



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
Office of Governmental Accountability
State Contracting Standards Board

Special Meeting Notice and Agenda

Privatization Contract Committee

Friday, September 5, 2025 -- 11:00 A.M.

Virtual Only

In Attendance:

Salvatore Luciano, Chair of the Privatization Contract Committee

Lauren Gauthier

James Marpe

Rochelle Palache

Brenda Sisco

Gregory Daniels, Executive Director

Aaron Felman, Staff Attorney

Aleshia Hall, Administrative Assistant

Guests:

Adelita Orefice, DPH

Nicholas Jakubowski, DPH

Rachel Nowek, DPH

Dawn Shaban, DPH

Avery Pittman, 1199 Union

Amalia Mayorga, 1199 Union

MINUTES

1. Call to order

Chair Luciano called the meeting to order at 11:03 a.m.

2. Approve the minutes of the August 18, 2025, Privatization Contract Committee Meeting.

A motion was made to approve the minutes by Rochelle Palache.

The motion was seconded by James Marpe.

The motion was approved unanimously with Ms. Gauthier abstaining.

3. Review Privatization Contract Case # 2025-002:

Case number 2025-002: The Department of Public Health (DPH) requests to execute a supplemental contract for limited services related to the Environmental Laboratory Certification Program.

DPH:

Deputy Commissioner Orefice and Mr. Jakubowski of DPH explained that they offered a presentation for the 1199 Union regarding this issue requesting that they provide comments and recommendations two months prior to submitting this request to SCSB. To date, DPH has not received a response from the union. The following information was provided by DPH:

- DC Orefice explained that this is a limited time request to clear a backlog of certifications for environmental labs.
- Public Health Services Manager Rachel Nowek, who oversees the Lab Certification Program, explained that there are different types of labs and inspections, however, the drinking water labs require specifically certified inspectors to perform these evaluations.
- History: Certified staff retired throughout 2018-2019. As a result of the Covid pandemic there were hiring delays and the training certification opportunities were suspended for almost three years. These factors combined with staff turnover has resulted in a backlog of inspections at 18 laboratories. DPH's request is specific to addressing this 18-laboratory backlog. Each laboratory is supposed to be inspected once every three years; however, some have not been inspected in over six years, and this creates a significant concern for DPH.
- DPH's Dawn Shaban recently received inspection certification, and two other staff are in the process of becoming certified. After all three staff are certified, the requirements of inspecting these approximately 36 labs will be maintained by current staff. However, it is imperative that the backlog be cleared.
- There is only one vendor that can perform the inspections in accordance with DPH standards, and they are equipped to address this backlog over the course of one year. The August 1, 2025, date on the request can be amended to begin at on the date of approval.

1199 Union:

- 1199 Union representative Avery Pittman voiced concerns about the presentation the DPH provided to them, noting that there were outstanding vacancies and backlog. Representative Pittman recommended that staff be allowed additional time to address the backlog.
- Deputy Commissioner Orefice shared that there are only two staff members currently certified to perform these inspections, and they are offered overtime and compensation time. She went on to explain that it takes time for people to be hired and to receive their certification and completion of these inspections is a priority.

- Union Representative Pittman asked if DAS was approached about changing the salary group and requirements. Manager Nowek explained that the current salary competes with the private sector and is often higher. The State also offers a better work-life balance with less likelihood of layoffs than in the private sector. Manager Nowek explained that one new hire into this position left State employment for a career aspiration of a higher-level position in a federal agency.
- Union Representative Amalia Mayorga stated that the union understands that there is a backlog and recognizes that it has been growing for years and questioned the length of the contract. DC Orefice explained that two months ago, the DPH made a presentation to the union, and they did not reply. She requested to go on record to clarify that DPH did not schedule this meeting on short notice; this meeting was scheduled by the State Contracting Standards Board.
- Amalia Mayorga requested to meet again on this issue and noted that the union received the presentation two months ago with no timeline for a response.
- Mr. Luciano suggested that DPH and the Union create an opportunity to discuss the issue. DC Orefice explained that there are only two people certified. Even with comp time and overtime, there is not enough availability to keep timely with current inspections requirements and address the backlog too. DC Orefice sought clarification on the purpose of such a meeting.

