



STATE of CONNECTICUT
Office of Governmental Accountability
State Contracting Standards Board

Regular Board Meeting

Friday, September 12, 2025 - 10:00 A.M.

Location: 165 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, CT
Conference Room G006D & G007E and *Virtual*

In Attendance:

Rochelle Palache, Chair (in person)
James Marpe (in person)
Brenda Sisco (in person)
Thomas Ahneman (virtual)
Salvatore Luciano (virtual)
Lauren Gauthier (virtual)
Stuart Mahler (in person)
Al Ilg (in person)
Keith Brothers (virtual)
Jean Morningstar (virtual)
Bob Fernandez (virtual)
Donna Karnes (virtual)

Gregory Daniels, Executive Director
Aaron Felman, Staff Attorney
Carmen Hufcut, Trainer Specialist
Maritza Lopez, Accounts Examiner

MINUTES

1. Call to Order: Chair Palache called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.
 - a. Roll Call of Board Members
2. Approval of Minutes
 - a. Approval of the minutes from the July 11, 2025, SCSB Regular Meeting
A motion to approve the minutes as written was made by Bob Fernandez.
The motion was seconded by James Marpe.
The motion passed with two abstentions (Rochelle Palache and Donna Karnes).
3. Communications and Petitions
 - a. Sec. 4e-36 Contested Solicitations & Awards Subcommittee Report
Chair Stuart L. Mahler: No business to report.
 - b. Privatization Contract Committee Report –

- i. Privatization Contract Case # 2025-002 - The Department of Public Health's request to execute a supplemental contract for limited services related to the Environmental Laboratory Certification Program.

Chair Salvatore C. Luciano: The Department of Public Health has requested a contract to address a backlog of 18 laboratory inspections. Each lab requires approximately 70 hours of work to complete. They are requesting to privatize only to address the backlog which was the result of staff shortages. At the request of the Committee, DPH met again with the Union. DPH provided assurances that positions were approved for refill, and the vendor was only being requested to address the backlog, and the Union supports the request.

On behalf of the Committee, Chair Luciano made a recommendation to the full Board that DPH be allowed to pursue a privatization contract to address the 18-lab backlog on a non-precent setting basis.

A motion to approve the recommendation that was made by: James Marpe
The motion was seconded by: Lauren Gauthier
The motion passed unanimously.

- c. Audit/Data Analysis Work Group – Chair Roberto C. Fernandez

- i. Audit Work Group Report

Chair Roberto C. Fernandez reported that three audit reports were completed and sent to the Work Group by Accounts Examiner Lopez.

Accounts Examiner Lopez shared:

- The three audits completed were for OPM, DAS-IT, and DSS. The first email was sent on August 22 but received no response. She sent a follow up email to the Work Group on September 3, 2025, but has still not received any response.
- She is finalizing a fourth audit for DAS-PSX. She met with DAS, and they responded to findings.

Ms. Gauthier has comments that she has not yet shared. After the Work Group has finished with them, they will be elevated to the Board for approval.

Ms. Karnes shared that the Work Group has scheduled standing meetings on the third Wednesday of each month. The next meeting will take place virtually on Wednesday, September 17, 2025, at 11:00 a.m. The audits will be discussed at that time and brought to the next meeting.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Mr. Fernandez shared that the Audit Work Group has created standing virtual meetings for the Wednesdays following the Board meeting.

ii. Budget Sub-Work Group Report

Chair Brenda L. Sisco: No new business to report.

d. Statutes, Regulations, Policies and Procedures Work Group – Chair Thomas G. Ahneman

i. Statutes, Regulations, Policies and Procedures Work Group Report

Chair Thomas G. Ahneman shared that the Work Group met on August 20, 2025, and reviewed the rules of practice, definitions and Article 1. He thanked Staff Attorney Felman for the great work he has done on this to include advising the work group of the legal requirements and language required and putting it into an understandable format. He also thanked the Work Group members for the work they have put into understanding the material and bringing this together. They are currently working on Article 2, Contested Cases; they have five of the 16 sections completed.

The next meeting is scheduled to take place on October 8, 2025, after which, he hopes to elevate three sections for the Board's review.

e. Training Work Group Report

Chair Thomas G. Ahneman this is a large task. They are:

- Refining the Training Handbook
- Actively working on three courses: Audit, Freedom of Information, and Lease and Realty which they hope to have completed by the end of 2025.
- There are three different levels of training being developed.
- We are now fully accredited. He thanked Trainer Specialist Carmen Hufcut for her hard work on the accreditation and the lengthy Training Handbook.
- Staff Attorney Felman is working on the crossover with the policies and procedures.

