

**Low-Income Energy Advisory Board Meeting**  
**Wednesday, February 4, 2015**  
**HRA/Human Resources Agency**  
**180 Clinton Street**  
**New Britain, CT**

**Members/Designees/Others In Attendance:** Chuck Anderson, DSS, Chris Herb, CEMA, Carlene Taylor, DSS, Rhonda Evans, CAFCA, Gail Lucchina, DEEP, Alyson Ayotte, PURA, Kelly Sinko. OPM, Kasia Janik, OPM, Cherlynn Villano, SCG, Kate Quigley, 211, Pat Wrice, Operation Fuel, Joy Hollister, Cromwell, CLASS, Wendy Wanchak, Connecticut Legal Services, Diane Duva, DEEP, Sean Condon, DEEP, Linda Foreman, DEEP, 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 November 5, 2014 meeting:** The minutes were approved with one typographical error noted. Wendy approved the corrected minutes and Nora seconded.

**LIHEAP Update:** Chuck Anderson provided handouts that had been issued the previous day. He reported that the program is at the mid-year point. The block grant funding is \$7.6 million higher than the previous year. Chuck stated that they have developed some ideas about how to best utilize this increased funding. The proposal is to restore a third safety net benefit for qualified vulnerable CEAP and SAFA households and a second safety net benefit for qualified non-vulnerable CEAP households. Chuck asked for input on the matter. Pat was in agreement with the plan but stated that LIEAB should go on the record regarding the proposal. Diane asked how often LIHEAP was allowing an allocation for weatherization? Chuck advised that the LIHEAP benefits don't carry someone throughout the entire winter so traditionally they don't use LIHEAP money for weatherization. Carlene added that \$2 million was used for the Standard Utility Allowance so it was a good thing that they were given an increased allocation. Joy asked about the possibility of extremely cold weather in the next couple of months causing a potential shortfall. Chuck advised that there would not be a problem with

running out of money. The motion to restore second and third safety net benefits was put forth for consideration. Wendy moved adoption and Joy seconded.

Chuck suggested that a subcommittee once again be formed to provide recommendations regarding next year's LIHEAP application. Joy volunteered to chair the subcommittee. Wendy, Kate, Joanne and Linda volunteered to be members of the subcommittee.

Carlene informed the group that the president's budget requires that 10-40% of LIHEAP funds must be used for weatherization. It is a \$3.19 billion dollar budget compared with a \$2.8 billion budget the previous year. Chuck is concerned that this may mean cuts in benefits for people. He stated that if weatherization were to be included, the appropriation would need to be approximately \$5 billion. Pat said she read a proposal that all energy assistance programs would have to have a weatherization component.

Diane stated that DEEP administers emergency funds. There are various sources of funding. There is federal weatherization money, DEEP funding and funding from the utilities from the income-eligible funds. All three sources of funding were used for emergency furnace repairs.

**Operation Fuel:** Pat advised that the lower oil prices have helped a great deal. Last year at this time, Op Fuel was out of funds. It looks like they will have a robust spring program unless Connecticut experiences a lengthy period of very cold weather. Pat reported that last year they received \$50,000 per day in requests for assistance. This year the requests are approximately \$35,000 per day. She anticipates remaining open through the spring. In response to a question from Kate, Pat stated that she believes that all sites have funding. Joanne confirmed that her agency has funds but they are going quickly.

Gail inquired about the People's Power settlement of \$35,000 that was supposed to be paid to Op Fuel. Pat reported that the check has bounced twice. It was written from a personal account and Pat stated that OP Fuel has been charged a fee each time from its bank for the insufficient funds. Nora advised that it may be impossible to collect. Diane said that it should go to PURA for enforcement. Chris Herb suggested contacting the police. Nora advised that both a civil and criminal complaint can be filed at the same

time. Gail said that she would follow up with PURA and will report back to Pat.

Pat handed out invitations to an Op Fuel Board reception to be held on February 13, 2015 at the Keeney Memorial Center in Wethersfield. Linda Kelly, President of the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving will be a guest speaker. The Hartford Foundation just awarded Op Fuel a \$50,000 grant to upgrade its computers. Pat also stated that Op Fuel will host the April LIEAB meeting at its new offices in Hartford.

