

2024 JAN 26 AM 10:32

Bristol Christmas Festival Committee

Presentation before the Town Council 2/7/2024

The Bristol Christmas Festival Committee is honored to host the Grand Illumination Celebration and European Christmas Festival. As both events have grown in popularity and attendance, so have our concerns regarding safety, security, and visitor experience. After serious discussion, our committee is considering an alternative location for one or both events.

As the Grand Illumination and Christmas Festival stand now, our biggest challenge is the yearly request to close Hope St between State and Church streets. This road closure request has grown from one evening, 3 hours, to 3 days spanning 2 weekends and encompassing almost 20 hours of resources and workforce. With the guidance and support of the Bristol Police Department we have been able to mitigate safety and security issues but the cost of accomplishing that feat has increased and the disruption to traffic flow is cumbersome. As the crowds for each event has increased, the space on Hope St becomes more crowded for both events. Additionally, The Grand Illumination struggles to provide adequate sound, and optimal clear viewing of the festivities, both of which diminish enjoyment of the events.

The Town Common is a venue that has its roots deep in the early layout of towns in colonial New England; centrally located and expansive space used as a town gathering place. Today it provides great adjacency opposite the reimagined Reynolds School soon to be Town Hall. Shining a light on this jewel can inspire others to imagine a host of other events.

The venues surrounding the Common increase the indoor space that the Christmas Festival requires to protect visitors, performers, volunteers, and craft vendors from the elements. Potential space partners could include the renovated Reynolds School auditorium, the Byfield School, the Walley School, the Statehouse, the First Baptist Church, the First Congregational Church, Our Lady of Mount Carmel Gym, the Bristol Train of Artillery Museum and St. Mary's Church. Currently we are limited to St Michaels Parish House and the Maritime Center. The walkable venue created by the proximity of any number of these buildings will be welcoming and convenient.

David Scarpino, Chair Bristol Christmas Festival Committee

932 Hope St

Bristol RI 02809

845-802-3386

