

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
SOCIAL EQUITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING - **DRAFT**
MAY 6, 2025 Meeting 10:00 A.M.
IN-PERSON

1) Call to Order, Welcome and Attendance

Andrea Comer called the meeting to order at 10:16 a.m., welcoming council members, state officials, representatives, and members of the public. She proceeded to conduct the roll call.

Present:

Andrea Comer
Corrie Betts
Greg Davis
Avery Gaddis
Andrea Hawkins
Michael Jefferson
Edwin Shirley
Shirley Skyers-Thomas
Ojala Naeem
Charles Venator
Tina Beamon

Absent:

Kyle Abercrombie
Fanita Borges
Kelli-Marie Vallieres
Daniel Karpowitz
Melvin Medina

Executive Director: Brandon McGee

2) Approval of the April 1, 2025, Regular Meeting minutes.

Chair Andrea Comer began this agenda item by offering context related to recent legislative activity and growing frustrations expressed by some Social Equity Entrepreneurs (SEAs) regarding the cannabis space. She emphasized the Social Equity Council's statutory responsibilities under Section 23F and 23-5H of the RERACA Public Act, including promoting participation from disproportionately impacted communities, creating access to licensing, capital, and training, and making policy recommendations—not lobbying for SEAs.

Comer clarified that while the Council will advocate when it aligns with its mission, it is not mandated to represent the interests of a small group of 108 SEAs over broader community needs. She encouraged those seeking more focused advocacy to consider pursuing an ombudsman position through legislative channels, as was done in the medical marijuana space.

Following this statement, the Council moved on to the formal approval of the April 1, 2025, meeting minutes.

Motion – by Avery Gaddis
Second – by Edwin Shirley
In Favor – All
Opposed – None
Abstentions – None

Motion passed unanimously.

3) Vote on Equity Joint Ventures

The Council reviewed two Equity Joint Venture (EJV) applications with differing recommendations:

A. ACRE.0015701 – Second Chance Project, LLC – recommended for denial

Motion – by Avery Gaddis
Second – by Andrea Hawkins
In Favor – All
Opposed – None
Abstentions – None

Motion passed unanimously.

B. ACRE.0015683 – C3 EJV I, LLC – recommended for approval

Motion – by Michael Jefferson
Second – by Andrea Hawkins
In Favor – All
Opposed – None
Abstentions – None

Motion passed unanimously.

4) SEC Committee Updates

No committee reports provided.

5) Updates from the CT SEC

Acknowledgment of Attendees:

Recognized Social Equity Entrepreneurs and guests present. Expressed appreciation for Council members and staff contributions.

Mission & Vision Reminder:

Reiterated commitment to promoting economic prosperity and community reinvestment in areas most impacted by the war on drugs.

Financial Summary:

\$10.8M currently in the Social Equity Innovation Fund (SEIF), with \$10.2M approved in the budget. Current expenditures total \$145,751.04. SEIF balance overall stands at approximately \$65–70M.

Reinvestment Program (R-2) Update:

Funding increased from \$5.6M to \$36M over three years, restructured for long-term investment strategy. Plan includes \$12M annually, beginning July 1. Covers 10 regions (expanding from 6) across 194 of 237 census tracts in Connecticut. Emphasis on predictable, measurable outcomes and longer runway for impact.

Program Priorities:

Economic Development: Focus on workforce readiness and supporting community-based organizations.

Re-entry Programs: Scaling support for formerly incarcerated individuals.

Youth Initiatives: Supporting young people in impacted communities. Metrics and reporting rubrics are in development to track outcomes.

Social Equity Revolving Loan Program:

Four loans closed to date totaling approximately \$1.7M. Ongoing engagement with other Social Equity Entrepreneurs. Credit extended to the Finance Committee and DECD for their support.

Legislative Updates:

Cultivation Location Limits: Maintaining cultivator locations within DIAs to ensure reinvestment remains in affected communities.

Micro-Cultivator Conversion: Limited uptake; three cultivators converted to date.

Onsite Pharmacist Requirements: Evaluation of telehealth and flexible hours.

Equity Joint Ventures (EJVs): Opposition to ownership change proposals due to potential market imbalance and risk to equity participants.

