



**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
SOCIAL EQUITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING
JUNE 2, 2026, Meeting
10:00 A.M. VIA ZOOM**

1) Call to Order, Welcome and Attendance

The regular meeting of the Social Equity Council was called to order at 10:02 a.m. by Chair Andréa Comer. Chair Comer welcomed council members, staff, and members of the public.

Members Present:

Andréa Comer (Chair)

Kyle Abercrombie

Corrie Betts

Fanita Borges

Greg Davis

Avery Gaddis

Andréa Hawkins

Michael Jefferson

Brittany Lamar

Melvin Medina

Ojala Naeem

Edwin Shirley

Shirley Skyers-Thomas

Kelli-Marie Vallieres

Kevin Walton

Members Not Present:

Tina Beamon

Charles Venator Santiago

A quorum was confirmed

Council members participated in discussion throughout the meeting regarding agency operations, legislative developments, entrepreneur support, community reinvestment activities, workforce development initiatives, and future priorities of the Council.

2) Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

The Council reviewed the minutes of the May 5, 2026 regular meeting. Following discussion, a motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes as presented.

Motion: Michael Jefferson

Second: Corrie Betts

Discussion: None

In Favor: Majority / All Present

Opposed: None

Abstentions: None

Motion passed unanimously

3) Equity Joint Venture Applications

The Council considered Equity Joint Venture applications presented by staff.

1. Vote to Approve Application ACRE.0015709

Motion: Michael Jefferson

Second: Kevin Walton

Discussion: None

Motion passed unanimously.

2. Vote on Addition of Application ACRE.0015710 to the Agenda

Motion: Michael Jefferson

Second: Edwin Shirley

Discussion: None

Motion passed unanimously.

3. Vote to Approve Application ACRE.0015710

Motion: Michael Jefferson

Second: Edwin Shirley

Discussion: None

Motion passed unanimously.

4) Updates from the Social Equity Council Provided by Executive Director Brandon McGee

Executive Director Brandon McGee provided a comprehensive report on agency activities and accomplishments (Presentation reviewed with Council incorporated herein by reference). He highlighted progress made during the previous eighteen months in strengthening governance, operational controls, procurement procedures, financial oversight, strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, and organizational accountability. He noted that the Council continues to implement its strategic roadmap and social impact framework while expanding services for Social Equity Entrepreneurs and impacted communities.

Mr. McGee reviewed agency finances, noting continued growth in revenues generated through cannabis-related taxes and ongoing investments in community reinvestment initiatives, entrepreneur support, and agency operations. He reported that multiple loans had been approved and disbursed through the revolving loan program and emphasized the Council's commitment to supporting entrepreneurs through financing, technical assistance, and business development services.

The Executive Director also discussed recent audit findings and explained that many observations cited by auditors had already been addressed through reforms implemented by the agency. He emphasized that the Council welcomes oversight, values transparency, and views audits as opportunities for organizational improvement.

5) Legislative Update

Chief Legal Officer Nichelle Mullins presented a detailed legislative report regarding the 2026 legislative session. She reviewed H.B. 5350 and H.B. 5222, including provisions affecting Social Equity Entrepreneurs, ownership and control requirements, investigatory authority, ownership transfers, financial backer replacement procedures, and enforcement mechanisms.

Attorney Mullins explained that new statutory provisions clarify the Council's authority to review compliance with ownership and control requirements and investigate concerns raised by Social Equity Entrepreneurs. She described procedures governing transfers of ownership interests, review of transactions, notice requirements, processing fees, and circumstances under which matters may be referred to the Department of Consumer Protection.

The presentation also addressed provisions intended to prevent nominal ownership arrangements and ensure that Social Equity Entrepreneurs retain meaningful authority and decision-making responsibility within their businesses. Council members asked questions regarding enforcement, implementation, retroactivity, and future legislative priorities. Staff

reported that the agency successfully achieved most of its legislative objectives during the session and will continue monitoring areas requiring future statutory clarification.

