CANNABIS CONTROL COMMISSION

March 12, 2026
10:00 AM

In-Person at Cannabis Control Commission, Second Floor Public Meeting Room, Worcester Union Station, 2 Washington Square, Worcester and with Remote Access via Microsoft Teams Live*

PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

Documents:
- Application Materials associated with:
  - Staff Recommendations on Renewal Licenses
  - Staff Recommendations on Provisional Licenses
  - Staff Recommendations on Final Licenses
- Meeting Packet
- March 11, 2026, Boston Globe Article.

In Attendance:
- Chair Shannon O'Brien
- Commissioner Carrie Benedon
- Commissioner Kimberly Roy
- Commissioner Bruce Stebbins

Minutes:

I. Call to Order
- The Chair recognized a quorum and called the meeting to order.
- The Chair gave notice that the meeting is being recorded.
- The Chair gave an overview of the agenda.

II. Commissioners' Comments & Updates – 00:05:18
- The Chair commented about the serious work they have at hand and timeframes they have. She stated that a Boston Globe did a report about the serious crisis that the Commission and the Cannabis industry is in right now. She expressed that it was a call to action quickly and decisively. She added that if you are doing the right thing in this industry, the Commission should feel your partner, not your biggest obstacle. Commissioner Roy reflected on the joint Ways and Means meeting where they testified for the FY27 budget. She thanked the legislature for their continued partnership in support. She looked forward to the upcoming conversations. She added

she met with Cannabis Credit and representatives from Needam bank. Commissioner Stebbins noted the Renewals this month and Metrc's training seminar. He added he has been working with the Northeastern capstone master's degree program on public policy and urban affairs. He mentioned he would share a final report. He noted that the first meeting was tomorrow for the Social Consumption (SC) and Responsible Vendor Training (RVT) working group. He mentioned allowing Metrc training to replace RVT and the need to change RVT during the next regulatory round. He added that they needed to make regulatory changes with respect to a Provisional Licensee holding property through that phase of their License. Commissioner Benedon noted joining the Massachusetts Equitable Opportunities Now (EON) round table discussion around challenges within the industry with a focus on the Social Equity Program (SEP) and Economic Empowerment Priority Applicant (EEA) Licenses. She mentioned certain individuals within the industry and looked forward to continuing working with them. The Chair pointed out that there were 40 Licenses listed for Renewal and out of an abundance of caution, moved T.Bear Inc. to Monday's Public Meeting (PM). She also noted issues raised by Commissioner Benedon about sufficiency of the meeting notice including acronyms and debating or deliberating around the update on the petitions process. She confirmed they would only be listening to the information. Commissioner Benedon provided some insight on Open Meeting Law (OML) notice specificity requirements. Commissioner Roy asked to table petitions as she had questions and the Chair acknowledged.

III. Minutes – 00:15:38

- The Chair requested the legal definition of minor and asked Executive Director (ED) Travis Ahern to share the February 6, 2026, memorandum to all the Commissioners from the February 10, 2026, PM.

- February 10, 2026
- Commissioner Roy moved to approve the February 10, 2026, Commission Public Meeting minutes.
- Commissioner Stebbins seconded the motion.
- The Chair took a roll call vote:
    - Commissioner Benedon – Yes
    - Commissioner Roy – Yes
    - Commissioner Stebbins – Yes
    - Chair O'Brien – Yes
- The Commission unanimously approved the February 10, 2026, Commission Public Meeting minutes.

- February 12, 2026
- Commissioner Roy moved to approve the February 12, 2026, Commission Public Meeting minutes.
- Commissioner Stebbins seconded the motion.
- The Chair took a roll call vote:

    - Commissioner Benedon – Yes
    - Commissioner Roy – Yes
    - Commissioner Stebbins – Yes
    - Chair O'Brien – Yes
- The Commission unanimously approved the February 12, 2026, Commission Public Meeting minutes.

- Commissioner Roy noted a message she sent to the ED around rules of necessity and delegation. The Chair and ED noted it would be talked about it at a later PM in March.

