

STATE OF CONNECTICUT | SOCIAL EQUITY COUNCIL
May 3, 2022, Meeting 10 A.M.
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

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MEETING MATERIALS

- April Meeting Minutes
- Camelo Communication Presentation
- Workforce Rubric
- Workforce Development Plan
- Public Comment

A meeting of the Social Equity Council (SEC) was held virtually via Zoom on May 3, 2022.

1. Call to order
 - Meeting was called to order by Andréa Comer at 10:07 a.m.
2. Attendance:

Corrie Betts	Marc Pelka
Andréa Comer	Christine Shaw
Avery Gaddis	Edwin Shirley
Subira Gordon	Kelli-Marie Vallieres
Michael Jefferson	Kevin Walton
David Lehman	

Council members absent:

Marilyn Alverio
Ramón Arroyo
Fabian Durango
Ojala Naeem

Staff: Ginne-Rae Clay (SEC), Jennifer Edwards (SEC), Komla Matrevi, (SEC), Kristina Diamond (SEC), Crystal Morris-Crenshaw(SEC), Kyle Abercrombie(DECDD)

Andréa Comer welcomed the council and the public. She discussed what would be covered during this meeting.

Approval of the April Meeting Minutes

Andréa Comer asked for a motion to approve the minutes

Motion – Edwin Shirley
Second – Michael Jefferson
Discussion – None
In Favor – All
Opposed – None
Motion Passed.

3. From the Executive Director Ginne-Rae Clay, Interim Executive Director

Ginne-Rae Clay presented her May 2022 Report to the Council. She began by introducing Crystal Morris-Crenshaw, Administrative Assistant and Kristina Diamond, Communications and Legislative Program Manager.

The social equity application, verification and review process is underway. CohnReznick is in the process of reviewing the 149 & Equity Joint Venture applications. There will be a presentation from Camelo Communications. The RFP for the Accelerator Program has been completed and awaiting OPM approval. The Low Interest Loan program is in development. Attorney Komla Matrievi is drafting council bylaws and working with the governance and the policy committees of the council to complete these items. Interim Director Clay also stated that all council members had received the ethics statement for their review.

Interim Director Clay also informed the Council the interagency meetings are underway. The first meeting was with the Department of Banking and Commissioner George Perez. The Banking Department supports the Safe Banking Act. Director Clay stated that she will write a letter in support of the Safe Banking Act. The Safe Banking Act would allow cannabis businesses to bank with federally chartered banks.

Interim Director Clay spoke of the ongoing webinar series and reported from February 2020 through April 2020, over 787 attendees attended live webinars and there were 2013 views on YouTube. Over 604 questions have been answered, and the mailing list has grown to over 250. A lunch and learn webinar with the Department of Banking will take place in May.

Interim Director Clay spoke about the submission of applications since the April meeting. The numbers for the social equity in many cases have surpassed the general lottery.

Interim Director Clay concluded her report and asked if there were questions. Councilman Jefferson asked if there is a list of frequently asked questions. Interim Director Clay responded that the list is being completed by staff and should be ready to post by the end of the week. Councilman Jefferson asked where will the list be posted?

Discussion ensued

Interim Director Clay asked if there were further questions. There were no further questions. Interim Director Clay introduced Andrew Clark from the University of Connecticut and his team to provide an update on the cannabis study. Mr. Clark gave his Cannabis study update. Discussion ensued.

4. Committee Reports/Requests for Action

- Finance Committee Christine Shaw, Chair
The finance committee has not met since February, but we are in touch with our Interim Director to ensure the ongoing oversight of the expenditure of funds for the administrative support for this Social Equity Council. We are working with Ms. Clay and the SEC staff where the SEC is formally housed for administrative purposes. The Finance Committee will, talk about the format for the reporting of actual expenditures as compared with projected expenditures, because the primary objective is to ensure that whatever resources are necessary in order to carry out some of the technical assistance that is part of this Council's work, as well as other items, other expenditures in connection with the work. We want to make sure that if bonding requests need to go in that this is done on a timely basis. So that is no short-term need for tapping into the bond funds that have been authorized. We expect to have further updates at the next and subsequent meetings of this council.

