

Diversity Council Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, August 26, 2025 at 6:30pm
Hybrid Meeting: In-Person and on Zoom
Meeting Room 1-2, City Hall, 111 N. Main St., Bristol, CT

Attendees: Marcus Patton-Interim Chair, Council Members Sandra Kamens, Tony Lopes (Zoom), and Jeff Israel

Absent: City Council Member, Mark Dickau, and Council Member David Rackliffe

Guests: None

I. Call to Order

Interim Chair Patton called the meeting to order at 6:35pm. There was a quorum. The Interim Chair lead all present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Approval of Minutes

a) Minutes from the July 29, 2025 Regular Meeting

Interim Chair Patton called for a motion to approve the Minutes of the July 29, 2025 Special Meeting. The motion to approve was made by Council Member Israel and was seconded by Council Member Kamens. All were in favor with no changes or corrections, and the Minutes were accepted into the record.

III. Council Attendance

Present Council Members were noted.

IV. Public Participation

There was no Public Participation.

V. Current Business

a) City Meeting Updates

The Interim Chair requested updates from city meetings the Council Members attended in the prior month. Council Member Kamens reported on the City Council Meeting where the Open Fire Burning Ordinance she had championed for was approved.

Council Member Lopes and Israel were unable to attend city meetings. Council Member Israel took this time to share an update on the Interfaith Prayer Walk that had taken place the weekend before the meeting. He shared Diversity Council information at the event and mentioned the Bristol Pride Fall Festival from 5pm to 9pm on October 25th at Faith Lutheran Church, 1125 Stafford Avenue. It will be posted to the Diversity Council's Facebook page.

Council Member Rackliffe shared his meeting updates through the Interim Chair as follows: Economic and Community Development (ECD) Meeting – Discussion about a Southeast Bristol Business Park developer and his proven commitment to that project. WORX, a marketing company, presented information about the younger aged growing demographic in Bristol. The

Revolving Loan Program offered is popular as a business-friendly program and additional funds for it were discussed. Several Forestville businesses were noted for their improvements, as well as interest being shown in 150 Central. Lot #10 development was purchased by Eric Carrier for a mixed-use building on the site.

The Interim chair attended the City Council Meeting along with Council Member Kamens. Of note: a few honorees acknowledged representing Bristol youth, discussion around noise testing in the city, a parent spoke about the special education needs and lack of funding in the city's schools, the West End Festival was held the weekend before, the Bristol Police Department is actively recruiting, and the creation of new positions in the city, a Parent Ambassador and a Community Engagement Coordinator.

b) Cash Mob Selections for September

The Economic and Community Development (ECD) Dept. provided the Interim Chair with a list of new businesses, and it included businesses that moved to new locations in the city or are under new ownership. With the focus on restaurants, members made initial rankings which lead to ten businesses. Discussion continued as to how often the Cash Mob would be run, the best way to offer the locations for public voting and promoting the Cash Mob Come Back.

The Council came to a consensus regarding the number of businesses to include in the initial Cash Mob voting, and the following Motion was made by the Interim Chair:

Motion to include the following ten (10) businesses that are new to Bristol, under new ownership or in a new location for the first Cash Mob voting of the new season: Guac 'n Roll, Ventana's, Shah's Halal Food, Fresh and Green Plate, Espresso Café, Joseph's Steakhouse, Divine Health Juice Bar, Bristol Scoops, Hibachi Buffet, and Iron Horse Sports Pub.

The motion was seconded by Council Member Kamens. All were in favor and the motion passed into the record.

Interim Chair Patton will brief each business and meet once more with Dave Haberfeld as the Council's Cash Mob consultant.

c) Two DC Members to lead "Words Matter" Event

This event will be held in November or December of 2025 and two Council Members are needed to lead the planning and event arrangements. Council Member Rackliffe expressed interest in being involved and that will be confirmed. Council Member Kamens will be one of the leads, with confirmation of Council Member Rackliffe and Council Member Lopes serving as an alternate. A winter holiday and community building theme was discussed.

VI. New Business

a) Feedback from TBE Recruitment Article

Feedback from the Bristol Edition article about recruitment to the Diversity Council from the previous month's Special Meeting was discussed. The Interim Chair received messages from interested parties with positive feedback almost immediately. The article will be shared out on social media for those who may have missed seeing it in print. Those interested in joining the Diversity Council will receive next steps, which include meeting with the mayor.

A former Bristol resident, Brian Hannon, reached out suggesting the Council research the Capitol Workforce Partners in Hartford. This group provides paid internships for municipalities, and the Interim Chair confirmed the group is available and the Hartford group includes Bristol. He is looking to move forward on the opportunity.

b) BPS Partnership Opportunities

Discussion took place about revisiting partnerships with the Bristol Public High Schools for student involvement on and with the Council. Historically, the schools already have diverse focused groups on campus. The consensus was to pursue student representation and that it would be valuable on the Council, and the idea of meeting at the school to make it more streamlined for the students was proposed. No vote was taken, and this item will continue to the September meeting's agenda.

c) September Meetings and Follow-Ups

Council Members agreed to continue to attend the meetings they went to in the past month. Council Member Kamens will consider an alternative to City Ordinance, and Commissioner Israel will need to wait until the following month due to previous commitments. Meetings to attend include City Council, Arts & Culture Commission, Inland Wetlands, and the ECD Board.

Members were reminded that the next Diversity Council meeting is September 30, 2025. Future city events include Books in Bristol at the Bristol Public Library on September 6, 2025 with 20 Connecticut authors present.

The Soul Session returns to Downtown Live at Rockwell Theater on January 17, 2026, and an author and publisher led panel will be held that day at Bristol Public Library. The panel topic is on how to publish your book. Women, Wine and Watches at the Clock and Watch Museum is coming up and might be a good volunteer opportunity for the Council members.

Interim Chair Patton spoke about a new book called The Elephant in the Room by local author Nicole Singleton at New Cambridge Brew House. The book is about managing stress and what we can take on as individuals. A flyer for this event was shared to the Diversity Council's Facebook page, and other Council Members are invited to field similar requests to share information on their page if it aligns with their goals to build community partnership and outreach.

VIII. Adjournment

Interim Chair Patton called for a motion to adjourn. The motion was made by Council Member Kamens and was seconded by Council Member Lopes. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 8:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Arsego
Recording Secretary