Pathway for DIA Cultivators to Micro Conversion: Supported only if conversion does not involve refunds or creation of new EJVs. Ongoing dialogues with DCP and Social Equity Entrepreneurs to address concerns.

Clarification on Revenue Impact: Tax revenue from cultivation facilities benefits the municipality they are located in. Moving cultivation outside DIAs risks diverting funds away from communities targeted for reinvestment.

Next Steps:

Continued stakeholder engagement and legislative monitoring.

- Preparation for NOFA release and implementation of regional grant managers.
- Further development of performance metrics and impact assessments.
- Brandon emphasized the weight of recent decisions regarding support for Social Equity Entrepreneurs (SEEs), acknowledging their lack of revenue over the years.
- Highlighted collaboration with the General Law Committee and appreciated their involvement in advancing related policies.
- Mariedy Collazo added concerns about HB 7178, particularly the lack of criteria for determining buyout approvals, which could expose the Council to litigation.
- Edwin Shirley voiced concerns about reducing the ownership period from seven to three years, citing business maturity timelines, particularly in tech sectors.
- Avery Gaddis raised questions about tax liabilities for SEEs; Collazo explained that improperly structured agreements have led to large personal IRS liabilities, deterring investors from funding.
- McGee affirmed continued advocacy for SEEs through the end of the legislative session.

Strategic Roadmap (Three-Year Plan) Q1 Update

Four Focus Areas: Staff, Council, Community, Industry

Staff:

- Developed a new operating model and organizational chart to clarify departmental workflows.

• **Council:**

- Updated bylaws to reflect the mission and streamline operations.
- Reduced committee meetings by 60% and instituted quarterly full council meetings.

• **Community:**

- Rebranded the reinvestment program to R2 (Reimagine and Revitalize).

- Expanded from 6 to 10 regions receiving investment (\$36M over 3 years, covering 194 of 237 census tracts).
- Updated KPIs and RFP processes for compliance and funding alignment.
- **Industry:**
 - Held six virtual roundtables with entrepreneurs for updates and feedback.
 - Formed a Loan Advisory Group.
 - Cleared backlogs, including:
 - 30 loan applications → 4 closed loans totaling \$1.7M.
 - Delayed Social Equity and workforce development plans.
 - Updated policies on change of ownership and Social Equity status.

Q2–Q3 Initiatives Preview

- Launching a Social Equity Council Resource Hub with grant and technical assistance info.
- Increasing collaboration with municipal governments to aid entrepreneurs in navigating local permitting and reduce cannabis-related stigma.
- Planning a SEE Networking Event to facilitate relationship-building and direct engagement between entrepreneurs and the Council.

Administrative Reminders and Meetings

- Next Council meeting: **June 3rd (virtual)**.
- Three upcoming **committee meetings** (Policy Governance, Finance, Legislative).
- SEE meetings continue monthly on second Tuesdays at **noon and 6 PM**.
- Georgette to send Zoom links and updated calendars.
- Michael Jefferson requested correction to his committee listing (should be on Policy and Governance, not Workforce and Reinvestment).

Maria Miranda – Communications Update

Maria Miranda, founder of Miranda Creative, presented.

- Firm has 36–37 years of experience, 30 local team members.
- Notable work: Parkville Market branding, CT Grown, and CT’s cannabis-related branding.

Communications Plan Objectives:

- Establishing a communications dashboard for ongoing accountability and transparency.
- Responsibilities include:
 - Strategic messaging, digital presence, and rebranding support.
 - Aligning public perception with the Council’s mission and 3-year plan.
 - Building resources that can be transitioned to internal staff.
 - Focusing on website clarity, digital footprint, and SEO optimization to ensure better public access and understanding of Council work.

6) For the Good of the order

None

7) Adjourn

Motion – by Avery Gaddis

Second – by Michael Jefferson

In Favor – All

Opposed – None

Abstentions – None

Motion passed unanimously.



A Plus Reporting, LLC
55 Whiting Street, Suite 1A
Plainville, CT 06062
203-269-9976
scheduling@aplusreportingservice.com

Date: May 6, 2025

RE: Minutes: May 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