Privatization Contracting Committee:

- Ms. Sisco explained that after having provided presentation to the union, it makes perfect sense that DPH to move forward to resolve this issue. Additional conversations between the agency and the union will not change the request that has been brought before this Committee. This is a request for a short period of time to address a specific need. Discussions such as salary adjustments are long, drawn-out processes that DPH does not control. While DPH should continue to work with the existing staff, it makes sense for this Committee to move forward with approving this request.

DC Orefice clarified that the duration of the contract is based on the length of time required to complete the inspections. Manager Nowek explained that there are complexities involved that require as much as 70 hours for each inspection.

- Ms. Gauthier also sees the benefit of the Committee moving forward on this request and suggested that DPH work with the legislature to avoid a recurrence of this situation. In response to a reference to the cost-benefit analysis, DC Orefice explained that a 12-month period was requested due to the fact that it may take until November or December to get this contract initiated. She reiterated that DPH is using this limited scope contract to address just the backlog of 18 lab inspections.

- Mr. Luciano explained that this item was to be included on the agenda for next State Contracting Standards Board meeting on September 12, 2025. Mr. Luciano recommended that within a week's time 1199 Union meet with their members. DC Orefice explained that there is no more that DPH can offer at this time other than the comp time and overtime that is currently being offered.
- Mr. Marpe followed up on Ms. Sisco's recommendation above. He believes that the Committee's process should be to vote on this issue to bring the Committee's recommendation to the Board meeting on Friday, September 12, 2025.

In response, Staff Attorney Felman clarified that, according to statute, this Committee must make a recommendation and present it to our full Board to make a final decision on a privatization request. Mr. Luciano acknowledged his agreement.

- After a brief discussion and receiving clarification from Ms. Sisco regarding concerns over the length of time for this contract,

Ms. Gauthier put forth a motion:

To allow the Department of Public Health to hire contractors to evaluate 18 labs for certification in order to clear the indicated work backlog on a non-precedent setting basis.

The motion was seconded by Ms. Sisco.

Discussion:

Mr. Marpe understands why both the agency and union representatives are puzzled, as he is uneasy about the likely anticipation that there would still be a desire to talk to us one more time. He does not like the notion of postponing this and wants to move this process forward as efficiently as possible. He will be supportive of the motion but does not believe this is the way we should be doing business going forward.

The motion received:

- **ay votes from Brenda Sisco, Lauren Gauthier, James Marpe**
- **abstention from Chair Palache**
- **nay votes were none**

The results of this motion were not conclusive.

Closing Discussion:

- Mr. Luciano referred to a former case of 2025-001 brought to SCSB by DPH in which he recommended that the agency work with the union representatives to figure it out. He reported that they did so without us; however, DC Orefice explained that that case was not concluded and is still outstanding. They are still

in the process of working on a stipulated agreement in that case. Mr. Luciano acknowledged her response and offered that we can move forward from there on that case too.

- DC Orefice appreciates the support of the SCSB and is happy to meet with the Union and give them an opportunity to share their concerns about this proposal and stated that if there is anything that is within their power to help alleviate concerns, they will do that. She sought clarification about what the SCSB is expecting from DPH at this time. DPH will meet with the Union and do everything in their power to alleviate concerns. She explained that they are already offering comp time and overtime. Mr. Luciano clarified that he is requesting only that DPH report back that they have met with the Union before the full SCSBoard meeting on Friday, September 12, 2025.

4. Adjournment

**A motion to adjourn was made at 11:49 by Salvatore Luciano.
The motion was seconded by Lauren Gauthier.
The motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Aleshia Hall
Administrative Assistant