

MINUTES

Low Income Energy Advisory Board
Wednesday, August 5, 2015
Operation Fuel, Inc.
75 Charter Oak Avenue
Hartford, CT

Members/Designees/Others In Attendance: Alyson Ayotte, PURA, Frank Augeri, PURA, Gail Lucchina, PURA, Margaret Bain, OCC, Carlene Taylor, DSS, Linette Jones, DSS, Kathy Wasilnak, UI, Kasia Janik, OPM, Kate Quigley, 211, Pat Wrice, Operation Fuel, Diane Duva, DEEP, Nora Duncan, AARP, Charles Anderson, DSS, Wendy Wanchak, CLS, Julian Freund, Operation Fuel, Kelly Sinko, OPM, Cherlynn Villano, SCG, Edith Karsky, CAFCA,

Welcome: The meeting was convened at 1:30 p.m. Ms. Wrice chaired the meeting.

Approval of minutes of the meeting: The May 6, 2015 minutes had proposed corrections. Carlene stated that on page three the minutes should state that there is a “potential” \$10 million carryover and that all of those who are eligible would receive a benefit. It was also noted that a correction should be made to the payment for the first delivery. It should be November rather than October. In addition, Operation Fuel corrected that the summer program was \$1.2 million and the amount for the year was \$3.2 million. Wendy moved to accept the minutes with the above noted changes and Kathy seconded.

LIHEAP UPDATE: Chuck offered that it is an exciting time when the plan is about to be released. He provided handouts and stated that there was less than a ½ percent drop in CHAP from 2014 to 2015. In addition, there was a slight increase in the lower benefits so there was not a lot of shift in ratios. Chuck stated that the fiscal year ends September 30th. He advised that there were fewer applications processed due to the drastic drop in fuel prices, the computer transition which involved a platform migration which meant intakes took longer and they also received more funds along with the other cold weather states. The carryover was a little more than \$8 million. Carlene advised that there will be a \$95 supplemental payment for

utility heated households. She also advised that the federal Department of Health and Human Services will be visiting DSS to verify LIHEAP compliance. They will be looking at fiscal operation and are looking at 2012-2013. All of the information and client files must be provided. This audit will take place from September 8th through September 11th. Carlene stated that CRT and ABCD are two agencies where they want to do an onsite visit. Edith inquired about what area for ABCD? She was advised it was in the greater Bridgeport area. HHS also inquired about NEON. Carlen stated that HHS hired the contractor and other states have given reviews that are not very positive. HHS is trying to complete 18 states in one year. It is a very compressed timeframe and they are trying to complete Connecticut in three days rather than four. This is a very structured approach per Chuck and they have an hour by hour schedule of what will be done.

Chuck advised this is the third plan he has been involved with and it is the best one. Chuck distributed a fact sheet of changes and advised that the plan incorporates the LIEAB recommendations. He advised that the total budget is \$89.74 million including the carryover and refunds. It is a Republican controlled Congress so he advised that a sequester may be an issue. It is a slightly larger budget going in than the prior year. The benefits are listed on page eight of the plan. It is one energy program and one pot of money. Chuck stated that liquid assets will be increased by \$5,000 to \$15,000 and \$12,000. Wendy asked how this was determined and Carlene replied that it was based on discussions with their energy directors. Pat asked how many states have an assets test. Carlene replied that there are not many but the Connecticut legislature has always asked these questions to make sure the money is serving the neediest. Chuck addressed the DSS set aside for replacement of heating systems. For many years DSS set aside money for this and the turnaround was 1-2 weeks. When ARRA money was available this had been shelved so now it is reestablished. Pat asked if only those up to Level 4 or 200 percent of poverty would be eligible and Chuck answered affirmatively. Chuck also stated that the \$20.01 LIHEAP SNAP will continue. Carlene thanked Chuck, Linette and the OPM staff for all their hard work. Chuck thinks the plan is far-reaching and makes improvements. Wendy asked how LIEAB will support the plan. Edith moved that the Board endorse the plan. Frank seconded and Pat added that the Board should send a letter and individual organizations can testify in support of the plan. Edith also advised that the

chairperson or LIEAB representative should testify in person in support of the plan.