- Policy Committee Edwin Shirley, Chair
Councilman Shirley made a motion to reconsider a vote to exclude the existing backers tax return requirements from all future social equity applications. Discussion ensued

Motion – by Avery Gaddis
Second – Seconded by Subira Gordon
Discussion – Discussion ensued
In Favor –All
Opposed – None
Abstained – None
Motion Passed.

- Outreach Committee Marilyn Alverio & Subira Gordon, Co-Chairs
Councilwoman Subira Gordon discussed the selection process and how the committee chose Camelo Communication. She discussed the scope of work and the 5 firms that responded. She discussed the selection committee and the timeline for the proposal review and recommendation. In April, the proposals were reviewed, and 2 firms were interviewed. The selection committee recommended Camelo Communication

Camelo Communication presented to the council.

Motion was made to approve Camelo Communication as the communication vendor for the Social Equity Council by Corrie Betts.

Second – by David Lehman
In Favor – All
Opposed – None
Abstained – None

Motion Passed.

- Workforce Committee Kelli-Marie Vallieres, Chair

The Committee met and reviewed the criteria for determining if the workforce plans for the equity applications are acceptable. The Committee updated the first criteria. A motion will be needed to approve the change. A points system was added to each of the criteria. Part one of the motion is to add that we require the utilization of Connecticut based workforce training programs, but we'll be adding nationally recognized workforce training programs to support the startup of new businesses by establishing a robust cannabis workforce development pipeline.

Applicants must show proof that they plan to continuously invest in hiring new workers or updating additional workers with the skills to advance their careers in the cannabis industry. Applicants will further be expected to submit annual reports to measure performance against their original goals. We expect businesses to define clear career pathways within the organization and work with employees to develop career progression plans upon being hired and including providing any required services for workers to be able to progress along the said plan.

The Social Equity Council needs a clearer understanding of what federal, state and private investments will be utilized to subsidize tuition and or industry recognized credential costs for prospective or current employees participating in cannabis or other workforce training programs.

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The two things that need to be modified to this document, removing the word federal and adding nationally recognized training programs. Discussion ensued.

Motion was made to amend the previously approved workforce development plan criteria with two amendments, add nationally recognized workforce training programs to the first criteria to remove the word federal in the last criteria and to approve the scoring rubric with a minimum score of 75%

Second – Seconded by Avery Gaddis

Discussion – None

In Favor – All

Motion passed.

- Accelerator Adhoc Committee Andrea Comer, Chair (temporary)

Interim Director Clay reported the accelerator RFP is currently waiting for approval from the Office of policy and Management. Councilmember Pelka is helping to get the RFP through the OPM process.

- Governance Committee Andrea Comer, Chair (temporary)

Attorney Komla Mavevi reported the SEC has an ethics statement. This statement was provided to all the members of the council for review and comment.

Councilwoman Shaw asked if members of the Social Equity Council were required to submit annual statements of financial interest to the Office of State Ethics. Councilwoman Shaw asked if the council is in compliance given the deadline was May 1, 2022. Attorney Matrevi stated the newest members of the council will need to comply with that element.

Discussion ensued

Council went to executive session.

Council returned from executive session.

A motion was made for Ginne-Rae Clay to become the Executive Director of the Social Equity Council

Motion - David Lehman

Second - Corrie Betts

All in favor – All

Opposed – None

Abstentions – None

Motion Passed

5. Public Comment Period

Members of the public spoke to the council.

Devin Schleich, Riverton

Freedom Gerardo, Danbury

Duncan Markovich, Branford

Jeff Kivlin, West Hartford

Eileen Kopec, Groton

Gauge McCabe, Manchester

Joseph Raymond Accettullo,
Hamden

Benjamin Zachs, Hartford

Lou Rinaldi, Guilford

Jose Zavaleta, New Britain

Angelo Graziano, Watertown

Christina Eva Capitan, Broad Brook

Jason Cavanaugh, Montville

Luis Vega, North Haven

Kylah Shafer, Mansfield Center

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

Councilmember Shaw requested the March minutes be revised to reflect that Chairwoman Comer presented the finance report on her behalf, because she would be late. And further that the minutes reflect her being in attendance

7. Adjourn

Chairwoman Comer asked for a motion to adjourn.

Motion – by Subria Gordon

Second – Seconded by Marc Pelka

Discussion – None

In Favor – All

Opposed – None

The meeting adjourned at 1:02.

Minutes are a draft until approved at a subsequent meeting.