

Bristol makes national survey for best small cities

By ELIO GUGLIOTTI
STAFF WRITER

Bristol has been named one of America's top 100 best small cities by Money Magazine.

CNNMoney.com recently released its rankings for the top 100 small cities with Bristol coming in at number 84 on the list.

"ESPN has its headquarters there, but that's not the only reason people in Bristol are excited about sports. Strong high school

soccer and baseball teams have residents cheering all year long," the magazine said about Bristol at money.cnn.com. "If they want more excitement they can venture to the rides at Lake Compounce, the nation's oldest continuously operating amusement park (it dates back to 1846). But that's nothing compared to the age of the town itself: It's celebrating its 225th anniversary."

Bristol was one of five

Connecticut cities to make the list. West Hartford and Stamford came in ahead of Bristol at 55, and 78 respectively. Hamden and Norwalk came in behind Bristol with rankings 87 and 90 respectively.

According to money.cnn.com, the rankings were compiled by first looking at cities across the country with a population between 50,000 and 300,000. Cities with significant job loss, poor educa-

tion, and high crime rates were excluded. The remaining cities were ranked on several factors, including housing affordability, schools, diversity, and quality of life issues.

Economic factors, including the fiscal strength of the cities' governments, weighed heavily on the rankings, according to cnn.money.com.

"Bristol's a great place to live and raise a family," said City Councilor Kate

Matthews, when the topic of the city's ranking was discussed during the City Council's July meeting.

The overwhelming feeling on the council was that the city is well deserving of its ranking. While there was recognition amongst the council that the city has its issues, it was felt that ongo-

ing projects like the Route 72 extensions, and downtown revitalization will only enhance the city.

"I hope that (ranking) gets to a better number as we continue our process," said City Councilor Kevin McCauley.

Council puts hold on tax scofflaw boot program

By ELIO GUGLIOTTI
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The City Council came under heavy criticism for giving delinquent taxpayers the boot.

"I am very ashamed to live in this town that cares more about taking money from families that are struggling, rather than tightening their own belt," resident Greg Randall told the City Council during its July 13 meeting.

Randall stood before the council to protest the city's implementation of a boot program to collect overdue car taxes.

The program was initiated in the middle of June, and targets people who are six months or more overdue on their car taxes. The city hired VioAlert Systems, LLC to track down cars that have overdue taxes on them, then place a boot on a tire of the

car so it can't be moved.

Anyone who is booted must pay their back taxes, along with a \$175 fee to VioAlert Systems, in order to get the boot removed.

Randall felt the city turned to the program because of its own fiscal mismanagement, and is taking advantage of residents. He said that many families are currently struggling to make ends meet, and only have one car to use to go to work. By booting the peoples' cars, he said, the city is taking away the only chance for some to make money.

"At the end of the day, they'll be forced to starve while you enforce this bogus law," Randall told the council.

Randall's remarks drew a response from two council members who painted the boot program in a different

light.

City Councilor Ken Cockayne said the city is just retrieving the money it's owed and asking resident to abide by the law.

"People should pay their bills," Cockayne said. "If they don't pay their bills they face the consequences."

Mayor Art Ward said without the boot program, the city has no other way to collect back car taxes. Over the first two weeks of the program, he said, the city collected \$122,000 in back taxes.

"What recourse does the city have to recoup money?" Ward asked.

Ward added that if everyone paid their taxes on time, the city's mill rate would be less, which would benefit all taxpayers in the city.

For now, the boot pro-

gram has been put on hold. But, it won't be dormant for much longer.

Ward said the city suspended the boot program

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City changing recycling day in August

Effective Aug. 2010, all Bristol residents recycle day will change to the day after rubbish collection, the city's Public Works Department has announced. Friday collections will move to Monday. Holiday schedules will delay each collection by one day. Recycling will still be every other week, but one day later than the current schedule.

The department said this change is being made in anticipation of single-stream recycling, which uses 95 gallon barrels for all recyclable materials. Single

stream recycling will be implemented city-wide over the next three years. Some areas of Bristol do not have enough curbside property to accommodate both rubbish and recycle 95 gallon

barrels on the same day. Shifting recycle to one day later than rubbish will allow enough room for barrel placement.



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