

ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Regular Meeting
Thursday February 2, 2023 5:00pm
City Hall West Meeting Room 1 – 111 North Main St.

ATTENDEES: Mayor Caggiano, Council Member Panioto, Commissioners Schmelder, Goldwasser (phone), Mills, Verikas, Hick, Massarelli (phone), and Rasmussen-Tuller.

ABSENT: Andrew Armstrong, Assistant City Planner

STAFF PRESENT: Justin Malley, Executive Director; Dawn Nielsen, Marketing and PR Specialist, Dr. Dawn Leger, Grants Administrator; Sharon Arsego, Sr. Admin. Assistant

GUESTS: Dr. Catherine Carbone, Superintendent of Schools - Bristol
Dr. Michael Dietter, Deputy Superintendent of Schools – Bristol
Joshua Medeiros, Superintendent - Department of Parks, Recreation, Youth & Community Services, Bristol

I. Call to Order

Mayor Caggiano began the meeting at 5:05PM and led the room in The Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

III. Minutes – January 5, 2023

Mayor Caggiano entertained a motion to approve the Minutes from January 5, 2023. The Motion was made by Commissioner Schmelder and seconded by Commissioner Rasmussen-Tuller. The Motion was approved by all and the Minutes were accepted into the record.

IV. Consent Agenda

A. Communications

B. Economic Development Grants/Marketing Report

Commissioner Schmelder made a motion to accept the Consent Agenda into the record and was seconded by Commissioner Mills. The Motion was approved and the Consent Agenda was accepted into the record.

V. New Business

A. Rockwell Theater Update

Mayor Caggiano introduced the Rockwell Theater Update as an ECD Board requested item.

Dr. Michael Dietter advised that as of January 6th, 2023 the theater fittings and adjustments were completed, opening the theater to students, scholars and the community. The mezzanine is now open. Prior to this the theater held limited events in the lower level. The completion of a glass partition for framing upper box seats is pending. The school's and Bristol Parks, Recreation, Youth and Community Service's joint use agreement process was finalized

in June/July 2022, the details of which had been held back until the theater could be in full use. Currently, anyone wanting to use the space speaks with Jessie Gamble, the Theater Manager, who has a technical focus that includes security, and to Dr. Dietter regarding fees. A fee schedule was determined by a review of area theaters.

Mayor Caggiano mentioned there was an Arts and Culture person in the previous year and asked Parks Superintendent Joshua Medeiros to speak about it from the city's side. Joshua provided a timeline of work on the theater and the role of the Arts and Culture Division position.

Commissioner Mills asked about black out and available dates. Dr. Dietter advised that roughly sixty days are blocked out for Parks and remaining dates are TBD. The space is currently used for learning. The school needs to know of planned events so the learning materials can be relocated. Currently the school is running Middle School and High School events in the theater. Commissioner Mills addressed the theater as a draw to Downtown and wanted reassurance that the community is still a focus. Dr. Dietter responded he believes that the community has been the focus with discussions held and research done.

Mayor Caggiano asked about the first blackout date where a community or non-school event could be booked with the summer months being in demand. Dr. Dietter advised the earliest blackout dates are in February and extend out monthly. Dr. Carbone spoke to the school's dates being designed to benefit students academically while also being open to the public. Joshua Medeiros requested clear communication on the division of event planning and who the main contacts are for each event, whether school or city sponsored.

Commissioner Schmelder expressed disappointment that theater operation issues are not resolved, and the focus is on school vs. community usage. Council Member Panioto asked about technical equipment. Dr. Dietter responded that Jessie Gamble knows how to operate the equipment and students are learning too. Theater seating was also discussed.

Commissioner Hick suggested area school concerts and dance recitals, etc., be held at Rockwell Theater to showcase the facility. Dr. Dietter clarified Rockwell Theater is limited to 621 seats which is smaller than other school locations. Commissioner Hick believes the new Arts and Culture position will eventually be full-time. Mayor Caggiano advised the position will be reviewed as the venue proves to provide self-supporting revenue. The mayor further clarified this theater is a new model being in collaboration with the school that houses it, the seating limits potential for some acts, and drawing visitors downtown is the ultimate goal. He did request improved communication on all future events to further boost interest and attendance

B. Downtown Update

Justin Malley provided an update on the Wheeler Health building including the placement of a construction trailer on February 3rd, and true site excavation to begin on February 13th. Old construction debris was trucked out, the contents of which were not out of the ordinary or of concern.

Other updates included Carrier's purchase of the Funk and Eagle buildings. Clean up of the parking area and possible construction starting sooner than anticipated was mentioned.

The Sessions project is going well. The consultant is putting out building remediation bids.

The Center Square Village proposal will be presented to the Zoning Commission on February 22, 2023. Approval could come at that meeting or in March's meeting. Carrier may appear before the Board to provide an additional update in March.

