

MINUTES

Low Income Energy Advisory Board
Wednesday, February 3, 2016
Operation Fuel, Inc.
75 Charter Oak Avenue
Hartford, CT

Members/Designees/Others In Attendance: Alyson Ayotte, PURA, Frank Augeri, PURA, Gail Lucchina, PURA, Carlene Taylor, DSS, Pat Wrice, Operation Fuel, Brenda Watson, Operation Fuel, Clayton Jason, Operation Fuel, Linda Foreman, DEEP, Brian Biernat, DEEP, Wendy Wanchak, CLS, Margaret Bain, OCC, Kate Quigley, 2-1-1, Eddie Swift, Eversource, Veronica Gomez-Hernandez, Eversource, Kathy Wasilnak, UI, Edith Karsky, CAFCA, Chuck Anderson, DSS, Joanne Balaschak, New Opportunities, Joy Hollister, CLASS, Jeff Brining, NPU

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

Approval of minutes of the December meeting: The January 6, 2016 minutes were approved. Wendy moved to adopt the minutes and Edith seconded. At this point in the meeting, Pat introduced Clayton Jason of Operation Fuel to the group. He is a new employee on the operations side.

Weatherization Update: Brian stated that there was a total program allocation of \$5.2 million including the carryover amount. The funds were split between the five community action agencies. Brian stated that he would provide the printouts so they could be posted on the website. He noted that in 2015 ABCD decided to cease participation so those funds will be transferred to the entity covering that area. Carlene asked if the area would be covered and Brian stated that it would. Edith added that due to the ebb and flow of funding it was not feasible for them to continue in the program. For 2016 Brian said that there was \$2,480,000 with a carryover of \$900,000. Pat verified that the CAAs first spend the money and then they are reimbursed. Linda and Joanne confirmed that. Linda stated that there is 25% upfront funding given.

Operation Fuel: Pat stated that it has been very slow and people have been able to catch a break. She advised that as of November 30, 2015, they have provided just under \$300,000 in grants. At the same time last

year, over \$1.5 million had been provided to recipients. The summer program was \$1.2 million and was robust so Pat feels that things have shifted a bit and she believes that this may become a trend that continues so they are waiting to see if the post-moratorium period will be their biggest program. Pat is also looking at ways to best utilize the money received from PURA through supplier fines that have Operation Fuel as the beneficiary. Pat advised that this very morning they received \$30,000 and Operation Fuel anticipates that they will use some of this money for furnace repairs for Level 5 clients and they are working on MOUs at the moment. Pat added that they are looking at various ways to leverage these funds and it gives them the opportunity to jumpstart programs they have always wanted to establish.

Brenda stated that it is the third year of the Homeless Prevention and Intervention Program. They are looking to add a Hartford site in the next month and she advised that right now they are in Stamford and Bridgeport. The program helps with past utility arrearages to allow people to move forward with housing. They provide grants up to \$1000. Brenda further stated that the program is also a homeless prevention program so they assist people who have housing but may be in danger of losing it. Brenda said they are looking to add additional agencies. Carlene added that people should contact the Department of Housing for information. Edith requested that Brenda send out an email with the information. Joy advised that the report on homelessness was just issued and it shows it is going down. She also added that the report is broken down by town and it was put together by the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness. Joy said she will have the report distributed to the group.

LIHEAP: Chuck advised that they are not running out of money. They have had a caseload of 80,000 applications with 66,000 determined eligible. This is approximately 4% behind last year due to the warmer weather. As far as deliverable fuel, Chuck advised that those people have used their basic benefit and would be using crisis and safety net so next month they will know based upon the weather how much funds will be needed. Carlene stated that the biggest change from last year is that 137 households used crisis and safety net benefits and last year it was much higher. Carlene stated that the expenditure is 98% less than the previous year. Carlene reported that the heating repair and replacement program is new this year. She said that \$1.5 million was set aside and they have spent \$240,000. Carlene said that 36 applications were approved. Linda

asked if this low number was due to a lack of outreach and Carlene advised that it was not. Carlene stated that just yesterday five applications came in as the weather was colder. She stated the applicant must be a homeowner and it has to be a single family home. Brenda asked if the program could be continued in the summer and Carlene replied that they are looking into that possibility. Joy asked if the utilities refer applicants for this program to the CAP agencies and she was told that they do. Carlene stated that repair was supposed to be only for inoperable situations but they have not adhered to this strictly. Wendy stated that it sounds like a learning curve and even though it is on the website a lot of service providers don't know about it. Wendy said that she did a presentation to twenty service providers and they knew nothing about it. Carlene said the CAAs are getting the word out and they also have a relationship with 211 and they are getting the word out also.

Chuck advised the group that they need to form a subcommittee for the LIHEAP plan that will be written in June. The subcommittee will develop LIEAB's recommendations for 2017. It was determined that Joy will chair the subcommittee.

Utility Matching Payment: both Eddie and Kathy stated that they would email figures so they could be posted on the website. UI had a total of approximately 28,500 and Eddie stated Eversource had an approximate total of 30,745. Pat asked how the numbers compared with last year. UI stated they would check and get back with the information and Eddie replied that Eversource is down in enrollments.

Legislative Matters: Frank advised that the Liberty Power hearing was scheduled for tomorrow. There is a proposed settlement agreement of \$10,000. The original fine was \$13,000 per Frank.

Miscellaneous: Joy noted that the study she mentioned rated Connecticut low because it has an assets test for Energy Assistance. Joy stated that she will provide the study to the group so they can discuss it. Chuck stated that they do track how many people are ineligible due to the assets test. Wendy stated that only 11 states have an assets test. Carlene added that the limits have been increased and that SNAP has an assets test but not for the elderly.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:45.

Next Meeting: The next meeting was scheduled for March 2, 2016.