

STATE OF CONNECTICUT | SOCIAL EQUITY COUNCIL REINVESTMENT/
WORKFORCE COMMITTEE (DRAFT)

February 1, 2024, Meeting 2 P.M.

Virtual Meeting via MS Teams

1. Call to Order and Welcome

Committee Chairwoman Ojala Naeem called the meeting to order at 2:03 P.M.

2. Attendance

Committee Chairwoman Ojala Naeem took attendance.

Present:

Andrea Comer

Avery Gaddis

Subira Gordon

Ojala Naeem

Paul O. Robertson

Edwin Shirley

Shirley Skyers-Thomas

Kelli-Marie Vallieres

Kevin Walton

Absent:

Corrie Betts

Andrea Hawkins

Michael Jefferson

Staff present: Ginne-Rae Clay, Executive Director, SEC; Arlene Galindo-Jimenez, Karen Colebut, Vera Lembrick, Jennifer Stevens, Jennifer Edwards, Kristina Diamond, Ana Rosa

3. Meeting with Governor Update

Director Clay gave an update on the meeting with Governor Lamont on January 18, which provided the governor with an overview of the Social Equity Council. She stated he seemed pleased with the progress and shared his thoughts on reinvestment.

Committee Chairwoman Naeem added that there were conversations around areas highlighted in the community conversations as important for reinvestment, including early childhood care and housing, specifically as it relates to homelessness. Councilwoman Comer noted that the governor desires to make a meaningful impact in communities with a more concentrated approach.

Chairman Robertson also stated that the governor embraced the idea of working together with other agencies toward the goal. Councilwoman Comer questioned if there had been any conversation about how other agencies might be engaged.

Director Clay listed several departments that SEC Staff is in the process of meeting with, including the Department of Housing, the Office of Early Childhood, the Community Investment Fund, and the Department of Administrative Services, and discussed some of the discussions held with those agencies.

4. Reinvestment/Workforce Update

Director Clay reviewed the updated reinvestment plan. Staff had worked with various DIAs and talked about options of how to get money into the communities. She discussed the option of a regional approach, with amounts determined by the number of census tracts in each DIA.

Committee Chairwoman Naeem noted the split between local, community-based programs at \$22M and community reinvestment for larger-impact initiatives at \$12.5M. She requested that Director Clay share why it was felt to be more important to focus on the local grassroots community programs and suggested the Committee to discuss if this was the correct split and correct approach.

Director Clay explained that there was a series of community conversations to discuss how the SEC can be most helpful in reinvesting. The programs piece was those ways in which the community helps itself but may not have the resources they need, such as afterschool programs. The community reinvestment piece included the things people cannot do themselves, as in the issue of affordable childcare, which is a regulated industry.

Committee Chairwoman Naeem asked when the report on the community conversations would be available as she was not comfortable deciding on what to focus on from a community perspective without that information. Director Clay responded that the report would be available by the end of the day.

Councilwoman Comer was interested in what themes came up in these conversations. She does not want to make a decision to invest without a clear understanding of that because she does not want to put money into something and later find out another agency is already providing funds for the same purpose.

5. Phase 2 Spending Plan

Councilwoman Vallieres felt breaking up funds into categories may put artificial constraints around what could be done. She was interested in looking at a holistic approach to what the communities would like to do rather than limiting the amount given. She also noted that

splitting the money between every census tract could mean not funding something larger with bigger impact and suggested thinking philosophically about the impact of the programs funded, whether it was better to fund a program that would go away in 1 or 2 years once the money is spent versus building a childcare center that has perpetuity after the setup fees are expensed.

Councilman Walton wanted to see a balance for the grassroots opportunities to receive significant reinvestment funds but was also in favor of funding something sustainable versus spreading it out, based on the requests.

Councilwoman Gordon was not comfortable giving money to state agencies and preferred to see funding go directly into the community organizations looking to set up programs.

Councilman Gaddis felt that opening up the funding to state agencies was asking for trouble and stated he would be a strong no vote against any proposal giving money to state agencies over communities.

Councilwoman Comer clarified that her intent was not to give money to state agencies. Her suggestion was to look at the community conversations, take 5 focus areas, share those with the relevant state agencies and find out what they are currently doing to provide support in those areas, and then determine where the gaps are in order to make meaningful investments that are not redundant but address the communities' concerns. Councilman Gaddis agreed with consulting state agencies but not with giving them money. Councilwoman Gordon asked if there was a feasibility study done on the pilot program with any data or feedback that would help in deciding whether to go through the same process. Director Clay explained that the Office of Social Equity has the ability to create an RFP and use a third party to move the agenda along without funding a state agency directly, creating a specific, well-crafted notice of availability of funds and leaving it at the local level.

Councilwoman Vallieres agreed with setting the parameters for investments and having community organizations run those RFPs and then give the Council their recommendation for how to spend the funds.

Committee Chairwoman Naeem reviewed her thoughts based on the above input. She felt the next steps should be getting the community conversations report and the pilot program outcomes, deciding on the split of funding, and then honing in on focus areas. Director Clay noted the full pilot program results would not be available until August but would try to get a mid-year report in about 30 days.

6. Committee Recommendations

Committee Chairwoman Naeem discussed the timeline. The community conversation report is expected by end of day. She requested Staff contact state agencies to find out what is available in terms of funding opportunities in those focus areas and where there are gaps.

She was also interested in any information collected on the outcomes of the pilot program and hoped to have this information in the next 2 weeks. Director Clay would try to have the information around February 21 or 22. Committee Chairwoman Naeem wished to reconvene by March to be able to decide how to move forward.

7. Adjournment

Chairwoman Naeem requested a motion to adjourn.

Motion – by Paul O. Robertson

Second – by Kevin Walton

In favor – All

Motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:04 P.M.

/ab

February 6, 2024

RE: Transcript: February SEC Reinvestment Workforce Committee Special Meeting Minutes Draft 32140

Please be advised that the above-referenced typewritten transcript is a true and accurate transcription of 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,

Mary A. Goehring

**Mary A. Goehring
CEO, Transcription Plus, LLC**

I certify that this document is a true and accurate transcription of the audio voice file indicated above.

Anne Bruno
Anne Bruno