IV. Executive Director and Commission Staff Report – 00:20:12

- The ED highlighted procurement activity and stated that there were two Requests for Information (RFIs) for the licensing management system, and digital agent badging and medical patient identification. He noted an upcoming discussion around complaint resolution and background checks. He noted in the future he would be bringing a contract to the board to move forward the medical platform. Commissioner Roy stated it was interesting to hear the Executive Office of Technology Services and Security (EOTSS) talk about how they have provided services to other agencies to help them advance their Information Technology (IT) infrastructure. The Chair mentioned partnering and collaborating with other agencies, so they were not reinventing the wheel. Chief Technology and Innovation Officer Paul Clark (CTIO Clark) stated they did try and coordinate with EOTSS. The Chair noted unfunded mandates. CTIO Clark stated he is always open and looking for opportunities to coordinate. He added that the Licenses that the Commission has are very cost effective as compared to what it would cost through EOTSS. The ED noted they were in the gathering stage as the Commission needs resources to implement a lot of the changes that are coming.

1. Licensing Update
    - Director of Licensing Olivia Koval (Director Koval) presented highlights from the licensing data. She provided an update on licensing applications. Commissioner Roy asked how many surrenders they had in 2025 and Director Koval stated she would check with the Data Analytics team to figure out how many. Commissioner Roy also requested a slide by year that shows surrenders, expirations, revocations and suspensions to keep an eye on the trends. She also requested a standalone slide for receiverships. The Chair mentioned conducting financial audits. Director Koval presented data on active Cultivators. The Chair noted holding two Public Listening Sessions on March 18th around a potential freeze and workers safety. Director Koval presented data on Host Community Agreements (HCAs). Commissioner Roy asked about extension requests and Director Koval confirmed it was all the extensions requested from the very beginning. Commissioner Stebbins noted that one Licensee could come back and keep requesting extensions. Director Koval highlighted a Licensee who is an Medical Treatment Center (MTC) who is not utilizing their

Cultivation License because they are cultivating under a sister License due to the vertical integration requirements.

V. Staff Recommendations on Renewal Licenses – 00:41:38

- Licensing Manager Tsuko Defoe (Manager Defoe) presented on behalf of the Licensing department the Staff Recommendations for Renewals, Provisionals, and Final Licenses.

- The Chair noted that item numbered 34 indicated on the agenda T. Bear Inc. (#MPR244405) would be tabled.
- Commissioner Benedon moved to approve the renewal of items numbered 1 – 40 with the exception of item numbered 34 as indicated on the agenda.
- Commissioner Stebbins seconded the motion.
- The Chair took a roll call vote:
    - Commissioner Benedon – Yes
    - Commissioner Roy – Yes
    - Commissioner Stebbins – Yes
    - Chair O'Brien – Yes
- The Commission unanimously approved the renewal of items numbered 1 – 40 with the exception of item numbered 34 as indicated on the agenda.

VI. Staff Recommendations on Provisional Licenses – 00:42:36

1. Kapnos, Inc. (#MRN285398)
    - Commissioner Roy moved to approve the Provisional License.
    - Commissioner Stebbins seconded the motion.
    - The Chair took a roll call vote:
        - Commissioner Benedon – Yes
        - Commissioner Roy – Yes
        - Commissioner Stebbins – Yes
        - Chair O'Brien – Yes
    - The Commission unanimously approved the Provisional License.

VII. Staff Recommendations on Final Licenses – 00:43:26

1. FreeMarketMA, LLC (#MP282279), Marijuana Product Manufacturer

    - Commissioner Roy moved to approve the Final License.
    - Commissioner Stebbins seconded the motion.
    - The Chair took a roll call vote:
        - Commissioner Benedon – Yes
        - Commissioner Roy – Yes
        - Commissioner Stebbins – Yes

    - Chair O’Brien – Yes
- The Commission unanimously approved the Final License.

VIII. Commission Discussion and Votes – 00:43:53

1. Update on FY27 Joint Ways and Means Budget Testimony
    - The ED stated that the budget was presented at the Joint Ways and Means meeting and noted a lot of work still to be done between now and the final budget. He stated the request was 33 million dollars and included a number of items that are priorities. It was noted that the Commission does not keep any of the revenue and all depends on the appropriation. He noted the need for funding for licensing software, SC implementation, reference lab procurement and development, SOC 2 audit, financial audits and background checks. The Chair noted the importance of all Commissioners having individual communication with legislators to make the case. She added sending another letter to all the members of the Ways and Means committee and all the members of the Cannabis oversight committee.