The next meeting will take place today after this meeting. All are welcome.

Chair Palache thanked Mr. Ahneman for chairing both the SRPP and Training Work Groups.

Chair Palache noted that she has had some difficulty accessing the training courses that were recommended and encouraged others to reach out to Trainer Specialist Hufcut if they are experiencing any issues as well. She supports Board members familiarizing themselves with these trainings.

Ms. Karnes offered her expertise in leasing and real estate to assist with development of that training component. Trainer Specialist Hufcut shared that she works closely with Accounts Examiner Lopez. When audit results identify agency deficiencies, they look to

create courses to educate in those areas. Leasing and Real Estate is one of the areas that was identified, she set out to develop training on that topic. After she develops the curriculum, she seeks an expert to partner with. Ms. Karnes offered her 42 years of experience in that area. Ms. Hufcut thanked her for her offer to participate and looks forward to working with her.

f. Staff Report

- i. Administrative and Operations – Gregory F. Daniels, Executive Director
Executive Director Daniels shared that this small staff work together internally to develop operational methods and utilize resources to increase our ability to manage the increasing workload.

Increased Reporting: A Gender and Racial Composition Report is now due to the Secretary of the State annually on October 1; Executive Director Daniels submitted our report on September 3, 2025, and received confirmation. This is the second year for this report.

Data Collection: Staff are also in the process of increasing data collection to build a robust map of various areas of data that will assist with audits, training and internal tracking. This will help justify our existence in a compelling and meaningful narrative.

Waiver Process: Mr. Mahler brought up the topic of the OPM Annual Waiver Report. Although this was to be discussed under Old Business, Chair Palache requested that Executive Director Daniels respond now. Ms. Sisco referenced OPM approval of Waivers for Federal Requirements, she understands that we need to gain a better understanding of the report because there are various federal requirements that affect these decisions. For background, Executive Director Daniels referenced the 2023-24 OPM Waiver Report that was distributed to Board Members earlier. Mr. Mahler requested that we get more information and possibly invite OPM to present to the Board. He met with OPM in August, and they provided a comprehensive presentation on the waiver report. During that meeting, and after discussions with Chair Palache and Mr. Marpe, he has drafted a formal invitation from the Chair to OPM.

In July, Mr. Luciano sought clarification on the basis for waiver approvals and confirmation that the list provided was inclusive of all the Waivers approved. Executive Director Daniels did not receive a clear response to that inquiry at his meeting with OPM but will follow up. With the support of Chair Palache, Executive Director Daniels invited all Board members to send their questions to him, in writing, by close of business on September 26, (two weeks from today). The questions will be

shared with OPM in advance of the next Board meeting, so they can adequately prepare to have a productive session.

A. Training – Carmen Hufcut, Trainer Specialist

Ms. Hufcut shared that after receiving accreditation, we reached out to other agencies that offer training to collaborate with them to expand our library and offer CEUs to their staff. Two agencies, DAS and Office of State Ethics, both responded with interest. She is scheduled to meet with DAS next week.

In her meeting with State Ethics, they require a student base of 30,000 participants, and we can only accommodate 500 at this time; therefore, we will not be pursuing joint projects at this time. Other agencies may also be interested in collaborating with us.

The Town of Enfield reached out to us seeking procurement training opportunities. She is beginning to work with them on this effort and looks forward to offering training sessions to municipalities beginning in 2026.

In response to Mr. Mahler's inquiry, Ms. Hufcut offered that all the training takes place virtually and she is in the preliminary stages of coordinating these efforts. Mr. Mahler mentioned, and Mr. Marpe reinforced that the Connecticut Council on Municipalities (CCM) may be a good partner. Ms. Sisco asked about charging municipalities for training; she believes that CCM does charge. Ms. Hufcut referenced the language in our statute; Staff Attorney Felman said that nothing in the statute prevents us from charging. There was a discussion regarding chargebacks that will require additional research and discussion. Ms. Gauthier expressed an interest in exploring this option but does not want charges to limit their ability to have personnel trained.

At the close of the meeting, Mr. Ilg took the opportunity to share with Trainer Hufcut that historically Connecticut provides the least financial help to municipalities of any state in the United States. He is glad to hear that she is willing to partner with the municipalities to provide free training. He is not sure how she could undertake to serve the 169 municipalities in the state, but he believes that they could really use the assistance.

