

Low-Income Energy Advisory Board Meeting
Wednesday, November 5, 2014, 1:30 PM
HRA/Human Resources Agency
180 Clinton Street
New Britain, CT

Members/Designees/Others In Attendance: Edith Karsky, CAFCA, Chuck Anderson, DSS, Carlene Taylor, DSS, Margaret Bain, OCC, Gail Lucchina, DEEP, Kelly Sinko, OPM, Kasia Janik, OPM, Cherlynn Villano, SCG, Kate Quigley, 211, Pat Wrice, Operation Fuel, Veronica Gomez, NU-CL&P, Diane Duva, DEEP, Kerri Kemp, NPU, Joanne Balaschak, New Opportunities, Inc., Nora Duncan, AARP, Dalyn Delgado, CNG

Welcome: The meeting was convened at 1:35 p.m. Pat Wrice chaired the meeting.

Approval of minutes of the October 1, 2014 meeting: The minutes were approved with three changes noted. A remark attributed to Kasia was deleted. Edith mentioned another entity, Fuel Ware, that the agency had developed a bridge with and she added a qualifier to a statement regarding executive functioning ability. Edith approved the corrected minutes and Kate seconded.

LIHEAP Update: Chuck Anderson provided handouts that had been issued the previous day. The federal grant was awarded on October 15th and Chuck reported that the amount was \$77.3 million. It is approximately 90% of the grant amount from the previous year, minus one half of one percent.

Chuck also reported that the first deliverable fuel vendor list was issued last Friday. The next list will be issued November 7th. The first list contained 202 vendors and the total will most likely grow to approximately 350. Chuck stated that DSS participated in three vendor meetings and the Operation Fuel Forum.

DSS will hold a meeting tomorrow to do updates and revise performance measures. This is a transition meeting. It is an important month and by next month there will be expenditure reports.

Chuck noted that the price of oil is down. For Connecticut Heating Assistance Program (CHAP) participants, the benefit is \$285 plus a \$130

crisis payment for a total of \$415. It is one delivery but it will buy more gallons because of the lower oil prices. He noted that fuel deliveries will begin on Wednesday.

Carlene reported that positions have been posted. They received over 350 applications for the first position. They reviewed all of the applications and will interview 16 people. It is a trainee position and no degree was required. There were some internal applications submitted. Carlene reported that some of the applicants had graduate degrees and they had to make difficult decisions. They will be interviewing for two other positions soon.

Kate asked if all the CAP agencies are sharing the vendor lists. Carlene, Edith, Joanne and Chuck advised that you can provide the list but you cannot recommend a vendor. Steering to a particular vendor is prohibited. It was noted that the list should specify which vendors are accepting new customers. Chuck stated that the list is ever-changing and they are being updated right at the moment. Chuck said they endeavor to get the vendors online as quickly as possible. The number will be approximately the same as last year. Carlene suggested that maybe the difficulty Kate heard about was due to the fact that the list was not yet available. Chuck acknowledged that it's a tricky situation. He noted that it is the client's responsibility to find a vendor. Carlene stated that there is a vendor that doesn't want to deliver in Hartford because there was a shooting. Edith asked if vendors can be allowed to discriminate in this way. Nora stated that vendors can make geographical decisions. Edith asked if as a state, Connecticut could say that this smacks of discrimination. Nora noted that this is a difficult road to go down. Edith advised that a lot of local Hartford vendors have gone out of business. Chuck said that if it is overt discrimination, DSS attorneys follow up. He stated that a vendor posted a photo on Facebook of a client's automobiles in the driveway. DSS followed up with a warning letter to the vendor that he was in non-compliance with DSS policy.

Edith asked if there was a vendor shortage in Northwest Connecticut. Chuck said that there are a couple of vendors in that area that have sent in their forms. Carlene said that it is still early so there are no problems yet.

Carlene reported that ABCD is progressing and they are serving the former NEON territory. They will continue for this year. Edith advised that they

are doing very well and had a 131% increase in their client base. It was noted that they are using NEON's former facilities.

