

ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Regular Meeting
Thursday March 2, 2023 5:00pm
Bristol Public Library, Room #3
5 High Street, Bristol, CT

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

ABSENT: Commissioner Verikas and 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: Dave Preleski, Treasurer – City of Bristol

I. Call to Order

Mayor Caggiano began the meeting at 5:00PM and led the room in The Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

III. Minutes – February 2, 2023

Mayor Caggiano entertained a motion to approve the Minutes from February 2, 2023. The motion was made by Commissioner Schmelder and seconded by Commissioner Mills. 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 Goldwasser made a motion to accept the Consent Agenda into the record and was seconded by Commissioner Schmelder. The motion was approved and the Consent Agenda was accepted into the record.

V. New Business

A. Incentives

Justin Malley provided an update on the meetings with area banks with the goal of broadening assistance to businesses while also streamlining the grant application and review process. Discussed at the meetings were how the city works currently with businesses and looking at how the programs could be better utilized. The bankers want to be involved. It was suggested to use a revamped Chamber loan fund model. Justin and Dave Preleski also met with Community Economic Development Fund (CEDF) where additional ideas were discussed. Dave Preleski expressed being encouraged by how the meetings went and advised the specifics are still being decided. He noted foreseeing a change in the process and possibly a sub-committee of bankers put in place.

Commissioner Schmelder asked for clarification on grants vs. loans and expressed concern that the city continue to be the deciding party for grant awards. Commissioner Goldwasser noted federal government changes coming soon that will impact banking and opportunities being presented with this partnership with the banks. Dave Preleski noted this was an interim report. Mayor Caggiano voiced this as an opportunity to best balance what the state, banks and Bristol offers to best assist the businesses. There was further discussion on the need for a more streamlined program and the Board provided positive feedback steps to improve the process.

B. Downtown Update

Mayor Caggiano mentioned the front page of the day's Hartford Courant coverage of the city. Justin Malley followed up with feedback from the Carrier project stating that the Board's encouragement for a four vs three story building has made this better. Closing documentation for the project is in progress.

The price on City Place (Parcel 10) dropped significantly and there is great interest in it. Commissioner Goldwasser noted the current developers have listed the property for sale with the incentive of an awarded grant available to transfer to a new owner. Justin confirmed the grant can transfer to a new owner if the project remains the same. If the new project meant a change of scope, then it would come back before the Board.

Commissioner Mills suggested flying the drone over the Wheeler Group construction for updates. Dawn Nielsen advised images are taken from a camera on a light pole and she will ask the focus be moved from the City Hall renovation to the Wheeler Group. The Board voiced the importance of keeping the public aware of the steps and progress.

General discussion about additional development changes including the new traffic flow at Routes 72 and 69. Justin thanked Dr. Dawn Leger for her work on a CIF Grant from the state for streetscapes and a Recreational Trails Grant for a bike path along the river from Muzzy Field to the Memorial Park Boulevard bike paths.

Mayor Caggiano provided an update on the Sessions Building which remains on track with clean up beginning this April with the work out to bid today.

Justin addressed the news of Firefly Hollow Brewing closing. The three owners are working out how, and if, they're able to move forward, close or restructure.

Mayor Caggiano advised the Hope Street structure for the Carrier building is still in the design phase, but the City Hall parking garage has moved beyond it. The City Hall renovation continues to be on time. Commissioner Schmelder appreciated that Immanuel Lutheran Church could be involved with traffic flow for the city, church and the school.

Commissioner Massarelli asked about the Boulevard Bridge. Mayor Caggiano advised all the pieces are in and are expected to be in place for Memorial Day 2023.

Commissioner Hick asked if there was any movement on the Chick Miller property. Mayor Caggiano advised there is none at this time though it is being discussed.

Commissioner Mills and Mayor Caggiano provide an update on Rockwell Theater and that some contacts have been made. There are 80 dates a year for community based, private

shows. Any not-for-profit community events will be scheduled through the school, the school will put on their own events, and a job is posted for a part-time position to fill the 80 dates going forward. Shows could be on stage as early as this Spring and Summer.

C. Farmer's Market 2023

Dawn Nielsen reported that there is a new signed agreement with the Rotary Club for the Farmer's Market 2023 that will go before the City Council on March 14, 2023. The Market will be held in the same location as in 2022. Rotary will be in charge again for 2023, food trucks are needed, and parking at the city lot will be available.

D. ARPA Update

Dawn advised the BristolWORKS! Training Center opens this month. It's an ARPA funded program. The first classes are on March 21, 2023 and a ribbon cutting is on Monday, April 3rd from 3:30pm to 5:00pm. There are currently 60 students enrolled across the four programs.

Mayor Caggiano highlighted the part-time job opening for a local ARPA Coordinator to help businesses navigate the application process.

VI. New Business by Commissioners

There was no new business to report.

VII. Old Business by Commissioners

Justin discussed BHF Logistics is expected to put up structures in the next week or two.

Commissioner Mills asked about the Convention Center at Doubletree. Dawn Nielsen advised there is a Chamber event planned at the new Center in September 2023. Discussion continued with the possibility of events within the space, including medical conventions.

Commissioner Mills noted there's a lot happening in Bristol and it's important to promote it. Justin emphasized the updated city website will have all of these projects highlighted.

VIII. Committee Reports

A. City Council Member Report

There was no City Council Member report.

B. CDBG Policy Committee

Dr. Dawn Leger reported on the number of applicant responses and the allocation amount of \$588,000 for this Grant year. The first CDBG Public Hearing meeting will be held March 6th.

X. Adjournment

Mayor Caggiano entertained a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Schmelder made the motion which was seconded by Commissioner Hick. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 6:05pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Sharon Arsego
Recording Secretary