ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Regular Meeting Minutes
Thursday, October 2, 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, and Kearney-Gonzales (Zoom)
ABSENT:	Commissioners Provenzano, Goldwasser, and Cowdell
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 Mike Goman and Brad Senft, Goman + York Property Advisors (Zoom)

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 of 116 Lewis Rd., Bristol, addressed the Board regarding the grove of trees located on Lot #10 within the Southeast Bristol Business Park (SEBBP). He expressed his view that the trees are likely over 100 years old and raised concerns that their preservation may not have been adequately considered during the sale and development of the property to Allstate Commercial Driver Training School.

Mayor Caggiano recognized Mr. Dudko's concerns and recommended that he attend a Public Works Board Meeting or arrange an individual meeting with Ray Rogozinski, the city's tree warden, to discuss the matter further. The mayor noted that he was not aware of any specific evaluation of the trees as referenced by Mr. Dudko, but affirmed the city's continued commitment to preserving open spaces, such as the Birge Pond Hoppers and Pigeon Hill properties.

No additional public participation was recorded.

III. Approval of Minutes

A. Minutes of the September 4, 2025 Regular Meeting

Mayor Caggiano called for a motion to approve the Minutes from the September 4, 2025 Regular Meeting. The motion to approve was made by Commissioner Hick and it was seconded by Commissioner Mills. There were no changes, 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 approve the Consent Agenda. The motion to approve was made by Commissioner Hick and it was seconded by Commissioner Mills. There were no changes, all were in favor, and the Consent Agenda was accepted into the record.

At this time the mayor requested a motion to move Agenda item **V. New Business D. Downtown Update** up for discussion. The motion was made by Commissioner Hick and was seconded by Commissioner Mills. All were in favor, and discussion turned to the Downtown Update.

V. New Business

D. Downtown Update

Justin Malley addressed developments at the J. H. Sessions Building located at 273 Riverside Avenue. The Michaels Group had been selected to lead the housing project on the remediated site, but recent changes to CHFA guidelines now require developers to submit 90% of architectural plans with low-income tax credit applications—an increase from the former 40%. This guideline shift has nearly doubled the necessary investment to $1,000,000 without any guarantee of approval. Consequently, The Michaels Group's Board of Directors decided not to proceed with the project.

Further discussion featured insights from Mike Goman and Brad Senft of Goman + York Property Advisors, who are partnering with the city on this initiative. They recommended that non-profit development companies, often more experienced in such processes, might be better suited for this project. It was clarified that neither CHFA nor the developers were notified about the rule change in advance; both learned of it simultaneously and explored alternatives, although none proved feasible.

The property is now clean and construction-ready. A new RFP will soon be drafted, marking the next step forward. The Board asked for a letter to be sent to the State, expressing concerns over the abrupt changes to application guidelines and their negative impact on the project. Currently, the building is without utilities; insurance is the sole remaining cost, and security measures are implemented as needed.

Malley also discussed the adjacent 1.35-acre development site near the Wheeler Health building and the Pocket Park, which complements the area. This plot will soon go out for bid, featuring drone footage as part of the process.

Dr. Dawn Leger is applying for a DEEP Urban Green Grant to help finance half of the Pocket Park construction, while work performed by the Public Works Department will count toward local funding requirements. City engineers are among those involved in designing the park, and additional discussion followed.

The Board received a request to support the grant application. Commissioner Mills moved to approve the letter of support from the ECD Board, and Commissioner Hick seconded. The motion passed unanimously and was entered into the record.

Questions regarding parking on Main Street and in the structure, particularly now that the Main Street development site is closed. Directional signage is needed, and samples of the signs were shared and included wording and placement. Justin Malley, Dawn Nielsen, and Public Works are working together on this project.

The mayor and Justin Malley shared a video on the new Kitchen Express factory and the launch of their Direct Cabinets, their online custom cabinet retail business with on site pick up. Appliances will also be offered in the future.

A. SEBBP Update

The Board received a brief update on projects in Southeast Bristol Business Park: FORCE Automation and the purchase of fill for grading, Horizon Stone is completing interior work, Allstate Trucking vocational school gained final lane use approval, and CMI is proceeding with its planned expansion.

B. Strategic Planning & Budget

The Board received the ECD Board's refined Strategic Planning Initiatives for city submission. The next Strategic Planning Meeting is at 4pm on October 28, 2025; members are encouraged to attend.

Budget updates included current balances of Business Incentives – ECD Grants and the Revolving Loan Program. The Manufacturing Technical Assistance Grant was unused this year as the applicant from last month withdrew. Justin asked that funds from that account be moved to two more readily used accounts to help with ongoing project requests.

In response, Mayor Caggiano entertained the following Motion:

Motion to transfer $10,000 from 1044109-589340 the Manufacturing Technical Assistance Grant account in equal amounts of $5,000 each to 1044109-589330 the Small Business Grant Account and 1044109-589335 the Façade Improvement Grant Account.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hick. There were no additional comments, all were in favor and the Motion was accepted into the record.

In response to Commissioner Provenzano's question at a previous meeting regarding funding from the main ECD account put to use for Community Development, an ECD Policy Committee Meeting will be held to further discuss options. Feedback on the difficult discussion Justin had with at least one business since the changes in the Revolving Loan Program Guidelines was shared with the Board. The mayor expressed his interest in maintaining the Revolving Loan Fund Program with the main account funds as an established incentive to Bristol businesses while also exploring options for a small infusion of funds to community development projects.

C. Façade Projects Review

Current Façade Projects include the former NAPA Auto Parts building at 65 Memorial Blvd. clean up, BBQ & Bacon and Vintage Co-Op signage in Forestville, and Luna's renovation on Center Street also in Forestville. The former Fletcher Plumbing Building on the corner of Center Street is also being painted with new lighting being installed.

VI. New Business by Commissioners

Commissioner Schmelder provided an update on a visit ECD staff, Commissioner Provenzano and he took to St. Vincent De Paul where they met with the new Director. The meeting was productive, and as a result, they will be visiting all the CDBG Recipients for updates and overview of their operations.

There was no additional New Business by Commissioners.

VII. Old Business by Commissioners

There was no Old Business by Commissioners.

VIII. Committee Reports

A. 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 Mills and was seconded by Commissioner Hick. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 5:57pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Sharon Arsego
Recording Secretary