B. Audit Update Maritza Lopez, Accounts Examiner: No report.

C. Legislation Process – Samson Anderson, Research Analyst – Not present.

D. Legal Update – Aaron I. Felman, Staff Attorney

Staff Attorney Felman referenced a communication that we received, and he sent from the Town of Sherman to the Board members for their review. Our statute is very clear that, except for training, municipalities are outside our purview and express or implied purview. We do not have the authority to do what the individual requested of us. An initial acknowledgement letter was sent to the individual. He is working with Executive Director Daniels to address this.

Mr. Luciano agrees with Staff Attorney Felman that this is not for us to address. He shared a Hartford Courant article and asked Staff Attorney Felman to explore if this is a 4e-34 case concern as it applies to contractors who have not acted in good faith with the State. Mr. Luciano requested that Chair Palache consider forming a 4e-34 Subcommittee that would examine these issues.

Attorney Felman has completed an initial review that will require further examination and discussion. The statute specifically states that *any disqualification of a contractor by this Board would have to first be under the purview of a subcommittee created by the chairperson*. There are a lot of things to consider including that this would be a contested case. We would have to pursue this step-by-step with a lot of discussion moving forward.

Mr. Ahneman sought clarification on which State agencies were involved. Mr. Luciano shared the history of former Deputy Secretary of OPM Konstantinos Diamatis who was accused of steering contractors to municipalities. This contractor appears to be one of those contractors; the company is not owned by the son instead of the father.

Based upon his request, Chair Palache is amenable to creating a 4e-34 subcommittee which would allow Attorney Felman to begin further research. Attorney Felman clarified that the statute specifically requires a committee of three that must consist of one legislatively appointed Board member to be on the subcommittee. Ms. Gauthier volunteered to join the subcommittee and fulfill the legislative requirement.

Mr. Ahneman asked if the Attorney General was aware of this. Chair Palache stated that we have not made them aware; however, that would be part of the process. With that, Mr. Ahneman volunteered to be on the subcommittee as well.

Gene Burke of the DAS confirmed that the Office of the Attorney General is aware. This contractor is a subcontractor on Department of Transportation (DOT) projects. He explained that any contractor doing work for the State for which state

funds are being used is required to be pre-qualified; that company is currently up for pre-qualification now. It may have an impact on municipal and school district projects if part or all of the funding is from the State. The pre-qualification was put in place following the Governor Rowland era to ensure the basic integrity of construction-related contractors. DAS is working with the Attorney General as it relates to pre-qualification application by this masonry company. Chair Palache thanked him for his helpful input.

Attorney Felman referenced the definition of contractor in our statute that extends to subcontractors as well.

Chair Palache confirmed that the 4e-34 Subcommittee will consist of Mr. Luciano, Ms. Gauthier, Mr. Mahler and Ms. Sisco.

ii. Chief Procurement Officer Report - None

4. Old Business

a. Chief Procurement Officer Search Update

Mr. Marpe shared that we are anxious to bring a Chief Procurement Officer on Board. They have worked throughout the summer to recraft the job description and submit it to DAS. DAS has referred it to their Talent Solutions area to craft the final job posting. No timeline has been offered; however, our urgency has been conveyed.

Chair Palache thanked Mr. Marpe and Executive Director Daniels for all their work on this. In response to Ms. Gauthier, Chair Palache, will share the job description that will reflect the input received from the Board. She and Executive Director Daniels have been working closely together throughout this process to ensure that DAS is aware of the urgency. If the position has not been posted next week, Executive Director Daniels will be following up.

Mr. Marpe confirmed that the timeline for posting is six months. In response to his inquiry, Executive Director Daniels confirmed that we will post the position for shorter durations of time, knowing that we can repost the position if we do not receive a qualified candidate in the first round.

Mr. Luciano reinforced that a CPO is key to training, auditing and everything that we do. Since many of them are political appointees, it may be helpful to go back to those who appointed them to move the process along. Chair Palache agreed that it would be helpful. She asked that they wait until Tuesday to pull those political levers if necessary as they have been assured the position is moving forward.

b. Office of Policy and Management 2024 Annual Request for Waiver Report Update
See report above under the Staff Report.

5. New Business

- a. Request to Review Sherman School Building Project.
This was discussed under the Legal Update Report above.

6. Opportunity for Citizens to Address the SCSB – None

7. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Brenda Sisco.

The motion was seconded by Bob Fernandez.

The motion was unanimously passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Aleshia M. Hall
Administrative Assistant

Next SCSB Meeting:

October 10, 2025

