

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
SOCIAL EQUITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - **Draft**
MARCH 4, 2025, Meeting 10:00 A.M.
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

1) Call to Order, Welcome and Attendance

Andrea Comer called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m., welcoming council members, state officials, representatives, and members of the public. She proceeded to conduct the roll call.

Andrea Comer
Kyle Abercrombie
Fanita Borges
Corrie Betts
Greg Davis
Tina Beamon
Avery Gaddis
Andrea Hawkins
Daniel Karpowitz
Michael Jefferson
Edwin Shirley
Shirley Skyers-Thomas
Melvin Medina
Ojala Naeem
Kelli-Marie Vallieres
Charles Venator
Kevin Walton

Executive Director: Brandon McGee

2) Executive Session

Andrea Comer confirmed that a quorum was present before introducing the first agenda item, the Executive Session. She noted that she had been advised by the Executive Director that there were no issues requiring discussion. Brandon McGee affirmed this, so the Executive Session was not held.

3) Approval of the February 4, 2025, Regular Meeting minutes.

Andrea Comer introduced the agenda item for the approval of the February 4, 2025, meeting minutes.

Motion – by Melvin Medina
Second – by Corrie Betts

In Favor – All
Opposed – None
Abstentions – None

Motion passed unanimously.

4) SEC Committee Updates

Andrea Comer introduced the agenda item for committee updates, reminding the public that committee meetings now occur quarterly. She then invited any committee chairs with reports to speak.

Andrea Hawkins, Co-chair of the Strategic Planning Committee, provided an update. She stated that the committee had made significant progress in executing the strategic plan and proposed shifting strategic planning updates to an ad hoc basis. She requested that Director McGee include updates on the strategic plan in his quarterly reports.

Andrea Comer sought clarification on whether a motion was needed for this procedural change. Avery Gaddis, the parliamentarian, confirmed that no motion was required, as it was an internal procedural matter. With that clarification, Andrea Comer confirmed that the committee could proceed with its new update structure.

5) E. Updates from the CT SEC

General Updates & Recruitment

Executive Director Brandon McGee provided an overview of the SEC's ongoing work, emphasizing the continued progress and alignment with strategic goals. The SEC has two open recruitment positions: a staff attorney and a research analyst. Council members and external networks are encouraged to share job postings to help secure top talent.

Financial Summary

February expenditures were presented, detailing personnel services (\$80,704.17) and other expenses, including contracts (\$51,502.54), for a total of \$132,206.61. The FY 2025 budget includes \$5.6 million earmarked for the Community Reinvestment Program (R2: Revitalize and Reimagine). No major changes in the SEC loan program since the last in-person meeting at the State Capitol.

Legislative Affairs Update

The SEC is monitoring several legislative bills, with a primary focus on the agency bill. Executive Director McGee testified before the Appropriations and General Law Committees to support moving the SEC's funds into a dedicated Social Equity Innovation

Fund. This shift aims to provide more flexibility in funding programs while maintaining oversight and transparency through audits, legislative reports, and council reviews.

Loan Program Challenges & Adjustments

The SEC Loan Program faces challenges, with numerous applications pending for over two years. The Finance Committee, chaired by Avery Gaddis, has been actively reviewing applications to find solutions and improve the program. Councilor Gaddis raised concerns about elected officials lobbying on behalf of applicants whose loan applications were denied or adjusted. Some applicants expect automatic approval, but the SEC emphasizes financial responsibility and proper business planning. The SEC is hiring a program loan manager to enhance oversight and efficiency.

Formal Loan Denial Process

Councilor Melvin Medina inquired about the formal denial process. Councilor Gaddis confirmed that applicants receive official denial letters with explanations. Due to lender liability laws, the SEC cannot directly assist applicants in improving their applications but ensures clear guidelines and transparency.

Committee Calendar & Future Meetings

The SEC's Policy Governance and Finance Committees will meet on March 20, 2025. The Legislative Affairs Committee will meet on March 26, 2025. All meetings remain open to the public and will be conducted virtually.

The SEC remains committed to supporting social equity entrepreneurs while ensuring fiscal responsibility. The leadership team continues to refine financial strategies, legislative engagement, and loan program administration to foster long-term economic prosperity in impacted communities.

Rodrick J. Marriott, PharmD, Director of the Drug Control Division, provided an in-depth update on Connecticut's cannabis market and regulatory framework. He detailed the program's timeline, licensing categories, and key milestones since the introduction of RERACA in 2021.

Licensing Structure & Market Development: Connecticut's adult-use cannabis market officially launched in January 2023, and currently includes cultivators, micro-cultivators, producers, manufacturers, retailers, and delivery services.

Challenges & Adjustments: Access to capital remains a significant hurdle for new businesses, especially for Social Equity Entrepreneurs. The state has made adjustments, such as allowing expanded licensing pathways and developing loan programs.

Regulatory Oversight: The Drug Control Division has been actively conducting inspections at multiple phases of facility development, ensuring compliance with security and operational requirements.

Market Competition & Supply Challenges: The market is still developing, with a need for greater supply diversity. New businesses are coming online, but the capital-intensive nature of cannabis operations presents financial challenges.

McGee emphasized the importance of equipping Social Equity Entrepreneurs with the necessary tools to succeed in the industry, while also considering alternative business opportunities for those who may face challenges in the cannabis space. The discussion concluded with an acknowledgment of the SEC's efforts in streamlining application processes and providing financial support to Social Equity Applicants.

6) For the Good of the order

Chairperson Andrea Comer opened the floor for any final remarks but noted that there were no additional comments. She expressed gratitude to Director Rodrick J. Marriott and his team for their presentation, emphasizing the importance of the data shared and looking forward to the final version of the presentation for further review.

Director Marriott acknowledged the appreciation and confirmed that the presentation deck would be sent shortly, with additional data points being incorporated into the state's open data platform for public access.

Comer then took a moment to share an email from Senator Pat Miller, President Pro Tempore and Chair of the Banking Committee. Senator Miller commended Executive Director Brandon McGee for his leadership in streamlining the SEC's processes, particularly in reducing approval wait times for applicants. She noted that the improved efficiency was making a significant impact on both the organization and the individuals it serves.

Comer highlighted this acknowledgment as a testament to McGee's leadership and the Council's ongoing transformative efforts. McGee expressed his gratitude in response.

With no further comments, Comer concluded the discussion, expressing excitement for future progress.

7) Adjourn

Motion – by Avery Gaddis
Second – by Michael Jefferson
In Favor – All
Opposed – None
Abstentions – None
Motion passed unanimously.



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Date: March 4, 2025

RE: Minutes: March SEC Council Meeting Minutes Minutes (Draft)

Please be advised that the above-referenced typewritten minutes are a true and accurate description of the proceedings obtained from the recorded conversations to the extent that the audio could be clearly heard/understood. Portions that could not be heard/understood have been notated with a (an “inaudible” or “?...”).

Sincerely,

Brenda LaFleur

Brenda LaFleur
Owner, A Plus Reporting Service, LLC

I certify that this document is a true and accurate description of the proceedings obtained from the recorded conversations contained in the listed audio file.

Boden Truitt

Boden Truitt,
Transcriber