



STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
SOCIAL EQUITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING - **DRAFT**  
OCTOBER 7, 2025, Meeting 10:00 A.M.  
ZOOM

1) Call to Order, Welcome and Attendance

The meeting was called to order by Ojala Naeem, who chaired in the absence of Chair Andrea Comer. Ojala welcomed members and conducted a roll call.

**Council Members Present:**

Kyle Abercrombie  
Fanita Borges  
Corrie Betts  
Greg Davis  
Tina Beamon  
Avery Gaddis  
Andrea Hawkins  
Michael Jefferson  
Edwin Shirley  
Ojala Naeem  
Grace Suh, representing Kelli-Marie Vallieres  
Charles Santiago Venator

**Absent:**

Daniel Karpowitz  
Melvin Medina  
Kevin Walton  
Shirley Skyers-Thomas

Executive Director: Brandon McGee

With quorum confirmed, the meeting proceeded.

2) Approval of September 9, 2025, Regular Meeting minutes.

Motion – by Kyle Abercrombie

Second – by Edwin Shirley

In Favor – All

Opposed – None

Abstentions – None

Motion passed unanimously.

3) Vote on Health Equity Solutions (HES) Contract

Ojala Naeem introduced the item, seeking approval to enter a three-year, \$180,000 contract with Health Equity Solutions (HES) to provide subject-matter expertise in health, racial, and access equity, with the goal of supporting community engagement and sustainable reinvestment strategies.

Motion – by Michael Jefferson

Second – by Corrie Betts

In Favor – All

Opposed – None

Abstentions – Andrea Hawkins

Executive Director Brandon McGee explained that HES would partner with SEC to engage community-based organizations, conduct focus groups, and develop a blueprint for future reinvestment rounds. He emphasized the importance of expert partners to design sustainable equity programs statewide.

Michael Jefferson inquired about HES's location, website, and contract term. McGee clarified that HES is based in Hartford, Connecticut, has a public website, and the contract is for three years.

Charles Santiago Venator confirmed the organization's name.

Avery Gaddis voiced strong support, stating that HES does “tremendous work” and is a “legitimate, robust organization.”

Ojala Naeem added that the partnership aligns with ongoing reinvestment efforts and will strengthen data and monitoring capacity in the coming months.

A vote was held. Motion passed.

Abstention made by: Andrea Hawkins

#### 4) Updates from the Connecticut SEC

Executive Director Brandon McGee provided an extensive quarterly update, covering financials, program performance, working group progress, and industry trends.

#### **Financial Report**

September 2025 expenditures totaled \$176,953, including \$127,833 in personnel and \$49,120 in operational expenses. The \$36 million Revitalize Reimagine Reinvestment Program remains on track, with \$12 million disbursed annually over three years. The Revolving Loan Program has collected \$48,947 in interest repayments, signaling early signs of strong loan performance and sustainability. Adult-use cannabis sales for August 2025 exceeded \$18 million, reflecting an \$800,000 year-over-year increase. SEC receives 60% of cannabis tax revenue, which funds community reinvestment initiatives.

#### **Market Outlook Working Group**

McGee reported that the 2025 Market Outlook Working Group launched successfully on September 24, 2025, at the Legislative Office Building, with over 75 attendees, including Governor Ned Lamont, who commended SEC's work.

The group consists of three subcommittees:

Marketplace Subcommittee, led by Nicole of the Connecticut Cannabis Chamber of Commerce, addressing market entry and workforce readiness.

Municipal Relations Subcommittee, co-chaired by Mayors Arunan (Hartford) and Cervoni (Wallingford), developing a municipal toolkit for adult-use integration.

Youth Champions Subcommittee, led by Eddie Torres and John Torres, focusing on youth engagement, harm reduction, and education.

Preliminary recommendations are expected by end of 2025, with a draft market outlook report due in early 2026.

### **Industry Check-In and Call to Action**

McGee discussed challenges faced by Social Equity Entrepreneurs, including financing, facility development, and compliance barriers.

He called for intentional reinvestment in manufacturing, cultivation, and retail sectors to strengthen the cannabis supply chain and urged council members to continue engaging actively and supporting equity licensees.

### **Councilor's Responses**

Ojala Naeem commended the upward sales trend and praised the working groups' potential impact.

Andrea Hawkins expressed optimism that the working groups' findings would strengthen strategic planning.

Edwin Shirley highlighted that the working group meetings provide an effective platform to discuss and address the specific needs of Social Equity Entrepreneurs.

Greg Davis joined during this portion of the meeting and was acknowledged for attendance.

### **Additional Updates**

McGee announced the inaugural SEC Annual Meeting, scheduled for Thursday, November 6, 2025, in Glastonbury, Connecticut.

He proposed combining the November 4th regular meeting with the annual meeting for efficiency.

He also noted upcoming committee meetings on December 17–18, concluding the council’s 2025 calendar year.

McGee’s final message emphasized unity, data-driven reinvestment, and partnerships to ensure that social equity licensees not only receive licenses but succeed in the marketplace.

5) For the Good of the Order

None

6) Adjourn

Motion – by Avery Gaddis

Second – by Kyle Abercrombie

In Favor – All

Opposed – None

Abstentions – None



Motion passed unanimously.

