



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE ELECTIONS ENFORCEMENT COMMISSION

DRAFT MINUTES
STATE ELECTIONS ENFORCEMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR TELEPHONIC MEETING

Via Teams

Additional Methods to Attend This Meeting Included:

For public access please click: Stream on Youtube (<https://youtube.com/@ctseec>)

Stream on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/ctseec/live>)

May 20, 2026

9:30 A.M.

I. Call to Order

Commissioner Penny was present via Teams and called the meeting to order at 9:32 A.M. Commissioners Greg Picuch, Shannon Bergquist, and Sonia Worell Asare were present via Teams. Agency staff were also present and present via Teams.

II. Approval of the Minutes

1. Approval of the Minutes of the Meeting of May 6, 2026

An amendment was noted to correct the misspelling of an attorney's name.

It was moved by Commissioner Picuch and seconded by Commissioner Bergquist to approve the Minutes of the Meeting of May 6, 2026, as amended. So voted by a vote of 4-0-0.

III. Administrative Reports

1. Report of Executive Director and General Counsel Ryan Burns

Executive Director Ryan Burns began his report by noting that CEP Grant Season officially began today, and several committees have scheduled their applications. He also reported that the agency's audit lottery regulations have moved forward to the Attorney General's Office for review, which is the next step in the process. The public comment period has concluded, and no comments were received. The regulations are proceeding as the Commission previously approved.

Executive Director Burns stated that the Fiscal team has begun closing out the fiscal year. Although the fiscal year officially ends on June 30, all purchases and operational spending effectively conclude on June 15, 2026. The team is wrapping up outstanding fiscal items, and SEEC is currently projecting a small

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surplus to be returned to the General Fund, which he noted is the desired position for the agency. Additionally, he reported that the IT team has completed all server, application, and workstation image upgrades for the year, resulting in significantly improved system stability and no planned downtime during CEP Grant Season.

Executive Director Burns provided enforcement statistics, which were included in Commissioners' packets. He reported that there are currently 169 open cases. Of those, 33 are on hold, almost entirely due to law enforcement referrals, 49 involve non-filers, and 91 are active complaints, referrals, and Commission initiated investigations combined. He commented that this is the first time he can recall the number of active complaints, referrals, and non-filers dropping below 100. He recognized and commended the Enforcement Unit for their work in achieving this milestone, while noting that substantial work remains. He added that there are no pending General Election audits, as the entire backlog has been eliminated. A report regarding Special Election audits will be included in the agenda packet for the next regular meeting on June 3rd.

On the grant application side, he reported that 71 committees participated in Pre-Application Reviews, all of which have been completed. Sixty-four committees met the required thresholds and are expected to have a straightforward grant application process, assuming no unusual changes occurred between their review and their application.

Executive Director Burns then provided a Legislative Update. He stated that the legislative session was generally positive for SEEC. The agency was not a major focus during the session, which he viewed as beneficial given the internal transitions of the past year. There were no significant changes to the Citizens' Election Program, SEEC's independence was preserved, no new operational restrictions were imposed, and certain aspects of the agency's authority were expanded. He noted that this reflects continued confidence in SEEC's ability to execute its mission.

Legislative Highlights

HB 5352 passed unanimously. The bill removes the mandatory one-year dismissal deadline for violations under Chapter 151. The legislature sought feedback from SEEC, and the agency drafted the language ultimately adopted. Executive Director Burns expresses appreciation for the broad support.

SB1, the budget bill, includes a modest increase to SEEC's operational budget and authorizes a \$3.5 million sweep from the Citizens' Election Fund. He previously expressed concern that the sweep might impact the agency's ability to fully fund 2026 grants; however, given developments at the statewide

conventions this past weekend, he now believes the agency will be able to fully cover all qualifying grants. He noted that this creates a structural funding issue for 2030 and that SEEC will continue discussions with the legislature regarding proper CEF funding levels for upcoming gubernatorial cycles.

HB 5001, signed into law yesterday, establishes no-excuse absentee balloting. SEEC took no position on the underlying policy. The agency requested two additional staff positions, an investigator and a staff attorney, in anticipation of increased enforcement needs. The Office of Fiscal Analysis included an investigator position, but this was not adopted in the budget. Additional provisions include clarification that SEEC has investigative and hearing authority over election regulations, expanded authority for the Attorney General to seek injunctive relief which may require SEEC to take custody of election materials or tabulators, expanded eligibility for early and absentee voting for individuals who will turn 18 by Election Day, expansion of risk limiting audits with related reporting responsibilities for SEEC, restrictions on law enforcement presence within 250 feet of polling places, and additional election related felony offenses involving tabulators and drop boxes.

