

Low-Income Energy Advisory Board Meeting
Wednesday, March 6, 2013
HRA/Human Resources Agency
180 Clinton Street, New Britain, CT 06053

Members/Designees: Pat Wrice, Joy Hollister, Frank Augeri, Taren O'Connor, Veronica Gomez, Michael Coyle, Eddie Swift, Caty McDermott, Nora Duncan, Wendy Wanchak, Rhonda Evans, Kate Quigley, and Laura Gonzalez

Others: Tom O'Brien, Chuck Anderson, Dino Pascua, Gail Lucchina, Joanne Balaschak.

Agenda/Item/Action

Welcome: The meeting was convened at 1:33 p.m. by Chairperson Pat Wrice.

Approve Minutes of the February 6, 2013 meeting: Chairperson Wrice welcomed everyone, after which a motion - duly seconded - for acceptance of the February 6th minutes was put before the Board. The vote thereon was unanimous, with two scrivener's errors noted.

2013 LIHEAP Update: DSS's Tom O'Brien provided an update, accompanied by handout materials. The first handout described in snapshot format the status of CEAP and CHAP by funding source, expenditures, and estimated balance(s). The document also depicted in approvals, actual expenditure and estimated expenditure format the components of the programs at a subcategory level (e.g., CEAP/CHAP deliverable, CEAP/CHAP utility, Rental, Crisis, etc.). The second handout offered a caseload comparison by CAP, reflecting year-to-year change 2011 to 2013 (present), and a third handout compared CAP caseload by CAP, by fuel type, 2012 v. 2013.

Tom noted the continuing absence of a budget at the federal level owing to sequestration implementation last week, one effect of which was expected to be a 5%cut in LIHEAP allocations. He estimated that Connecticut's program was sufficiently robust to withstand the cut and still meet projected obligations.

Tom reported that DSS would likely be issuing a press release within the next few days affirming the program's ongoing ability to meet need in Connecticut and encouraging those eligible to apply for benefits. A brief discussion regarding the programmatic nexus of LIHEAP and SNAP followed.

Overall, program applications continue to run on par with 2012 levels, but remain (+/-14.7%) less than 2011. Deliverable fuels continue on a lower trend than in recent years, with eligible caseload figures down as well.

Utility Matching Payment Program Updates: Eddie Swift reported 6,713 "new" auto-enrolled customers at the end of February bringing the NU companies' total to 30,657. Eddie reported +/-4800 below budget worksheets completed (3090 CL&P, the balance Yankee).

Discussion arose regarding reports of increased use of electric space heaters, which Eddie affirmed in CL&P territory based on field reports and consumption patterns. A separate discussion evolved regarding programmatic treatment of primary heating sources.

UI's Laura Gonzalez provided an update, noting 2,683 enrollees through February 28th (including 305 added in February). UI is working with its IT Department to prepare a below budget worksheet report - it expects to have a full report available for distribution prior to the next LIEAB meeting. UI is also engaged in an outbound calling campaign to encourage energy assistance applications, which InfoLine/211's Kate Quigley confirmed to have generated substantial call volumes.

No report for SCG/CNG was available.

Operation Fuel Update: Chairperson Wrice stated that Operation Fuel was preparing to suspend its program, and would offer the Board a comprehensive report at the next Board meeting. Operation Fuel reports that February was a particularly busy month, and that it is nearly out of its recent \$1.1M grant. Operation Fuel plans to "reopen" +/-April 1st in time for customers facing moratorium.

Other Issues: AARP's Nora Duncan addressed the Board regarding several energy issues recently targeted by AARP. Nora distributed a package AARP prepared regarding pending legislation that would "auction" blocks (approximately one-half of the residential ratepayer class) of standard service electric customers in an RFP-like process, with the state yielding a financial dividend. AARP is soliciting support against the proposal, which AARP vigorously opposes. Discussion ensued regarding generation/T&D separation, changing marketplace margins, "pool of last resort" analogies, and potential penalties for customers who might opt out of their 'assignment' down the road.

Chairperson Wrice polled the Board membership, seeking its will on how to proceed on AARP's request for LIEAB support of its position on this issue.

Legal Aid proxy Wendy Wanchak made a motion for a Board vote to go 'on record' opposing the Bill. The vote results, by voice vote of the voting members/proxies in attendance, were as follows:

Operation Fuel (Wrice)	Yea
CLASS (Hollister)	Yea
United Illuminating (Gonzalez)	Abstain
CL&P (Gomez)	Abstain
Yankee (Swift)	Abstain
PURA (Augeri)	Abstain
OCC (O'Connor)	Yea
InfoLine (Quigley)	Yea
Legal Assistance (Wanchak)	Yea
AARP (Duncan)	Yea
CAFCA (Evans)	Yea

The Yea votes prevailing, Nora Duncan proposed to draft a document for the Board leadership's review.

Nora then commented on the section of the recently released version of the DEEP Comprehensive Energy Strategy that addressed on-bill financing of energy efficiency upgrades, such as water heater upgrades, heating system replacements and the like. AARP's position is that CES language may not be clear as to customer rights and termination of service for failure to pay for financed items (e.g., water heaters). Frank Augeri and Mike Coyle provided some background on the overarching protection offered by regulations (16-3-100) and statute (Conn. Gen. Stat. Sec 16-262) that underlie utility service termination.

AARP then expressed concern over the regulatory concept of mandatory Time-of-Use pricing for electric customers. AARP states that mandatory TOU disproportionately affect customers who work from home, stay at home (e.g., retirees) and the elderly generally.¹ PURA's Frank Augeri provided some regulatory perspective and background on the TOU issue for the Board's information.

The two working groups (LIEAB '13-'14 plan and MPP letter language) created at the February 2013 meeting report they will meet immediately after the March 6th LIEAB meeting to further discuss their respective tasks, objectives and progress to date.

Laura Gonzalez noted that the topic of LIEAB membership arose at a recent legislative hearing. Specifically, it was reported that Energy and Technology Committee leadership was requested to consider revising the LIEAB membership statute, reducing utility voting membership and reaffirming oil dealers' opportunity to participate. Laura said she would forward the proposal for informational purposes to the LIEAB and suggested that the topic might be revisited at the Board's April 3rd meeting.

In response to an inquiry from Chairperson Wrice, Mike Coyle then provided a brief update regarding the status of the Low Income Discount Rate proceeding. Chairperson Wrice suggested that LIEAB consider taking steps to 'jump start' that process. It was agreed that this item, too, might be queued up for the April meeting, with the anticipation that the LIDR proceeding might have some movement by that point, thus presenting something for the Board to reflect and comment upon.

Lastly, Veronica Gomez forwarded regards from longstanding LIEAB member Lindsay Parke. Veronica reports that Lindsay has been reassigned to other tasks within NU, and that Veronica will be the new LIEAB designee for CL&P.

The meeting adjourned at 3:10 p.m. The next Board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 3, 2013, at HRA in New Britain.

¹ Note AARP's positions on these and other issues can be found on its website: <http://states.aarp.org/category/connecticut/>