

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
SOCIAL EQUITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING - **DRAFT**
JUNE 3, 2025 Meeting 10:00 A.M.
ZOOM

1) Call to Order, Welcome and Attendance

The meeting was initiated by Chair Avery Gaddis, who proposed a procedural adjustment to the agenda, pending no objections. Michael Jeffers expressed appreciation for the change. Executive Director Brandon McGee coordinated quorum confirmation and welcomed members as they joined, including Kyle, Tina, Fanita Borges, and Charles Venator.

During the informal welcome, Brandon McGee and Charles Venator engaged in brief conversation about recent awards received by both Venator and Fanita Borges, with Venator humbly acknowledging recognition from the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus for his community work.

Additional members, including Shirley and Kristina Diamon, joined the meeting. Kristina confirmed that quorum had been achieved, prompting McGee to hand over the meeting to Chair Gaddis, who officially called the meeting to order and began roll call.

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

Executive Director: Brandon McGee

2) Approval of the May 6, 2025, Regular Meeting minutes.

Chair Avery Gaddis called for a motion to approve the minutes from the May 6, 2025, meeting of the Social Equity Council.

Motion – by Michael Jefferson
Second – by Kyle Abercrombie
In Favor – All

Opposed – None
Abstentions – None

Motion passed unanimously.

3) Vote on Equity Joint Ventures

i) CT Nightjar 2, LLC (AMHF.00008288)

Motion – by Ojala Naeem
Second – by Michael Jefferson
In Favor – All
Opposed – None
Abstentions – None

Motion passed unanimously.

4) Updates from the CT SEC

Financial Overview

Brandon McGee provided a financial summary for May 2025:

Personnel costs: \$192,855.83 (covering 9 full-time staff)

Other expenses: \$34,132.07 (mainly attributed to the Miranda Creative Consultant contract)

Total expenditures: \$226,087.90

Cannabis Retail Sales

McGee highlighted adult-use cannabis retail sales:

April 2025 sales reached \$17 million, with a total of \$23 million including medical sales. Since legalization on January 10, 2023, the adult-use market has outpaced medical marijuana sales.

Charles Venator and Daniel Karpowitz raised questions on market trends, noting a shift from medical to adult-use cannabis, attributed to the ease of access and no need for medical cards.

Market Trends and Access

Caesar Valentin confirmed a downward trend in medical marijuana card renewals and emphasized price differences between markets due to taxes and access.

Venator emphasized the importance of understanding pricing, cultural shifts, and ease of access, suggesting that this shift has implications for state revenue and consumer behavior.

Licensing and Social Equity Applicants

The Council reviewed the licensing breakdown:

A visual slide depicted current license holders, including Social Equity Applicants in provisional and final stages.

The discussion highlighted cultivation licenses and their impact on the equity ecosystem.

Reimagine and Revitalize Community Reinvestment (R-2) Program

McGee presented updates to the R-2 funding program:

\$36 million is planned for investment across 10 strategic regions (194 out of 237 census tracts) over three years.

Focus areas include high-unemployment and poverty zones with prior drug-related convictions.

Annual Reports from Cannabis Establishments

19 Cannabis businesses submitted Social Equity Plans (SEPs), contributing approximately \$90,000 to community initiatives (e.g., food insecurity, youth, mental health, reentry programs).

Volunteerism: 485 hours donated to organizations supporting reentry and neighborhood issues.

Establishments included EJV's, lottery selections, and medical-to-retail conversions.

Data Tracking and Metrics

Charles Venator proposed formal tracking of employment numbers, wages, and investment impacts by census tract.

Caesar Valentin reported an estimated 2,000 cannabis employees in Connecticut (1,500 general and 500 key).

McGee and Venator agreed on the need for automated data dashboards to monitor long-term impacts, especially for Disproportionately Impacted Areas (DIAs).

Strategic Funding and Impact Concerns

Melvin Medina expressed support for the revised SEC vision but noted limitations of the \$36M Community Reinvestment Fund, spread over 10 regions and 3 years, might dilute impact. He proposed a tiered system for prioritizing investments to better support specific communities.

Mariedy Collazo responded:

The \$36M allocation was an increase from the originally proposed \$12M. Each region receives \$1.2M per year, totaling \$3.6M over three years. To reduce the "drip effect," funds are strategically divided into categories: economic development, youth initiatives, and re-entry programs.

A tiered grant system is implemented, with top grants up to \$75,000 to avoid previously ineffective microgrants.

Substance Use among Youth

Councilman Kevin Walton raised concerns about increased cannabis and vaping use among youth, suggesting SEC partner with DMHAS (Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services) for awareness campaigns.

Brandon McGee supported the idea, noting the importance of community conversations and involving youth in shaping outreach campaigns. Plans are underway to reimagine engagement efforts statewide with trusted local partners.

Calls for Data-Driven Targets

Charles Venator suggested setting impact targets (e.g., jobs created, hours served) for funded programs to improve measurement and accountability.

McGee agreed and noted the Council is working on building a new system for better data collection and reporting, and welcomed further discussion on the idea, especially in the context of microloans.

Community Reinvestment Committee

Andrea Hawkins emphasized that many of these strategy discussions are happening in the Community Reinvestment Committee and committed to involving Councilman Santiago in upcoming meetings.

Legislative Updates

House Bill 6930: SEC's agency bill, shaped by community, staff, and comptroller feedback. House Bill 7181 (previously listed as 7178): Concerns cultivators and broader industry structure. A task force may be convened, including SEC and other stakeholders, to review the cannabis industry comprehensively.

The Council is preparing for a "2.0" UConn study to reassess and refine its policies now that initial frameworks are in place.

Operational Updates

Office hours changed to Mondays and Tuesdays.

Next Council meeting tentatively set for Tuesday, July 8, though may be canceled due to summer schedules.

Upcoming Finance and Policy Governance Committee meetings fall on Juneteenth (a federal holiday); rescheduling may be necessary.

Legislative Committee meeting scheduled for June 25 at 4:00 PM.

Gather and Grow Event

The inaugural "Gather and Grow" networking event takes place tonight (6:30–8:30 PM) at the State Legislature.

The event aims to humanize entrepreneurs and support Social Equity Entrepreneurs.

Legislators and members of the Connecticut Cannabis Chamber will be present.

Closing Notes

Chairwoman Comer was absent due to travel for professional duties but sent her well wishes.

Brandon McGee expressed gratitude to the staff for their dedication and efforts, particularly in legislative affairs.

5) For the Good of the order

None

6) Adjourn

Avery Gaddis adjourned the meeting.



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Date: June 3, 2025

RE: Minutes: June 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