ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Regular Meeting Minutes
Thursday, December 4, 2025 at 5:00pm
City Council Chambers, City Hall, 111 N. Main Street and on Zoom

ATTENDEES: Mayor Zoppo-Sassu, Council Member Tyler, Commissioner Schmelder (Zoom), Provenzano, Mills, Hick, and Kearney-Gonzales

ABSENT: Commissioners Goldwasser and Cowdell

STAFF PRESENT: Justin Malley - Executive Director, Dr. Dawn Leger - Grants Administrator, and Dawn Nielsen - Marketing & Public Relations Specialist, Dave Sgro – Housing & Project Specialist (Zoom)

GUESTS: Charlie Talmadge, President of Development Planning Solutions
Ryan Carrier, Asset Management and Development, Carrier Companies, LLC

I. Call to Order

Mayor Zoppo-Sassu called the meeting to order at 5:00pm, and lead all present in the Pledge of Allegiance. Introductions by the ECD Board Members and ECD Staff followed. A quorum was present.

At this time the mayor requested a special point of order to recognize that December marks Commissioner Schmelder's 50th year serving on the ECD Board. Commissioner Schmelder expressed that it's been his honor to serve the residents of Bristol throughout the years. The ECD Board and Staff thanked the Commissioner for his time and dedication.

II. Public Participation

Charlie Talmadge spoke to the Board regarding the development plans for, and the forward movement being made at the former Chic Miller dealership property at 40 West Street. The mayor had met with the development team along with property owner, Bhrugesh Patel, and invited them to share property updates at this meeting.

Updates included a timeline of necessary permits, demolition and excavation approvals, the temporary power service being scheduled, and water service changes. Prior conversation with the mayor included tax abatement, enterprise zone, and an increase in the number of planned residential units and a small commercial space with parking considerations needed. The items require further conversation and will come before the ECD Board at future meetings. The mayor emphasized the Enterprise Zone tool among the city's economic development offerings. Discussion followed, including the need to clarify the housing definitions such as "affordable" and "workforce" in future conversations. A review of the property's involved development history was also discussed.

At this time the mayor called for a motion to move the discussion to **V. New Business A. Downtown Update.** The motion to move the discussion was made by Commissioner Mills and was seconded by Commissioner Hick. All were in favor and the mayor welcomed Ryan Carrier to address the Board.

V. New Business

A. Downtown Update

Ryan Carrier provided an update on the Centre Square development on North Main Street. He reported that Phase I building is at 96% occupancy, with the businesses reporting steady growth. Phase II construction is moving along quickly with the first set of Certificate of Occupancy documents expected in March 2026. Phase II includes the gym for Centre Square tenants. Approximately 50 people are on the waiting list for housing in Phase II. All 6,000 square feet of retail space is either under reservation or on lease. Additional updates followed. Ryan Carrier expressed appreciation to the city, the ECD Board, and ECD Executive Director, Justin Malley, for their partnership throughout the Centre Square project.

III. Approval of Minutes

A. Minutes of the November 6, 2025 Regular Meeting

The mayor called for a motion to approve the Minutes from the November 6, 2025 Regular Meeting. The motion to approve was made by Commissioner Provenzano and was seconded by Commissioner Mills. There were no changes or corrections noted. All were in favor and the Minutes were accepted into the record. City Council Member Tyler abstained from the vote.

IV. Consent Agenda

A. Communications

B. Economic Development/Grants/Marketing Report

The mayor called for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion to approve was made by Commissioner Mills and was seconded by Commissioner Hick. No requests were made to edit or otherwise revise the report. All were in favor and the Consent Agenda was accepted into the record.

V. New Business

A. Downtown Update

Justin Malley spoke about the two Requests for Proposal (RFP) that are actively posted for 273 Riverside Avenue and the 1.35-acre lot on North Main Street. Goman + York continues to partner with the city for this process. The RFP for 273 Riverside Avenue closes on December 17, 2025. The one for the 1.35 acre on North Main Street closes January 29, 2026. Two site visits for the Riverside Avenue RFP have been held with several developers completing the walk through. Roof patching is needed for the building there, and the work qualifies for payment using the state remediation grant issued for that property.

Additional downtown locations and projects were discussed, among them the streetscape grant submissions with bid documents expected mid-February 2026 for the Park Street project, and the winter of 2026 for the Riverside Avenue portion of the project. Timelines include, and are affected by, necessary partnerships with the State of Connecticut. Dr. Leger has submitted the grant funding request for the Pocket Park project at Centre Square. The fuel cell data center location was also discussed.

B. Marketing Campaign Update
Dawn Nielsen reviewed results from the new marketing campaign designed to attract and retain the younger demographic in, and to the city. Results included responses to the dedicated web page designed to capture photos and stories from residents and businesses. The page directs visitors to additional, existing pages on bristolallheart.com that focus on Bristol neighborhoods, venues, places to worship, restaurants and businesses.

Additional marketing included a new LinkedIn account and use of the new sub-branding on new and existing social media forums. NBC-CT streaming format aired a :30 second commercial that directed the viewers to the dedicated web page. A social media video featuring Downtown LIVE and the walkable downtown is in production. The city's Arts and Culture Supervisor, Arianna Therriault, who is also in the target demographic, is the video presenter. Discussion followed.

