

MINUTES

Low Income Energy Advisory Board
Wednesday, August 3, 2016
HRA/Human Resources Agency
180 Clinton Street
New Britain, CT

Members/Designees/Others In Attendance: Alyson Ayotte, PURA, Frank Augeri, PURA, Gail Lucchina, PURA, Carlene Taylor, DSS, Kate Quigley, 2-1-1, Diane Duva, DEEP, Kasia Purciello, OPM, Kelly Sinko, OPM, Nora Duncan, AARP, Wendy Wanchak, CT Legal Services, Veronica Gomez-Hernandez, Eversource, John Roberts, SCG, Chris Herb, CEMA, Taren O'Connor, OCC, Brenda Watson, Operation Fuel, Ruth Swift, NPU, Karen Adamson, Operation Fuel, Linda Foreman, DEEP, Joy Hollister, CLASS, Suannette Galarza, UIL, Kathy Wasilnak, UI, Chuck Anderson, DSS, Edith Karsky, CAFCA.

Welcome: The meeting was convened at 1:33 p.m. Nora Duncan chaired the meeting.

Approval of minutes of the June 1st meeting: The June 2016 minutes were approved. Taren moved to adopt the minutes and Frank seconded. Approved with Edith and Joy abstaining.

Introduction of Karen Adamson: Nora introduced Operation Fuel Director, Karen Adamson, to the group. Karen stated that her prior position was in community action and she is honored to work for Operation Fuel. She told the group that this is her second career. She previously spent 31 years in public education and has launched a second career in non-profits. She stated that she is hoping to remove barriers for low-income people and she is learning every day.

Nora informed the group that Karen went through the Encore Hartford program. She also advised that AARP is an Encore sponsor. Nora added that a new Encore Fairfield County program is starting and offered to provide more information to those interested.

Operation Fuel: Brenda informed the group that the Op Fuel program has been reopened. She said that the program has taken applications since

July 11th. There have been 542 requests for electric and gas and one oil request. Brenda stated that they are working closely with the Fuel Banks. She also told the group to save the date of October 12th for the annual all day conference.

Brenda thanked all the subcommittee members who met in June to discuss the Apprise Study. She advised that David Carroll was given all of the feedback and she also stated that the study is not final yet. She added that Linda Foreman recently submitted comments from DEEP.

LIHEAP: Chuck distributed the federal fiscal year 2015-2016 caseload report. Chuck stated that there was a sharp 8.57% decline in applications due to the unusually warm weather and the decline in the price of heating oil. Chuck stated that this led to fewer people needing assistance.

Carlene advised that the biggest drop was in the safety net. She also stated that the prior year was approximately \$11 million and this year it was \$1 million. She added that the excess funds are still under discussion. Most of the money will be a supplemental utility payment. A final decision on the funds will be made soon. Carlene noted that the excess funds are approximately \$22 million. Wendy stated that she has heard that municipal customers may have liens put on property due to nonpayment of utility bills. Wendy asked if this was the case in Connecticut and if some of this money might go to helping such people. Carlene responded that there could be discussion of this but there are restrictions. Brenda added that some of the municipal water districts use liens. Wendy explained that executing the lien by selling them to foreclosure companies can result in people losing their homes. Ruth stated that at NPU they do lien property but they go the extra mile before they lien. Brenda added that the largest municipals are using this practice. Frank informed the group that PURA has not heard from customers about this.

LIHEAP Subcommittee Recommendations: Carlene thanked Chuck and the rest of the staff as well as Kasia and Kelly and she also thanked LIEAB for its recommendations on the plan. Carlene stated that there are some changes in the plan. She advised that basic benefits increased by \$5 for vulnerable households. The furnace replacement program will now have \$1million set aside and they have had inquiries about servicing furnaces. Also, \$100,000 has been set aside for weatherization and health and safety and they will work with DEEP on this. Carlene advised that HHS had

expressed concern that services are not provided to all of those eligible. Thus, they will be providing rental assistance to Levels 4 and 5.

Kelly advised that the plan was submitted on August 1st and the legislature has 30 days to act on it. There will be a hearing the week of the 22nd -29th. Kelly asked people to come and support the plan. She stated that she would update everyone about the exact date. Nora stated that she would be on medical leave. Taren advised that she will see if she can present testimony for LIEAB. Wendy asked if it would be individual testimony or as a board. Edith moved that the board endorse the plan and provide testimony. Wendy seconded. The board approved with Taren abstaining.

