



NOTICE OF  
SPECIAL MEETING OF  
CONNECTICUT PORT AUTHORITY  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Tuesday, March 24, 2026  
12:00 PM**

**Location: Connecticut Port Authority  
455 Boston Post Rd., Suite 204  
Old Saybrook, CT 06475**

**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; John Johnson; Kristin Urbach; David Kooris; James Donegan; Paul Hinsch; Paul O. Robertson; Brian Thompson; Doug Dalena; Kaelie Moran; Felix Reyes; Sally Kruse

Absent: Thomas Gill; Thomas Patton; Dave Pohorylo; Harry Rilling; Christine Xenelis

Staff/Other: Michael O'Connor; Fayola Haynes; Jill Dowling-Moreno; Melissa Root; Anthony Afriyie

**MINUTES**

**1. Call to Order**

Chairman of the Board Paul Whitescarver called the meeting to order at 12:00pm.

**2. Public Comment**

None

**3. Small Harbor Improvement Projects Program (SHIPP)**

*(Begins at 2:12 of the audio recording)*

Hear and act on a request to approve project recommendations for the Small Harbor Improvement Projects Program (SHIPP) Round 5.

Michael O'Connor provided an overview of the review process for the SHIPP grant applications that were submitted. He also noted the legislative action taken last year regarding towns that had previously been approved by the Connecticut Port Authority (Authority) Board but not by the State Bond Commission (SBC) due to timing constraints and noted that after Round 5 projects were identified, that a request from Guilford was received to fund in accordance with the statute. He noted that the total for SHIPP grant applications being recommended plus the request from Guilford is approximately \$3.6M of the \$5.2M in funding that was available. He noted the success of a 30-day application period and the expedited timeframe to start working with the recipients. He noted that a future application window for the remaining \$1.6M in funding would be determined at an appropriate time. He also noted that the Authority would continue to work with the legislature for the remaining authorized but not yet allocated \$5M in SHIPP grant legislation for funding for next year.

Melissa Root provided additional details regarding SHIPP Round 5, noting that there are 18 projects that are being recommended for approval and she provided an overview of the types of projects included. She noted that if approved, the list of projects will be included on the Authority's website, and the approved applicants will be notified. She noted that the projects that were not approved generally did not follow the Request for Applications (RFA) accurately or submit all requested information. She noted this was the first time an online application was used for SHIPP and that the process went well. She provided further details regarding the internal review process completed by staff, with recommendations going to the Selection Committee which consisted of Board members and is now being recommended to the full Board.

John Johnson asked if there were dredging projects included and Melissa Root noted that there are and that this round of SHIPP was the first one open to applications from private entities for dredging-related expenses beyond typical dredging costs such as biological testing, sampling, transportation and placement related fees.

Motion to approve the [list of recommended projects for SHIPP Round 5](#) made by John Johnson, seconded by Gaffney Feskoe. So, VOTED with NO opposed and an abstention by Felix Reyes.

Michael O'Connor read a request submitted by the Town of Guilford which is requesting reimbursement of \$860K for the Guilford Marina Dredging Project which was previously approved for funding through the SHIPP for the dredging of Guilford Harbor and the Marina Access Channel. The request notes that the project was undertaken to restore navigational depths necessary for safe maritime operations, public safety, and the continued functioning of the harbor as a working and recreational maritime facility. It notes that the town had pursued funding through SHIPP and the project was identified as eligible and was expected to receive \$860,000 in grant funding. It further notes that the grant funds were not distributed due to procedural timing constraints related to the State Bond Commission process and that it left the Authority without a contract in place to release the grant funds. It notes that last year, the General Assembly addressed this issue through [Public Act No. 25-65](#), which amended how SHIPP was administered and notes that the statute now expressly authorizes the Authority to provide reimbursement for projects that were approved for funding, or that commenced prior to the distribution of funds due to timing considerations impacting the flow of commerce at a small harbor. Michael O'Connor noted that if approved, it would follow the same process as other SHIPP requests including establishing a contract with the town and the town providing receipts for what will be reimbursed.

Motion to approve reimbursement to Guilford for a SHIPP grant made by Doug Dalena, seconded by Gaffney Feskoe. So, VOTED with NO opposed and NO abstentions.

Michael O'Connor thanked the Board for their support and noted that a [press release](#) would be sent out today, information will be posted on the Authority's website, and notifications will be sent out to applicants. He noted that mayors, first selectmen, representatives and senators will be included in communication regarding approved projects. He thanked the legislature for their actions to release the funds to the Authority to allow the Authority to expedite getting funds into projects and having unused funding available for future projects. Paul Whitescarver thanked

Authority staff and the members of the Board who served on the Selection Committee which was comprised of himself, Grant Westerson, John Johnson and Brian Thompson.