OPERATION FUEL: Pat stated that the summer opened July 13th with a \$1 million program. There were 554 households as of August 4th. Pat also advised that money has been allocated to the fuel banks. It is approximately \$80,000 per week in Energy Assistance. Frank Augeri advised that there is a settlement with North American Power. It will be a \$2.6 million settlement that will amount to a payment of \$100,000 per month for 26 months to Operation Fuel. Pat stated that it is an unrestricted fund and they will look at some long term programs such as furnace repairs. She also stated that this settlement has nothing to do with the summer program funding. Pat advised that at the next meeting she will have a report concerning how the money will be budgeted.

UTILITY MATCHING PAYMENT PROGRAM: UI reported that it has a 56% success rate for the match. Matches are made in May and a second match in July for late funds coming in. SCG had a total success rate of 43% and CNG reported a 50% success rate. Both SCG and CNG reported higher success rates than the previous year. Carlene said they have supplemented payments and Kathy stated that if people were successful they will match the \$95 and if not successful they will review on a case by case basis. The match would be at the end of Phase II.

Kathy informed the group that Suannette Galarza is the new Lead Analyst for Hardship Administration. She will be the main point of contact for all three companies.

Carlene advised that all offices have a DSS screen and there was a winter protection video. She also has 211 information. Kathy advised that Corporate Communications can get something out.

The Board was informed about PURA Docket No. 15-06-25. A hearing has been requested by one of the participants. No hearing date has been set. PURA has issued some interrogatories.

Kathy stated that she will send all the below budget information. She did not have the below budget success rate for the gas companies. Edith asked if there was a breakdown by Agency. Kathy was uncertain if they have that information. Frank asked if the information could be provided by

town. Kathy stated that she would check to see if it was possible to provide the information by town.

Pat informed the group that Eversource was not present so no information was provided.

SUBMETERING DISCUSSION: Frank said he had a question concerning traditional submetering when a tenant is not billed by UI or Eversource. He asked if such an individual could apply for Energy Assistance and have the money go to the landlord. Chuck stated that was possible in current cases with natural gas and propane. Carlene stated there is a natural gas individually metered building in Bloomfield. She stated that if the usage can be tied to the household they can apply for Energy Assistance. Kelly asked when you can submeter and when can't you submeter. Frank stated that any location that meets the requirement of the CES can be opened up to submetering. Multi-tenant and mixed use residential. Margaret stated that PURA has to approve all of these. Frank advised that there is an actual application process with hearings and interrogatories. Nora asked if there was a threshold number of units and Frank stated that there was not. Pat stated that it originally started with Barry Circle and she asked how that had worked out. Carlene replied that it has worked out ok and it is natural gas and it was grandfathered. Frank stated that natural gas is not approved at this point due to safety reasons. Margaret stated that there are four or five cases where a landlord illegally submetered. She stated that Greater Hartford Legal Aid is representing the tenants.

MISCELLANEOUS: Wendy commented that Nora sent around information about statutory changes to LIEAB's responsibilities. Diane stated that the changes were reflective of ongoing conversations and memorializes what is going on and is straight forward and already happening. Pat stated that there is a deadline and thus communication of the obligation of the Board is the issue. Nora cautioned that if this had not been found out for a couple of months it would have been a problem. Diane and Carlene were both going to bring it up. Pat stated that Operation Fuel's lobbyist can forward all issues so nothing falls through the cracks. Diane stated that today was the first day the Board met so it was the regular ongoing LIEAB business. Nora stated that each Department has legislative liaisons so she noted that a person in each Agency saw the change. Members should discuss this matter. Pat agreed and said it will be added to the October agenda. It will

be a discussion of how to communicate among legislative liaisons and how to establish a process of monitoring legislation.

Wendy stated that she will send out an invitation to join the subcommittee. Pat offered that someone from DSS should volunteer.

It was noted that there will be a Technical Meeting next week to get rid of electric supplier variable prices. A decision is expected in October or November.

Pat informed the group that Operation Fuel is going to revise the study that was done. The former study was called the Apprise Study. They have the resources to revise this study. There was a committee during the prior study. All stakeholders were involved so Operation Fuel would like the utility members to become involved this time as well. Wendy stated that their subcommittee looked at other states that had discounted rates and they informally concluded that Connecticut's not having a discounted rate worked better. Pat stated that she respectfully disagreed. Pat also stated that she favors the percentage of income method. She informed the group that it will be an objective study. Edith stated that she thought it was a very good idea since there is a low success rate for the Matching Payment Programs.

NEXT MEETING: The next meeting will be held at the offices of Op Fuel on October 7, 2015 at 1:30 p.m. The Election of Officers will be added to the October agenda. The meeting adjourned at 2:55.