ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Regular Meeting Minutes
Thursday, September 4, 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, Hick, Goldwasser, Provenzano, Cowdell (Zoom), and Kearney-Gonzales

ABSENT: None

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

GUESTS: Louis Silva, President – Community Investment Company (CIC)
Maxine Bowden, Executive Director – Paradigm Arts & Culture Foundation

I. Call to Order

Mayor Caggiano called the meeting to order at 5:01pm and lead all present in the Pledge of Allegiance. The mayor called for a motion to move the discussion to **V. New Business A. Incentives Budgets**. The motion was made by Commissioner Goldwasser and it was seconded by Commissioner Mills. All were in favor and item was moved up for discussion.

V. New Business

A. Incentive Budgets

Justin Malley first presented an update on the Revolving Loan Fund Program to the Board with Louis Silva from CIC present on Zoom. CIC manages the Revolving Loan Fund Program business incentive for the city. The program is popular to the point of available funds running short of the demand. While all the loans are current, the payments aren't coming back to the fund at a pace that allows the program to be self-sustaining. The question before the Board is how to best address the program with funding, timelines, and program guidelines moving forward.

Discussion followed with Louis Silva providing options and adjustments that may be of use. These included reducing the loan amounts, changing the interest rate or length of the loans from 10 years to 5 years, and fixed principal payments that include paying against the interest each month. That last suggestion would reduce the amount of interest to be paid each month which helps the borrower while also allowing for those funds to be available sooner for new loans to be awarded.

It was noted that these loans are considered paid in full at the 50% loan amount, and the fund started with $750,000, with the program meant to be self-sustaining. Currently, the fund receives approximately $5,000 per quarter in payments that can be reinvested.

Discussion continued and included options for funding the loan program with transfers from existing Economic & Community Development (ECD) accounts and consideration for the projects those funds would be used for if not for the Revolving Loan Fund Program. The long-term scope and goal of the program, reviewing the use of the loans, and being good stewards with the funds were also discussed.

Real estate and commercial vehicles (DMV registered vehicles) were specifically discussed with regards to removing them from the program as eligible for loans in light of program restructuring. In response to the Board's inquiry, Mr. Silva noted that deciding factors for borrowers have been the interest rate and the 50% loan forgiveness for their 10-year commitment to Bristol.

The discussion clarified the following consensus among the Board: Keep the Revolving Loan Fund Program active, Board approval of a $100,000 transfer at this time which is equal to five more loans at the current demand, changing to a 5-Year term and cap loan amounts at $20,000. This would allow for assistance now, while the ECD Strategic Planning items are more fully defined as part of the city's initiative.

Start-up businesses were considered as well and included their access to additional business incentives offered by the city. Two start-ups are currently using the loan program.

As a result, the following Motion was read and then made by Commissioner Goldwasser:

Motion to transfer $100,000.00 from the main ECD Grant Fund account# 1044109-589300 to the Revolving Loan Fund account# 1044110-589345, eliminate the use of loans for the purchase of real estate and DMV registered vehicles, reduce the loan amount to a $20,000.00 loan cap for existing businesses and shorten the term to a 5-year loan term.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Mills.

Additional discussion of the loan program for use by start-ups lead to the Motion being amended as follows:

Motion to transfer $100,000.00 from the main ECD Grant Fund account# 1044109-589300 to the Revolving Loan Fund account# 1044110-589345, eliminate the use of loans for the purchase of real estate and DMV registered vehicles, reduce the loan amount to a $20,000.00 loan cap for existing businesses and shorten the term to a 5-year loan term, and limit start-ups to a $10,000.00 loan limit.

The amended motion was seconded by Commissioner Schmelder. All were in favor without further discussion, and the motion was accepted into the record.

II. Public Participation

Maxine Bowden, 42 Merriman St., Bristol spoke to the Board regarding the return of The Soul Session to the Downtown Live at Rockwell Theater roster on January 17, 2026. Ms. Bowden is the curator and creator of the show and worked with Arianna Therriault as the Arts & Culture Supervisor for the city. For the 2025 show, the event received a $6,000 grant for event promotion with payment of 15 of the performers, who, she noted, accepted a reduced fee to support the event. All proceeds from tickets sales for The Soul Session go to Downtown Live at Rockwell Theater.

Ms. Bowden would like to see more Bristol residents at the 2026 event. Last year's event had approximately 200 attendees and many were not from Bristol. The 2026 theme is Motown. Based on her experience of previously marketing and promoting the event without a designated team to assist, she is seeking both a sponsorship and promotion of the 2026 event to reach a broader, local Bristol audience. Downtown Live has approved $4,000 for this program, and she is seeking an additional $15,000 in support of the show.