    - Commissioner Roy moved to take a recess returning at 11:15 AM.
    - Commissioner Stebbins seconded the motion.
    - The Chair took a roll call vote:
        - Commissioner Benedon – Yes
        - Commissioner Roy – Yes
        - Commissioner Stebbins – Yes
        - Chair O’Brien – Yes
    - The Commission unanimously approved the motion.
    - The Commission took a brief recess. (Returned at 01:04:38.)

2. ICPS Report
    - Chief of Research Julie Johnson (Chief Johnson) presented findings from the International Cannabis Policy Study (ICPS) from 2019-2023. The Chair noted the Commissioners would not deliberate and would submit written questions to the Research department. She added that they might have to come back to the topic at a future PM. Chief Johnson stated they would take substantive questions for two weeks via email and would comprehensively answer all those questions. She added they would anonymize them and a Questions and Answers (Q&A) would be posted. Commissioner Roy asked who the partners were and how long it took to create the report. Chief Johnson stated that they split the legislative mandate between the industry report and the ICPS report. She noted that their research mandate is an unfunded mandate and they need more resources. She noted they have not been able to do two metrics currently mandated due to funding. She stated she works collaboratively with external folks to get on grants to satisfy the research mandate successfully by collaboration. She stated that the ICPS report was procured through Dr. David Hammond at the University of Waterloo. She added that it was a global study since 2018 and it was the only surveillance system study that asked really

detailed questions about Cannabis use specifically. She provided an overview of the legislative research agenda. Research Analyst Alexander Colby (Analyst Colby) presented a brief history of Cannabis laws and regulations. He also provided an overview of the ICPS. He noted that the Commission has used the ICPS to show the public health impacts of Cannabis legalization in Massachusetts since 2019. He gave background on the ICPS survey methodology. He mentioned they organized the survey data into nine sections. Analyst Colby and Research Analyst Graelyn Humiston (Analyst Humiston) reviewed the results from their analyses of Massachusetts ICPS data. Commissioner Roy asked about what buying from a store meant and Analyst Humiston stated they needed to explore further. Analyst Humiston clarified that Cannabis purchases from a legal or authorized source rose from 56% in 2019 to 84% in 2023 and went over limitations. Commissioner Roy clarified that the data was from 2019 to 2023 used in this survey. Commissioner Roy asked if the participants were compensated and the Chair requested more information on how people get identified. Analyst Humiston recapped the overall findings from the ICPS survey data. Chief Johnson presented policy recommendations to the board around education and prevention, hemp derived cannabinoids, future research, monitoring, and data. She acknowledged internal staff and Dr. Hammond. Chief Johnson stated they would compile all Commission questions and answers anonymously in a formal Q&A to publish on the website along with the report. Chief Johnson clarified the process of reporting to the legislature. The Chair asked if this could be sent to the legislature sooner than in the fall. Commissioner Roy suggested an executive summary and suggested including delivery. She also suggested in the future questioning around potency and what demographic seeks the highest potency and its relation to psychosis.

- Commissioner Roy moved to take a recess returning at 1:00 PM.
- Commissioner Stebbins seconded the motion.
- The Chair took a roll call vote:
    - Commissioner Benedon – Yes
    - Commissioner Roy – Yes
    - Commissioner Stebbins – Yes
    - Chair O'Brien – Yes
- The Commission unanimously approved the motion.
  The Commission took a brief recess. (Returned at 03:12:45.)

3. Exit Interviews Overview
    - The Chair noted that this topic was tabled.

4. Update on New Product Catalogue Launch Date
    - CTIO Clark presented an update on the new product catalogue launch date. He provided background of the Metrc product catalog and what was new for the product catalog. CTIO Clark explained that the Metrc product catalog was separate from the main application database. Commissioner Roy asked about search engine

optimization to "Massachusetts product catalog" to easily find it or they won't use it. Commissioner Benedon stated that when she searched, she found it. CTIO Clark stated he would work with the Digital and Creative Services team. He presented next steps for Metrc and the implementation of the new product catalog. Commissioner Stebbins asked about the retention policy and if a Consumer knew why all products weren't on the catalog. CTIO Clark stated he can work with the Communications team about the launch and can ask Metrc for awareness. Commissioner Stebbins expressed that it would be helpful to have an explanation on why products were gone and CTIO Clark stated he would work on a good suggestion and explained why they picked the 18-month retention period. Commissioner Roy noted that the enhancements would be more user-friendly and Certificates of Analysis (COAs) would accompany any product. CTIO Clark noted it would be easier to search. Commissioner Roy asked CTIO Clark if he heard of fraudulent COAs and flagged what the Commission can do to prevent it. CTIO Clark noted that Metrc had approached them recently to provide input as to improving their data collection on the testing data side. CTIO Clark also noted budget dependency on what they would need, workload on the Data and IT teams and bandwidth issues. Commissioner Roy read proposed motion language.

