

DRAFT MINUTES
Low-Income Energy Advisory Board Meeting
Wednesday, May 6, 2015
Operation Fuel, Inc.
75 Charter Oak Avenue
Hartford, CT

Members/Designees/Others In Attendance: Joanne Balaschak, New Opportunities, Inc., Veronica Gomez-Hernandez, Eversource, Joseph Rosenthal, OCC, Rhonda Evans, CAFCA, Carlene Taylor, DSS, Linette Jones, DSS, Eddie Swift, Eversource, Kathy Wasilnak, UI, Mary Ellen Zang, PURA, Kasia Janik, OPM, Kate Quigley, 211, Pat Wrice, Operation Fuel, Joy Hollister, Cromwell, CLASS, Diane Duva, DEEP, Nora Duncan, AARP, Dalyn Delgado, CNG, Gail Lucchina, PURA

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

Approval of minutes of the meeting: The April minutes incorrectly identified Ms. Delgado rather than Ms. Wasilnak under the MPP portion of the minutes and the first numbers should be identified as UI's figures. Ms. Hollister made a motion to approve the minutes with the two corrections, Ms. Wasilnak seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Subcommittee Report: Joy stated that she had emailed the two pages of recommendations. The group met the previous week. Joy was unable to attend the meeting; however, she discussed the changes with Wendy. Joy distributed copies of the recommendations to the group. The recommendations keep SNAP at \$20.01 to maximize the Standard Utility Allowance and the 2016 program should mirror the three tier levels of Energy Assistance benefits.

In regard to the recommendations to utility companies, Kathy asked if the process would be streamlined for hardship coding so that the companies are essentially the same. Joy mentioned that Eversource was sending some people to the towns and the towns had no knowledge of this and some people were not even eligible. Veronica said that Eddie was going to meet with the subcommittee to discuss this matter.

There was discussion of the recommendations for energy efficiency funds. LIEAB has concerns that the LIHEAP monies diverted to energy efficiency funding may reduce energy assistance benefits for the poorest households needing assistance. There are two recommendations. First, if there is a 10% requirement to fund energy efficiency programs, LIEAB should continue looking at different options for utilization of these funds. Second, if there is not a 10% requirement, LIEAB may still want to look at using a percentage of monies to fund repair or replacement of low efficiency furnaces. Diane asked what the difference was between the first recommendation and the second and Veronica offered that the word “disproportionately” seemed to be the only difference. Carlene stated that benefits might be reduced in the first recommendation and in the second recommendation it might mean that there might be no funds remaining. Diane stated that she just wanted to make sure it was intentional and Kathy suggested that it could be made clearer. Kate asked if it meant that there might not be a safety net. Pat asked if LIEAB as a board should be more forceful about moving funds that help people and continuing to carve up an ever diminishing pie. Carlene advised that she testified against it and stated that she would forward her testimony to the board.

Pat stated that she saw an interesting national study done of LIHEAP. It looked at diminishing LIHEAP funds in light of the move to sweep direct assistance to energy assistance. Pat said she will distribute the study. She contends that LIHEAP targets low income individuals and they are not energy hogs and don't have much of a say.

Diane offered that it could be stated positively by advising that if energy efficiency is to be encouraged and funded, do it but do not fund it from this pool of money. Instead, increase the pie. Diane said the message is not that LIEAB doesn't support energy efficiency. Joy asked if that statement should be included and Carlene informed that group that it is implied in 5C. The members agreed with Carlene's assessment. Joy offered an expansion of item 2. Nora and Veronica agreed. It will conclude with “may reduce or eliminate energy assistance benefits.” Pat stated that Joy will send out the new version.

Joanne spoke with Chuck and he said to have the dates coincide with each other. MPP-April 30th and Energy Application May 1st. It was stated that Eddie would have to change the filing. UI will not enroll people on May 1st. Joanne's suggestion is to make it uniform so it is not open to interpretation

regarding matched payment and add it to number 5. Pat asked if that was clear to everyone. Nora stated it was clear as mud but offered compliments on getting it done and it was a good job administratively. Nora made a motion to take the edited version and vote on this for submission to DSS and OPM. It was seconded by Kate and carried unanimously. Joy stated that she would send out the edited version. Carlene stated that it goes to Secretary Barnes and the DSS Commissioner. She said the LIEAB recommendations are taken into consideration and they also meet with the community action agencies.

