

Low-Income Energy Advisory Board Meeting
Wednesday, March 5, 2014
HRA/Human Resources Agency
180 Clinton Street
New Britain, CT

Members/Designees/Others In Attendance: Alyson Ayotte, PURA, Frank Augeri, PURA, Kate Quigley, 211, Kelly Jacobson, CAFCA, Nora Duncan, AARP, Eddie Swift, NU, Wendy Wanchak, CT Legal Services, Jim McNally, CNG, Rhonda Evans, CAFCA, Veronica Gomez, NU, Chuck Anderson, DSS, Carlene Taylor, DSS, Joanne Balaschak, New Opportunities, Pat Wrice, Operation Fuel, Melissa Mendoza, Operation Fuel, Gail Lucchina, PURA, Joy Hollister, CLASS

Welcome: The meeting was convened at 1:30 p.m. Joy Hollister started the meeting and it was turned over to Pat Wrice upon her arrival.

Approval of minutes of Jan 8 meeting: Wendy Wanchak moved approval and Kate Quigley seconded.

LIHEAP Update: Chuck Anderson reported that the State was given an extra \$1.4 million to make a total of \$77.4 million for fiscal year 13/14. This increase will offset the new requirements from the Farm Bill for SUA. The projected amount for 2014/15 is \$63.3 million based on the President's proposal. There are contingency funds that also could be available, which has not happened in the last couple years. There has been a 7866 difference in Safety Net benefits from this year to last. DSS projects a 2.5 increase in the number of applications this year. The utility companies are doing outreach campaigns. DSS projects there will be less carryover funds going into next season. DSS continues to be able to cover the cost of 100 gallon deliveries even with the increase in oil costs. (see handouts). Op Fuel will not help with someone who received safety nets this year.

Farm Bill – Chuck Anderson reported that Gov. Malloy made the decision to increase SNAP benefits from \$1 to \$20.01 for this fiscal year. Pat Wrice asked that going forward LIHEAB's input should be given when these decisions are made. LIEAB should make recommendations of how a windfall or shortfall should be handled. Nora Duncan asked that communication through LIEAB continue even if meetings are cancelled due to weather. There are other means of communication.

Operation Fuel update: Pat Wrice reports that they have made decision to remain open (see handout). May 30th will be the last day for assistance if they do not run out of funds before that. If they need to close sooner it might cut into the summer program. She also reported that they will not help people who received safety net benefits through Energy Assistance. They plan on having a Summer Program although it will not be as robust as last year. Pat also reports that if someone is interested in attending LIHEAP Action Day in Washington D.C. that Op Fuel will cover the cost of travel, hotel, etc. as she is not able to make it but thinks it is important that someone from CT

attends. Op Fuel's intern will be going. It takes place March 26th. In addition, NEOG is looking for a National Director. If anyone knows of someone who would be interested please have them consider applying for this job.

Docket 13-07-18: Frank Augeri from PURA reports that five hearings took place in February for people who have had issues. On the 24th a hearing took place where cross examination of the utilities took place. The Senate bill will help address the issues consumers are having even though the rules the utility companies have been going by are legal. Fixed rate contracts should be given notice. Frank reported that 59% of people have gone back to standard rate. Nora Duncan asks that if people have stories regarding their issues with their electric supplier they should get them to AARP, CT News Junkie or CT Capitol Report. If you see any advertising done by AARP you can click on it. She also reported that there is no standardization regarding 3rd party rules. Some companies are violating the do not call list and going to see people more than one time. They are hiring private contractors who are paid by the number of contracts they get signed. Also on DEEP's website they show average of 750 kw but that most people do not use that amount. Using that method people save \$20 but don't understand that rate could quadruple after 3 months. Fixed rate contracts are the way to go.

Utility Matching Payment Program Update: (See handout). NU reports that they are up 30% in the amount of low budget sheets that have been submitted although total program is only showing a .5% increase. Eddie presented the Utility Matching Payment information. There was a combined auto enrollment of CL&P and Yankee customers of 24,330. There were 6,392 new enrollees for a total of 30,722 as of February 21, 2014. The total below budgets were stated as 6,221. Veronica reports that they have done a mailing to energy applicants with 1500 copies sent to CAA's. Also, she has been doing a lot of scam prevention at Senior Centers, etc. She can do the presentations in English and Spanish.

Utility Sub metering: The scheduled presenter was not able to make it – will come to the next meeting. Recommendations for next year's LIEAB plan – Joy Hollister reported on the suggestions that came out of the subcommittee report. The group will reconvene and will see what else they can come up with.

Miscellaneous: There was brief discussion of the tree trimming docket. Pat Wrice spoke about the tree trimming that took place in her neighborhood and some members discussed the trimming efforts due to the limbs that fell last year on the Merritt Parkway. Frank and Alyson left the meeting to attend the tree trimming hearing being held at PURA.

Veronica distributed brochures the Company has put together to get the word out to customers. They have also done a You Tube ad and Veronica is doing various outreach presentations and she stated that she is available to speak to any groups requested and can deliver the presentation in English and Spanish.

Nora advised that phone scammers are falsely claiming to be from the utility companies and they are asking for account numbers. When customers are duped into providing account numbers they are then slammed and switched to an alternate supplier without their consent. They are also canvassing door to door and Nora apprised the group that there is a Senate Bill that will address this. It will propose that you cannot solicit the same person more than once and you must have proper identification. Pat Wrice related that she herself had someone come to her home and she found the person very aggressive in their approach and noticed that it was later in the day and it was dusk and this might prove intimidating or frightening to seniors as well.

The LIEAB subcommittee designated to formulate recommendations for 2014/2015 (Joy, Wendy and Kate) submitted draft recommendations as a handout. Each recommendation was briefly discussed and there will be further discussion prior to a final list of recommendations being developed.

Wendy inquired if the group had ever had a legislative subcommittee and felt that it would be useful so that everyone is kept apprised of proposed legislative in time to comment on it. There was discussion with Pat and Nora stating that due to the affiliations of some members they would not be able to comment and some groups might be in conflict with the majority opinion. Nora stated that LIEAB's statutory mandate was fairly narrow in scope and the group has to adhere to specifically what that mandate says. Pat concurred with Nora and said that the group can do statutory updates as an FYI and noted that while the statutory mandate is narrow the group has managed to be quite influential in some very critical matters.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:10 p.m. The next scheduled meeting will be April 2, 2014.