



REGULAR MEETING OF THE SOCIAL EQUITY COUNCIL
March 7, 2023, Meeting 10 A.M.
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Minutes

1. Call to order and welcome. Meeting was called to order by Chairman Paul Robertson at 10:01 a.m.

2. Attendance

Paul Robertson
Andréa Comer
Corrie Betts
Subira Gordon
Michael Jefferson
Marc Pelka
Julianne Avallone
Kevin Walton
Kelli-Marie Vallieres
Melvin Medina
Edwin Shirley
Avery Gaddis
Ojala Naeem

3. Approval of February 7, 2023, Meeting Minutes

The Council unanimously approved the February 7, 2023 minutes.

4. The Council unanimously voted to enter Executive Session to discuss pending litigation. Upon return from the executive session, Chairperson Robertson called the roll and all members of the Council were present.

5. Discussion and Vote on Previous SEC Decision

Five (5) equity joint ventures applications ACRE 0015645-FFDC EJV LLC, ACRE 0015646-FFDN EJV LLC, ACRE 0015648-FFDW EJV LLC, ACRE 0015649-FFDC EJV LLC, and ACRE 0015650-FFDN EJV LLC approved by the Council on September 7, 2022 did not comply with the shared ownership prohibition stated under RERACA. Therefore, Chairperson Robertson asked for a motion to withdraw the previous approval decision and to deny these equity joint ventures with the understanding that the applicant may resubmit revised applications for review at a future SEC meeting.

Chairman Robertson asked for a motion to withdraw approval and deny the five equity joint ventures (EJVs).



Motion – by Michael Jefferson
Second – by Andréa Comer
In Favor – All
Opposed – None
Abstention – None
Motion passed.

New applications with a revised ownership structure are anticipated and will be reviewed and voted on at future meetings.

6. Vote on Workforce Development Plans

a. Recommendations for Approval

Workforce development plans recommended for approval are ACCE0000028 by FFD 149, LLC and ACDS00001212 by Nutmeg Delivery, LLC.

Chairman Robertson asked for a motion for approval.

Motion – by Michael Jefferson
Second – by Kelli-Marie Vallieres
In Favor – All
Opposed – None
Abstention – None
Motion passed.

b. Recommendations for Denial

Chairman Robertson asked for a motion for denial.

Motion – by Michael Jefferson
Second – by Andréa Comer

Councilwoman Vallieres asked for the reasoning behind the denial. Ms. Saadeh stated ACRE0000015644 submitted by Budr Hartford Holding, LLC scored very low on 1 of the 6 criteria with an overall score of 66. Recommendation of approval has a minimum score of 70.

In Favor – All
Opposed – None
Abstention – None
Motion passed.

7. Vote on Equity Joint Ventures



a. Recommendations for Approval

Chairman Robertson asked for a motion for approval.

Motion – by Michael Jefferson
Second – by Andréa Comer

Six EJVs were recommended for approval: AMHF000H257 by CT Pharma Norwalk, LLC; AMHF0008258 by CT Pharma Newington, LLC; AMHF0008259 by Willow Brook Stratford, LLC; AMHF0008260 by Willow Brook Enfield, LLC; AMHF0008261 by Caring Nature EJV1, LLC; and AMHF0008262 by Caring Nature EJV2, LLC.

The Council voted unanimously to approve the six (6) equity joint ventures.

b. Recommendations for Denial

Recommended for denial based on exceeding the EJV cap are ACME0008475 by Atlantic Harvest, LLC; ACRE0015668 by EJ Ventures 4, LLC; AMHF0008236 by Raybrid LLC, LLC; AMHF0008237 by EJ Ventures 3, LLC; and AMHF0008238 by Fresh Lyme Partners, LLC.

Chairman Robertson asked for a motion for denial.

Motion – by Michael Jefferson
Second – by Edwin Shirley
The Council voted unanimously to deny the equity joint ventures.

8. Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Ginne-Rae Clay stated 2 of the 5 vacant SEC positions have been posted with the remaining 3 to be posted soon upon approval.

The Accelerator Program is doing great. The Canna-Business Revolving Loan Program has nearly completed finalizing legal matters. The program will be announced with webinar information sessions to follow and then the application period will open for the first round of lending. The next meeting of the Community Reinvestment Committee is on March 10. A reinvestment RFP has been drafted.