6) Entrepreneur Support and Social Impact Initiatives

Social Impact Officer Karraine Moody reported on her efforts to engage directly with Social Equity Entrepreneurs through surveys, meetings, roundtables, and stakeholder outreach. She explained that entrepreneurs have diverse needs and experiences and that there is no single pathway applicable to all businesses.

Survey responses identified several areas where entrepreneurs requested support, including financial literacy, QuickBooks training, business development, strategic planning, brand development, marketing, social media engagement, and long-term business sustainability. Ms. Moody explained that future workshops and technical assistance opportunities will be designed around these identified needs.

Council members discussed opportunities to collaborate with Connecticut's higher education institutions and workforce development programs. Particular attention was given to entrepreneurship certificates, business education opportunities, and methods for connecting training directly to employment and business success.

Ms. Moody also discussed efforts to support communities disproportionately impacted by the war on drugs. She highlighted conversations regarding workforce development initiatives, Southern Connecticut State University's Green Flower Program, Career Connect partnerships, and opportunities to provide industry-recognized credentials and career pathways.

7) Community Reinvestment and R2 Program

Chief Programs Officer Mariedy Collazo-Cruz presented a detailed update on the Reimagine and Revitalize (R2) initiative. The program represents approximately \$36 million in community investments over a three-year period and is one of the largest community reinvestment efforts undertaken by the Council.

Ms. Collazo-Cruz explained the Notice of Funding Opportunity process, application deadlines, grant manager responsibilities, regional information sessions, applicant outreach efforts, review procedures, and anticipated timelines. She noted that grant managers would review submissions and forward top-scoring applications for Council consideration.

Council members discussed the anticipated review process, the role of the Community Reinvestment Committee, special meetings required for approval of community-based organizations, and expectations for grant implementation. Staff indicated that approved organizations could begin receiving funds following execution of grant agreements and completion of approval processes.

8) Youth Education, Workforce Development, and Community Engagement

Council members engaged in extensive discussion regarding youth education, workforce development, prevention initiatives, and community outreach. Members emphasized the importance of ensuring that training programs lead to employment opportunities and that educational efforts address both workforce development and public health concerns.

Discussion included the possibility of creating a statewide youth advisory structure, developing educational campaigns related to cannabis and vaping, collaborating with public health organizations, and ensuring that community reinvestment activities include meaningful youth engagement. Council members stressed the importance of balancing economic opportunity with responsible public education and prevention efforts.

9) Introduction of Legal Interns

Executive Director McGee introduced two legal interns joining the Social Equity Council.

Solaiman Chowdhury, a rising third-year law student at the University of Connecticut School of Law, introduced himself and expressed enthusiasm for learning about cannabis regulation and supporting the Council's work.

Paul Dunford, a rising second-year law student at Quinnipiac University, discussed his previous experience co-founding Green Check, a company supporting financial institutions serving the legal cannabis industry. He spoke about the importance of expanding access to capital and advancing social equity goals. Council members welcomed both interns and expressed appreciation for their interest in public service and regulatory work.

Mr. McGee noted the Council's desire to continue creating internship and professional development opportunities for young people, particularly individuals from disproportionately impacted areas throughout Connecticut.

10) Good of the Order

Council members discussed continued support for Social Equity Entrepreneurs, community reinvestment priorities, and youth, education and harm prevention initiatives.

11) Closing Remarks

Chair Comer thanked Council members for their thoughtful questions and active participation. She also expressed appreciation to Executive Director McGee and staff for providing detailed information and improving transparency regarding agency operations, finances, legislative priorities, and community reinvestment activities. Chair Comer noted that the Council's discussions reflected its commitment to accountability, equity, and effective stewardship of public resources.

12) Adjourn

The meeting concluded following completion of the agenda.

Motion: Avery Gaddis
Second: Michael Jefferson
In Favor: All Present
Opposed: None
Abstentions: None
Motion passed unanimously.