- Commissioner Roy moved to approve an 18-month retention period for data with the Metrc product catalog and to ensure that Certificates of Analysis are incorporated into the catalog no later than March 31, 2026.
- Commissioner Stebbins seconded the motion.
- The Chair took a roll call vote:
    - Commissioner Benedon – Yes
    - Commissioner Roy – Yes
    - Commissioner Stebbins – Yes
    - Chair O'Brien – Yes
- The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

5. Aggregated Open Data
    - CTIO Clark stated that they previously posted on the open data platform testing dates for yeast and mold, Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and Tetrahydrocannabinolic Acid (THCA) from April 2021-December 2024. He stated that they originally planned to update it quarterly but did not reach that timeframe. He added that as of Tuesday March 10th, they posted testing data for 2025 and included heavy metals. He explained that the plan is to post older data in reserve chronological order from 2024 back to April 2021. The Chair asked about the process, and he stated it would be easier and made more sense to have more current dates available sooner. He mentioned quarterly updates with a 60-day delay and that the next update would be in early June of 2026 for January-March of 2026. Commissioner Roy noted how Nevada posted their data and expressed their want to make it easy for people to access the data. She added that they could go through the product catalog and could find the same information. CTIO Clark stated it was a big challenge to go through the product

catalog and pull every COA up. Commissioner Roy noted that Nevada published all the testing information and names of labs publicly. CTIO Clark noted different state laws. The Chair asked General Counsel Kajal Chattopadhyay (GC Chattopadhyay) for an explanation on why the data is protectable and not in the public. GC Chattopadhyay stated that due to the policy on waiver of privilege, there would have to be a vote from the board to allow for a member of the Legal department to discuss level advice. He requested the Legal department research the issue and go through the various different risks and bring the research back to the board. Commissioner Roy read proposed motion language.

- Commissioner Roy moved to direct the Executive Director and Commission staff to develop a draft data use agreement or DUA to permit end users to access de-anonymized identified data from the open data platform and to provide the draft DUA to the Commission for review and vote within 60 days.
- Commissioner Stebbins seconded the motion.
- The Chair took a roll call vote:
    - Commissioner Benedon – Yes
    - Commissioner Roy – Yes
    - Commissioner Stebbins – Yes
    - Chair O'Brien – Yes
- The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

6. Executive Director CY 2026 Goals
    - Commissioner Stebbins presented draft goals for the ED for the calendar year 2026 and the first six months of calendar year 2027. He noted the desired shift to review the performance goals on a fiscal year basis as previously it was on a calendar year basis to align with budget restrictions. He provided an overview of the goals and next steps. The Chair noted she might appoint herself to edit the goals and present and share the edited version. She stated that they needed to mention the issue of lab fraud in the goals. She raised her concerns. She suggested a management audit internally. She mentioned that money spent on behalf of the public is being well spent. She noted that goal #5 was not appropriate for the ED to be executing. The Chair mentioned that Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) had to be a goal. Commissioner Roy asked who if drafted the goals and Commissioner Stebbins stated he did with the use of a report from the ED sent in December. Commissioner Roy asked why he did the goals different this time and the ED explained the process. The ED asked the Commissioners to pick prioritization of the goals. Commissioner Roy asked if there was still time for the other Commissioners to shape the goals and the ED confirmed they do before a final vote. Commissioner Roy noted she would bring the finance aspect baked into the goals as Treasurer. The Chair stated she would ask for feedback in compliance with OML and finalize the draft. Commissioner Benedon suggested sharing their thoughts on the draft goals during a PM. The ED noted working groups and Commissioner Roy requested the Commissioners get the goals emailed to them.

