BRISTOL ZONING COMMISSION
MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING OF THURSDAY, AUGUST 20, 2026

CALL TO ORDER:

By: Chairman White Time: :00 P.M. Place: City Hall
111 North Main St.
Council Chambers
First Floor

ROLL CALL:

MEMBERS	NAME	PRESENT	ABSENT
REGULAR MEMBERS:	David White (Chairman)	X	
	Richard Goodwin (Acting Chairman)		X
	John LaFreniere (Secretary)	X	
	Richard Harlow	X	
	Sara Mangiafico	X	
ALTERNATE MEMBERS:	Peter Caruso	X	
	Morris Patton		X
	Jeffrey Hayden	X	
STAFF:	Robert M. Flanagan, AICP, City Planner	X	

1. Call to Order

Per the order of Chairman White, the meeting was called to order at 6:00 P.M.

2. Public Participation

The following persons spoke under Public Participation

Mark Morello, Chief of Police, 131 North Main St., Police Dept. Chief Morello described how property owners were violating laws on the sales of items at these types of businesses. The Chief described the reasons to support a moratorium for Vape/Smoke Shops. The Chief said these facilities were using a lot of time for the police officers.

Attorney Matthew Ranelli, representing the applicant Renew on Item b., data centers, under new business. Attorney Ranelli explained he represented an applicant that would like to file an application with the Commission soon. The attorney indicated he was working with Staff on the application.

Attorney Ranelli briefly detailed the application for a micro-cloud facility- technology facility for a small-scale category data center. The attorney's view was data center applications were better for developers with a specific Regulations in place before the applications are filed.

Attorney Ranelli explained the applicant received an approval from the CT Citing Council. The attorney explained that data centers had to provide their own power that is expensive in CT. Attorney Ranelli noted the proposed plan was for a 15,000 sq. ft. or under 15,000 sq. ft. building. The attorney's view was these smaller facilities were better for CT because of the concerns of water use, noise and power for the facilities.

Attorney Ranelli said that Staff would not allow any facilities if the water use was not fully protected. The attorney noted noise reports were required with the applications. The attorney thought Regulations for the smaller data centers would improve the Regulations. Attorney Ranelli said the smaller data centers use fuel cells with closed loop systems for energy and use very little water resources The attorney had no data for larger facilities because it did not apply.

Mayor Zoppo-Sassu reminded the Commission that the City Council had sent a referral letter to the Commission for the request of a moratorium on new smoke and vape shops. The mayor added the City Council sent the a referral letter to the Commission for to request the elimination of the larger data centers with a Regulation Amendment.

Mayor Zoppo-Sassu stated that a moratorium for Smoke and Vape shops would give time for the City Council, Ordinance Committee and legal Staff and Police Dept. to review the State laws to correctly regulate these facilities.

The mayor said Bristol supports the Renew project on Riverside Avenue. Mayor Zoppo-Sassu requested that data centers of 15,001 sq. ft. to 250,000 sq. ft. be eliminated from the Zoning Regulations. The mayor indicated Bristol does not have the electric power to support these larger entities.

3. New Business

    a. Commission Discussion on Vape/Smoke Shops

Francisco Gomes, IMEG Consultant, reviewed the discussion of Item a. Vape and Smoke Shops. Mr. Gomes would review the State Regulations, the facilities definitions and the recommendations. The consultant would review the reasons a moratorium was suggested at this time and the Commission's authority for a moratorium. Mr. Gomes would go over the trends in the City for these types of businesses that sell tobacco, cigarettes, electronic nicotine delivery systems, and vapor products. The consultant pointed out the CDC issued health concerns and suggestions to reduce this concern with retailers selling these products. Mr. Gomes explained the processes for the businesses and the State's concerns with many of these types of services that mainly sell smoke and vape shop as primary products.

The consultant reviewed the trends for Smoke and Vape. Mr. Gomes indicated this use has increased 20% each year since 2018 across the US. Mr. Gomes said 8% of high school students use electronic cigarettes and the CDC recommended reducing the facilities that sell the products for health reasons. The consultant noted the Dept. of Revenue Services collects taxes on these products. Mr. Gomes verified there are 44 businesses.

Mr. Gomes stated the businesses have to register with the CT Dept. of Consumer Protection and there are 32 active registered businesses and 51 inactive registered dealers. The consultant reviewed two statutes CGS 12-330a and CGS 12-285(b) Electronic cigarettes and vapor products, respectively.

Mr. Gomes added the definition of the vape shops had to be clear to enact a moratorium with these uses as primary uses, which the consultant reviewed with the Commission. Mr. Gomes stressed that general retailers were not included in the definition. The consultant indicated the State Statutes do not prohibit the local authorities to apply limits to these businesses.

Mr. Gomes recommended the Commission place a moratorium for 18 months on the establishment of any new smoke and vape shops and that the moratorium only applied only to principal uses. The consultant reviewed a few court cases that this was within Commission's authority to initiate a moratorium for any development for temporary time and for a reasonably related to a Planning or Zoning purpose.

Mr. Gomes reviewed the requirements for a moratorium by the Commission. The consultant described the draft moratorium was provided in the packet that recommended to add moratoria for current and future uses, and add a moratorium Regulation for smoke and vape shops and add a definition.

Commission inquiries, respectively: Mr. Gomes said the State did not have the total number of smoke and vape shops that were not a principal or accessory use facilities. Mayor Zoppo-Sassu explained the inactive smoke and vape shops were out of business for a variety of reasons but may register under a new name on an existing license and that this has happened repeatedly across the State.

The Commission indicated the total number of smoke and vape shops in Bristol that were not a principal or accessory use was discussed previously and no one had the total number at that time.

The Commission had concerns there was not a verified total number of non-principal or accessory use facilities. The Commission wanted to put this item on the September agenda because the concern was straightforward because of the proliferation of shops and the health concerns.

Mr. Flanagan commented this moratorium would be for new businesses only with the primary use of smoke and vape shops. The City Planner said that in his opinion the City Ordinance recently passed by the City Council for local regulation of smoke and vape shops was the primary protection for Bristol, which would then be backed up by the Zoning Commissions moratorium.

Chairman White designated himself, Regular Commissioners Harlow, LaFreniere and Mangiafico with Alternate Commissioner Caruso to vote on the Commission Discussion on Vape/Smoke Shops.

MOTION: Move that Application AZR-26-03 an application that provides for an 18-month moratorium on and any new smoke or vape shops be accepted and scheduled for a Public Hearing at the September 21, 2026 Regular meeting of the Zoning Commission.

By: Mangiafico Seconded: Harlow.

For: Harlow, Caruso, LaFreniere, Mangiafico and White.
Against: None.
Abstained: None.

b. Commission Discussion on Data Centers

Chairman White suggested tabling of the discussion on Data Centers to the October Zoning Commission meeting.
The Commission had no objections for the tabled tonight and then discussed at the October meeting.

Commission inquiries: Chairman White wanted the Commissioners to have time to review the concerns of the data centers

4. Staff Reports

There were no staff reports.

5. Adjournment

Chairman White designated himself, Regular Commissioners Harlow, LaFreniere and Mangiafico with Alternate Commissioner Caruso to vote on the adjournment.

MOTION: Move to adjourn at 6:00 P.M.

By: Mangiafico Seconded: LaFreniere.

For: Harlow, Caruso, LaFreniere, Mangiafico and White.
Against: None.
Abstained: None.

This meeting was recorded.
Respectfully submitted,

Nancy King
Recording Secretary

David White, Chairman

John LaFreniere, Secretary