

MINUTES
Low Income Energy Advisory Board
Wednesday, April 4, 2018
AARP
21 Oak Street
Capitol Place
Hartford, CT

Members/Designees/Others In Attendance: Carlene Taylor, DSS, Diane Duva, DEEP, Kasia Purciello, OPM, Nora Duncan, AARP, Linette Jones, DSS, Eddie Swift, Eversource, Wendy Wanchak, CT Legal Services, Inc., Frank Augeri, PURA, Ally Ayotte, PURA, Joanne Balaschak, NOI, Linda Foreman, DEEP, Gail Lucchina, PURA, Michele Lawson, UIL-CNG, Nadia De La Puente, Operation Fuel, Brenda Watson, Operation Fuel, Rhonda Evans, CAFCA, Taren O'Connor, OCC.

Welcome: The meeting was convened at 1:37 p.m. Nora Duncan chaired the meeting.

Approval of minutes of the February 7, 2018 meeting: Frank made the motion to approve the minutes and Wendy seconded. The February 7, 2018 minutes were approved with edits from Carlene.

LIEAB Update: Carlene distributed copies of the updates. She advised that delivery dates have been extended to 4/13/18 instead of 3/15/18. She stated that Governor Malloy issued a press release about this as well as the last day to apply for Energy Assistance.

Carlene stated that the caseload is 5.5% lower than the previous year. She also advised that part of the problem for the CAA, ABCD was that the Norwalk office was closed for a time due to flooding. They temporarily used the library but are now back at Water Street. Carlene further stated that New Opportunities was the only agency to have an increase from the prior year.

Carlene stated that the Omnibus Bill was approved and it added additional dollars for LIHEAP. She said that \$250 million more than last year is what has been allocated. Therefore, the sequester could be \$85 million. They still have not heard exactly what the final funding will be.

Linette stated that there was \$1 million set aside for the heating system program. She advised that there is no end date to the program and to date they have spent less than \$300 thousand. She added that there were 94 system replacements and ten repairs. Linette informed the Board that there were 18 denials: 10 incomplete applications, 5 multi-families, 2 foreclosures and 1 over the income limit.

Operation Fuel: Nora stated that Brenda is now the Executive Director of the Organization. Congratulations were extended to her and then Brenda introduced Nadia who is stepping into Brenda's former role. Brenda said they have many plans for the future and they are currently rebuilding the Board of Directors as they are done to nine members. She also advised that they are planning a legislative breakfast in the fall.

There is currently research being done on how to improve the Add a Dollar program. Another focus for the future will be to have an online application to help people who do not have any means of transportation or are not near a fuel bank or may simply be embarrassed to apply in person.

Brenda informed the group that MDC will fund a Water Assistance Program and they will be rolling that out soon. There will be a maximum of a \$500 grant. The company has committed \$44,000 at this point. Brenda wanted to thank the Save Our Water people who were instrumental in getting a Community Advocate established at MDC. Brenda is working with other companies such as Aquarion to improve their affordability programs.

Brenda also advised that they are contemplating doing a Water Utility Affordability Study. A final decision has not yet been made regarding this study.

Utility Matching Payment: Michelle emailed the information prior to the meeting. She advised that as of 3/31/18 the enrollment was as follows:

Electric	3,086
CNG	12,949
SCG	12,710

Michelle stated that the end of the moratorium is approaching and they will start getting calls. She advised that the Company called hardship customers in March. They only got a 2% response rate.

Eddie provided information for Eversource as follows:

Electric 31,054 enrolled in MPP (16,002 electric and 15,052 on the gas side.

There were 3,853 electric below budgets and 1,646 on the gas side.

Eddie stated that Eversource also contacted all customers to tell them the moratorium is ending and they will research the success rate of this effort.

Carlene asked Eddie about deposits and he stated that they are required of new customers or existing customers if they've been shut off. Frank added that if there have been three delinquent billing cycles they can also require a deposit but companies don't typically do this. Frank stated that hardship customers are exempt from a deposit.

Carlene explained that she got a call from someone who was coded hardship but her bill included a deposit. Carlene also asked about relocated hurricane evacuees. Eddie advised that he would speak with Carlene offline.

WAP Update: Diane reported that they apply to the federal government on an annual basis. They will use the same service areas and the same CAA network. She advised that the estimated funding for FY 2018 is \$3,639,882 and the statewide unit goal is 603. Diane stated that the state is broken into regions so they can meet regional goals and distribute the funds equitably. She advised that the public hearing will be April 19th at Ten Franklin Square in New Britain and comments will be accepted through May 3rd. Wendy asked what happened to the ratepayer energy efficiency funds and Diane advised that the funding was diverted to close a budget gap. Brenda and Diane advised that Lonnie Reed has introduced Bill 5165 to restore the funding but they are not sure if this bill will advance. Wendy mentioned the ripple effect of people who were going to be trained in these energy efficiency jobs and now they will be laid off and the state will have costs tied to the loss of employment. She stated that home energy employment will be devastated. Diane said that energy efficiency is an economy driver and every dollar invested results in \$7 to the Connecticut economy. Wendy says this is an ongoing situation every year in Connecticut and some contractors are relocating to Massachusetts due to this situation.

Frank mentioned Docket 18-04-25. He stated that DEEP is submitting a letter to advocate for reestablishing funding. Wendy stated that everyone can voice their opinion and she'd like to advocate for this. Frank advised that the docket schedule shows it will not wrap up until November.

Subcommittee Updates: Wendy advised that the Policy Subcommittee talked about how CT has the highest rates in the lower 48. She stated that low income households are paying an average of 11% for energy and in some cases as high as 50%. The Governor of New York adopted an initiative to lower the percentage of income that low income people pay for energy. The subcommittee wants to see Connecticut adopt such a policy. Wendy advised that they want to establish a task force. She added that the draft states the situation is getting worse and not better. They want to submit this draft to Governor Malloy. At this point Diane and Carlene have made edits and further edits are being made. Wendy said the goal is to close the energy affordability gap which is an overarching goal of the Comprehensive Energy Strategy.

Taren asked about providing feedback and Wendy replied that this is a starting point but everyone will have the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft. Nora asked for comments in the next three or four weeks. Wendy added that the draft can then be discussed at the June meeting. Frank stated that he might have to abstain. He advised that some of the issues might be docketed matters. Taren said the same would be true for her. Nora called for voting and non-voting member comments to be submitted by April 25th. She stated that the revised draft would be sent out to the full group by May 25th. It will be on the June agenda for a vote.

Nora advised that Joy was not present to discuss the LIHEAP subcommittee's work. She stated that the public hearing is not being held until August so the matter could be dealt with at the June meeting. Carlene advised that her agency needs specific information to report to the feds regarding the Matching Payment Program and they have to report on its success rate. Eddie said the info is currently not done by community action agency but rather by zip code. Eddie and Frank stated that the info is the annual report by zip code and does not identify the actual participants.

Nora stated that there should be some sort of coordinated outreach effort. She advised that it does not have to be an in-person event but instead could be a coordinated social media event. The goal would be to make sure people are aware of the opportunity to make payment arrangements on their accounts.

Nora called for a vote. Frank made a Motion to accept the proposals made on the draft and sent out yesterday. Wendy seconded . The Motion was passed.

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 3:27 p.m. Frank made the motion and Taren seconded.

Next Meeting: The next meeting is scheduled for August 1, 2018.