The parking deck for City Hall came in a little higher on the estimated construction costs. ECD worked with the ARPA Task Force to make up the difference. The parking structure on Hope Street, another ARPA funded project, has Desman as the chosen designer. Part of this discussion is helping Wheeler Clinic, Carrier and potentially Bristol Health as well.

Mayor Caggiano asked the Board for any restauranters they may know of that would be interested in locating or expanding in Bristol.

Justin provided an update on Discount Office Solutions from owner Al LaPorta. They are in the 80 School Street location with renovations completed and with appreciation for their grant funding which allowed them to move to Bristol. Commissioner Hick noted visible exterior changes to the location and Commissioner Schmelder suggested the Board tour the facility as well.

C. Appointments

Mayor Caggiano entertained a motion to appoint Carolyn Verikas to the StartUP Bristol Task Force. Commissioner Mills made the motion, Carolyn accepted the appointment and the motion passed with all in favor.

D. Incentives

Justin Malley and Dave Preleski, City Treasurer, have meetings scheduled with community banks for a broad discussion on the existing incentives process and the current business climate. The goal is better long-term benefits for businesses and the city.

E. ARPA Update

Mayor Caggiano advised that BristolWORKS! anticipates a March launch. The building is ready, the Director and Administrative staff are in place, and there is excitement about BristolWORKS! in the discussions with manufacturers and school readiness committees. The City Hall garage was partially funded by the ARPA Committee. The mayor advised the city is moving into a consolidation phase with ARPA meaning, in the case of funding not being drawn on in some cases due to institutions not being able to meet construction deadlines, the task force will re-allocate it. The current fund is estimated at \$3 million dollars. It's being held for contingency and to be matched with Federal or State grants to move more shovel ready projects.

Justin mentioned a new part-time 18.75-hour position posted in ECD to locally assist ARPA applicants navigate the process. This person would work in tandem with ECD, Comptrollers and Purchasing. Justin clarified this person will always be backed up by the consultants at UHY. Commissioner Schmelder provided an update from the ARPA Task Force who followed up with the applicants to assist if and where possible.

F. All Heart Website Update

Dawn Nielsen provided the Board with handouts showing the current website's visitor statistics and logistics, along with draft designs of the proposed updated site. Commissioner Hick encouraged the creation of a mobile app for the site. Commissioner Schmelder asked for a launch date. Dawn advised the vendor projects a two to three month design process. Commissioner Verikas asked about click through rates and organic vs. paid numbers. Dawn confirmed all the stats from the last year are organic and click through rates can be provided. Council Member Panioto asked about the "properties for sale" listing. Justin spoke about opportunities for anyone listing properties to manage them directly and keep them up to date. Suggestions on managing this portion are welcome from the Board.

Mayor Caggiano asked Dawn Leger for an update on CDBG activities. Dr. Leger reported 15 applicants were received by the January 31, 2023 deadline for the 49th year. Eleven applications for public service total \$245,000, and four facilities grants total \$234,000 which is a grand total of \$480,000 and the award budget is less than \$200,000. The first public hearing is February 13, 2023 at the Bristol Public Library.

VI. New Business by Commissioners

There was no new business to report.

VII. Old Business by Commissioners

Commissioner Hick asked about the oil for Sessions. Justin confirmed that while it is being transitioned to the land bank the utilities are being paid from an approved ARPA fund.

Commissioner Mills mentioned the Atlantic Spring recognition as a positive item for the city and the business.

VIII. Committee Reports

A. City Council Member Report

Council Member Panioto reported meeting with Kim Ward Holly as Director of BristolWORKS! They discussed connecting IT students with businesses to build relationships. He also met with a group of 15 residents in the Sherman Park area led by Eric Madsen. This group believes the recent private sale will lead to development. The concerns are with water drainage and a cut through for traffic being built. Mayor Caggiano replied this would follow the Planning and Zoning process and understands there wouldn't be access through French Street but through the Camp Street side instead.

B. Budget Committee Report

Justin reported on the proposed 2023-2024 ECD budget details. The Committee did look for cuts that could be made. Commissioner Schmelder, as a member of the Budget Committee, confirmed they reviewed it line by line and feels this is a good budget. Justin thanks Dr. Leger and David Sgro for their help with budget cuts they identified.

Commissioner Hick read the following motion:

To approve the Economic and Community Development 2023-2024 Budget Proposal and forward to the Comptroller and Board of Finance for consideration.

Commissioner Schmelder seconded the motion. All were in agreement and the motion carried into record.

X. Adjournment

Mayor Caggiano entertained a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Rasmussen-Tuller made the motion which was seconded by Commissioner Schmelder. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 6:34pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Sharon Arsego
Recording Secretary