

STATE OF CONNECTICUT | SOCIAL EQUITY COUNCIL (DRAFT)

September 12, 2023, Meeting 10 A.M.

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

1. Call to Order and Welcome

Chair Robertson welcomed everyone to the meeting and called the meeting to order 10:03 AM

2. Attendance

Julianne Avallone
Corey Betts
Andréa Comer
Avery Gaddis
Subira Gordon
Michael Jefferson
Ojala Naeem
Melvin Medina
Marc Pelka
Paul O. Robertson
Edwin Shirley
Kelli-Marie Vallieres
Subira Gordon
Andrea Hawkins

Absent: Kevin Walton

Staff: Ginne-Rae Clay, Executive Director, SEC; Karen Colebut, Paralegal Specialist, SEC; Kristina Diamond, Communications & Legislative Program Manager, SEC; Jennifer Edwards, Program Manager; SEC; Komla Matrevi, Staff Attorney, SEC.

Approval of August 1, 2023, Meeting Minutes

Chairman Paul Robertson asked for a motion to approve the August 1, 2023, meeting minutes.

Motion – by Michael Jefferson
Second – by Andrea Comer
In Favor – All
Opposed – None
Abstentions – None
Motion passed.

3. Executive Session

- a. Discussion on Pending Litigation involving the Council.

Paul Robertson asked for a motion to move to Executive Session.

Motion – by Andrea Comer

Second – by Michael Jefferson, Esq.

In Favor – All

Opposed – None

Abstentions – None

Motion passed.

4. Chairman Robertson took attendance upon return from Executive Session.

Attendance:

Julianne Avallone

Corrie Betts

Andréa Comer

Avery Gaddis

Michael Jefferson

Melvin Medina

Marc Pelka

Ojala Naeem

Paul O. Robertson

Edwin Shirley

Kelli-Marie Vallieres

Subira Gordon

Andrea Hawkins

5. Vote on Workforce Social Equity Applications.

- a. Recommendation to approve Brownstone Sales LLC, Chillax LLC, and Divine 1 LLC applications.

Chairman Paul Robertson asked for a motion to vote on recommendation to approve:

Motion – by Andrea Comer

Second – by Michael Jefferson, Esq.

In Favor – All Opposed – None

Abstentions: Andrea Hawkins

Motion passed.

- b. Recommendation to Deny FFDC EJV II LLC's application.

Chairman Paul Robertson asked for a motion to table the item to a future SEC meeting:

Motion – by Avery Gaddis

Second – by Michael Jefferson, Esq.

In Favor –

All Opposed – None Abstentions:

Julianne Avallone

Motion passed.

6. Vote on Workforce Development Plans.

Chairman Robertson asked for a motion to accept CohnReznick’s recommendations to approve Workforce Development Plans submitted New England Edibles LLC, Emerald Canning Partners LLC, Southern CT Wellness and Healing LLC.

Motion – by Michael Jefferson

Second – by Edwin Shirley

In Favor – All

Opposed – None

Abstentions – None

Motion passed.

7. Executive Director’s Report and Recommendation.

a. Resolution Concerning the Expedited Approval Process for Social Equity Plans and Workforce Plans.

Executive Director Clay began her report by asking that the Social Equity Council authorize the staff to review and approve Social Equity Plans. Executive Director Clay stated that the SEC staff is working very closely with the Social Equity Applicants to get their plans in order and there was a lot of back and forth with that. The timing of the regularly scheduled Social Equity Council’s meetings does not fall in line with our ability to get the plan on the agenda for recommendation. So, in order to streamline the process, to allow us to work more closely, and to have these plans be moved without special sessions, or special meetings with the Council we’re asking that you authorize me to approve the plans and move them forward. None of the plans are final. We’ve said that the plans should not be a reason why applicants do not get their license. They are a work in progress, they are new companies with new communities, they’re getting to know their communities and their communities are getting to know them, and their plans may shift a little bit throughout. The plans are not final, but they provide us enough information to show these companies are making significant impact in the DIA communities that they are either located in or that are closest to them. With your permission, I request that authority through this resolution.

Councilor Michael Jefferson motioned to approve the resolution as presented by Executive Director Clay.

Motion – by Michael Jefferson
Second – by Andrea Comer
In Favor – All
Opposed – None
Abstentions - None
Motion – passed.

Opposed – None
Abstentions – None
Motion passed.

b. Executive Director’s Report.

Executive Director Clay stated that she will be reporting on:

- Staffing Update
- Program Updates
- Committee Update

Executive Director Clay began her report by stating, “Please join me in welcoming Arlene Galindo-Jimenez as a Program Manager. She has a background in community organizing, marketing, media, brand communications and the use of digital platforms. She is also Bilingual, fluent in Spanish, writing and speaking.

