# ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Regular Meeting Minutes
Thursday, August 7, 2025 at 5:00pm
City Council Chambers, City Hall, 111 N. Main Street and on Zoom

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

ABSENT: Commissioner Hick

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

GUESTS: Mr. Michael Dudko, 116 Lewis Rd., Bristol
Attorney Jim Furey - Furey, Donovan, Cooney & Dyer, PC, Bristol
Brian Kelley, Rachel Rosa, and Elyse Werner - WORX Group

**I. Call to Order**

The mayor called the meeting to order at 5:00pm and led all present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**II. Public Participation**

Mr. Michael Dudko, 116 Lewis Rd., Bristol expressed interest in speaking to the Board regarding the Industrial Committee Report which is later in the agenda. Mayor Caggiano made note of it.

There was no other Public Participation.

The mayor called for a motion to move up item **VIII. Committee Reports A. Industrial Committee Report.** Commissioner Mills made the motion which was seconded by Commissioner Schmelder. All were in favor and the discussion turned to the Industrial Committee Report.

**VIII. Committee Reports**

**A. Industrial Committee Report**

Justin Malley led the review of the Industrial Committee Meeting which had taken place prior to this ECD Board Meeting. The Industrial Committee had discussed Lot #3 at the Southeast Bristol Business Park (SEBBP) and the development of FORCE Automation at that site. There are known grading challenges on the lot, and all parties acknowledge that a significant amount of fill is needed. Discussion at the Industrial Committee meeting was to decide about the city assisting in obtaining the soil for Lot #3 using funds set aside for the SEBBP.

The second item that had been discussed was the Right of Reversion clause in the contract with FORCE Automation. It was noted that FORCE Automation qualifies for financing, and their bank wants to fund the project, however the bank was hesitant to complete the funding due to the wording in the clause, and as such, it needed to be reviewed by the Committee.

Attorney Jeff Steeg, representing the City of Bristol, was present at the Industrial Committee Meeting and spoke to the city's understanding and acceptance of the request. Commissioner Goldwasser, speaking as the Chair of the Industrial Committee stated to the Board that the Committee feels the contract should be fair and set up to succeed.

Commissioner Schmelder expressed his concerns regarding protecting the city if the lot goes undeveloped. Mayor Caggiano spoke to the amount of up to $50,000.00 fund assistance that the Industrial Committee had approved for use to buy the fill stating that the soil is needed no matter what is developed there or by whom, and he is open to discussion on the financing item.

Attorney Tim Furey joined the discussion representing the developer. He provided a summary of their commitment to the plan, including specifics of their financial investments in it, permits that had been obtained for it, and materials being assembled for construction at the site.

Mr. Dudko spoke at this time and stated that there was another option that he brought before the Board in January 2025 and that option didn't require fill. He also expressed concern for the contract wording that was in question and the city not being protected because of it.

The mayor clarified that the Industrial Committee had approved the use of *up to* $50,000.00 from a $75,000.00 SEBBP account at their meeting earlier that afternoon. There had been an original arrangement to use existing fill from off site, but it isn't suitable for the intended use, hence the need for this discussion. Attorney Furey added that there are milestones that need to be reached before they'll request that the fill is purchased. There was no further discussion.

Mayor Caggiano called for the first motion to be read. Commissioner Cowdell read the Motion as follows:

***Motion****: To utilize account 3054105-587040-98006 "Southeast Bristol Mini Industrial Park" in the amount of up to $50,000.00 to fund the purchase and delivery of fill/soil to help manage significant grade challenges for Lot #3, Southeast Bristol Business Park, to allow FORCE Automation to begin construction on its project.*

The motion was second by Commissioner Mills. All were in favor, and the motion was accepted into the record.

Commissioner Cowdell then read the second Motion as follows:

***Motion:*** *To amend the Real Estate Purchase Agreement between the City of Bristol and FORCE Automation, Inc. or its assigns for Lot #3, Southeast Bristol Business Park, to eliminate the property reversion clause following issuance of a building permit for the construction of Phase I – an approximately 30,000 square foot industrial building.*

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

After the votes were completed, the meeting returned to the original Agenda order.

## III. Approval of Minutes

**A. Minutes of the July 9, 2025 Regular Meeting**

Mayor Caggiano called for a Motion to accept the Minutes of the July 9, 2025 Regular Meeting. The motion was made by Commissioner Goldwasser and was seconded by Commissioner Mills. All were in favor, and the Minutes were accepted into the record.