Utility Matching Payment: UIL did not have an update. They stated they would provide information via email. Kathy stated that this year they have changed how they monitored Phase I and they allowed people to make up payments and catch up. They will update the numbers as these people are successful and are put back on the program. If customers make up payments they will get the match. Joy asked if this included below budgets and Kathy advised that below budgets are also included. Brenda asked if an Operation Fuel payment would be sufficient to make up the payment. Kathy said that it would if the amount is sufficient to cover missed payments. Nora asked if LIEAB members could get the MPP numbers in advance of meetings so we can follow along.

Veronica advised that Eddie has the information and he is not present. She stated that the information would be emailed.

Legislative Matters: Frank advised that the MPP docket is 16-07-01. He added that hearings are scheduled tentatively if needed and interrogatories have been issued. Frank also advised that UIL has submitted their responses which were due today. He advised that no one has requested a hearing at this point. Carlene stated that Mr. Carroll talked about the lack of information regarding the success of the MPP.

Frank advised that the UI rate case docket is 16-06-04. He added that there will be public hearings on September 8th and September 12th, The hearing on the 8th will be in Bridgeport and the hearing on the 12th will be in New Haven. Frank said public comment will be taken at these hearings and also at the hearings held at PURA. Nora asked what the percentage of increase requested was and Frank said he was uncertain. He advised that

customer notices will go out as billing inserts shortly and people who pay online will get an email. It will break down the application by customer class. Frank stated that many people now submit comment via email rather than appear in person.

Miscellaneous: Diane advised that there is an update regarding the RFP for CAAs to run weatherization programs at the local level. She stated that there were no surprises and the process will be wrapped up soon. Linda advised that the deadline is August 31st. DEEP will be working with DSS regarding how to use health and safety funding. Diane stated that in regard to the RF, it was mostly the same vendors.

Joy inquired about the Eversource credit reporting docket, 16-05-26. Frank advised that full credit bureau reporting has been requested. PURA will look at the pilot program and see where it will go from there. It was stated that UI has done this since before 2010. Frank stated that the commissioners agreed to a pilot program and the OCC is involved and they have concerns. Taren stated that she can provide OCC's comments and that the AG took a harder line. Frank informed the group that an Interim Decision will be issued to establish the information they are looking for. It will be issued as a Draft Decision and parties can comment on it. He added that it only affects residential customers. The hearings will be held next May and the program is set to kick off in August 2017. Kelly asked what the benefit was to the company and Taren responded that it is an inducement for customers to pay their bills. Joy stated that she has heard that bad credit is a barrier to employment for some people. Edith asked if UI could provide some information regarding how many people are impacted. Kathy responded that she does not know the numbers of how many customers are reported derogatorily. She added that anyone on a payment arrangement is reported as current. Veronica stated that the purpose is to promote on-time payment. She stated that Eversource is working with Brenda on a bill insert and she advised that she has a fact sheet that will go out to fuel banks and CAAs. Edith stated that it is such a difficult economic situation in Connecticut and that people are forced to make decisions about heating, eating and medications and that having such high utility rates makes it incredibly difficult. Joy asked if the company had thought of offering low interest loans. Veronica advised that this had not been discussed. She said that just like UI, if people are on payment arrangements they will not be reported negatively. Kelly asked if there was a state statute that allows this type of reporting and she was told that there

is no statute that says what can be reported. The law just states that there must be customer notification. Joy stated that it is unfortunate that the pilot is not with a limited number of customers. Veronica stated that she welcomes any ideas and she has been working with Brenda and she welcomes any CAAs to contact them. They are willing to come in and talk about this subject. Edith asked if PURA will be looking at both companies and Frank responded that they will only look at Eversource in the pilot. He stated they will look at the success of UI's program as part of its rate case. Wendy stated that she wished there was a mechanism to repair bad credit. Kathy advised that there is a repair and UI does it. Joy said she had a client whose parent used their SSN and the company did repair it. It took a bit of time but it was repaired.

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 2:51. Edith made the motion to adjourn and Taren seconded.

Next Meeting: The next meeting was scheduled for October 5, 2016.