OPERATION FUEL: Pat informed the group that Op Fuel is winding down its summer program. She provided a handout to the group and stated that the amounts are listed from lowest to highest. Pat said that most of the fuel banks are out of funds. In response to an inquiry, Pat stated that the summer program is for utility bill payments. Some may have been shut off. Some recipients may be in the MPP program or on the budget plan. Operation Fuel payments count as a customer payment in these programs. One Op Fuel requirement is that the customer must have made at least one payment during the moratorium period. Pat stated that the summer program is closing at the end of the week. It was approximately a \$1 million program. The settlement grant helped to fund some of the summer program.

The winter program will begin December 1st and will run until the end of May if there are enough funds. The program will be approximately \$1.8 million. CHAP households will be eligible to receive Op Fuel funds. This will mean that CHAP households will get two deliveries in the winter. Pat stated that Op Fuel looks at what LIHEAP is doing in terms of payments and then they try to position themselves strategically to help as many households as they can.

Pat informed the group that Op Fuel will be at the Legislative Office Building on December 10th to present its Energy Affordability GAP study. It is done by a consultant, Roger Colton, of Belmont, Massachusetts. Pat will send out invitations.

Utility Matching Payment Program: Eddie Swift was absent and Veronica advised that he would have to provide the data at a later date.

UI reported that it had 960 customers that were matched at \$176,000. CNG had 517 customers receive matching payments of \$182,000 and SCG reported 464 customers received matching payments totaling \$174,000. Pat asked for the percentage of customers that successfully completed the MPP program. Cherlynn Villano stated that she did not know that percentage but could get the information and report back.

Miscellaneous: Carlene advised that all DSS offices have television monitors. DSS worked with Veronica and they have shown a NUStart video. Carlene asked board members to provide content that they think might be appropriate. They want to run content in a two hour loop. DSS would like to present info on the winter moratorium as part of the video presentation. Edith asked about doing telephone announcements as well. Carlene agreed that was a good point since many clients apply via telephone. Veronica stated that perhaps something could be included that urges people to return the mailers that are going out. The company is sending out 350,000 mailers and typically only 68,000 people respond. Veronica informed the board that she will provide the PDF of the mailer.

Diane advised the group that the \$2 million Operation Fuel grant is being processed. Pat asked how much money was being approved for overhead costs. Diane stated that OPM has informed her that \$100,000 has been appropriated for administrative costs. Pat said that she will not sign the agreement as it would set a bad precedent. Pat stated that last year Operation Fuel was allowed \$200,000 for administrative costs. It was stated that Pat will let Diane know of the outcome of her discussions with OPM.

Joanne mentioned that the portal not being open until November 1st is a problem. Veronica advised that the portal was open as of October 1st, however, there is currently no MOU with New Opportunities, Inc. and that is the source of the problem.

Pat mentioned that there is talk of changing the medical life threatening illness language. Nora expressed that there was no prior success in attempts to change the law. She said that it remained to be seen if a new proposal will be put forth and she mentioned that there will be changes in leadership on the Judiciary and Energy and Technology Committees. Nora stated that the PURA docket request was recently dismissed. Pat informed the group that UI and SCG have opened a fraud docket that concerns specific individuals.

Nora stated that there was a final decision today in the 3rd party electric supplier docket. Nora felt that PURA did the best job it could under the circumstances and she would not be surprised if another docket were opened. Nora said she would forward the press release that was issued regarding the PURA decision.

Pat advised that ISO New England dropped a supplier and Op Fuel will get the \$35,000 fine that the supplier was ordered to pay. The CEO had to resign and the company can't do business in Connecticut for ten years. They were found to be slamming customers. The company fraudulently obtained account numbers and they switched people without their knowledge.

Carlene asked if DEEP can provide information about the weatherization program. Diane stated that there is a little over \$1 million and most of it has been distributed with the exception of one agency. Diane provided the website which is DEEP.weathization@CT.GOV. Pat asked Diane if DEEP could provide information to LIEAB on what these agencies are providing. Diane stated that she will have a DEEP representative provide the information at the next meeting. She said that the agencies involved are ABCD, CRT, Access, New Opportunities and CAANH.

Next Meeting: The meeting adjourned at 2:45 p.m. and the next meeting is scheduled for January 7, 2015

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