

MINUTES

**Low Income Energy Advisory Board
Wednesday, December 7, 2016
Operation Fuel
75 Charter Oak Avenue
Hartford, CT**

Member/Designees/Others In Attendance: Brian Biernat, *DEEP*, Kate Quigley, *United Way CT/211*, Brenda Watson, *Operation Fuel*, Karen Anderson, *Operation Fuel*, Wendy Wanchak, *CT Legal Services*, Diane Duva, *DEEP*, Edith Karsky, *CAFCA*, Carlene Taylor, *DSS*, Kasia Purciello, *OPM*, Kelly Sinko, *OPM*, Taren O'Connor, *OCC*, Eddie Swift, *Eversource*, Jeff Brining, *NPU*, Ruth Swift, *NPU*, Kathy Waslinak, *UI*, Alyson Ayotte, *PURA*, Frank Augeri, *PURA*, John Erlingheuser, *AARP*

Welcome: The meeting was convened at 1:35 P.M. Taren O'Connor chaired the meeting.

Review of Minutes of the October Meeting: Carlene of DSS and Kelly of OPM and Frank of PURA had some corrections for the minutes. It was decided that the corrections be sent to Gail before reaching final approval.

Operation Fuel Update: Operation Fuel is up and running as of October 1, 2016. Operation Fuel has added a Norwich Public Utilities Fuel Bank. They have expanded operations to cover clients with electric heat through the secondary assistance program. Operation Fuel is working on finalizing the Legislative Report concerning the Energy Affordability Gap and will be distributing the report to any board members who wish to review it before the final release in January 2017. Operation Fuel also recently held a press conference to build awareness of the need for energy assistance at the State Capital. A Power Lunch is anticipated in May 2017.

LIHEAP Budget: There is a continuing resolution on the final LIHEAP budget and it should be finalized on December 9th, 2016. Final review shall be finished by March 2017. The allocation from HSS is expected to only be 90% of the funding received last year. This equates to a several million dollar decrease in funds from last year.

Supplemental Payments were finalized at \$375. DSS shared a document showing the overall LIHEAP caseload of the various CAAs. ABCD Norwalk numbers are lower due to Stamford intake being directed to CAAWC in Danbury. Bristol BCO intake numbers are lower due to a pending merger between BCO and HRA.

DSS Updates:

Bristol BCO is merging with HRA. The merger is expected to be seamless with BCO ending December 2016 and the HRA transition being finalized January 2017. HRA will maintain the same locations and phone numbers. HRA will be covering all fuel bills for BCO ensuring vendors are properly compensated. Matching payments plans and operation fuel assistance plans will be maintained.

A memorandum of agreement between DEEP and DSS is being put in place for providing health and safety support to Weatherization clients. Protocols are in place to provide for inoperable/unsafe furnace replacements and Clean Tune and Test programs.

Matching Payment Plan Updates: Eversource- Phase 2 Matching is completed. There are also several updates provided in Eversource spreadsheet that was circulated. **UI/SCG/CNG-** Phase 2 matching has been completed. There are also several updates provided in the UI/SCG/CNG spreadsheet. There was discussion regarding the differences between Phase 1 and Phase 2.

Utility Updates: The utility companies have provided some clarification on the differences and how the current program allows customers to change status throughout the program year of May 2nd to October 31st. Previously, it was not possible to go back to phase 1 after you were classified Phase 2 until the completion of the program year. The new reports for MPP should will have metrics regarding geographic location based on zip-code. This may be helpful in satisfying the new reporting requirements of the energy assistance programs.

Legislative and PURA Docketed Matters: PURA Updates- Working group met in late November to work through the docket regarding utility payment history being reported to the credit bureaus. The intention is to help to reduce the amount of losses incurred as a result of customers not paying utility bills. Members expressed views that further review is necessary from PURA and OCC to determine that this

is a decision that serves the ratepayers well and does not create discriminatory situations or negatively affect the affordability of energy to the ratepayers. Utilities believe that this is a good thing as it will assist people who make payments on a regular basis with building their credit scores. This program has been implemented in UI service territories and Eversource does not anticipate any additional costs as result of implementing this program and actually anticipates costs being reduced as a result of more payments being made on time. Some members noted that the data collected as a result of this program should be helpful in better understanding what causes people to miss payments, and noted some states prohibit this from happening while others allow it. Comments on these matters should be submitted in writing so that they become an official correspondence to PURA before a final decision is made regarding the planned pilot. A separate UI rate Case is still being discussed. There is a draft decision still pending based on a dispute related to the customer service charge.

Legislative Updates- There was discussion regarding anticipated potential bills, based on activities in the legislature last session.

General Discussion: Concerns were raised regarding third party suppliers targeting the low income community with door to door sales. Members expressed the importance of communication and how we inform the low income community of the current rates and the list of approved third party suppliers that do not have questionable business practices or unclear terms and rates. It was also noted that NY and NH have already outlawed the door to door sales of third party suppliers. There was a question posed regarding being able to not pay the generator portion of a bill to a specific vendor. This is not possible because the generation charge is built into the total bill.

Meeting Ended: The meeting concluded at 2:30 PM