

Low-Income Energy Advisory Board Meeting
Wednesday, January 8, 2014
HRA/Human Resources Agency
180 Clinton Street, New Britain, CT

Members/Designees: Joy Hollister (Vice-Chairperson), Wendy Wanchak (Legal Assistance Resource Center), Veronica Gomez (CL&P), Edith Karsky (CAFCA), Kelly Jacobson (CAFCA), Laura Gonzalez (UI), Kate Quigley (211), Kelly Sinko (OPM), Gail Lucchina (DEEP)

Others: Alyson Ayotte (PURA), Chuck Anderson (DSS), Carlene Taylor (DSS), John Erlinghueser (AARP), Chris Herd (CEMA)

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

Approve minutes of the November 6, 2013 meeting: Joy moved approval of the November 6, 2013 minutes and Edith seconded. The vote in favor was unanimous.

Update:

CEAP: Chuck distributed two reports. The first concerned caseload activity and the second detailed funding. Chuck reported that there have been 77,000 applications taken and to date 62,000 have been deemed eligible. The report shows that there have been 1.4% more applications than last year.

Chuck advised that the good news in December was that Congress agreed on a two year budget so there is no longer any fear of sequestration. He does not know the mechanism for distributing the funding.

Chuck reported that at the end of January there will be a legislative report that he will provide at the Board's February meeting. He has put together a heat report and stated that the weather could impact the program. If the cold weather continues Operation Fuel will be getting many more people applying for assistance.

The second report shows the estimated balance of funds and it shows that the funds should be sufficient if they receive the expected block grant and the weather moderates. Chuck stated that Josie has started to prepare the utility payments.

Chuck advised Joy that a LIEAB subcommittee for 2015 needs to be established. Wendy and Joy volunteered for this and others were invited to join.

It was reported that there are fuel spikes right now but so far so good with fuel prices. They are twelve cents higher than November 15th.

Wendy inquired if the best time to purchase oil can be predicted? The response was that it is hard to predict. It was mentioned that it is too bad that oil can't be bought in

bulk in the summer. Carlene Taylor stated that Operation Fuel did a pilot program but it is tough to manage and there is nowhere to store fuel. Joy asked if you can just do it regionally for the Northeast to predict heating oil and propane prices. The response was that in the second year of the pilot, the price went against them so the pilot was abandoned.

Joy asked Chuck if moving back to November 15th helped. Chuck stated that he thinks it should be the second Wednesday or Thursday because November 15th will be a Saturday in 2014. It was moved to November 15th because benefits will not last the entire winter and with current funding levels it needs to be the 15th. Edith asked if oil prices had stabilized and the response from Chris Herd was that prices have not stabilized due to speculation.

Joy then asked if there were any other volunteers for the subcommittee. Kate Quigley volunteered and Edith stated that Pat Wrice and Joanne Balaschak would probably want to participate.

An update was provided by Carlene regarding the NEON Agency in the Norwalk area. ABCD is paying the bills right now and the Interim CEO is the Reverend Tommy Jackson.

Utility Matching Payments: United Illuminating authorized 2,382 and total enrollment is 27,046. Below Budget are 494 right now. CNG and SCG figures were not available but will be provided at a later date.

CL&P and Yankee will be provided at a later date.

OPERATION FUEL: Pat and Brenda were absent for this meeting, however, it was brought up that Operation Fuel has a new rule this year. The rule is that if you receive crisis or safety net benefits then you cannot get Operation Fuel benefits. OP Fuel is trying to hold onto funds for people who only got one delivery and not four or five deliveries. Joy stated that she will have Brenda e-mail this new information to the group.

Miscellaneous: Edith stated that the weather forecast says that extremely cold weather will continue so perhaps the Board should go to the legislature for more funding. Chris Herd stated that the prediction is for very cold snaps alternating with a couple of warm days for the next month or so.

Gail Lucchina stated that Frank Augeri had a question for the group. Frank asked if people are receiving service through a sub metered account are they still eligible for Energy Assistance? Wendy stated that she is not sure but will try to get more info. Wendy stated that there are issues regarding this that remain unresolved and she will provide information regarding this matter to the Board. Joy stated that the Board should look at the issue for next year and Chuck stated that the Board can take it under its purview.

Edith stated that we are facing a crisis situation and we need to be ready to make a request of the legislature for funding. Carlene said that they are looking at deliverable fuel and income because they have no shutoff protection. Chuck stated that for just deliverable fuels that are looking at customers at 100% of poverty level. At that level the cost is \$4 to \$5 million.

Joy asked Edith if the CAPs are scheduling people in February. Edith did not know if this was the case. Edith stated that they do take emergency cases and walk-ins. Joy advised that some people are saying that they can make it until February. Carlene stated that you don't want people to go down to empty tanks. In that event, there is a start-up fee and Chuck added that there would also be a same-day delivery fee.

Joy and Gail informed the Board about the conclusion of the LIDR docket. John stated that he helped draft that Section of the Public Act and it states that PURA must create a rate. Wendy and Gail stated their contention that the final version of the Act was changed and PURA is not required to set a rate. John did not agree. Edith commented that the Matching Payment Program does not have a high success rate.

Copies of the Connecticut Association for Community Action's 2013 Annual Report were distributed.

Next Meeting: The meeting adjourned at 2:25. The next LIEAB will be Wednesday, February, 5, 2014 at 1:30 p.m.