

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 January 9, 2025 Regular Meeting

The mayor called for a motion to approve the meeting Minutes from January 9, 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