

**SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING - THURSDAY EVENING - APRIL 19, 2012**

PRESENT: Marshall, Barboza, Teixeira, Herreshoff (arrived at 7:09 o'clock PM), and Parella (arrived at 7:12 o'clock PM)

ALSO PRESENT: Diane C. Mederos, Town Administrator

The Council met in special session on Thursday evening, April 19, 2012 in the Town Hall, Council Chambers beginning at 7:08 o'clock PM, Council Chairman Marshall presiding:

1. Interview/Appointment - Conservation Commission (term to expire in December 2012)
  - a. Alison Ring, 61 Mulberry Road - interest/appointment

Ms. Ring informed the Council that she has lived in Bristol for approximately four years and would like to contribute. She added that she believes her education and experience would make her a good fit for the Conservation Commission.

Council Chairman Marshall stated that the Conservation Commission has been lately participating in open space clean-up projects.

Councilman Herreshoff arrived at this point in the meeting 7:09 o'clock PM.

Council Chairman Marshall continued that the open space committee was merged with the Conservation Commission since the goals of both committees were similar.

Ms. Ring responded that the Conservation Commission appears to be an active group.

Council Chairman Marshall also explained that the Conservation Commission, along with the Community Development Department has tagged trees to indicate the perimeters of Town-owned open space. He added that it was nice to hear from Ms. Ring that she considered Bristol to be her home town.

Ms. Ring reported that she was originally from Smithfield.

Councilman Barboza agreed that the Conservation Commission appeared to be a "good fit" for Ms. Ring with Councilman Herreshoff concurring.

Councilwoman Parella arrived at this point in the meeting (7:12 o'clock PM).

Councilman Barboza noted that the appointment would likely be made on May 2, 2012 at the regular Town Council meeting.

Councilman Teixeira thanked Ms. Ring for applying for the position.

2. Workshop with EDC re Explore Bristol

Council Chairman Marshall noted that he and Town Administrator Mederos will have to leave the meeting for a short time due to another meeting which they must attend.

He added that the Council is familiar with the Explore Bristol initiative and that he is pleased to see that the participants are very energetic about the program.

Council Chairman Marshall and Town Administrator Mederos left the meeting and Councilman Barboza assumed the gavel at 7:18 o'clock PM.

Michael Byrnes, acting Chairman of the Economic Development Commission, provided an overview of the "Explore Bristol" program.

He explained that the initiative found its beginnings in the post-Hurricane Irene discussion. He added that several of the merchants discussed their businesses and realized that there was little coordination between the various entities and that it would be advisable for all to work together since the services and products provided were related. He added that the effort is collaboration between the Merchants Association, Economic Development Commission, East Bay Chamber of Commerce, Mosaico and Roger Williams University.

Mr. Byrnes noted that the group is concerned that there are several empty storefronts in the downtown area and that the effort will attempt to arrest the trend and that the overall objectives of the program are to create a positive environment, a better place to operate a business, and also a better place to live.

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Mr. Byrnes reported that the theme of the initiative is "better together" and that the program wishes to actively market the Town.

Mr. Byrnes reported that there is a steering committee which has been meeting every two weeks and that there are seven (7) working groups.

Mr. Byrnes reported that Linden Place will host seventy (70) weddings this year and Blithewold is also seeing considerable numbers of special events.

Mr. Byrnes also reported that the group plans to raise funds to have a promotional website and that it would like to engage a marketing expert to guide the effort and promote the Town.

Victoria Fonseca reported that the group is assembling the content of a new website to include information on over 200 businesses and that Alyane White is the "point person" for this effort. She added that the website should be operational by mid-May and that it will present a three-phase approach.

Councilman Barboza noted that the Council appropriated \$5000 toward the website in the budget for fiscal year 2012-2013.

Jeff Hirsh reported that the group would like to engage the public relations firm Lou Hammond and Associates to market the Town and that this firm has worked for Charleston, South Carolina, Providence, etc.

He added that Ms. Hammond believes that Bristol has much to offer and that there will be synergistic advantages working with Bristol and Providence at the same time.

It was reported that the new website will be available to all businesses and that Roger Williams University will be assisting with funding and with intern help.

Mr. Hirsh reported that the group was looking toward a summertime implementation and that Ms. Hammond's team was ready to begin soon.

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Councilwoman Parella asked to know how much the group plans to raise with Mr. Hirsh responding that he is hopeful that the Town will make a commitment toward the total.

The Council asked the Clerk to place this matter on the May 2, 2012 Town Council docket for consideration potentially appropriating from the Town Council Contingency account.

Mr. Hirsh reported that Ms. Hammond was "generous" with the fee for her firm.

Councilwoman Parella asked to know the budget for this initiative with Mr. Hirsh responding that the budget will be \$65,000 per year with a two year commitment.

Councilman Herreshoff asked what the group plans to accomplish this year with Mr. Hirsh responding that this is not yet determined but that the group will have a checklist and will be able to evaluate the program as to what does and does not work.

Councilwoman Parella asked to know if businesses will pay fees with Mr. Hirsh responding that these will be assessed on a sliding scale with the larger businesses such as the Lobster Pot on the "high end" and smaller businesses paying less.

He added that the group is trying to be equitable and is relying upon the honor system.

