Housing prices are still high, and I don't want to rush into homeownership without being sure I'm getting a good deal. I also don't want to end up in a town that feels too disconnected.

Decision Influencers

Affordability, local amenities, and access to social and networking opportunities.

Media & Research Preferences

I mostly research on Zillow and Google, but I also check out Reddit threads and YouTube walk-throughs to get a feel for different areas.

Preferred City Type

A mid-sized city with a mix of suburban and urban elements—walkability, good restaurants, and career opportunities are all important to me.

Pain Points

It still feels like buying a home is out of reach, especially with rising interest rates.

What Resonates With Jess

Jess values financially smart investments—seeing cost savings compared to cities like West Hartford would resonate well, but she does not want to sacrifice a social life.

What to Avoid

Using generic real estate marketing—Jess prefers well-researched, data-backed information rather than just emotional appeals about moving.

The Established Homeowner Considering an Upgrade



Mindy

Age: 34

Bristol, CT

Occupation

Project Manager in Manufacturing

Income

\$100,000/year

Current Housing

Owns a home with spouse and two children

Relationship Status

Married

Life Planning & Moving Goals

My family and I have lived in Bristol for years, and we've been happy here. We love the affordability, the strong sense of community, and the parks and recreation options for our kids. However, we're thinking about whether upgrading to a larger home in Bristol or relocating to another town would be the best fit for us.

I'm not in a rush to move, but I want to explore different areas to see what they offer. I want to ensure that wherever we settle next provides the best quality of life for my family.

Pain Points

The town's driving accessibility is inconvenient and I wonder if other areas provide a better balance of amenities and convenience.

Main Concerns

Property taxes keep going up, and we're trying to find a place that makes financial sense long-term. Safety is also a huge concern for us and the kids.

Preferred City Type

A suburban area that balances family-friendly amenities, convenience, and long-term home value.

Decision Influencers

Safety and low crime rate, school ratings, and proximity to extended family.

Media & Research Preferences

We trust word of mouth, recommendations from other families, Facebook town groups, or Reddit threads.

What Resonates With Mindy

Mindy values high-quality family amenities —parks, recreation, and school rankings are all important. She also trusts professional advice and data-driven insights.

What to Avoid

Avoid positioning Bristol solely as inexpensive, as there is a fine line between affordable and cheap. Instead, highlight the positives to emphasize the value Bristol offers without diminishing its appeal.

Key Takeaways & Insights

Key Insights from the Personas:



Affordability is the biggest concern—homeownership is a goal, but high costs, rising mortgage rates, and financial constraints make it difficult for this demographic.



Job opportunities matter—young professionals want stability, remote workers seek flexibility, and potential entrepreneurs want city support.



Social life & amenities drive decisions—entertainment, restaurants, and community events play a huge role in city desirability.



Safety & schools influence long-term commitment—those planning families prioritize safe neighborhoods and good schools.



Digital & word-of-mouth research dominates—most use Zillow, Google, Reddit, and recommendations from friends when considering a move.



Young professionals want a balance between affordability and lifestyle—without sacrificing one for the other.

Opportunities

Content & Organic Opportunities

Utilize website content and online forums to raise awareness on what Bristol CT has to offer young adults.

- Write blog posts and optimize them for keywords related to living and enjoying life in Bristol, CT. Use terms like "affordable places for young people in Bristol," or "things to do for young adults in Bristol."
- Create a comprehensive guide about moving to Bristol, CT for young adults.
- Use forums like Reddit to engage with younger audiences. Create content that fits naturally into Reddit's subreddits related to local areas, events, or interests:
 - a. Ask Me Anything (AMA): Host an AMA with someone local to Bristol who can speak to the experience of young people living there.
 - b. Start a challenge on subreddits like r/Connecticut or r/YoungAdults to showcase Bristol's popular spots.
 - i. "Post a Picture of Your Favorite Bristol Spot and Win a Local Gift Card!"

Paid Digital Media Opportunities

Leverage targeted digital ads to reach young people considering moving to Bristol

- Run ads targeting young adults in nearby cities or states who might be interested in relocating to a smaller, more affordable city.
- Use lifestyle-oriented messaging in digital ads that focus on Bristol's unique appeal for younger demographics.
- Create paid ads on real estate sites like Zillow and Trulia to reach users during their housing/rental search.
- Use engaging video ads on YouTube to highlight Bristol's affordable living, and local events and local businesses. Educate users on what Bristol has to offer or address misunderstandings noted in social and forum review.
- Create sponsored posts on Reddit in relevant subreddits (e.g., r/Connecticut, r/YoungAdults) showcasing Bristol's perks with a conversational tone.



WORXbranding.com

Economic Development/Marketing/Grants/CDBG Report

March 2025

Downtown/West End Updates

- Centre Square:
 - Construction of “Phase II” continues with sitework/foundation work. Pure Foods and Dark Moon are open and doing well.
 - Hope Street Parking Garage construction is expected to be completed in April.
 - The final section of streetscape work for North Main Street (in front of the Police Station) is expected to be complete in March.
 - The final parcel available for development must temporarily be used for parking during the Hope Street Garage construction.
- Staff are working on an industrial/distribution project for the downtown area to be announced soon.
- Golden Years’ opening is pushed to early spring. The building at 118 Main Street will serve as headquarters for Golden Years’ home healthcare operation, adult daycare, and a small café that will provide food for the agency’s programs and for the public.
- The Michaels Organization is working with staff and CT Dept. of Housing. Staff anticipates Michaels submitting a financing proposal – including a local “ask” to help close a financing gap – in April.
- Route 72 Streetscape Design work is nearing completion, with a public hearing on the design planned for April.
- Staff are working with Ventanas Restaurant on its planned opening in late March/early April as well as a smaller restaurant concept interested in the former Pure Foods location on North Main Street.