7. Executive Director Management Oversight Group
    - The Chair noted ongoing concerns around internal and external stories. She suggested they create an ED management oversight group. She stated this would ensure rigorous ongoing supervision of the ED. She appointed Commissioners Benedon and Roy. She stated that the key responsibilities were to monitor the ED reports on finances, ongoing Human Resources (HR) issues, and ensure that all employees are properly protected through the HR department, statutory and regulatory compliance. She added they will assess the ED performance using defined metrics like operational efficiency, policy alignment, goal achievement and leadership effectiveness. She thanked the two Commissioners and stated this would be an ongoing tracking and oversight of issues that come into the Commission. Commissioner Roy stated this was long overdue and she welcomed it as highly productive for everyone involved. The Chair expressed the hope that the Commissioners can foster a more positive and collaborative relationship with the ED. Commissioner Benedon asked what the intention was and stated that all Commissioners have every right to be just as involved in the day-to-day oversight. The Chair stated that all Commissioners will still have their regular meetings with the ED and this doesn't undermine or stop any of them from doing anything. She explained this as a more structured way to achieve the goals in the spirit of collaboration and positive interaction. Commissioner Stebbins raised that it puts the ED in a position not to talk to himself and the Chair. Commissioner Roy stated that highly sensitive information that she wouldn't feel comfortable talking about in a PM, she would like to talk to the ED about. She added this was an opportunity to have open dialogue to stay within the parameters of OML and foster a more productive environment for everyone. Commissioner Stebbins mentioned clarity around reporting. The Chair mentioned Commissioners previously voting to undermine the statutory authority of the ED when it came to day-to-day operations and that it was not done properly. The Chair voiced her concerns and frustrations and noted this as a good alternative. Commissioner Benedon stated that no vote was needed and stated it was important for her that they are not so much delegating the authority of the Commission as a whole and not taking anything away from the other Commissioners, simply a more frequent or more accessible opportunity to have a sounding board type discussions, rather than delegating to two Commissioners among the four to have any particular powers that would otherwise be held by everybody. The Chair and Commissioner Roy agreed and worried about pushback. The ED looked forward to the collaboration and the support and asked if they would come back around June to update the board on what they have been working on.

    - Commissioner Roy moved to take a recess returning at 2:45 PM.
    - Commissioner seconded the motion.
    - The Chair took a roll call vote:
        - Commissioner Benedon – Yes
        - Commissioner Roy – Yes
        - Commissioner Stebbins – Yes

    - Chair O'Brien – Yes
- The Commission unanimously approved the motion.
- The Commission took a brief recess. (Returned at 04:33:40.)

8. Non-Enforcement of Red Tape Items Discussion
    - The Chair stated they have convened many stakeholders around the topic. She stated when the Commission was first started there were heavy regulations and items that do not protect public health and safety. She added some regulations just being more burdensome for Licensees and staff. She asked the Investigations and Enforcement (I&E) team for their feedback. The Chair noted the regulatory process as long and cumbersome. Commissioner Roy read the proposed motion language and explained the process. Commissioner Roy and the Chair brought up examples. Enforcement Counsel Timothy Goodin (EC Goodin) asked if the red tape removal working group could identify or get more clarity on what the universe looks like. The Chair noted she would like to set up a meeting to discuss and wants I&E to look at the universe and see if they agree. Commissioner Roy asked about tier relegation and asked who made the decision not to enforce it. Director of Enforcement Training Armond Enos (Director Enos) and EC Goodin didn't know. He added that they have several different tools that are available to the agency when considering enforcement of regulations. The Chair mentioned rent and architectural review. She expressed wanting relief. EC Goodin stated that more conversations would help them have the opportunity to identify any liability for the agency or any risks for particular non-enforcement. EC Goodin mentioned that each individual regulation may be tied up with a number of other regulations. The ED illustrated the process. Commissioner Stebbins stated he wanted some legal opinion around caselaw to add to the motion. Commissioner Benedon stated she was comfortable with the motion language and bringing this topic forward for further consideration. She added that she viewed differently the identification of items for temporary non-enforcement compared to discretionary relaxation. The motion language was tweaked and next steps were discussed. Commissioner Roy read the proposed motion language.

    - Commissioner Roy moved to direct the Executive Director and staff to develop and present to the board no later than April 16, 2026, a prioritized list of regulations that may be considered for temporary non-enforcement subject to board authorization as part of an immediate initiative to reduce regulatory burden and streamline compliance requirements.
    - Commissioner Benedon seconded the motion.
    - The Chair took a roll call vote:
        - Commissioner Benedon – Yes
        - Commissioner Roy – Yes
        - Commissioner Stebbins – No
        - Chair O'Brien – Yes
    - The Commission passed the motion by a vote of three in favor and one opposed.