C. Industrial Update :40 stopping point
Justin Malley spoke about CMI expanding its building in the Industrial Park, the new facility being built by the All State Trucking School, and sewer access. CMI needs the access while All State has more access than they need. The request is for the city to release the existing easement for Lot #10 so it is available to both lots, and CMI can then access it.

Commissioner Hicks read the following proposed Motion:

Motion to abandon the sanitary sewer and water service easement located on Lot #11 in favor of Lot #10 of the Southeast Bristol Business Park, as the two lots will merge allowing one sanitary sewer and water service lateral to service both Lot #10 and Lot #11.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Mills. Justin Malley confirmed for Mayor Zoppo-Sassu that this request has been approved by Water and Sewer.

Commissioner Hick then read the additional item below:

Motion amended to refer this matter to the City Council Real Estate Committee.

The amended motion was seconded by Commissioner Mills. All were in favor, and the Motion was full motion was accepted into the record.

Justin Malley then provided an update on Baumer Manufacturing at 5 Century Drive. Baumer has chosen to purchase the building which was originally meant to serve as their temporary location while they did a build to suit elsewhere in the city. They've been awarded an ECD Grant which has not been paid out yet as it was for the original expansion project. Additional updates will be provided as they arise.

D. ECD Incentive Budget
Justin Malley presented the monthly update on grant account balances to inform the Board regarding the various available funds in programs such as the Facade Grant and the Small Business Grant programs. The update included possibly creating a pilot program using funding to support not for profits and/or offer alternatives that tackle community development. Discussion followed including a brief review of the Facade Grant Program purpose and guidelines.

E. Committee Assignments
Mayor Zoppo-Sassu named the following ECD Board Members to the ECD Committees as outlined below:

CDBG Policy: Chair - Commissioner Schmelder, Vice Chair - Commissioner Provenzano, with Commissioners Kearney-Gonzales and Hick

Downtown Committee: Chair - Goldwasser with Commissioner Mills and Council Member Tyler

Budget/Personnel Committee: Chair - Commissioner Hick with Commissioners Schmelder and Goldwasser

Industrial Committee: Chair - David Mills with Council Member Tyler, and a new Commissioner TBD

The mayor will serve as ex officio for all the committees, and noted that committee assignments are subject to change.

At this time the mayor called for a motion to disband the ECD Policy Committee as the ECD Board has been acting as a committee as a whole, and the Policy Committee is no longer needed. The motion to disband the ECD Policy Committee was made by Commissioner Provenzano, and was seconded by Commissioner Hick. All were in favor and the Motion was accepted into the record.

F. ECD Budget Preview 2026-2027
Justin Malley advised the Board that budget planning for the 2026-2027 fiscal year has begun with a continued focus on efficiency and due diligence with regards to spending. There will be a Budget Committee Meeting scheduled in February to review and vote on the EDC's proposed budget which is due to the Comptroller's Office on February 16, 2026. The mayor encouraged members to attend the Board of Finance meetings during the budget approval season.

VI. New Business by Commissioners
Commissioner Provenzano asked for clarification on the Safe Street Program. Dr. Dawn Leger advised that it is a Federal Grant through the Department of Transportation. She included a brief overview of how the grant came about, and the goal of reducing incidents in higher accident areas. The application for Route 229 improvements has already been submitted. Discussion followed.

Commissioner Mills suggested a coordinated advertising and event planning effort among the retail and restaurant businesses to better leverage the updated Downtown area. The mayor also suggested a review of the Special Event Permit Process to make it more user friendly and more inviting for the smaller events that want to be in the city.

There was no further 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. Council Member Tyler expressed her appreciation at being named to the ECD Board and is looking forward to serving on it. She also provided updates on social media videos and posts the City Council Members had made along with the mayor, with an especially well received Shop Local Saturday themed piece. The mayor added that the videos may become a monthly City Council initiative for merchant support.

At that time, Mayor Zoppo-Sassu advised the Board that Commissioner Cowdell has requested she not be reappointed to the Board due to business and family schedules. Commissioner Cowdell's resignation will be submitted to the City Council, and she will receive an official letter. On behalf of the Board, the Mayor expressed appreciation to Commissioner Cowdell for her time, service and contributions to the city and the Board while she was a member.

Time was then provided to Dawn Nielsen who announced her retirement as the city's Marketing and Public Relations Specialist in the ECD Department effective January 16, 2026. She thanked Mayor Zoppo-Sassu and Commissioner Goldwasser for providing her with the opportunity for the position, and highlighted various achievements and strides made during her tenure. They included the successful branding of Bristol as the All Heart City, and referenced relationships built with the State and the Office of Tourism, including the appointment Bristol's Arts & Culture District which is now the largest Cultural District in the state.

The mayor thanked Dawn for the body of work that she created for the city, and called on everyone to continue building on that foundation and momentum. The processes and related materials for these initiatives and relationships will be maintained in the ECD office for reference and use going forward.

IX. Adjournment

The mayor called for a motion to Adjourn. The motion was made by Commissioner Hick and was seconded by Commissioner Provenzano. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 6:13pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Sharon Arsego
Recording Secretary