Regarding legislative session, SEC Bill HB6695 passed 23-0 out of the General Law Committee. The next step is for HB6695 to be filed with the Legislative Commissioners' Office and placed on the House calendar. The SEC and DECD are in budget conversations. There will be a subcommittee work session tomorrow via Zoom to answer questions legislators may have regarding the SEC budget.



Technical assistance webinars were held twice daily on February 22 and March 1. A special webinar for Accelerator Program participants will be held on March 13. SEC staff are reviewing 5 social equity plans.

March work will include reviewing social equity plans, community conversation plan, announcing the loan program, continued participation in the legislative session, posting vacant positions, and new council member orientation.

Councilwoman Gordon asked for an update on the council member retreat. Director Clay said rescheduling the retreat would need to include a public meeting.

Councilman Gaddis asked when the loan program would be rolled out. Chairman Robertson said he expects the loan program to roll out next week.

Councilman Gaddis asked for the number of participants in the Accelerator Program. Director Clay said there are 30 active participants attending each session with 6 others not actively participating.

Councilman Jefferson asked when they can expect the vacant positions to be filled. Director Clay estimated it will take another 4 to 6 weeks.

Councilwoman Vallieres asked for an update on legislation allowing hemp farmers to cultivate cannabis. Kristina Diamond said the hemp bill is on today's General Law Committee's agenda and she will send an update.

9. Committee Reports

a. Finance Committee

Chairwoman Comer stated the committee met on February 28 and reviewed the financials through that date. The SEC budget for FY23 has a remaining balance of \$9.2 million, the bulk of which is in the Community Reinvestment and Marketing and Branding lines as well as roughly \$844,000 remaining for Oaksterdam. The Committee discussed the short window in which to expend allocated reinvestment dollars and the Outreach Committee's request to use funds from either the Marketing or Reinvestment lines to launch community conversations. Chairwoman Comer thanked Councilman Walton and the committee members for thoughtful consideration of this request. The Committee voted to recommend the resources be allocated to the Outreach Committee for community conversations and outreach.

Motion – by Andréa Comer for the Council to approve the Finance Committee's recommendation to allocate resources to the Outreach Committee to launch community conversations upon submission of a budget and a plan.

Second – by Avery Gaddis

Councilwoman Gordon said it is important to connect to the community. She thanked the Finance Committee for moving forward. Councilmen Walton and Betts are interested in working to ensure due diligence of the Council in working with the communities. Councilwoman Gordon appealed to new council members who may be interested in joining the Outreach Committee that they are holding town halls in all the DIAs and working with nonprofit partners to solicit feedback from the community on how they would like to see dollars reinvested.

The Council voted unanimously to approve the resolution.

- b. Chairwoman Naeem had no updates from the Governance Committee.
- c. Reinvestment Committee

Chairwoman Naeem said the Reinvestment Committee's first meeting was on February 28 where they discussed the roles and responsibilities of the committee, the staff, and the process. They are partnering with the Outreach Committee who will be conducting community listening sessions and town halls to better understand gaps in the community from a reinvestment perspective. Staff is putting together an RFP for areas of impact that the committee has highlighted for funding opportunities before the end of the fiscal year. At the March 10 meeting they will review updates on community conversations through the Outreach Committee as well as the RFP.

Councilwoman Gordon encouraged supporting community organizations that are already vetted and doing good work in the community.

Councilman Medina said organizations doing harm-reduction work will be critically important when thinking about reinvestment. Harm-reduction work aligns with the vision of a public health model.

Councilwoman Vallieres said the state requires an RFP process. They cannot just provide funding to certain organizations. Organizations can be invited to apply for funding. She suggested determining how much money they want to put in different areas and then making sure they are collecting RFPs that meet the needs of those areas. She suggested that workforce development as a community reinvestment line item be included in the RFP process.

Chairwoman Naeem said agencies in the state that are federally funded cannot engage on workforce development as it relates to cannabis businesses.

Councilwoman Comer asked if it made sense to replicate the Community Investment Fund model. Chairman Robertson said that will be made available. Chairwoman Naeem said they would like to review that at the March 10 meeting.

- d. Outreach and Marketing Committee

Chairwoman Gordon said they have identified all existing DIAs. The thought is to prioritize Hartford, Bridgeport, Waterbury, Stamford, and New Haven to start with and hold community conversations in Meriden, Ansonia, Norwalk, Bristol, Torrington, and the Norwich-New London area. The goal is to hold one event per area initially working with an anchor nonprofit in each city. They would like to have all meetings recorded, translated, and transcribed to ensure full access. They plan to have 150 to 200 people at each event. She welcomed suggestions from Council members regarding nonprofit organizations in these communities that would have the space to hold meetings. Council members were invited to attend the community conversations.

