CT State Independent Living Council (CT SILC)
Board of Director's Meeting Minutes
Thursday, September 17, 2026, 1:00 - 3:00 PM

Board Members Present: Gretchen Knauff, Chris Blake, Marc Anthony Gallucci, Farrah Garland, Michelle Johnson, Corey Lee, Rich Luby, Jaclyn Pinney, Darrell Ruopp, Kim Smith, Melissa Thompson

Board Members Absent: Melissa Cullen-Carter, Mark Linabury, Joe Shortt, George Michna*, Emily Zambrello

***Denotes non-voting members.**

Staff: Molly Cole, SILC Executive Director; Michele DuBois, Data Coordinator/Office Administrator

Guests: Sharon Heddle, Executive Director - Disabilities Network of Eastern Connecticut (DNEC), Carol Scully, Christie Lee, Ralph Dooley, Terry Hooks, Taylor Redner

1. **Call to Order:**

   Gretchen Knauff called the meeting to order at 12:50 p.m. A quorum was established with 11 Board members present.

2. **Welcome and Introductions:**

   Gretchen Knauff welcomed Board members, staff, and guests to the meeting. She explained that the agenda would be taken out of order to address items requiring a quorum before some Board members needed to leave.

3. **Approval of Minutes from July 15, 2026:**

   Motion: Kim Smith moved to approve the July 15, 2026, Board meeting minutes. Melissa Thompson seconded the motion.

   Action: The motion carried, with Farrah Garland and Michelle Johnson abstaining.

4. **Treasurer's Report: Gretchen Knauff**

   Financial Report

   In Treasurer Mark Linabury's absence, Gretchen Knauff presented the financial report for the period ending August 31, 2026..

   - CT SILC reported net income of $53,710, consisting of $32,023 from operations and $21,687 from SPIL Goals 1 and 2.
   - Financial activity remained relatively consistent, with revenues exceeding expenses.
   - The financial statements included funds received and distributed on behalf of CT ADAPT. It was clarified that these were pass-through funds.
   - Part B expenditures included Supported Decision Making presentations and related activities. Gretchen noted that additional spending had occurred that was not yet fully reflected in the financial reporting.
   - CT SILC's financial position remained good, with no significant outstanding payables other than data collection funds owed to the Centers for Independent Living.

- Accounts receivable primarily reflected the outstanding July through September invoice to the Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS).
- Current assets exceeded one year's SPIL budget, and the bank account had been reconciled through August 31, 2026.

Action: No formal vote was required for the Treasurer's Report.

Review, Discussion and Approval of Budget

Gretchen Knauff presented the proposed fiscal year 2027 budget. She explained that an initial funding notification indicated a reduction of approximately $100,000, which was subsequently determined to be an error. The corrected funding reflected level funding consistent with the prior fiscal year.

CT SILC had received a contract from the Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS) through September 30, 2027. However, federal funding was authorized only through December 11, 2026, under the current continuing resolution. The Board discussed the uncertainty surrounding future federal funding and the need to remain cautious in financial planning.

The proposed operating budget totaled $340,565 and included federal and state funding, estimated income from grants and other initiatives, and the planned use of a portion of CT SILC's reserves. Gretchen explained that reserves had been used in recent years to help balance the operating budget and support organizational activities.

When the Board reached the personnel compensation portion of the proposed budget, Molly Cole and Michele DuBois were asked to leave the room.

Upon their return, they were informed that the Board had approved a 5% cost-of-living adjustment for both employees.

Action: The 5% adjustment was approved by a vote of 8 in favor and 3 opposed.

The Board continued its review of the proposed budget, noting that most operating expenses remained consistent with the prior fiscal year.

Motion: Marc Anthony Gallucci moved to approve the fiscal year 2027 budget, revised to reflect the Board-approved 5% cost-of-living adjustment. Farrah Garland seconded the motion.

Action: The motion carried, and the fiscal year 2027 budget was approved.

5. **Executive Director's Report:**

Molly Cole gave the Executive Director's report.

Operations:

CT SILC continued to await payment of its July through September invoice submitted to the Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS) on July 8. Another quarterly report and invoice would be submitted at the end of September.

Federal funding remained authorized through December 11, 2026, under the continuing resolution. Although CT SILC had received a level-funded contract through September 30, 2027, future funding remained uncertain pending federal budget decisions.

Projects and Initiatives:

The Connecticut Cross Disability Alliance was focusing on home and community-based services (HCBS), including Community First Choice and other programs supporting people with disabilities in community settings. The Alliance anticipated increasing its advocacy efforts following the November elections in preparation for the upcoming legislative session.

Supported Decision Making (SDM):

The Supported Decision Making toolkit event, originally scheduled for October 27 at the Sheraton in Rocky Hill, had been postponed until March 2027 to allow additional planning and preparation. The event, anticipated to accommodate approximately 150 participants, would feature Jonathan Martinis and provide opportunities to practice SDM planning and develop agreements using the toolkit. Additional webinars were also being planned.

Southbury Coalition:

The Southbury Coalition continued its advocacy for individuals residing at Southbury Training School. Molly Cole and Gretchen Knauff met with Acting Department of Developmental Services Commissioner Elisa Velardo to discuss the state's position on closing the facility. The Department's position remained unchanged.

