

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
SOCIAL EQUITY COUNCIL | SPECIAL MEETING - DRAFT
April 17, 2024 Meeting 3:00 P.M.
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

1) Call to Order and Welcome

Andrea Comer called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m. and welcomed committee members, council colleagues, SEC staff and members of the public.

2) Attendance

Kyle Abercrombie
Corrie Betts
Avery Gaddis
Subira Gordon
Andréa Hawkins
Michael Jefferson
Daniel Karpowitz
Melvin Medina
Ojala Naeem
Edwin Shirley
Shirley Skyers-Thomas
Kelli-Marie Vallieres
Kevin Walton

Staff: Ginne-Rae Clay, Executive Director

3) Executive session

Andrea Comer entertained a motion to move into executive session for purposes of discussing potential litigation.

Motion – by Avery Gaddis
Second – by Corrie Betts
In Favor – All
Opposed – One
Abstentions – None
Motion passed unanimously.

Council members joined a TEAMS meeting for an executive session briefly then returned to the special meeting. Andrea Comer recalled the roll.

Attendance

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4) Action Items

- a. Equity Joint Venture Application AMHF.0008280 – Acreage Connecticut Retail JV, LLC

Andrea Comer called a motion to approve Equity Joint Venture AMHF. 0008280.

Motion – by Avery Gaddis
Second – by Ojala Naeem
In Favor – All
Opposed – None
Abstentions – None
Motion passed unanimously.

- b. Ownership Transfer - Connect Wellness

Andrea Comer called a motion to approve the ownership transfer for Connect Wellness.

Motion – by Avery Gaddis
Second – by Ojala Naeem
In Favor – All
Opposed – None
Abstentions – None
Motion passed unanimously.

c. Equity Joint Venture Application AMHF.0008284 – Stamford Dispensary

Andrea Comer moved a motion to approve Equity Joint Venture AMHF. 0008284.

Motion – by Avery Gaddis
Second – by Shirley Skyers-Thomas
In Favor – All
Opposed – None
Abstentions – None
Motion passed unanimously.

d. Community Reinvestment Grantmakers

Discussions led by Andrea Comer, Ginne-Rae Clay, Michael Jefferson, Edwin Shirley, and Councilwoman Naeem. The council approved allocating \$22 million for fiscal year '24 to five grant makers as follows:

\$4.75 million to the Prosperity Foundation for New Haven.
\$4.25 million to Nest for Waterbury.
\$6.75 million to the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving for Hartford.
\$2 million to the Community Foundation for Eastern Connecticut.
\$4.25 million to the United Way of Coastal and Western Connecticut for Bridgeport and Stanford.

These funds were designated for violence prevention, with awards ranging from \$25,000 to \$150,000 per grant. Ginne-Rae Clay noted potential adjustments in grant maker allocation based on service areas, particularly regarding Danbury. Michael Jefferson made the motion, which was seconded by Edwin Shirley, to approve the allocation.

Motion – by Michael Jefferson
Second – by Edwin Shirley

5) Discussion – Social Equity Applicant Roundtable

Andrea Comer chaired the discussion, which involved Ojala Naeem, Ginne-Rae Clay, Kelli-Marie Vallieres, Michael Jefferson, Edwin Shirley, and Kyle Abercrombie.

Councilwoman Naeem sought clarification on how the funds would be allocated within service areas. She asked if the grant makers had the flexibility to distribute funds anywhere within their service area or if there were specific allocations for each town. Director Clay explained that the funds were allocated for regions, and organizations within the outlined towns would apply to

their respective grant makers. This raised concerns about the potential for certain towns to receive more funding than others based on application strength.

Councilwoman Vallieres suggested considering dollar-for-dollar swaps instead of town swaps to ensure equitable distribution of funds. She expressed concerns that swapping towns might result in disproportionate funding distribution if certain towns had stronger applications than others. Director Clay clarified that the dollar-for-dollar exchange would ensure that each region received the same total funding, regardless of which towns were included.

Councilwoman Naeem emphasized the need for a thorough review of service areas and funding allocations to ensure transparency and fairness. She raised concerns about the possibility of larger cities receiving more funding than smaller towns due to the strength of their applications.

There were discussions about ensuring an equitable distribution of funds among towns and regions, considering past funding patterns and the need to support underserved communities. Director Clay assured the council that the allocation formula took previous funding into account to ensure fair distribution.

Councilman Abercrombie abstained from the vote, citing his recent appointment to the council and the need for more time to familiarize himself with the details before making such a significant decision.

The discussion concluded with a vote, which passed after addressing concerns and clarifying the allocation process to ensure fairness and transparency in fund distribution among the service areas.

Andrea Comer reminded the council of an additional \$12 million in gap funding designated for community collaboration, as outlined in Section 128(2) of the Cannabis bill. She proposed aligning the distribution of these funds with areas such as crisis housing, food insecurity, community-based childcare, access to capital, technical assistance for business, workforce education, and community investments. Comer also suggested repurposing some of the remaining \$4 million in the operating budget for further reinvestment, focusing on disproportionately impacted communities.

Councilman Michael Jefferson echoed Comer's sentiments, emphasizing the need to ensure equity in the adult cannabis licensing business and exploring legislative support to help social equity applicants succeed in the industry.

Councilwoman Subira Gordon praised the recent social equity applicant roundtable discussion, noting valuable insights from participants that could inform future actions. She proposed organizing meetings with current licensees and those who have gone through the licensing process to gather feedback before the next lottery process, aiming to improve the overall process based on their experiences.

Director Ginne-Rae Clay did not add further comments, indicating readiness to proceed.

Andrea Comer concluded by announcing upcoming changes to the committee structure aimed at facilitating social equity applicants and improving overall processes.

6) Good of the Order

Andrea Comer expressed gratitude to all members. She humorously acknowledged the mix of congratulations and condolences she received during the transition period, humorously unsure if it was a congratulatory or sympathetic sentiment as she resumed her role as chair of the council. Comer thanked everyone for their commitment and expressed anticipation for continued collaboration and work together.

7) Adjourn

Andrea Comer called a motion to adjourn.

Motion – by Avery Gaddis

Second – by Michael Jefferson

In Favor – All

Opposed – None

Abstentions – None

Motion passed unanimously.



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Date: April 17, 2024

RE: Minutes: April 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