#### 4. **Request for Proposals (RFP) for Auditing Services**

*(Begins at 13:22 of the audio recording)*

Hear and act on a request to authorize the Executive Director to negotiate and enter into an agreement for Auditing Services.

Paul Hinsch provided an overview of the process for the Request for Proposals for Auditing Services. He noted the Selection Committee consisted of himself, Paul Whitescarver, Tom Patton, Michael O'Connor and Fayola Haynes. He noted timelines including posting of the RFP on January 21, 2026, deadline for questions February 4, 2026, posting of responses to questions on February 18, 2026, and deadline for submission of proposals of February 27, 2026. He noted that six (6) proposals were received with one deemed invalid due to non-submission of a hard copy and noted the respondent firms. He noted the shortlisted firms that were interviewed were BerryDunn, CLA and Whittlesey and that he, Michael O'Connor and Fayola Haynes conducted the interviews. He noted that CLA was the firm selected.

Motion to allow the Executive Director to negotiate that contract made by John Johnson, seconded by Gaffney Feskoe.

Gaffney Feskoe asked about CLA and Michael O'Connor noted that they are CliftonLarsonAllen and that they are based in Hartford and have experience working with quasi-public agencies. Paul Whitescarver noted that the previous auditing firm was engaged by the Authority for several years and Fayola Haynes noted that they had completed two three-year terms. Paul Hinsch noted that the three shortlisted firms were all qualified and that this time the selected firm was CLA. John Johnson asked about timing for the next audit and Michael O'Connor noted that the independent audit would occur after the close of the fiscal year with anticipated completion in November. Michael O'Connor also noted costs in a range of \$60-70K that were received from the proposals submitted, and Fayola Haynes noted the last audit was \$58K.

So, VOTED with NO opposed and NO abstentions.

#### 5. **New Haven Harbor Improvement Project (NHHIP)**

*(Begins at 18:54 of the audio recording)*

Hear and act on a request to authorize the Executive Director to execute a Project Partnership Agreement (PPA) with the Department of the Army for the New Haven Harbor Improvement Project.

Michael O'Connor noted that the agreement is a standard agreement that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers enters into with non-federal sponsors and that the Authority is acting as the non-federal sponsor for the NHHIP. He commented on certain sections of the agreement and provided additional details including communication, removal and replacement of buoys, work to be completed by the U.S. Coast Guard, and payment of funds. He noted that for this approximately \$72M project, the non-federal share is approximately \$18.2M and noted that the Authority has already paid a portion of that for the design work. He noted approximately \$17M from funds already approved by the State Bond Commission and anticipated funds of approximately \$7M for the next set of bonding to support future navigation work. He noted the project will take two dredge terms to complete with payment required within 60 days of completion of the project, anticipated in spring of 2028. Paul Whitescarver noted that it is great that the Authority is focusing on dredging of waterways and its importance.

Motion to approve the Executive Director to execute a Project Partnership Agreement with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers made by Doug Dalena, seconded by Gaffney Feskoe. So, VOTED with NO opposed and NO abstentions.

Michael O'Connor read the Certificate of Authority that would require signature from Chairman Paul Whitescarver and would accompany the agreement.

Motion for Paul Whitescarver to sign the document for the Board of Directors made by John Johnson, seconded by Gaffney Feskoe. So, VOTED with NO opposed and NO abstentions.

**6. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) – SeaTrain Technology**

*(Begins at 26:00 of the audio recording)*

Hear and act on a request to authorize the Executive Director to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with SeaTrain Technology, LLC.

Michael O'Connor provided an overview of SeaTrain Technology noting autonomous ship design that would benefit from robotic construction and welding. He noted the type of workforce needed for this and that it is being developed in Connecticut in places such as the Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology (CCAT). He also noted available real estate along the coast and the Connecticut and Thames Rivers. He noted that the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) includes discussions with SeaTrain regarding manufacturing technologies and shipyard development with the MOU outlining confidentiality and guarding of intellectual property for the next 24 months.

Motion for the Executive Director to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with SeaTrain Technology made by John Johnson, seconded by Kristin Urbach.

There was further discussion regarding SeaTrain, the agreement and future partnerships and collaborations with other organizations. Doug Dalena asked if SeaTrain was in communication with DECD, Advance CT or other state entities doing economic development and Michael O'Connor noted that they would expect to collaborate with other state entities through the Authority.

So, VOTED with NO opposed and NO abstentions.

**7. Adjournment**

*(Begins at 35:08 of the audio recording)*

Motion to adjourn made by John Johnson. Meeting adjourned at 12:35pm.