BRISTOL PLANNING BOARD
OCTOBER 8, 2026 MINUTES

TOWN HALL
10 COURT ST.
BRISTOL, RI 02809
401-253-7000

Held: Thursday, October 8, 2026 in person

Location: Bristol Town Hall, 10 Court Street, Bristol, RI

Present: Charles Millard, Chairperson; Anthony D. Murgo, Vice Chairperson; Steve Katz, Secretary; Member Brian W. Clark; Member Richard Ruggiero; and Second Alternate Member Jessalyn Jarest

Also Present: Diane Williamson, Director of Community Development; and Amy Goins, Esq., Assistant Town Solicitor

Not Present: First Alternate Member Michael Sousa

A. Pledge of Allegiance

Chairperson Millard called the meeting to order at 7:00pm and led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

B. Approval of Minutes – September 10, 2026

A motion was made by (Clark/Katz) to accept the minutes of the September 10, 2026 meeting.

In favor: Millard, Katz, Clark, Ruggiero, and Murgo
Refrained: None
Opposed: None

C. New Business

C1. Review Annual CDBG Application and action on finding of consistency with the Comprehensive Plan

Bob Plain, CDBG Program Manager, and the Planning Board had a discussion. Mr. Plain stated that it was the Planning Board's job was to certify that none of the activities that the Town intended to apply for conflicted with the Town's Comprehensive Plan. He advised the Planning Board that they did not have to find that any of the activities further any goals in the Town's Comprehensive Plan, but rather to decide that they are not in conflict with the Town's Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Plain said the Town intended to apply for more funding to work on the project at the Wally School, funding for a Looking Upwards project on Sherry Avenue. He stated that Looking Upwards ran group homes for adults with severe intellectual disabilities. Further, the Town intended to apply again for its' home repair program.

Member Murgo asked Mr. Plain, with regard to the home repair program, if there were monies left over at the end of their fiscal year, does it roll over. Mr. Plain stated the Town applies for the program and then applies for individual applications. So, for example, if someone applied for $30,000.00 to make a repair to their roof and the project only cost $25,000.00, they didn't get to keep the money, it would go back to the State.

Chairperson Millard asked the Board if anyone had any objection to accepting the proposal. No objections were made. Chairperson Millard asked Diane Williamson how the Board was to move forward. Ms. Williamson stated the Board would just make a motion that the Board found that the proposed projects were not inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

A motion was made by (Clark/Murgo) to accept the proposal and that it did not conflict with the Town's Comprehensive Plan.
In favor: Murgo, Ruggiero, Clark, Katz, and Millard
Refrained: None
Opposed: None

C2. Re-Review and possible action on proposed ordinance amendment regulating AI Data Centers

Attorney Amy Goins explained the proposed ordinance to the Board. She understood that the Board requested a moratorium on AI Data Centers. However, after some research, Attorney Goins found that a moratorium was not an option that was available to the Town because State law limited when cities and towns could implement moratoria and none of the situations would qualify. She said if the purpose of a moratorium was to close the door to applications while the Planning Board studied data centers and then adopt the amendment stating data centers were prohibited, it wouldn't preclude the Town Council from later on making it more permissive. Attorney Goins advised the Planning Board that there were 2 versions of an Ordinance for discussion. Option B was the Ordinance that was presented at the September meeting which stated that data centers would be prohibited in all zoning districts. Option A, which was worked on by Ms. Williamson, and Attorney Goins discussed with Ms. Williamson as to what special use permits standards could make sense. Attorney Goins said that Option A still kept the definition of a data center although on the last page it added a new definition for an accessory data center. She explained that a principal use data center was a very large building full of servers for AI and would not include a server room in a business. Attorney Goins said an accessory data center was defined as a data center which was located along with a permitted principal use and was supporting the use of the principal facility which would also include a size limitation.

Attorney Goins stated that accessor data centers would be permitted by right in a manufacturing zone and the large principal use data centers would be permitted by special use permit in the manufacturing zone. She said the suggested standards were a mix of Ms. Williamson doing research and what she came up with. Attorney Goins stated that Groton, Connecticut had some of the standards in their Ordinance. She reminded the Planning Board that a request for a special use permit would require a public hearing before the Zoning Board. Attorney Goins stated there was a 200ft buffer from a residential zone or residential use. If someone wanted to propose a data center on a parcel in the M zone by special use permit that was less than the 200ft they would also need to apply for a variance.

Member Clark asked Attorney Goins where the Town had 200ft in an M zone. Ms. Williamson said after looking at the map there was property on the west side of Ballou Boulevard, and some

property on Tupelo Street, but it's very limited. She stated she used the same standards as the Town already had in the Ordinance for adult entertainment. Member Clark asked if it was 200ft as it was for marijuana stores. Attorney Goins said that was correct. Member Clark asked what 200ft in an M zone would look like. Ms. Williamson said it would be mostly the east bay industrial park. Member Clark asked if it would include any of the ELG land and Chairperson Millard said no because there were homes in the area.

Member Murgo said in his research it said that a data center would need a minimum of 200-500 acres. Attorney Goins agreed and said she didn't know if anyone was going to come to Bristol or anywhere in Rhode Island except a very large wooded area. She said Smithfield currently is in court over a data center that was looking in Smithfield. She stated the Smithfield Town Council went ahead with the process to band data centers; however, the data center had applied before that became effective in Smithfield. Attorney Goins didn't want the Town to think that Bristol would be taking a bad step if the Town similarly prohibited data centers. Chairperson Millard said from that point of view if the Board went with Option A and left it to the elected Town Officials to make the final decision seems to be the most sensible way to handle it. Attorney Goins asked Chairperson Millard if he meant Option B and he said yes. Chairperson Millard said whichever Option was the one that prohibited data centers everywhere and then it would put it in the elected officials domain where it belonged as it was a big issue. He said the elected officials should determine the matter and not a board.