Executive Director Burns also reviewed several bills that did not pass but may return next year 2027.

CEP-Related Legislation

Executive Director Burns then provided an update on legislation affecting the Citizens Election Program. **HB 5318**, a banking committee bill, was supported by the agency but did not advance out of the Appropriations Committee. **HB 5544** would have allowed municipalities to hold local elections at the same time as state elections. The agency raised concerns due to the potential impact on the Citizens Election Program, including the risk that CEP expenditures for a legislative race could also benefit a municipal candidacy in overlapping districts. The bill did not pass but will require continued monitoring. **HB 490**, concerning online donation platforms, passed out of committee with agency support but did not receive a vote. **HB 5543** would have reduced the qualifying contributions required from candidates while allowing grant amounts and contribution limits to increase annually. Executive Director Burns stated that this would reduce the required public support candidate's must demonstrate and increase grant size disproportionately to the funds raised. The bill passed out of committee but did not advance. He reported productive discussions with legislators on this issue.

Executive Director Burns concluded with updates on two additional bills. **SB 425** concerned agency performance plans and originally required agencies to submit plans to the Office of Policy and Management for approval and oversight. SEEC

and other watchdog agencies raised concerns about impacts on independence. The bill was amended so that plans would be submitted only to the Committee of Cognizance but did not ultimately pass. **HB 5253** concerned oversight of fire districts. Executive Director Burns stated that the subject matter does not fall within SEEC's statutory authority and that the agency will continue to communicate that position should the issue return.

IV. Executive Session per General Statutes §§ 1-200(6)(B),(E), and 1-210(b)(1), (3),(4),(10) and General Statutes §9-7a
(Preliminary draft and agency consideration of enforcement action and exempt records relative thereto)

It was moved by Commissioner Picuch and seconded by Commissioner Bergquist at 9:50 A.M. to proceed into Executive Session pursuant to General Statutes §§ 1-200(6)(B) and (E), and 1-210(b)(1), (3),(4),(10) to discuss strategy and negotiations with respect to pending claims and exempt records. So voted by a vote of 4-0-0.

Commissioners Penny, Picuch, Bergquist, and Asare were present via Teams. Staff members present via Teams were: Executive Director and General Counsel Ryan Burns, Senior Counsel Joshua Foley, Legal Program Director Shannon Kief, Director of Campaign Disclosure & Audit Salman Munir, Associate Accounts Examiner Kysta Palozie, Enforcement Director William Smith, Staff Attorneys Mario Borelli, Johny Ross, III, Zak Jazlowiecki, Maryam Bitar, Aaron Charney, Patricia Mwilwa, Legal Investigators Stephaie Fish, Ronald Perry, Scott Branfuhr, Elections Officer Melissa Moore-Ward, Information Technology, Information Technology Manager Irene Jeremic, Information Technology Analyst Nathan Diaz-Rolon, Jonathan Ortiz, and Commission Clerks Stephen Palmer and Cynthia Ortiz.

V. Consideration of Matters Discussed in the above Executive Session

At 10:22 A.M., the Commissioners came out of Executive Session and noted that no matters were decided and no vote was taken during Executive Session. The Commissioners then considered the following matters discussed in Executive Session.

1. Recommendation of Counsel: Necessary to Investigate Determination pursuant to General Statutes §9-7a

Attorney William B Smith summarized the Recommendation of Counsel dated May 14, 2026, and requested that two (2) matters be moved to be investigated.

It was moved by Commissioner Picuch and seconded by Commissioner Bergquist to take a determination that it is necessary to investigate violations

relating to two (2) complaints, File Nos. 2026-046 & 2026-047. So approved by the Commission. So voted by a vote of 4-0-0.

2. In the Matter of a SEEC Initiated Investigation of “Knotek for the 34th”
Recommendation of Counsel
File No. 2024-169

Attorney: William B. Smith
Legal Investigator: Sheri-Lyn Lagueux

Attorney William B. Smith summarized the above referenced complaint and Recommendation of Counsel in File No. 2024-169. He recommended adoption of the Proposed Notice of Dismissal in this matter.