Vera Lembrick, Reinvestment Program Manager, she has a background in Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB), through her extensive work at financial institutions. She has worked with community leaders to partner on projects to help marginalized communities impacting the culture, careers, business, and students. Served on the board of O.N.E./C.H.A.N.E., Connecticut State Corporate Diversity Council, Hartford Street Youth Project, and the Connecticut African American Parade Committee.

They will be starting next Monday, and we are looking forward to them joining our team.

Program updates- our Accelerator Program, we just completed our inaugural program. We held our graduation on September 6th. We had twenty-one students- companies graduate from the Connecticut Social Equity Business Accelerator Program. A fun day was had by all. The day started with a reception. Next, there were accelerator pitches to investors. Investors were in the room. They had a lot of questions. Next, there was a graduation celebration which included lunch – that was followed by an industry mixer with networking. That was a good time as well. I have a few pictures, but we will be posting more pictures to our Facebook page. The Lieutenant Governor gave the key-note speech.

I want to thank Andrea Hawkins and Andrea Comer for coming down and being part of the pitch

competition as well as Anthony Barrett, who represented our member, Kelly Marie Vallieres. You'll see a picture of Dale Sky-Jones with us who has been working this program along with Sarah Bodsley of Reset. It was a fun day, several other members expressed an interest, but were unable to join us. But hopefully, we'll be doing this again, and we'll have more companies graduating.

Just want to remind folks that those folks that participated and graduated from the Accelerator Program will receive a discount rate for the Social Equity Cannabis Revolving Loan Fund. Webinars on August 31st – one at 12 o'clock and one at 5:30. Applications are available on the Social Equity Council website, and Jennifer Edwards is the Program Manager.

Any information that you want, you can send any questions to our dedicated email inbox. The public can send emails and questions to that website or contact Jennifer Edwards. I would like to give another shout-out and special thanks to the Council that worked on the development of this program as well as our partners at the DECD who worked very diligently and will be co-managing this program with us. We look forward to approving loans.

The next effort we are undertaking is the Community Reinvestment Grant Pilot Program. For those of you who may not know, the Council put one million dollars in each large, urban area communities. Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven, New London, Norwich, Willimantic area, Stamford and Waterbury. So far, in the first round of our Grant Pilot Program, we've received seventy-five applications from the city of Bridgeport for over 3.6 million dollars. New Haven is putting together their information as the deadline was the thirty-first of August. They're putting together their grant profiles to send over to us. New London/Norwich/Willimantic, we received twenty-five applications totaling over one 1.5 million dollars, Stamford sent us fifty-four applications totaling over 3.8 million dollars. Waterbury is also gathering their grant reports to send to us for a quick review.

With just those cities that have submitted. d their applications that we have over 11.2 million dollars, knowing that this is not uncommon. There are a lot of organizations out there that do good things- just not enough money to go around. But the Council will be making reinvestments in those communities.

The next step in the Grant Pilot Program is the grant-makers will convene a team of community volunteers that will review, rate, and make recommendations to the governing body of the grant makers. So, all of the decisions of the grant makers are at the local level.

In our community conversations, we are waiting for one more approval from the Office of Policy and Management. We are in very close communication with them on that. They're working on that for us now.

In the meantime, we have conversations ready to go in Hartford, New Haven, and Waterbury. We are launching a community survey. There is a QR code. The QR code is available on our website. An explanation on the community survey will be up until December 1st. Anyone can take the survey. We all know someone that has been affected by the war on drugs. We will be able to pull

out those surveys completed by DIA residents and DIA stakeholders by using their zip codes. But, we will pull out specific voices to use in our community reinvestment efforts going forward.

Our goals for September are to launch community conversations, launch the community survey, finalize the new SEC website, onboard new staff, review, update and finalize Social Equity Applicant criteria and prepare for what could be another round of lottery, host a couple of Social Equity Plan Webinars to help people with writing their plans, review policy and procedures and review/discuss 2024 legislative recommendations.

Update on committee meetings: Outreach did not have a meeting on September 8th, as they were waiting for the new Outreach Manager to come so they can begin their work.

Reinvestment/Workforce will meet on September 20th, Policy & Governance will meet on September 21st and Finance will meet on October 11th. The next Council meetings is on October 3rd, November 7th and then December 5th.

We have Facebook. If you are not following us Council members and the public, please follow us. Coming soon we will have a new look to our website. Our website will go live at the end of September.

Discussion ensued.

8. Committee recommendations

9. For the Good of the Order – New Business, Updates and Information

10. Adjourn

Chairman Robertson asked for a motion to adjourn.

Motion – by Kellie Marie Vallieres

Second – by Michael Jefferson

In Favor – All

Opposed – None

Abstentions – None

Motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 11:04 A.M.