Councilman Shirley said he would have suggestions for the Hartford area.

Councilman Gaddis voiced concern over holding meetings at schools as cannabis would be a topic.

Councilman Medina stated he would be happy to join the Outreach and Marketing Committee.

e. Policy Committee

Chairman Shirley said the Policy Committee met on February 16. They received an update on the social equity plan and legislative activities. Chairman Robertson thanked the Policy Committee for their continued work.

f. Workforce Development Committee

Chairwoman Vallieres said the cannabis workforce development coordinator position was posted which resulted in hundreds of candidates. They will work with HR to narrow down the candidates in a process that might take a few months.

Chairwoman Vallieres said no federal dollars can touch anything that has to do with cannabis. The workforce development system through the American Job Centers is federally funded. She thanked Attorney Komla Matrevi for his in-depth review of legal applications and what other states are doing. If budget expansion passes legislative session, the entire committee staff could be moved to state line items in the general fund enabling use of their knowledge and resources. She said it would be appropriate to request proposals for a workforce initiative out of the Reinvestment Committee.

Councilman Jefferson asked who could provide training for those in the DIAs for work in the cannabis business. Chairwoman Vallieres said other states have removed individuals from American Job Centers, put them in a different location, and built a parallel state-funded system. Additionally, there are national online entities that provide cannabis training, and some colleges are interested in developing programming. The workforce coordinator will perform a needs assessment for the industry and determine what

programs are needed. They would then begin working with state-funded state entities to build out programming. National online out-of-state universities could fill an immediate need in the short term. Councilman Jefferson asked if the process would be started months from now after the coordinator is hired or if they could start something sooner. Chairwoman Vallieres said in the interim, an RFP could be done for an out-of-state entity to run some cannabis-related training programs. Funding can be used for workplace development programs for members of the designated affected areas if it is not cannabis-related training. Councilman Jefferson asked how soon the RFP could be put out for out-of-state training programs. Chairwoman Vallieres said she will work with the executive director and Councilwomen Naeem and Gordon on getting an RFP out in the next week or so.

Councilwoman Comer stated Section 39 of the statute regarding creation of a workforce training program for people in DIAs requires coordination with DECD and the Department of Labor.

Councilman Medina asked if there was certification that requires the hiring of people who enter a workforce development program or incentive for companies to hire those people. Chairwoman Vallieres said employers determine what their needs are and when they need them and then make the commitment to hire. No one will go through a training program that does not have a job at the end of it. Workforce plans require organizations and entities to hire people through the job training programs.

Councilman Pelka thanked Chairwoman Vallieres for her work and wished her luck on recruitment. Councilman Pelka asked if workforce development training programs target positions in the cannabis industry or elsewhere. Chairwoman Vallieres said there is a \$70 million investment in job training programs. A single online portal provides access to all job training programs in the state in the fields of manufacturing, IT, healthcare, infrastructure, green energy, and bioscience. Marketing targets underserved and marginalized populations. Supportive services include childcare, transportation, housing and food stipends, and access to technology. Chairwoman Vallieres will provide additional information on the toolbox at the Reinvestment Committee meeting on March 10.

Councilwoman Gordon asked if there was a way to share information on types of jobs that will be needed in Connecticut and a method to connect to pertinent job training programs. Chairwoman Vallieres said it is her job to do just that.

Councilwoman Comer suggested replicating what the New York Department of Labor is doing regarding cannabis careers and training opportunities.

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

Councilman Medina and Councilwoman Avallone were welcomed.



11. Adjournment

Chairman Robertson asked for a motion to adjourn.

Motion – by Ojala Naeem

Second – by Michael Jefferson

The meeting adjourned at [REDACTED].

/ad

March 10, 2023

RE: Transcript: March SEC Council Meeting Minutes Draft

Please be advised that the above-referenced typewritten transcript is a true and accurate transcription of 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,

Mary A. Goehring

Mary A. Goehring
CEO, Transcription Plus, LLC

I certify that this document is a true and accurate transcription of the audio voice file indicated above.

Amy Deutsch
Amy Deutsch