**WAP Presentation by DEEP:** Diane Duva introduced Sean Condon, DEEP's WAP Program Manager, to the group. Handouts were distributed. Sean advised the group that DEEP became the administrator for the WAP program in 2012. The funding comes from the federal WAP program as well as legislative funding. The plans for 2015 were discussed. For FY 2015, the DOE is allocating a little over \$2 million. There are five CAP agencies and they have a formula that establishes a goal for each CAP. The goal for 2015 is to weatherize a total of 369 units across the five CAP agencies. Sean stated that a unit will be considered completed after both the audit and final inspection have been done.

Sean advised that a key issue in 2015 is the new audit tool that had to be brought in. It is new to Connecticut and is a product of Oak Ridge Labs. There are approximately 30 states that are using it. Connecticut must verify that it can correctly utilize the tool. Two sample sets of audits were put in and it is hoped that the tool will be approved in Connecticut soon. Sean explained that in the interim no funds will be lost. If people are in the queue they will remain there and when the tool is approved they can move ahead with scheduling. Sean also explained that there are emergency funds that DEEP has set aside as a way of tiding people over until approval is received. The funds were approved in January and they are for no heat calls. Rhonda stated that many of the agencies did not know about this emergency funding. Sean advised that the money went directly to CL&P and UI and it was up to the utilities to let the agencies know about it. The money was specifically for no heat or weatherization. Carlene stated that she directs people to the CAP agencies and her agency was not aware. Pat asked why the money went to the utilities and Diane said that it was RGGI funding so it had to be administered that way. Diane said she will clarify this with the CAPS and also advised that the standard operating procedure remains the same with the incoming call either from 211 or DSS or a CAP and then to the

Weatherization Community Action Agency. It was stated that Bridgeport was able to handle their situations due to the fact that they had additional legislative funding.

Joy asked if weatherization was available to subsidized housing. She said that many such dwellings lack insulation. Diane stated that this type of housing will be a focus. She directed Joy to [DEEP.Weatherization@CT.gov](mailto:DEEP.Weatherization@CT.gov) for information. Nora stated that she is president of her condo association and they have shared attics. They are attempting to go in as a group on the insulation rebate but it is difficult and requires a lot of coordination of work. Diane suggested that perhaps in the fall it would be helpful for DEEP to do presentation for the LIEAB board on all of the funding opportunities such as the Green Bank, CHIF and CHFA. Pat agreed that would be an excellent idea.

Another key issue is the new DOE rule requiring quality control inspectors. There is \$400,000 for training and assistance. Connecticut has a training facility in Seymour and it is hoped that each CAP agency will have one or two qualified inspectors. At the present time, it is expected that six of the twelve inspectors will be approved in March.

Diane stated that going forward Connecticut's WAP plan may evolve and perhaps there may be a demonstrated need for a 3<sup>rd</sup> party quality control contractor or a consolidation of the quality control function. Sean added that inspectors must have 2000 hours to be approved. Diane stated that DEEP may have to work with CAFCA to be certain that they have individuals with the necessary experience.

At the April LIEAB meeting, Diane and Sean will present the actual Weatherization Plan and the LIEAB board will need to formally approve the plan in order for it to be submitted. Pat stated that this should be added to the April LIEAB agenda.

**MPP:** Cherlynn advised the group that the monthly enrollment for UI was 2,462, CNG was 13,569 and SCG had 13,287. She advised Pat that she had just received the report and was not able to compare it to the previous years but she would provide the information at a later date. The following data was provided for Phase II matches:

UI - 2,364 enrolled – 963 customers successful - \$176,000 in matches

CNG – 2,464 enrolled – 517 customers successful - \$182,000 in matches

SCG – 2,251 enrolled – 464 customers successful - \$174,000 in matches

Cherlynn advised that Phase II participants are automatically enrolled in the program if they have been successful in the 1st phase.

**Miscellaneous:** Nora provided some legislative updates. She informed the group that there is a proposed bill that would put a cap on the fixed charges on consumers' electric bills. They are aiming at a cap of \$10.00.

There is a proposed ban on variable rate contracts for 3<sup>rd</sup> party electric suppliers. There are also proposed rules about what rate you can be placed on if a customer fails to take action at the end of a contract period. In addition, there should be no cancellation fee. These are all concepts being raised at this point by the Energy and Technology Committee. Diane advised that DEEP is going to update the supplier webpage. Sean is the individual responsible for updating the information.

**Next Meeting:** Pat stated that the Board would not meet in March. It was decided that the Board would determine at the conclusion of each meeting whether or not the group would meet in four weeks or eight weeks. The meeting was adjourned at 3:01.