## IV. Consent Agenda

**A. Communications**

**B. Economic Development/Grants/Marketing Report**

Mayor Caggiano called for a Motion to accept the Consent Agenda. The motion was made by Commissioner Schmelder and was seconded by Commissioner Mills. All were in favor, and the Consent Agenda was accepted into the record.

## V. New Business

**A. Marketing Campaign Update**

Dawn Nielsen reintroduced the WORX Group members who are coordinating the branding and positioning for Phase II of the marketing campaign to keep, and attract, a younger demographic in, and to, the city.

The WORX Group provided a presentation that included a positioning statement built on the personas that had resulted from the Phase I survey. The campaign will focus on the attributes of the demographic which include them performing their own research for information on items they find interesting. The goal is for them to see, and find themselves, in the culture and spaces that are taking shape in Bristol. The campaign is designed to spark interest and encourage them to discover what life in the city can mean for them.

Discussion continued around the branding. The Bristol All Heart logo will be used with an adjustment in colors and tag lines that are exclusive to this campaign, the targeted audience, and the various online platforms where they live. The goal is for the framework of the campaign to be in place with support from WORX as needed while the city moves forward with the tools in place. Dawn Nielsen added that the Arts & Culture District will especially be brought into the campaign as a draw, and the campaign will begin in the fall of 2025.

**B. Board of Finance Requests**

Mayor Caggiano called for the reading of the Motions for the Board of Finance Requests. They include end of fiscal year transfers and carryovers.

Commissioner Mills read the Motion as follows:

***Motion***: *To request the carryover of the following fiscal year 2024/2025 account balances: $4,101.00 from the "Advertising" account #1044101-557700-G2025, and $4,918.00 from the "Professional Fees" account #1044101-531000-G2025, and to refer to the Board of Finance for action.*

Commissioner Provenzano second the motion. All were in favor, and the motion was passed into the record.

Commissioner Mills then read the next Board of Finance Request Motion as follows:

***Motion***: *To request the transfers of the following fiscal year 2024/2025 account balances to cover overages:*
*$79.00 from "Overtime Wages – 4102" to "Regular Wages – 4102",*
*$54.00 from "Overtime Wages – 4102" to "F.I.C.A. – 4102",*
*$11.00 from "Overtime Wages – 4102" to "Medicare Insurance – 4102",*
*$34.00 from "Postage – 4103" to "F.I.C.A. – 4103",*
*$8.00 from "Postage – 4103" to "Medicare Insurance – 4103",*
*$650.00 from "Advertising – 4103" to "Professional Fees – 4103",*
*and to refer to the Board of Finance for action.*

Commissioner Provenzano second the motion. All were in favor, and the motion was passed into the record.

Commissioner Mills read the following Motion as follows:

***Motion****: To transfer the following:*
*$37,500.00 in account #1044110-531000 "Professional Fees" to account #1044110-589345 "ECD Loan Program", and to transfer $20,000.00 from account #1044109-589300 "Economic Development Expenses" to account #1044109-589330 "Small Business Grant Program".*

Commissioner Cowdell seconded the motion. Justin Malley advised the Board that the request to transfer the $37,500.00 are funds the Comptroller set aside when the Revolving Loan Program was created and represents the amount of 5% loan interest which the loan recipient pays, not the city, therefore, these funds are available to lend out through the Revolving Loan Program. The $20,000.00 are funds from the main ECD Grant account being requested to replenish the Small Business Grant Program.

There were no questions, all were in favor, and the motion was passed into the record.

**C. Revolving Loan Fund**
Justin Malley updated the Board on the popularity of the Revolving Loan Program. The demand is high, and loan payments are current, however, the funds aren't coming back at the pace needed to meet the demand. He is arranging for a meeting with Commissioner Schmelder, Dave Preleski, and Louis Silva from Community Investment Corporation (CIC) the city's loan officer, to discuss adjustments to the program guidelines in order to make it more sustainable.

**D. Downtown/Forestville Updates**
Justin Malley shared images of work being done on two businesses who are Façade Grant recipients. Smith Cycles on Riverside Avenue in Bristol is using the Façade Grant to have the exterior painted. Sample renderings of possible color combinations of the building were included in the presentation. The final paint color/combination is pending.