Development Outside Downtown

- Industrial Update:
 - Staff will present a new project concept for the Southeast Bristol Business Park at the March ECD meeting.
 - The ECD board will continue its review of the proposal for 894 Middle Street at the March ECD meeting.
 - Staff are working on a large manufacturing/distribution project that we hope to announce in the coming days.
 - FORCE Automation has submitted site plans for land use approvals – Planning, Zoning, Wetlands – for the development of Lot #3 of the Southeast Bristol Business Park
 - AllState Driving School plans to soon submit initial plans for Land Use review for Lot #10/11 of the Southeast Bristol Business Park.
 - Horizon Stone submitted plans for slight site plan modification for Planning Commission review in February.
 - ECD staff continues to work with a manufacturer from a nearby community on plans for Lot #6 of the Southeast Bristol Business Park.
 - We are happy to welcome General Machine to Bristol. General Machine is a manufacturer from outside Bristol that has been looking for an appropriate

building for several years. The company has purchased a property on Birch Street and is preparing the space for the company's relocation.

- Route 6:
 - The Paper Store is moving to the former Pier One location.
 - A Halal-focused regional chain restaurant is preparing to open on Route 6 by March. More to come!
 - Tropical Smoothie and Hibachi Buffet will open in the Bristol Commons plaza.
 - SNIPES, a European based streetwear retailer, a 7,000 square foot store in Bristol Plaza is now open.
 - Construction on the ProHealth/Platinum Car Wash/fast casual restaurant project on Route 6 is well underway.
 - DESI Mandi, an established Connecticut chain of South Asian markets/eateries, will open in the former Eblens space very soon.
 - Both new gas stations projects are under construction.
- Forestville
 - Environmental assessment work at 43 East Main St. is expected to begin shortly following a pause in federal grant activity.
 - ECD staff is working with a commercial building owner on a façade update using the ECD Façade Improvement Grant program.
 - ECD staff is working with a local food business planning to locate in Forestville following necessary approvals from Zoning/land use.

Business Incentives

Small Business Micro Grants

- Staff is working with popular local barber and business owner Andy Mendoza on a new venture at 277 West Street.

State of CT Urban Jobs Tax Abatement for Manufacturers

- Anticipated Applications for 2025/2026: Horizon Natural Stone, General Machine on Birch Street, a large downtown project in the works

Downtown/West End/Forestville Façade Program

- Working with the owner of 14 East Main Street in Forestville – the plaza featuring Rumba Lounge/Post Office.
- Working with a food business preparing to occupy 31B Church Ave. in Forestville
- Working with the property owner of 13 Divinity Street in the “West End.”

Forgivable Revolving Loan

- Several loan projects are expected to close late January/early February. These include Pure Foods, Dark Moon, DesiMandi, and more.

Marketing

1) ECD Ribbon Cuttings, Business Anniversaries and Business Site Visits:

Business Anniversary – ECD Staff celebrated the 35th anniversary of **The Carousel Museum** with Morgan Uργο on February 13, 2025.

New Business Openings & Business Site Visits – Mayor Caggiano, Justin, and Dawn N. visited existing businesses and welcomed new businesses to Bristol:

1) **Tomato & Garlic Pizzeria**, located at 102 Wolcott Street, is owned by two brothers Nick and Alex Cruz and is open 7 days a week for dine-in, take-out, or delivery. *See photo in Communications.*

2) **Ventana’s Bar & Restaurant**, located in the former Better Half Brewery on North Main Street is coming soon. Mayor Caggiano, Justin, and Dawn N. visited owner, Efrain to discuss his plan for opening in the near future.

3) **The New Cambridge Project** is now offering more than just beer – with wine, spirits, and pizza from Zuppardi’s pizza along with hosting a variety of events from live music, to yoga, to trivia nights – *see photo in Communications.*

2) Marketing and Public Relations Initiatives:

- The Marketing Research Project survey results– the WORX group will present an in-depth report at the meeting – *please review reports in Communications.*
- The ARPA Video Project – a plan has been put together to begin releasing the short videos through social media in the coming weeks. Three projects have been filmed to date.
- America250 Committee Update – a web page has been set up and is being launched this week for the community to stay up to date on initiatives being planned for this year and in 2026. The URL is: <https://www.bristolallheart.com/America250> A press release will be sent to the local media to make the community aware. Bristol’s logo has been approved by the State of CT America250 Commission and the City of Bristol has now officially become an affiliate. Currently about 40% of towns are signed up in CT. <https://ct250.org/get-involved/affiliate-program/>

Grants Administration

Recent Grant News:

- Federal funds were temporarily frozen in late January but legal action continues and the status of current and future grant programs is uncertain. Local projects that were frozen included CDBG, Fire Department, Police Department, PRYCS, Senior Center transportation and meal programs, EMPG, and any Public Works projects receiving Federal support. Education spending is also at risk of being reduced, along with school lunch, special education, and transportation funding.

Still pending:

- An application was filed on November 27 for a DEEP Open Space Grant to purchase two parcels of land in the Hoppers-Birge Pond area to add to existing City open space. It is anticipated that awards will be announced in late Spring 2025.

CDBG Program Highlights

Pending anticipated layoffs and program budget cuts at HUD, there has been no announcement about Program Year 51 funding allocations.

- CDBG Year 50 – Second quarter payment requisitions processed.
- 5-Year Consolidated Plan – A 30-day public comment period just ended with no comments received on the draft plan, which is still available on the ECD website.
- Applications for CDBG Year 51 – 15 applications for CDBG funding were received.