Councilwoman Parella asked to know if the group is looking into the possibility of sponsoring harbor tours or rental boats since these were identified as needs with Mr. Hirsh responding that the group is vetting ideas and that some of these might be considered as a "phase II" effort.

Councilman Herreshoff agreed to provide a harbor tour for the Hammond group with Councilman Barboza and Councilwoman Parella stating that they had the opportunity to meet with Ms. Hammond and were impressed by her.

Councilwoman Parella asked to know if the houses of worship were included in the marketing plan with Mr. Hirsh noting that all entities were asked to provide event calendars.

A discussion ensued regarding weddings and the associated business opportunities with Mr. Hirsh responding that he is

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now doing some rehearsal dinner business but would like to do more of this. He added that although there are many weddings held in Bristol that much purchasing by bridal couples is done out of Town.

Mr. Byrnes provided a synopsis of the program and indicated that the overall budget is \$80,000 per year for two years. He added that the room and meal tax collected by the Town through the State tax laws is approximately \$29,000 and suggested that this might be "invested" by the Town into the program.

Councilman Herreshoff noted that these funds were already factored into the Town budget as revenue.

Councilman Herreshoff asked to know if the group is considering promoting manufacturing with Mr. Byrnes reporting that the group does plan to market the marine trades which have a broad spectrum. He added that he was unsure as how to integrate the remainder.

Councilman Herreshoff stated that it was sensible to consider the marine trades and noted that these can sometimes cross markets. He explained that one business used its boat building technology to construct a large egg for a Korean customer.

Alan Crisman noted that the Town has a terrific industrial base.

Wendy Mackie of the RI Marine Trades Association stated that she would like to partner with the Town.

Susan Maloney of 60 Van Wickle Lane suggested that there might be a Town-wide event as a "kick-off" for the average citizen to become aware of the initiative.

Mr. Byrnes stated that the group had not considered this and that Diana Campbell would like to do a "Voices II" program in order to gauge public opinion.

Ms. Maloney suggested that there might be an "Explore Bristol" event with an admission ticket price.

Mr. Hirsh stated that he was aware of some talk of a "bash" within the merchant group but that nothing had been "rolled-out."

Ms. Maloney agreed to send an e-mail of her thoughts.

Edward Stuart of 31 Birchwood Drive suggested that there should be a harbor cruise ship offering 45 minute tours.

Mr. Byrnes noted that James Dollins is working on boating-related elements of the program.

Mr. Hirsh reported that the Bristol plan enhances the efforts of the Newport Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Councilwoman Parella asked to know if the volunteers at the visitor center have been trained with visits to local historic sites, etc.

Councilman Barboza noted that the visitor center appears to have volunteers who are well versed.

Councilman Herreshoff suggested that the group should have a seven minute film about Bristol with Mr. Hirsh responding that this was a good idea also.

Councilman Herreshoff suggested that the group should work with Recreation Director Burke about a reuse plan for the State Street Armory with Mr. Byrnes responding that the group is looking into the facilities at the Seamen's Institute in Newport.

Ms. Maloney stated that the transient boaters are always looking for dockage.

Mr. Byrnes agreed that available "docking space is tough."

Teixeira/Barboza - Voted  
unanimously to take a 15 minute  
recess at 8:15 o'clock PM.

The meeting resumed at 8:30 o'clock PM with all members present.

3. Future Capital Borrowing

- LATE ITEM**            a. Town Administrator Mederos re Bond  
Referendum - 2012

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Town Administrator Mederos presented her memorandum and explained that there were many ideas being considered but that there was nothing concrete or specific enough to bring to the voters as a "project."

Councilman Herreshoff asked about the status of the Animal Shelter with Town Administrator Mederos responding that the Committee has agreed not to exceed the already bonded amount.

Councilman Herreshoff stated that he was in agreement with the Town Administrator's approach to future capital borrowing.

Town Administrator Mederos also reminded the Council that there were remaining funds from past borrowing authorization.

Councilwoman Parella stated that she did not agree that there was not some immediate need since there are potential open space acquisitions and that the Town should be ready for these. She added that the Town should attempt to obtain a right of first refusal and that a bond issue appearing on the ballot will allow the Council to know if the public will concur that acquisition of open space is a priority.

Town Administrator Mederos expressed concern that an abstract idea might be difficult to "sell" to the voters.

Councilwoman Parella suggested that the bond issue might specifically ask for funds to purchase open space and to upgrade parks with Town Administrator Mederos stating that she would prefer if the request to the voters was more specific.

Councilwoman Parella stated that she believes that the Town should be in a position to make an acquisition similarly as it has been in recent years due to the 2006 bond issue.

Council Chairman Marshall suggested that the Council might wish to take this information and take some time to think about it.

A discussion ensued regarding potential future uses of the Church Street Armory.

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Councilwoman Parella emphasized that the Town may not choose to borrow the funds simply because these are authorized but would rather judiciously apply these.

Herreshoff/Barboza - Voted unanimously to include this item on the agenda for the Special Meeting scheduled for Wednesday, April 25, 2012.

After the vote taken, Councilwoman Parella added that any bond issue should include furthering the Tanyard Brook rehabilitation project (Phase II).

There being no further business, upon a motion by Councilman Barboza, seconded by Councilwoman Parella and voted unanimously, the Chairman declared this meeting to be adjourned at 9:00 o'clock PM.

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Louis P. Cirillo, CMC, Council Clerk