Member Clark said no one had enough information about data centers to determine if they were good or bad. Member Murgo said all of the information was online so everyone could see the pros and cons of data centers. He stated the only pro was the tax revenue to the Town. Chairperson Millard said that would be for the Council to determine. Member Clark said data centers only generated jobs during construction, but the tangible tax was real. He said if there was $50million of equipment in the facility and it was being taxed, that money would go directly to the Town. Chairperson Millard said the Town Council should decide the outcome and said the Board should go with Option B.

A motion was made by (Katz/Murgo) to adopt Option B
In favor: Katz, Murgo, Millard, and Ruggiero
Refrained: Clark
Opposed: None

C3. Administrative Officer and Planning Board Solicitor Update on the status of the Ramos Landscaping Minor Land Development Project

Ms. Williamson advised the Board that Mr. Ramos finally received his DEM paperwork and brought everything to Ms. Williamson. She said Mr. Ramos paid all of the fines he owed for the violations and on October 7, 2026, she recorded final permit and plans, and she submitted his building permit request. Member Clark asked how soon would Mr. Ramos receive his building permit and Ms. Williamson said it would be up to the Building Official. Member Clark said the building permit should be turned around as soon as possible. Ms. Williamson stated she spoke to Matt and he was aware of it.

Ms. Williamson said that there was a pre-construction meeting scheduled with the Planning Board engineer for the following week. She stated that Mr. Ramos' engineer staked out the building. She said the fence was going up. Mr. Murgo said the fence looked really nice. Member Clark walked Shannon's property and saw the trees that Mr.

Ramos installed on her property. He said that Mr. Ramos pulled a lot of the other vegetation that was disrupting the other trees.

Ms. Williamson said that Mr. Ramos was meeting with Chris Fernandes as there was a written agreement to build a retaining wall due to the slope of the yard. She said a landscape plan had been presented for it. Further, Attorney Goins had done a disclaimer for Ms. Williamson's final permit which stated that just because they were issuing the final permit didn't mean they didn't reserve the right to issue violations if they had to. She and Attorney Goins had discussed the fact that the Board required Mr. Ramos to remove the tent structure in July which he did not due. A violation was issued and Mr. Ramos did pay the fine. Ms. Williamson said the next iteration was to remove the containers that the tent structure was attached to and the deadline to remove them was October 30th or his CO, whichever came first, and obviously October 30th was going to come first, and she and Attorney Goins were strategizing today about how to go forward with that issue. Member Clark said the weather was going to be changing soon and if Mr. Ramos wanted to get his slab poured before the freeze he needed to do it now. Ms. Williamson said she would check on the permit online. She said the Fire Department and Sewer Department had both signed off on it. Member Clark stated the sooner Mr. Ramos could get the slab and frame up, the sooner everything else would vanish.

Member Clark asked if Mr. Ramos was doing a stick build and Member Murgo said he thought it was a metal building. Ms. Williamson said it was a wood building with a shingled roof as metal buildings were allowed on Metacom Avenue. Member Ruggiero stated that a few of the neighbors didn't understand why the garage doors opened towards the neighborhood and not on Metacom Avenue. He asked why the Town wouldn't allow for the building to be reversed so the garage doors faced Metacom Avenue. Ms. Williamson said the neighbors brought that concern up at a few of the public hearings and a few reasons was the Metacom Avenue overlay requires that buildings be located closure to the road which meant he wouldn't have room for the garage doors to be on the front because there wouldn't be any room to pull in a truck and access the building. She stated that's why the Board required Mr. Ramos to have so much buffering and additional landscaping and fences to help screen the property from the neighbors. Alternate Member Jarest said there wouldn't be enough of a turning radius for the construction trucks to get into the building between Metacom and where the building had to sit on the property. Member Ruggiero said why couldn't the building be moved back to accommodate the doors. Ms. Williamson said Mr. Ramos would have needed a variance to do so. Attorney Goins said it wasn't something that Mr. Ramos asked for relief. Member Clark stated Mr. Ramos would have to re-engineer the entire site.

Chairperson Millard said as far as getting the containers out of there, that the Board should cut him some slack and Ms. Williamson said that's what she was thinking. Attorney Goins the goal was to work with Mr. Ramos to get the building up as quickly as possible. Ms. Williamson stated she either moved to enforce it or if there were complaints and it became an issue where there was a need to enforce it, she would. Chairperson Millard said, in other words, she would give Mr. Ramos a heads up that Ms. Williamson wasn't going to enforce it, but if she received complaints then she would have to enforce it and she said that was correct. Ms. Williamson said she spoke to Attorney Goins about it and said that she had fined Mr. Ramos $500.00 for each of the other violations and for this violation, if necessary, she could fine him $100.00 and then wait to collect it. She didn't want to bust his chops but wanted him to take it seriously if it became an issue.

Ms. Williamson said she spoke to Attorney Goins about it and said that she had fined Mr. Ramos $500.00 for each of the other violations and for this violation, if necessary, she could fine him $100.00.

Ms. Williamson said the only other thing was Mr. Ramos was supposed to be planting the buffer trees for Mr. Fernandes in the spring. She stated Mr. Ramos will need to get that done before he receives the CO so she will have to work with Mr. Ramos on it.

D. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 7:25pm by Katz/Clark

Respectfully submitted by Kathleen M. Maynard, Recording Secretary

Date Approved: 12 November 2026 Planning Board: 