

Mayor's Opioid Task Force Meeting
February 9, 2026 at 5:00 p.m.
Special Meeting
City Hall | 111 N Main Street | Bristol, CT 06010
Room 310

MINUTES (DRAFT UNTIL APPROVED)

1. Call to Order and Member Introduction

The meeting was called to order at 5:02 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and Introductions.

2. Acceptance of the October 20, 2025 Minutes.

Motion to Accept the minutes by Sandra Kamens, second by Councilman Steve Seymour, all in favor. None opposed. Motion carries and Minutes are accepted.

3. Update Items

A. Cobra & Bristol Police Partnership

Chief Morello discussed the need to resume regular meetings and noted that it has been some time since the last meeting.

Officer Finkle provided a recap of the most recent meeting and reported the following activity: five death investigations, one COBRA referral, and one instance where Narcan was administered. She also reported 86 possession arrests and 79 arrests for possession with intent to sell.

Officer Finkle explained the COBRA program, noting that it allows individuals found in possession of narcotics to be referred to treatment rather than arrested. Chief Morello confirmed this explanation.

B. B.E.S.T

Deedra discussed the presentation from the previous meeting and emphasized the importance of engaging with youth earlier by increasing outreach within the school system.

She also reviewed the meeting schedules as follows:

- **Youth Coalition:** Second Wednesday of each month, 4:30–5:30 PM, 51 High Street
- **Adult Coalition:** Fourth Thursday of each month, held at City Hall, Room 3-1

C. Mayor's Update

None.

D. BBHD Update

A very slight decrease in overdose deaths was reported, with data indicating the numbers may be reaching a plateau. BBHD utilizes a monitoring system to track overdose reports and conducts follow-up outreach. Peer support services are offered, and BBHD emphasized the importance of continued follow-up to ensure individuals receive appropriate care. Funding for this program is provided through a grant administered by the Health District and is secured through October 2027. The Mayor requested feedback regarding patient experiences. Jessica reported that feedback has been mixed,

but overall responses have been positive.

E. Introduction of Councilman Steve Seymour

Councilman Seymour introduced himself as a member of the task force and shared a personal experience regarding his son's overdose.

4. New Business

St. Vincent de Paul Update:

It was reported that all 20 cots are currently full, along with five chairs, though there had recently been some openings. With the cold weather protocol ending, an additional 20 or more individuals are expected to seek services. Efforts are underway to visit hotels to determine who will be returning and to coordinate transportation. Logistics are actively being addressed. It was noted that there is a growing prevalence of mental health concerns rather than substance use issues among those seeking services.

Community Outreach and Prevention:

Steve Bynum discussed efforts to strengthen connections with community members, including outreach to vape shop owners. He spoke about plans to collaborate with vape shop owners on prevention initiatives.

Agape House Update:

Matt shared that many individuals served are experiencing significant mental illness. While individuals with heavy substance use can be referred to rehabilitation, there is often a missing connection following treatment. He noted that mental illness is frequently more prominent than substance use, including cases of extreme paranoia without the typical drug use patterns. There is currently a lack of appropriate resources for individuals in crisis at the onset of mental health symptoms.

BBHD:

Erica Mikulak added that when complaints arise regarding conditions in housing units, residents may disclose struggles with mental health or substance use. She noted that environmental factors often contribute to mental health challenges or relapse. Erica stated that she feels well supported by Jess and Jenna.

The Mayor discussed the proposed ordinance addressing vape shop saturation within the city, noting that it would not impact existing vape shops. Angie reported that during a visit to a gas station, a large display of kratom was observed. She discussed efforts to encourage retailers to remove kratom products, reporting that approximately 80% of shops complied. Angie also noted a reduction in stigma surrounding Narcan use.

It was discussed that overdoses are occurring throughout Bristol and are not limited to low-income areas.

Law Enforcement:

Chief Morello reported that compliance checks conducted in December resulted in fines and arrests for some stores, but overall compliance levels were better than expected.

Wellness Officer Monica Finkle reported that referrals have been sent to all relevant partners. She discussed the increasing impact of mental health challenges, noting that some individuals are unwilling to engage due to the severity of their mental health conditions. She stated that follow-up efforts occur at the beginning of her shift and that support is provided by a CMHA worker and a social work intern.

Sandy Kamens asked whether the original brochure created by the group was still available or if new materials were needed. She shared that a revised version was being developed with Tina Tanguay. Parks & Recreation printed the brochures, though the final design differed from expectations. Leave-behind kits for overdose response calls were also discussed.

The Mayor discussed the importance of merging efforts across organizations to avoid duplication when providing resources to affected individuals.

Teran introduced herself and shared data from the Connecticut Department of Public Health, noting that approximately 25% of counterfeit pills contain fentanyl. She reviewed 2024 overdose data from OD Map, reporting 23 total overdose deaths in Bristol, including 20 opioid-related and 20 fentanyl-related deaths. She asked whether individuals request test strips, which was confirmed. Erica Mikulak added that restaurants have inquired about test strips due to concerns about staff members. It was noted that test strips are funded through state funding and include Narcan and test strips for various substances. No heroin-related deaths were reported, while fentanyl use continues to increase. Challenges with OD Map data accuracy were discussed, as well as the importance of connecting individuals to services immediately following an overdose.

5. Old business

Ongoing concerns related to vaping and educational pamphlets were discussed. The Mayor spoke about the installation of vape detectors in schools, noting that no referrals have been generated from the program to date. The detectors are currently installed in the high schools but not yet in the middle schools. The Board of Education funded the installation. The Mayor expressed interest in having a representative from the Board of Education attend future meetings.

6. Announcements

The next Opioid Task Force meeting will be held in March.

April 25, 2026 was identified as Drug Take Back Day. It was noted that the task force should distribute information about the event to the community.

“Tip a Firefighter” will take place tomorrow night at Chili’s.

7. Adjournment

Motion to Adjourn at 6:17 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Maria Theam, Recording Secretary