9. Biennial License Renewal Study Group
    - Commissioner Roy stated that this topic came up with the red tape removal committee, and she believed that was one area they could start removing red tape. She explained that Renewals impact every Licensee and the entire industry across the board. She noted a lot of paperwork and documents and that there was no prescriptive language in statute that would prevent them from doing biennial review. She added that licensing fees needed to stay yearly because the revenues were due to the state and that was non-negotiable. She noted that certain things that require notification to the Commission within a prescribed time frame would all remain the same but the annual glut of paperwork and uploads would free up staff too. Commissioner Stebbins mentioned incentivizing people to follow the timeline, so they were not delayed. He noted the good conversation and stated this would potentially lighten bandwidth for the team. The Chair talked about notifying and emailing more people so they don't miss the deadline. Director Koval noted a change with JD software for more than one person on the record to get the updates. She noted they get twelve updates through the Massachusetts Cannabis Industry Portal (MassCIP). She added that Licensees use Metrc more than MassCIP. She mentioned a phone call reminder system but noted no capability or funding. CTIO Clark mentioned automated mailings. The Chair mentioned yearly postcard. CTIO Clark stated they could explore thoughts and mentioned a form that they could put on the website to keep contact info up to date. He added that they do not have the actual owner in most cases and rely on forwarding the message. Director Koval mentioned they are supposed to notify them whenever they are changing their contact or in some cases the reminders go to junk mail. The Chair mentioned sending out something after you get your Provisional License and you have so many days to tell us they've received it and if you haven't your License is invalid. Director Koval confirmed they did but the automated emails might come in a different form. Director Enos stated that the initial communications go through and they really need Licenses to stay on top of the email addresses and information. He added to make sure you check primary means of communicating. Commissioner Roy asked if they charged a late fee and Director Koval confirmed they did not. She proposed biennial review and to impose a significant late fee. EC Goodin stated there have been quite a few instances recently and the staff scrambled to not get the License shut down. The Chair asked how they collect annual Renewals. Director Koval explained the payment process through MassCIP or paper check. EC Goodin explained that the fee paid at Renewal is different than the initial application fee. The Chair mentioned being concerned about employees going without a paycheck. Commissioner Roy mentioned folding this into regulations quickly.

10. Addition of Vernon Hill to the List of Disproportionately Impacted Areas
    - The Chair noted they had the authority to add to the list and how they set precedent adding Lawrence. Commissioner Roy mentioned testimony around the Commission not recognizing where they lived and thanked for bringing it to their attention. Commissioner Roy read a statement she wrote about Vernon Hill and why it should be added. She stated it benefited existing Licensees and provided opportunities for

folks that live there. She added it impacts families. The Chair mentioned that they received a very positive review from Representative Russell Holmes to accept Vernon Hill. Commissioner Stebbins asked if this was all of Vernon Hill and Commissioner Roy confirmed. He mentioned it was kind of an island around other Disproportionately Impacted Areas (DIAs). He stated he did outreach to Kevin Gilnack and Worcester and Springfield to come up with a long-term solution and better use of census tracks. He expressed he felt more comfortable about adding Vernon Hill. He suggested creating a working group to look at this problem across the three largest cities where the census tracks have been used. He stated again that a long-term solution was to either identify neighborhoods and not use the census tracks alone. He mentioned letting folks get in who might have been ineligible to apply due to the census tracks issue. He added to spend some time looking at the overall criteria for participation in the SEP and noted concerns around residency pieces. He added that they were moving away from folks that lived in neighborhoods when the true war on drugs and prohibition on Cannabis was being enforced. He suggested a friendly amendment to the motion language. The Chair asked Commissioner Stebbins to provide them with a report of the work he's been doing by the April 16th PM and she will put it on the agenda. He asked if he could have until a May PM. The Chair noted it would be great to look into changing the whole SEP. Commissioner Roy suggested looking at the current tracks and lining up with what's current. Commissioner Roy read proposed motion language.

