



NOTICE OF  
SPECIAL MEETING OF  
CONNECTICUT PORT AUTHORITY  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**June 24, 2025  
10:00 AM**

**Location: VIRTUAL**

**Zoom link was provided.**

*\*Please Note: In addition to the minutes below, an audio recording of this meeting can be found on the Authority's website at <https://ctportauthority.com/governance/>*

**Board Attendance**

Chair Paul Whitescarver; Vice-Chair Grant Westerson; Gaffney Feskoe; Brian Thompson; Kristin Urbach; Tom Patton; Paul Hinsch; Davis Kooris

Absent: Tom Gill; John Johnson; Kaelie Moran; Dave Pohorylo; Paul O. Robertson, Doug Dalena, Kimberly Lesay; Mayor Passero

CPA Staff/Other: Michael O'Connor; Fayola Haynes; Jill Dowling-Moreno; Melissa Root; Max Mueller

**MINUTES**

**1. Call to Order**

Chairman of the Board Paul Whitescarver called the meeting to order at 10:01am. He welcomed new staff, Community Liaison Melissa Root and Summer Intern Max Mueller.

**2. Public Comment**

None

**3. Schedule of Positions and Total Staffing Levels**

**Hear and act on a proposal to amend the Schedule of Positions and Total Staffing Levels for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2026**

*(Begins at 1:50 of the audio recording)*

Connecticut Port Authority ("Authority") Executive Director Michael O'Connor provided background information regarding the addition of a Community Liaison position to the Schedule of Positions. He noted that the Authority received several qualified applicants for the position and

has hired Melissa Root. At the last Board meeting he noted that if there were two excellent candidates, that he would propose adding a second Community Liaison position to the Schedule of Positions and is bringing that proposal before the Board today. He noted that adding a second Community Liaison would support the need for increased community outreach and help the Authority achieve its goal of growing the maritime economy throughout the entire State. Michael O'Connor recommended keeping the position of Maritime Development Manager on the Schedule of Positions. He noted that if there was a need to hire a Maritime Development Manager in the next year, he would come back to the Board with a budget modification to accommodate that.

Gaffney Feskoe noted his support for that proposal. Brian Thompson asked why an additional Community Liaison would be prioritized over a Maritime Development Management position noting that it had been a key position in the past. Michael O'Connor noted that the position has been staffed with gaps in the past and that the work done in that role is being addressed by the entire team. He noted that the Authority needs more community engagement, needs to understand where businesses need help and bring people together at this stage. Michael O'Connor noted that he will remain as the primary point of contact for dredging or engineering support. He noted the need for community partners to be in place as a first step.

Kristin Urbach asked how the work would be divided between the two Community Liaisons, by area or responsibilities. Michael O'Connor noted that the goal is to have the team work together to cover the entire state. David Kooris noted that it is a consistent approach to stakeholder engagement and not about the title but about the content to add more capacity at the Authority. Paul Whitescarver noted that he would like to have a Maritime Development Manager as that type of experience was helpful for the Small Harbor Improvement Projects Program ("SHIPP") grant application process. David Kooris noted that the person in the position would need to be able to assess readiness for grant applications and have an understanding of what it takes to move projects through the permitting process, approvals and construction. Kristin Urbach asked if the Authority has considered hiring a consultant for technical assistance. Michael O'Connor noted that he would consider it as needed but would look first to expertise internally and on the Board regarding SHIPP. He noted setting the stage for the State to grant \$5M to the Authority for SHIPP and then solicit applicants and continually engage communities. Paul Hinsch noted that he is not concerned about the title but agrees that additional staff will be helpful to engage communities. Grant Westerson noted his agreement and the need to get out to smaller towns. Michael O'Connor noted the ad hoc Strategy Committee that Paul Whitescarver will be convening. Tom Patton noted that he is supportive of the staffing proposal and the idea for a Strategy Committee.

Paul Whitescarver entertained a motion to amend the Schedule of Positions and Total Staffing Levels for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2026 to include a second Community Liaison position.

Motion by Grant Westerson, seconded by Gaffney Feskoe.

Paul Whitescarver noted that Dave Pohorylo was not in attendance but had previously voiced that he was not in support of adding an additional Community Liaison and instead wanted to add a Business Development position. Paul Whitescarver noted that having two Community Liaisons gives the Authority the ability to move the maritime economy along the coast in a more efficient way with a lot further outreach in all of the communities which is needed and would also help with brand recognition.

So, VOTED with NO opposed and NO abstentions.

#### **4. Adjournment**

*(Begins at 19:30 of the audio recording)*

Motion to adjourn made by Kristin Urbach, seconded by Grant Westerson. Meeting adjourned at 10:21am.