



**Diversity Council**  
**Special Meeting Minutes – Panel Discussion**  
Tuesday, October 24, 2023 at 6:00pm  
**Hybrid - In-Person and Zoom Meeting**  
Bristol Public Library Meeting Room 3

**Attendees:**

Jaymie Bianca – Chair, City Council Liaison Sebastian Panioto, Council Members Marcus Patton, David MacGregor Rackliffe, Jeffrey Israel, Sandra Kamens and Antonio Lopes

**Absent:** Alison Rae Willette – Vice Chair, Council Members Jordan Lopez and Olivia Chapdelaine

**Guests:** Laura Minor from the Interfaith Coalition; Panel Members Amy S. Breakstone, MD of Bristol representing the Jewish faith, Noreen Robinson of Plainville representing the Baha'i faith, and Joe Greco of Bristol representing the Church of Eternal Light and the Pagan faith

**1. Call to Order**

Jaymie Bianca called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM. A quorum was present; however, no votes can be taken at a Special Meeting.

**2. Public Participation**

There was no Public Participation at this time. The public was encouraged to participate during the Panel Discussion Q & A.

**3. Panel Discussion – Know Your Neighbor Community Conversation**

The focus of this panel discussion was interfaith diversity in Bristol, CT

Each panelist first introduced themselves, the faith they represented, how they came to their beliefs and various experiences which included from childhood to adulthood.

Council Chair Bianca moderated the discussion. The conversation included a request of Dr. Breakstone for her insights into the current situation with the Israel-Hamas war. This was followed by conversation with Joe Greco who spoke on behalf of the only chartered and federally recognized Pagan Spiritualist Church in the United States. Noreen Robinson shared the basic beliefs and structure of the Baha'i faith. Each panelist also

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shared what drew them to their faiths and various experiences they've had while living in Bristol and the surrounding communities.

Council Chair Bianca asked each panelist for their input on how to increase religious diversity and awareness in Bristol. Discussion included bringing the panel to a larger audience including the school system. Council Member Jeffrey Israel spoke to his experience of bringing the personal history of the Holocaust and survivors to the schools through Voices of Hope.

The importance of sharing the diversity of faith as part of a child's education was also discussed. Panelist Joe Greco expressed that attendance by current administration to Interfaith events would be helpful and appreciated.

Public Participant Laura Minor of the Interfaith Coalition was invited to speak as well. Topics included faith discussion in the schools, an interfaith Thanksgiving gathering, and Hate Have No Home Here signs recently posted and printed twice with language translation errors.

Chair Bianca thanks all who participated in the panel and discussions and closed the discussion at 7:15pm.

**Please note:** To view the panel discussion in its entirety, please click on the link below and use the provided password to access the recording. This recording will be available for 45 days.

[https://bristolct.gov.zoom.us/rec/share/c7IK1urT4\\_UJWak25SdE6Llhm4uJFIIGX4OpB0CD5Xry\\_ejzFgriP2\\_zrJsvd9AcL.RwwqGHa\\_xr8117tv](https://bristolct.gov.zoom.us/rec/share/c7IK1urT4_UJWak25SdE6Llhm4uJFIIGX4OpB0CD5Xry_ejzFgriP2_zrJsvd9AcL.RwwqGHa_xr8117tv)

**Passcode:** V\*2U#NW9

#### 4. Resource List

Council Chair Bianca reviewed the Resource List the Council is building. It is a shareable Google doc the members are encouraged to add businesses and groups to that foster diversity, equity and inclusion in the community and is for the public to use. This is especially needed as the current hate crimes and speech escalate in the city. The Council's goal is to have between fifteen to twenty listings to start.

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## 5. Liaisons and Special Groups

Council Chair Bianca expressed being encouraged by the number of members on the Diversity Council now. Current count is nine members plus City Council Liaison Panioto. Having the bandwidth with new members, and with current events in town, the Chair feels it's time to break out into the community as liaisons and special groups such as anti-racism in order to better focus energies and time. The Council Members were in agreement that this is a good avenue to actively pursue and discussed ways to achieve it.

## 6. Upcoming Events

November 22<sup>nd</sup> Interfaith Thanksgiving Service will be held at St. Joseph Church on Federal Hill in Bristol at 7:30 p.m.

**Joe Greco** (An event was mentioned but was inaudible. Minutes will be updated with the information as soon as possible).

## 7. Adjournment

Council Chair Bianca called for a motion to adjourn. The motion was put forward by Council Member Jeff Israel and it was seconded by Council Member Marcus Patton. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 7:29pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Sharon Arsego  
Sr. Administrative Assistant