



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
SOCIAL EQUITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING
SEPTEMBER 9, 2025 Meeting 10:00 A.M.
VIRTUAL: ZOOM

1) Call to Order, Welcome and Attendance

Chair Andrea Comer called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m. and welcomed members, noting hopes that all had rested and recharged over the summer.

Kyle Abercrombie

Corrie Betts

Tina Beamon

Avery Gaddis

Andrea Hawkins

Michael Jefferson

Edwin Shirley

Shirley Skyers-Thomas

Ojala Naeem

Grace Suh

Charles Santiago Venator

Executive Director: Brandon McGee

2) Approval of June 3, 2025, Regular Meeting minutes.

Motion – by Ojala Naeem

Second – by Edwin Shirley

In Favor – All

Opposed – None

Abstentions – None

Motion passed unanimously.

3) Approval of Code of Conduct and Ethics

Director Brandon McGee and Chief Legal Director Mariedy Collazo-Cruz summarized the draft Code circulated on September 2, 2025. The Code is required under CGS 21A-420(r) per Public Act 25-137.

Ojala Naeem sought clarification on restrictions regarding discussions with cannabis applicants. Mariedy Collazo-Cruz explained that restrictions apply specifically during the lottery phase to avoid conflict while still permitting workforce development assistance during later stages.

Motion – by Edwin Shirley, Avery Gaddis

Second – by Kyle Abercrombie

In Favor – All

Opposed – None

Abstentions – None

Motion passed unanimously.

4) Approval of Tow Youth Justice program

Chair Andrea Comer explained the contract with Tow Youth Justice Institute to support onboarding and training of grant managers with standardized reporting metrics.

Director Brandon McGee endorsed the proposal.

Motion – by Edwin Shirley

Second – by Avery Gaddis

In Favor – All

Opposed – None

Abstentions – None

Motion passed unanimously.

5) Updates from the CT SEC

Director Brandon McGee provided updates on the Council’s progress and initiatives. He began by reiterating the mission of the Social Equity Council to reinvest in communities most harmed by the War on Drugs and ensure equitable access to economic opportunities.

Financially, expenditures for August 2025 totaled \$156,027.53, covering personnel and operating costs. The loan program has disbursed \$1.68 million year-to-date and generated \$49,013.28 in interest, with funds structured as a revolving pool to support future lending.

On community reinvestment, McGee reported that the three-year \$36 million commitment (at \$12 million annually) is progressing well. The R2 Community Reinvestment program closed its RFP on September 3, 2025, receiving 28 proposals spanning all 10 priority regions.

In communications and outreach, the Council has been working with Miranda Creative to enhance its website, streamline program updates, and strengthen social media presence across LinkedIn, Instagram, and Facebook.

McGee also emphasized the Council’s ongoing workforce development efforts, aligning with the Governor’s workforce strategy while creating targeted pathways for justice-impacted individuals both within and outside the cannabis industry.

Finally, he announced the launch of the Council Market Outlook Working Group, which will hold its first session on September 24, 2025. This cross-sector group, comprising leaders from business, government, and community, will develop recommendations on marketplace equity, municipal relations, sustainable cultivation, equitable business models, and youth engagement.

Subcommittees will be chaired by leaders including Chris of CBIA, Mayor Arunan of Hartford, Mayor Cervoni of Wallingford, community advocate Eddie Brown of Hartford Communities that Care, John Torres of Caribe in Bridgeport, and Nicole Burns of the Connecticut Cannabis Chamber.

6) For the Good of the Order

None

7) Adjourn

Motion – by Avery Gaddis

Second – by Ojala Naeem

In Favor – All

Opposed – None

Abstentions – None

Motion passed unanimously.