It was moved by Commissioner Piecuch and seconded by Commissioner Bergquist to adopt the Proposed Notice of Dismissal in File No. 2024-169. So voted by a vote of 4-0-0.

3. In the Matter of a Commission Initiated Investigation into Certain Contributions to “Friends of Cathy Osten”
File No. 2024-059
Recommendation of Counsel

Attorney: Mario Borelli
Legal Investigator: Scott Branfuhr

The matter is continued.

4. In the Matter of a Complaint by David Hannon, Ansonia
File Nos. 2025-043
Recommendation of Counsel

Attorney: Mario Borelli
Legal Investigator: Stephanie Fish

The matter is continued.

5. In the Matter of Complaint by David Hannon, Ansonia
File Nos. 2025-044
Recommendation of Counsel

Attorney: Mario Borelli
Legal Investigator: Stehania Fish

Attorney Mario Borelli summarized the above referenced complaint and Recommendation of Counsel in File No. 2025-044. He recommended adoption of the Proposed Notice of Dismissal in this matter.

It was moved by Commissioner Piecuch and seconded by Commissioner Bergquist to adopt the Proposed Notice of Dismissal in File No. 2025-044. So voted by a vote of 4-0-0.

6. In the Matter of a Referral by an Elections Officer
File Nos. 2025-030, 2025-131, & 2026-015
Recommendation of Counsel
Attorney:

Johnny Ross III

Attorney Johnny Ross, III summarized the above referenced complaint and Recommendation of Counsel in File Nos. 2025-030, 2025-131, & 2026-015. He recommended adoption of the Proposed Notice of Dismissal in this matter.

It was moved by Commissioner Piecuch and seconded by Commissioner Bergquist to adopt the Proposed Notice of Dismissal in File Nos. 2025-030, 2025-131, & 2026-015. So voted by a vote of 4-0-0.

7. In the Matter of a Referral by an Elections Officer
File No. 2025-129
Recommendation of Counsel
Attorney:

Johnny Ross, III

Attorney Johnny Ross, III summarized the above referenced complaint and Recommendation of Counsel in File No. 2025-129. He recommended adoption of the Proposed Notice of Dismissal in this matter.

It was moved by Commissioner Piecuch and seconded by Commissioner Bergquist to adopt the Proposed Notice of Dismissal in File No. 2025-129. So voted by a vote of 4-0-0.

8. In the Matter of a Referral by an Elections Officer
File No. 2026-016
Recommendation of Counsel
Attorney:

Johnny Ross III

Attorney Johnny Ross, III summarized the above referenced complaint and Recommendation of Counsel in File No. 2026-016. He recommended adoption of the Proposed Notice of Dismissal in this matter.

It was moved by Commissioner Piecuch and seconded by Commissioner Bergquist to adopt the Proposed Notice of Dismissal in File No. 2026-016. So voted by a vote of 4-0-0.

9. In the Matter of a Complaint by Sara-Beth Rowe, Willimantic
File No. 2026-024
Recommendation of Counsel
Attorney: Zak Jazlowiecki

Attorney Zac Jazlowiecki summarized the above referenced complaint and Recommendation of Counsel in File No. 2026-024. He recommended adoption of the Proposed Notice of Dismissal in this matter.

It was moved by Commissioner Piecuch and seconded by Commissioner Bergquist to adopt the Proposed Notice of Dismissal in File No. 2026-024. So voted by a vote of 4-0-0.

10. In the Matter of a Complaint by William Finger (self-reported), Greenwich
File No. 2026-044
Recommendation of Counsel
Attorney: Zak Jazlowiecki

Attorney Zac Jazlowiecki summarized the above referenced complaint and Recommendation of Counsel in File No. 2026-044. He recommended adoption of the Proposed Notice of Dismissal in this matter.

It was moved by Commissioner Piecuch and seconded by Commissioner Bergquist to adopt the Proposed Notice of Dismissal in File No. 2026-044. So voted by a vote of 4-0-0.

VI. Adjournment

It was moved by Commissioner Piecuch and seconded by Commissioner Bergquist at 10:34 A.M. to adjourn the meeting. So voted by a vote of 4-0-0. Unless otherwise noted, all votes of the Commission are unanimous.

The next regular scheduled meeting is May 28, 2026, at 3:30 P.M.