



**Diversity Council**  
**Regular Meeting Minutes**  
Tuesday, September 26, 2023 at 6:30pm  
**Hybrid - In-Person and Zoom Meeting**  
Bristol Public Library Meeting Room 3

**Attendees:**

Jaymie Bianca – Chair, Alison Rae Willette – Vice Chair, Council Members Marcus Patton, Jeffrey Israel, Sandra Kamens, Jordan Lopez, Olivia Chapdelaine (Zoom), Anthony “Tony” Lopes, and Sebastian Panioto – City Council Liaison

**Absent:** Council Members David MacGregor Rackliffe

**Guests:** Chris Polansky from WNPR CT Public Radio  
Joe Buglewicz from WNPR CT Public Radio  
Dr. Dawn Leger, Grants Administrator – City of Bristol  
Melinda Floyd Torres, Bristol resident (Zoom)

**1. Call to Order**

Council Chair Bianca called the meeting to order at 6:34 PM. A quorum was present.

**2. Approval of August 22, 2023 Meeting Minutes**

Council Member Israel put forward the motion to approve the meeting Minutes from August 22, 2023. The motion was seconded by Council Vice Chair Willette. There was no further discussion, all were in favor, and the Minutes were accepted into the record.

**3. Public Participation**

There was no Public Participation.

**4. Current Business**

**a. Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)**

Dr. Dawn Leger provided a brief history of the city’s CDBG Program now in its forty-ninth year. The CDBG Program is made available by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and funding is awarded at their discretion. HUD also provides the guidelines by which the grants are distributed. The city reported a decrease in the awarded funding amounts from year to year. Some previous CDBG Program grant funded items include addressing the city’s homelessness and structural concerns of community use buildings.

**City of Bristol**

111 North Main Street  
Bristol, CT 06010  
[www.bristolct.gov](http://www.bristolct.gov)



Dr. Leger announced two October dates when she will be present at the Bristol Public Library to encourage conversation with the public about their goals and insights into where the city needs to best focus the CDBG funds. The dates for these meetings are as follows: Friday, October 6, 2023 and Saturday, October 7, 2023 each from 2:00pm to 4:00pm.

Dr. Leger also encouraged the Council to take and share access to the CDBG Community Survey to offer their input into the city's new plan of action. This survey and review are done every five years.

*Recording Secretary's Notes: Additional information about the CDBG Grant program including previous year's recipient's and the current year's community survey can be found at the City's website: <https://www.bristolct.gov> (Economic and Community Development – CDBG)*

**b. Introduction – New Council Members**

Council Chair Bianca welcomed the new Council Members and offered them each an opportunity to introduce themselves:

Jordan Lopez

Sandra Kamens

Antonio "Tony" Lopes

*Olivia Chapdelaine was not present at the time of the introductions. She did join the meeting later via Zoom.*

**c. Panel Series**

The Council discussed the next Panel Series event with a focus on the theme of the Interfaith Religious Diversity in the Bristol area. Council Chair Bianca addressed the recent language translation error on the "Hate has no home..." signs posted by the Bristol Public Schools. The message meant to read in Arabic as well as English was incorrectly translated or was not in Arabic at all. This issue was brought to the Council by Member Jeffrey Israel. It was noted that concerns regarding the sign's error should be directed to BPS Superintendent Dr. Catherine Carbone. It was noted that Dr. Carbone had issued an apology for the incorrect signage.

During the conversation, the Council agreed to the Panel Discussion theme of "Know Your Neighbor". The emphasis will be on the various faiths in the city and the diversity



of the residents within our own community who practice them. Council Member Israel is attending the Interfaith Coalition meeting tonight and will make connections there for panel members.

The Council agreed to hold the panel discussion after the next scheduled Diversity Council meeting October 24, 2023. The meeting itself will be a Special Meeting from 6:00pm to 6:30pm and the panel discussion will be held from 6:30pm to 8:00pm. Flyers with the panel details will be created, and the event will be promoted on social media and through the Council's community network.

**d. Resource List**

Council Chair Bianca revisited the need for the community resource list the Council had started to compile in previous months. The goal of the resource list is to make available to city residents the various organizations, contacts and advocacy groups in Bristol. The Chair expressed the need for the information the resource list provides especially in light of the recent hate speech that has occurred the city.

It was agreed that the Chair would again share the list with the Council for them to update as needed. The goal is to have the list available for distribution as soon as possible.

Melinda Floyd Torres (guest on Zoom) provided the name of the Anti-Racism Brigade as a resource.

**5. New Business**

Melinda Floyd Torres also spoke of the need for a community center where all like-minded diversity community groups could be connected for communication and sharing of ideas. Other ideas discussed were a community garden as a shared project, and book club focused on books promoting inclusivity and community. She believes that with enough community support and grant and equitable funding, the community center project could be realized.

Council Chair Bianca stated the importance of the Diversity Council to take a stand and state they denounce racism, bigotry and all forms of hate. She is encouraged that with the increased Council bandwidth with the new members, the Council will be able to move forward on initiatives they have wanted to take.

Council Member Jeff Israel excused himself at 7:15pm to make another meeting.



Council Member Patton revisited the Council's plan of members collaborating with similar groups in assigned roles, possibly as liaisons. He encouraged the idea of a larger community discussion developing from the Council's existing Panel Discussions.

## 6. Upcoming Events

Hispanic Heritage Month event on October 8th at Rockwell Park 2pm to 6pm

All Abilities Art Show on Sunday, October 15th at Café Real in Bristol from 4pm to 6pm  
(this is a new location for the event)

November 22<sup>nd</sup> Thanksgiving Service  
Saint Joseph Church

Open House and Halloween Party events at the Intensive Education Academy School in West Hartford. It's a school for children with disabilities and many students from the Bristol area attend.

A request was made as to how someone could become a member of the Diversity Council. Council Chair Bianca advised to contact the mayor's office. She joins the applicant and the mayor for meeting to discuss the post and then a recommendation is made.

## 7. Adjournment

Council Chair Bianca requested a motion to adjourn. The Motion to Adjourn was made by Council Vice Chair Willette and was seconded by Council Member Kamens. There were no objections and the meeting was adjourned at 7:29pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sharon Arsego  
Sr. Administrative Assistant