



**STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
SOCIAL EQUITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING  
APRIL 7, 2026, Meeting  
10:00 A.M. VIA ZOOM**

**1) Call to Order, Welcome and Attendance**

The meeting was called to order at 10:02 a.m. by Chair Andrea Comer.

Members Present:

Andréa Comer (Chair)

Fanita Borges

Greg Davis

Avery Gaddis

Andréa Hawkins

Michael Jefferson

Brittany Lamar (sitting in for Daniel Karpowitz)

Melvin Medina

Ojala Naem

Edwin Shirley

Shirley Skyers-Thomas

Kelli-Marie Vallieres

Kevin Walton

Members Noted Absent/ Not Present for Roll Call

Kyle Abercrombie

Tina Beamon

Charles Venator

A quorum was confirmed.

**2) Approval of March 3, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes**

The Council considered approval of the March 3, 2026, regular meeting minutes.

**Motion: Michael Jefferson**

**Second: Ojala Naem**

**In Favor: All Abstentions: None**

**Discussion: None**  
**Motion passed unanimously.**

### **3) Public Comment Integration**

#### ***1. Vote to Incorporate Public Comment***

The Council considered a proposal to reintegrate public comment into meetings as a way to improve transparency, accountability, and public engagement. The proposal was introduced as a pilot program, initially to be implemented during in-person quarterly meetings.

During discussion, Michael Jefferson asked whether the initiative would be time-bound and emphasized the need for a clearly defined evaluation period. In response, Brandon McGee confirmed the intent to treat it as a beta test, while Andrea Comer proposed a friendly amendment to run the pilot through the end of 2026, followed by review.

Greg Davis raised logistical concerns, particularly around managing participation, and suggested implementing a registration requirement (e.g., 24 hours in advance). Mariedy Collazo explained that initial flexibility was intended to avoid limiting access but acknowledged that structure could be added. Chair Comer supported incorporating the registration requirement into the proposal.

Melvin Medina sought clarification on legal compliance, and staff confirmed that the approach aligns with FOIA requirements and does not constitute a formal public hearing.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the reincorporation of public comment as amended (including the pilot timeline and registration process).

#### **Vote Outcome:**

**In Favor: Majority**

**Opposed: Andrea Hawkins**

**Abstentions: None.**

**Noted the motion passed.**

#### ***2. Vote to Approve Public Comment Rules & Procedures***

**Motion: Michael Jefferson**

**Second: Ojala Naeem Outcome:**

**Approved with amendments (including pilot period and registration framework).**

### **4) Updates from the CT SEC provided by CEO Brandon L. McGee**

#### ***1. Financial Update***

FY2026 budget: ~\$17.5 million

\$12 million allocated annually to community reinvestment Monthly expenditures (as of March 31): ~\$541,000

Emphasis on controlled, sustainable spending and compliance

**2. *Reimagine & Revitalize (R2) Program Transitioned from setup phase to implementation.***

- Grant infrastructure and compliance systems fully operational
- Four community reinvestment information sessions held (Bridgeport, Stamford, New Britain, New London region)
- ~125 participants from community organizations 6 additional sessions scheduled statewide
- Grant managers onboarded and aligned on compliance/reporting Funding opportunity release remains on track for Q2 2026 Focus on:
  - o Fiscal Oversight Standardized reporting.
  - o Technical assistance for long-term success.

**3. *Legislative & Policy Updates Key bills under review:***

House Bill 5351 – Strengthening Social Equity protections

House Bill 5350

Senate Bill 405 – Cannabis tax revenue diversion

House Bill 5109 – Flat tax proposal

SEC leadership continues engagement with legislators, Social Equity

Entrepreneurs and industry stakeholders (including the Connecticut Cannabis Chamber).

**4. *Leadership Announcements***

Atty. Nichelle Mullins – Chief Legal Director

Karraine Moody – Leadership role overseeing loan program expansion and entrepreneur support

Both addressed the Council and expressed commitment to SEC’s mission.

**5. *Administrative Reminder***

Statements of Financial Interest due May 1, 2026

Legislative Discussion: Equity Ownership Period (7 Years vs. 3 Years)

Chair Comer opened discussion on proposed legislation to reduce required Social Equity ownership from 7 years to 3 years.

Key Discussion Points:

- Andrea Comer: Highlighted tension between: Protecting community reinvestment goals allowing business flexibility. Noted Social Equity

framework is unique compared to other licenses. Emphasized that integrity and community commitment cannot be legislated.

- Edwin Shirley: Concerned early buyouts could prevent businesses from reaching true value and profitability. Supported flexibility only if the entrepreneur chooses voluntarily, not under pressure.
- Kevin Walton: Requested insight into Social Equity Entrepreneurs' perspectives. Asked whether feedback trends support or oppose the change.
- Andrea Comer: Reported mixed feedback. Some entrepreneurs want flexibility to exit earlier due to market uncertainty. Others emphasize long-term community and economic impact. Raised concern about maintaining community hiring and reinvestment goals.
- Attorney Mariedy Collazo: Warned of contractual risks: Many agreements allow backers to automatically buy out Social Equity owners if laws change.
  - o Risk: elimination of Social Equity participants from the industry over time
- Corrie Betts: Asked for clarity on downsides of reducing the timeline. Concerned about impact on the core purpose of the program.
- Brandon McGee: Acknowledged need to balance: Business realities. Program integrity. Emphasized SEC's role in: Supporting entrepreneurs' choices and preserving the mission of equity.
- Melvin Medina: Suggested a targeted ("scalpel") approach instead of a broad policy change. Asked whether market maturity data supports timing of the change.
- Staff Response: Industry still in growth phase
  - o Perspectives vary widely depending on:
    - Business performance
    - Backer relationships
    - Financial pressures

5) **Good of the Order None.**

6) **Adjourn**

**Motion: Avery Gaddis**  
**Second: Michael Jefferson**  
**In Favor: All**  
**Abstention: None**  
**Discussion: None**  
**Motion passed unanimously.**