Justin Malley and Dawn Nielsen will be working with Ms. Bowden for creative and fundraising ideas to assist her in meeting her goal. The 2025 season originally had a sponsorship from Xfinity Theater that wasn't able to be used due to a conflict of interest.

Justin Malley encouraged the Board to share any fundraising ideas. Dawn Nielsen as the city's PR & Marketing Specialist will stay in contact with Maxine and possibly connect her with some local corporations for sponsorships, and introductions to the Chamber and other community organization leaders.

III. Approval of Minutes

A. Minutes of the August 7, 2025 Regular Meeting

The mayor called for a motion to approve the meeting minutes from August 7, 2025. The motion was made by Commissioner Mills and seconded by Commissioner Provenzano. All were in favor and the motion was accepted into the record.

IV. Consent Agenda

A. Communications

B. Economic Development/Grants/Marketing Report

The mayor called for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion was made by Commissioner Goldwasser and seconded by Commissioner Schmelder. All were in favor and the Consent Agenda was accepted into the record.

V. New Business

B. BOF Transfers

The $100,000 transfer was addressed during the Incentives Budgets Agenda Item. There was discussion regarding the need for additional transfers to help fill in active grant programs. The Manufacturing Technical Assistance Grant has one application for $10,000 in process and is the first request received in a year, while the Small Business and Façade Grant programs are more active year round, and would welcome a transfer to assist with expected requests.

Commissioner Goldwasser then put forth the following motion:

Motion to transfer $32,587 from the Manufacturing Technical Assistance Grant fund account# 104410-589340 with $16,293.50 moving to each the Small Business Grant account# 1044109-589330 and the Façade Grant account# 1044109-589335.

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

C. Strategic Planning
Justin Malley reviewed the Strategic Planning categories and rankings resulting from the Board members previously providing ranking in priority from one to five. Discussion followed including the request to combine related categories (a total of 12) to better streamline them and include all areas as best as possible. The final result will be brought to the city's Strategic Planning Committee and the next ECD Board Meeting for review. The next Strategic Planning Session is in October.

D. Downtown Update
Justin Malley discussed the draft RFP for the final parcel of the Centre Square location. A map of the future Pocket Park will be included as an area of interest and beautification for the neighboring parcel. Discussion included the State's expected changes to Brackett Park and how it might affect the available lot. The Board was assured that had been considered and the timing isn't expected to be a factor that would impact the RFP or the interest of a developer to the location. The Board's concern for transparency on this item was noted. The Downtown Committee will be meeting to carry out the developer application process from the RFP responses.

Commissioner Goldwasser provided an update on the upcoming Mum Festival that runs Friday, September 26th from 5 to 9pm, Saturday, September 27th from 12 to 9pm, and Sunday, September 28th from 12 to 6pm, with the parade on Sunday. The Soul Sound Revue is a popular band appearing on Sunday as well.

The Board's concern about security was addressed with notes that both the Bristol Police Department and private security will be on site. Commissioner Goldwasser confirmed that parking will be where it's always been including the lot that now belongs to Express Kitchens. Memorial Boulevard will be blocked off for vehicle traffic flow and pedestrian traffic.

Commissioner Schmelder asked about the uneven bricks in the road on North Main Street. The mayor advised that Public Works leveled them out. He expressed the need for the pace of traffic to improve towards the goal of making it a walkable downtown. The installation of the rapid blinking beacons at the crosswalks was also mentioned.

E. Appointments
The mayor appointed Commissioner Kearney-Gonzales to the Downtown Committee which fills the Committee's vacant seat. They will be meeting as the Centre Square parcel RFP responses come in and the process moves forward.

VI. New Business by Commissioners
There was no New Business by Commissioners.

VII. Old Business by Commissioners
Commissioner Goldwasser asked about the painting of the former dry-cleaning location on Riverside Avenue. It was confirmed that the building's owners painted it, and it looked better. The mayor added that Code Enforcement has been involved with oversight of the property and will continue to do so.

Commissioner Cowdell excused herself at 6:28pm.

VIII. Committee Reports

A. City Council Member Report

There was no City Council Member Report.

IX. Adjournment

As there was no requests for further discussion, the mayor called for a motion to adjourn. The motion was made by Commissioner Goldwasser and seconded by Commissioner Hick. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 6:33pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sharon Arsego
Recording Secretary