LIHEAP UPDATE: Carlene stated that May 1st was the last date to apply. There was a two week extension for electric heat customers and natural gas customers with a shut off notice. The figures are below the same period last year. She stated that December was warm and they will see in a couple of weeks how many applications come in. She also advised that there were not many applications pending. Pat asked if CHAP was lower. Carlene stated that it did look lower and she would check into this further. Carlene said that they had an extra round of safety net benefits. They have a carryover of \$10 million and they are only allowed \$8.5 million. Carlene said they will look at the State Allocation Plan and if there are additional funds the utilities will get additional dollars. It could be used for matches and additional discussions will be had with the commissioners of DSS and OPM. Half of the applications are utility heated households. Carlene said they typically do an across the board benefit and about 50% of those who apply will get approved. Eddie stated that a letter comes from the governor and two years ago the Company gave approximately \$15 per household. They have not yet looked at what the amount would be. Pat wanted to go on record that it may not seem like a lot of money per customer but for low income people it is not a small amount. Joy made a recommendation that they look at other option for the set aside money and also asked if the \$8.5 million is start-up money. Carlene responded that it was. Diane stated that there are different options that can be looked at. Carlene advised that it is good to have start-up funds because it pays for the first fuel deliveries in October and sometimes the LIHEAP funding does not come until December or January.

OPERATION FUEL: Pat informed the board that Op Fuel will be open until June 30th or until the money runs out. Current funds are for people with shut off notices. They ran a \$1.2 million program this year. Carlene stated that the guidelines are that you must have a shutoff and have made four

payments during the year and one during the moratorium. Pat said that is correct but there are extenuating circumstances and they review on a case by case basis. Pat stated that a couple of locations are already out of funds. Carlene inquired if Op Fuel shifts funds to other locations and Pat responded that settlement funds were exclusively for the Eversource service area. They can shift unrestricted funds and they do when necessary.

UTILITY MATCHING PAYMENT PROGRAM: Kathy advised that UI was just starting to do the matches. She reported that last year they did not look for the full number of payments. They only looked for three payments. This year the Company did require the maximum number of five of six payments if they enrolled in November. Eddie said that Eversource had the same requirement. Eddie also stated that enrollment increased by 5% and there was a record number of below budgets. He stated that the portal would be open until Friday at 6:00 p.m. Any remaining below budgets may have had an IT problem so the time period was extended. Eversource will have the information to determine if the below budget worksheets are helping people complete the program. It was stated that not many of the below budgets get denied and Veronica makes sure it is a one for one ratio. Joy asked if the portal will be open on the first day of intakes. Eddie said he would check on this on report back. He said that restriction will have to be talked about with IT.

UI reported that as of May 1, 2015 a total of 38,456 customers were enrolled.

Eversource reported a total of 17,881 electric and 17,501 gas enrollments.

MISCELLANEOUS: All future meetings will be held at the Op Fuel offices. Diane Duva stated that there is a meeting the week of May 11th of the Department of Housing, CHFA and the Green Bank upcoming. It is a Lean Event to better align the processes to apply for energy efficiency for multi-family dwellings. Diane also stated that an energy efficiency investment plan is being put together. It is being developed and they are trying to do a better job of addressing different sectors of housing. During these plan development months, Diane suggested that LIEAB provide feedback about what the energy efficiency plan should include. Pat stated that she is concerned about absentee landlords. She feels that they have no incentives to make improvements. Pat stated that submetering can result

in efficiency gains but with consumer protections and matching programs this can be complicated. Joe stated that it is complicated and will be dealt with by LIEAB. A submetering discussion is to be added to the August agenda. Nora stated that S.P. 570 was not popular with utilities and there is an effort that she disagrees with regarding health factors. Some organizations have been contacting people to state that individuals with medical devices would be disproportionately affected due to the fixed charge going down but the volumetric charge would go up. Nora stated that there are protections in place for people with medical disabilities so she feels the argument is not a strong one.

NEXT MEETING: The next meeting will be held at the offices of Op Fuel on August, 5, 2015 at 1:30 p.m. The Election of Officers will be added to the August agenda. The meeting adjourned at 2:55.