

Low-Income Energy Advisory Board Meeting
Wednesday, September 4, 2013
HRA/Human Resources Agency
180 Clinton Street, New Britain, CT

Members/Designees: Pat Wrice (Chairperson), Joy Hollister (Vice-Chairperson), Brenda Watson (Operation Fuel), Wendy Wanchak (Legal Assistance Resource Center), Frank Augeri (PURA), James McNally (CNG), Veronica Gomez (CL&P), Edith Karsky (CAFCA), Joanne Balaschak (CAFCA), Eddie Swift (Yankee Gas), Nora Duncan (AARP), Kathy Wasilnak (UI), Gail Lucchina (DEEP)

Others: Chuck Anderson (DSS), David Frascarelli (DSS), Melissa Mendoza (Operation Fuel), Chris Hesk (CEMA)

Welcome: The meeting was convened at 1:35 p.m.

Approve Minutes of the August 7, 2013 meeting: Following the correction of two typographical errors, Edith Karsky moved approval of the August 7, 2013 minutes; Wendy Wanchak seconded. The vote in favor was unanimous.

Update:

Utility Matching Payment Program Updates: Jim McNally stated that CNG is still doing a system upgrade. They are heading into the winter moratorium and the companies including UI are noting early intakes in the system.

Operation Fuel: The summer program runs from August 1st through the end of October or whenever funds run out. They have 899 applications and \$314,000 allocated. Twenty four of the 99 fuel banks are closed. They open for the start of the winter program on December 1st. Pat Wrice advised members that it will be a difficult winter season. Operation Fuel is starting with \$1million dollars less than what they got from the Systems Benefit Charge. Last year Operation Fuel gave out \$3.5 million in Energy Assistance mostly for oil.

It was also noted that Rich Rosenfeld passed away and in accordance with his wishes donations in his name will go to Operation Fuel.

Operation Fuel thanked 211 for their assistance in getting the word out. Phil and Kate were thanked for doing such a great job.

Operation Fuel just completed its Strategic Plan and wants to do a great deal of education about how greatly at risk Connecticut is this year. They also plan to revisit an affordable rate and will do it in conjunction with other board members. The Energy Efficiency charge is doubling and Operation Fuel and the fuel banks want to put a face on it and use the GAP study to educate people about the need for an affordable rate.

Operation Fuel stated that demand from seniors has increased by 70%. Connecticut is one of the grayest states. They plan to use actual clients to get the message across. Melissa is a new intern who will assist in the effort along with the CAP agencies.

Edith Karsky informed the group that Dr. Frank has great information and testified at a LIHEAB hearing in Washington.

Review of CEAP Plan: Chuck Anderson noted that Caty McDermott is leaving for Wisconsin.

He received an August 30, 2013 email regarding block grants. He expects the hearing in September.

Chuck thanked LIEAB for their support of the plan and stated that it incorporates the board's recommendations.

Chuck provided copies of the summary information in a new format. Page one is a summary of companies and CAP agencies and the second sheet is a breakout of the companies that will be of benefit to the utilities.

There were 61,216 households eligible in 2013. This was very similar to the prior year. The third form shows that agencies have already certified over 6,100 applications. This is running a little ahead of last year. It is too early to look at trends. Pat noted the risk of a jump in Derby due to a family accident. It was noted that the ability of a small agency is affected by changes in circumstance.

Pat asked when the hearings will be. Chuck hopes it will be the third week of September. Connecticut is asking for 90% up front. He stated that Connecticut would not want that payment to be put off until the second quarter.

Chuck stated that OPM was generous in using 2013 post-sequestration.

Edith Karsky suggested that people contact Sue Keane on the Appropriations Committee. Edith also stated that it would be very effective for Pat Wrice to give testimony in support of the plan on behalf of LIEAB. Pat Wrice stated that she would be willing to do so.

It was also noted that each CAP agency confirmed the actual number of households eligible for the \$15 credit from Connecticut's carryover funds. The credit went to utility heated household and benefitted clients instead of returning the money. Matches were not required but the companies stated that they will match if the person is still in the program.

Pat Wrice stated that the utilities have submitted their MPP joint plan. There is a hearing in early October that Pat will attend. Operation Fuel will be monitoring regulatory matters as part of their strategic plan.

Election of Board Chairperson: Edith Karsky moved that Pat Wrice be re-elected chairperson. Wendy Wanchak seconded the motion. Pat Wrice was re-elected chair and Joy was re-elected as vice-chair.

Miscellaneous: Nora Duncan mentioned that on September 10th there is a hearing at PURA on the proposed increase to conservation programs. She is not taking a position but noted that rates are doubling and in some cases tripling. AARP is getting out an e-alert to members. She stated that PURA needs to do an impact study and make sure that low income customers have access to conservation programs.

AARP also sent out an email about the availability of energy audits. They profiled a member who took advantage of an HES audit.

Nora mentioned the upcoming National Energy Marketers Association Conference on September 11, 2013. She stated that another version of an energy auction may be proposed in the future. Nora stated that she would forward the Agenda of the meeting.

Joy Hollister brought up a new situation where clients are reporting that utilities are charging a \$675.00 fee to reconnect service following a shutoff. Joy's case was a hardship but had not been coded that way. Pat Wrice said the issue merited further discussion at next month's meeting. Frank read the definition of hardship. Pat made the motion to end the meeting and Jim McNally seconded.

Next Meeting: The meeting adjourned at 2:50. The next LIEAB meeting will be held October 2, 2013 at 1:30 p.m.