The Coalition continued exploring opportunities to support residents who wish to transition into community-based living arrangements, with an emphasis on expanding access to appropriate services and supports.

2026 Nonpartisan Candidates Forum:

Planning continued for the October 7 Candidates' Forum at the Bristol Event Center. More than $58,000 had been raised through sponsorships, with additional support secured through vendor discounts and in-kind contributions.

A large number of exhibitors are scheduled to participate, and candidate confirmations were ongoing. The event would include resource exhibits, accessible voting information, scheduled breaks, and meal opportunities to encourage participation throughout the day. Molly emphasized the importance of strong attendance from the disability community and encouraged Board members to register and participate.

36th Anniversary of the ADA Commemoration:

CT SILC and CT ADAPT co-sponsored the July 27 Americans with Disabilities Act commemoration at the Legislative Office Building. The event highlighted the promise of the ADA while drawing attention to continuing accessibility barriers at the State Capitol, Legislative Office Building, and within the broader community.

Training:

CT SILC hosted statewide documentation and case notes training for Centers for Independent Living staff on September 10, presented by Dr. Jenn Berton. The training was well received, and planning was underway for additional instruction, potentially through smaller in-person sessions.

Additional educational activities included ongoing Supported Decision Making training and systems advocacy training provided by Molly to the Massachusetts SILC.

DRAFT

REV UP:

CT SILC continued its voter education and registration outreach through community events, including Veterans Stand Down activities and other disability-focused gatherings. Efforts included distributing information about voter registration, early voting, voting rights, and identification requirements. Board members were encouraged to help share voting information and promote participation in the November elections.

MSW Student:

Molly introduced Taylor Redner, a University of Connecticut Master of Social Work student who would be working with CT SILC during the academic year. Taylor would assist with SPIL surveys and development, the Candidates' Forum, and other organizational initiatives.

6. **Election of Officers::**

Gretchen Knauff presented the slate of officers for the upcoming term and invited additional nominations from the floor. No additional nominations were made.

The following officers were elected by acclamation, as each was running unopposed:

- **President**: Melissa Thompson-Dooley
- **Treasurer**: Mark Linabury
- **Secretary**: Melissa Cullen-Carter

Vice President::

Chris Blake and Jaclyn Pinney were nominated to serve as Co-Vice Presidents. A question was raised regarding whether an Executive Director of a Center for Independent Living was eligible to serve as Vice President under CT SILC's bylaws.

The Board agreed to defer the Vice President election pending clarification of the eligibility requirements. Gretchen indicated that the bylaws would be reviewed and the Board notified of the determination. If both candidates were eligible, they would be elected by acclamation. Otherwise, additional nominations would be requested.

Action: The President, Treasurer, and Secretary positions were filled by acclamation. The Vice President election remained pending clarification of the bylaws..

7. **Committee Reports:**

Data Tech Committee

Michele DuBois provided the update in Eileen Healy's absence.

- The September 10th documentation and case notes training for the CIL staff, presented by Dr. Jenn Berton, was well received.
- Planning continued for additional training to improve documentation practices, strengthen data consistency, and better demonstrate the work and outcomes of the CILs.

Emergency Preparedness

Kim Smith provided the committee update.

- The committee continued working on the development of a fire safety training.
- The committee had not met as scheduled and would continue planning the training at a future meeting.

DRAFT

SPIL Committee

No separate committee report was presented. SPIL related activities had been addressed during the Executive Director's report..

Board Recruitment

Darrell Ruopp provided the committee update in Rich Luby's absence.

- The committee continued distributing recruitment materials and encouraging Board members to reach out personally to individuals who might be interested in serving on CT SILC.
- Members discussed the importance of personal outreach, particularly because some previous recruitment emails had not reached intended recipients.
- Recent outreach at community events had resulted in interest from two potential applicants and the CT SILC also received renewed interest in connecting with a tribal community representative.
- Recruitment materials had been shared with organizations and individuals, including contacts at the Veterans Affairs medical system and a spinal cord injury unit, to increase awareness of CT SILC and Board service opportunities.

Discussion: Board members emphasized the importance of continuing recruitment efforts through personal connections, community events, and disability organizations. Several Board terms were expected to expire in the coming year, creating a need to identify and encourage qualified applicants.

8. **Announcements and Upcoming Events**

2026 Nonpartisan Candidates' Forum:

The October 7 Candidates' Forum at the Bristol Event Center was highlighted. Board members were encouraged to attend and help promote the event. Candidate invitations had been extended across political parties, with confirmations continuing as the event approached.

Community Events and Outreach:

- **September 19**: An upcoming adaptive sports and recreation event was announced, offering opportunities for participation by individuals with various disabilities and for CT SILC Board recruitment outreach.
- **September 26**: The CT SILC will attend the The Down Syndrome Association event.
- **October 31**: A disability resource event, organized by the New Haven Commission on Disabilities, would be held at the Q House on Dixwell Avenue in New Haven from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. The event would feature community resource organizations, interpretation services, family activities, and a blood drive.

REV UP Outreach: Members continued participating in Veterans Stand Down events and other community activities to distribute voter information and promote voter registration.

Gretchen Knauff thanked Board members for the opportunity to serve as President and expressed her appreciation for their support.

9. **Adjournment**

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded. The motion carried, and the meeting adjourned at approximately 1:50 p.m.