



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

Daniel Karpowitz

Melvin Medina

Ojala Naeem

Edwin Shirley

Shirley Skyers-Thomas

Kelli-Marie Vallieres

Kevin Walton

Members Noted Absent/ Not Present for Roll Call

Kyle Abercrombie

Tina Beamon

Brittany Lamar

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 Naeem

In Favor: All  
Abstentions: None  
Discussion: None

Motion passed unanimously.

### 3) Public Comment Intergration

#### 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 cutoff (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

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

4 community 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:

Fiscal oversight

Standardized reporting

Technical assistance for long-term success

3. Legislative & Policy Updates

Key bills under review:

House Bill 5351 – Strengthening Social Equity protections

Senate Bill 405 – Cannabis tax revenue diversion

House Bill 5109 – Flat tax proposal

SEC leadership continues engagement with:

Legislators

Social Equity Entrepreneurs

Industry stakeholders (including the Connecticut Cannabis Chamber)

#### 4. Leadership Announcements

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

- Mariedy Collazo warned of contractual risks:

Many agreements allow backers to automatically buy out Social Equity owners if laws change

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

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

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

Abstentions: None

Discussion: None

Motion passed unanimously.





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**Date: April 7, 2026**

**RE: Minutes: April SEC Meeting Minutes**

**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,**

**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**