- Commissioner Roy moved to designate Vernon Hill Census Track 7326 in the city of Worcester, Massachusetts as an area of disproportionate impact for the purposes of the Commission's equity programs, including, but not limited to the Social Equity Program, positive impact requirements and any successor or related initiatives based on the neighborhood's demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, including its history of drug enforcement activity in its alignment with Commission's mandate to promote participation in the regulated Cannabis industry by communities disproportionately harmed by Marijuana prohibition and enforcement. And furthermore, direct staff to update the Commission's list of areas of disproportionate impact to include Vernon Hill, effective March 12th, 2026. Incorporate this designation into eligibility criteria and guidance for the social equity program and related equity initiatives. And work with the city of Worcester in community stakeholders to ensure that the benefits of this designation, including workforce development, technical assistance, and ownership opportunities are accessible to residents and legacy operators from Vernon Hill.
- Commissioner Benedon seconded the motion.
- The Chair took a roll call vote:
    - Commissioner Benedon – Yes
    - Commissioner Roy – Yes
    - Commissioner Stebbins – Yes
    - Chair O'Brien – Yes
- The Commission unanimously passed the motion.

11. Update on Petitions Process
    - The Chair stated the topic was tabled.

12. 30A Public Process Including Independence of Legal Team Fire Wall, Deadlines to Investigate and Appeal
    - The Chair noted the auditor raising questions about desperate treatment of Licensees and she noted it was important to have a better understanding of M.G.L c. 30A, the firewall between I&E, the Legal department, and Commissioners. She noted that the GC affirmed that the General Counsel's office does not get involved in investigations and enforcement. She noted they did not have a Hearing Officer (HO) for two years. She mentioned cases that are three or four years long and her concern is that a Licensee may potentially be assessed significant fines. She explained that 60-70% of fees that should have been collected weren't collected for two years and that they were in the process of collecting or have collected. She added that it would cost more money to do an audit or collections and that is was not transparent to Commissioners. She added that if a Licensee owes money and they go out of business, the Commission will not get those fees. She explained that it is inappropriate not to have a timely and fully robust process. EC Goodin walked through the deadlines and what happens under M.G.L c. 30A and why they are taking so long. He stated they were happy to look at areas for improvement and asked for suggestions. Commissioner Roy read a statement she wrote and stated her concern was they need to rebuild the firewall and have no appearance of bias. The Chair mentioned liability. EC Goodin stated that the GC does not direct a HO. Commissioner Benedon noted the GC is a Chief level position and in her view the GC is not simply providing legal guidance to the board as adjudicators but rather is responsible for providing legal guidance and making sure that the agency as a whole is in compliance with applicable laws. She suggested maybe needing another person in a GC equivalent position who provides legal guidance and support for that part of the agency. She noted that the GC or others in the Legal department can advise the Commission and also advise the I&E team on their legal obligations without getting involved in any particular enforcement matter. The ED stated he would review the HO process. EC Goodin noted past practice an explained how the EC position has generally been used by the Chief of Investigations and Enforcement (CIE). He noted he thought it benefited the agency to have collaboration with the GC. Commissioner Roy suggested someone else from the Legal department being a liaison to I&E.

13. Update on Attorney General's Office Meeting Regarding Coordination and Referrals
    - Commissioner Benedon stated it was a very brief introductory meeting that Commissioner Stebbins and herself had with representatives of the Attorney General's Office (AGO) Consumer Protection Division for the purpose of learning where they had taken action from a Consumer protection standpoint. She added that they did not discuss the issue of criminal referrals. She stated that they had not received Consumer protection complaints related to Cannabis operators. She added

that there was an additional division within the AGO, the Consumer Advocacy and Response Division. She stated they receive tens of thousands of Consumer complaints a year. The Chair mentioned inviting someone from that office to talk about how we could collaborate. Commissioner Roy questioned if they should have notified that division to say when we listed products on the public health and safety portal. She also suggested collaborating with them for the product recall process. Commissioner Benedon noted that anybody can submit a Consumer complaint and stated that they publicize their data and you can search complaints that have been received.

IX. New Business Not Anticipated at the Time of Posting – 06:16:17

- The Chair stated that there was no new business not anticipated at the time of posting.

X. Next Meeting Date – 06:16:24

- The Chair stated that the next meeting was scheduled for March 16, 2026, and noted a Public Listening Session on March 18th.

XI. Adjournment – 06:17:45

- Commissioner Roy moved to adjourn.
- Commissioner Stebbins seconded the motion.
- The Chair took a roll call vote:
  - Commissioner Benedon – Yes
  - Commissioner Roy – Yes
  - Commissioner Stebbins – Yes
  - Chair O'Brien – Yes
- The Commission unanimously moved to adjourn.