The Façade Grant awarded to Luna's, LCC is being used to update/replace features at the former Nuchie's at 164 Central Street in Forestville. Luna's is relocating to the Forestville location from its present 360 King Street address in Bristol. The owner hopes to open with a community walk through in November and in time for the holidays. The Façade Grant funds are being used for the entrance/doorway and a new stucco exterior.

Commissioner Goldwasser asked about 150 Central Street in Forestville. Justin Malley advised there is no update other than there is a timeline the property needs to adhere to in regard to an environmental consideration. The realtor has reported there is interest in the property.

Justin Malley shared that Eric Carrier will be closing on Parcel #10 at Centre Square in Bristol. The plan is for 30-31 living units in that space.

Commissioner Schmelder asked about West Street in Bristol, which is also a project by Eric Carrier. Their goal is to complete 11 condominiums at the West Street project and then move to Parcel #10. It was noted that the ECD Board had granted Enterprise Zone benefits for the West Street project.

Mayor Caggiano spoke about the Pocket Park at the corner of Riverside and North Main Streets. The original Urban Act Grant funding for both the municipal parking garage and the Pocket Park was absorbed in full by the garage with an additional $1M of the city's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds also applied to it.

The Pocket Park plan is moving forward under the design and direction of the city's engineers, gardener, Arts and Culture, Public Works and Parks, Recreation, Youth and Community Services. This is a creative, collaborative approach within city departments. The neighboring 1.5 acre parcel will go out for bid once the dimensions for the park are finalized as that information affects the final size of the parcel. Discussion followed, including the State of Connecticut's plans to reconfigure Brackett Park and them working with the city on the overall look and feel of those spaces.

The mayor advised that the site plans for the former Mafale's Plaza at 37 Main Street have been approved, and they hope to break ground soon. The plans will be provided to the Board as it has been several months since they were first reviewed and approved.

**E. Strategic Planning**

Justin Malley reviewed the input provided by the Board Members regarding Goals as part of the ECD's contribution to the City's Strategic Planning Initiative. Discussion of the specific categories, goals and related factors followed.

Board members requested the information be presented in an easier to read format and were tasked with prioritizing the twelve categories down to three to five to be considered for the City's Initiative and ECD separately for the September ECD Board Meeting.

Additional discussion followed with the mayor encouraging the Board to look beyond Downtown Bristol when reviewing the categories and goals. The Board will be provided with the information in a more user friendly format within the next week. The next Strategic Planning meeting is August 26, 2025 at 4:00pm.

**VI. New Business by Commissioners**

There was no New Business by Commissioners.

**VII. Old Business by Commissioners**

Council Member Dickau asked about for an update on the former Chic Miller property. Mayor Caggiano advised that the owner chose not to accept a New England Brownfield Program interest free grant allotment of $1.1M for the demolition and is independently arranging for that work. A contract is in place with funds to begin demolition by July/August and the owner plans to build apartments in that space. The mayor assured the Board that the property will continue to be on the city's watch list.

**VIII. Committee Reports**

**B. CDBG Policy Committee Report**

Dr. Dawn Leger updated the Board that the ECD Staff learned one of the CDBG Program grants made through the CDBG Policy Committee process for the current grant year is not yet set up in Connecticut. As a result, the Committee agreed to rescind the award and reallocate the funds to three other agencies that can use the funds. The Committee's goal of addressing homelessness in the city was used to choose where the funds were reallocated to.

Commissioner Provenzano read the following Motion:

***Motion:*** *To rescind the Year 51 CDBG Grant Award of $5,400.00 originally given to Pearl Transit and to reallocate these grant funds to the following recipients: $1,800.00 to Prudence Crandall – Shelter Services, $1,800.00 to Salvation Army Bristol Corps., and $1,800.00 to St. Vincent De Paul Homeless Shelter. I further move that this reallocation be referred to the City Council and the Board of Finance for action.*

Commissioner Mills seconded the motion. Mayor Caggiano thanked the ECD Staff for their discovery and for acting in a timely and well executed manner. All were in favor, and the motion was accepted into the record.

**C. City Council Member Report**

There was no City Council Member Report.

**IX. Adjournment**

The mayor called for 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 6:29pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sharon Arsego
Recording Secretary