

MINUTES

Low Income Energy Advisory Board
Wednesday, December 4, 2019
HRA/Human Resources Agency
75 Charter Oak Ave
Hartford, CT

Members/Designees/Others In Attendance: Gail Lucchina, PURA, Nora Duncan, AARP, Brenda Watson, Operation Fuel, Carlene Taylor, DSS, Linda Foremen, DEEP, Nora Benson, Eversource, Wendy Wanchak, CT Legal Services, Deb Polun, CAFCA, Kate Quigley, 211, Frank Augeri, PURA, Joanne Balaschak, NOI, Kathy Wasilnak, UI, Nancy Joaquim, PURA, Alyson Ayotte, PURA.

Welcome: The meeting was convened at 1:34 p.m. Nora chaired the meeting.

Approval of minutes of the October 2nd meeting: Wendy moved to approve the minutes with edits and Deb seconded. Ruth abstained. Minutes approved with the corrections.

APPOINTMENT OF NEW CHAIR: Nora advised that she will stay on as a member representing AARP. She stated that Taren will serve as the new chairperson and Brenda will be vice-chair. Frank made the motion to approve these officers and Kathy W. seconded. The vote was unanimous approval. Nora officially welcomed the new chair and vice-chair.

LIHEAP: Carlene circulated the latest information. She advised that there were almost 56,000 applications.

Carlene stated that ABCD was going through some personnel changes. They have a new director of Personnel so they are getting up to speed. She also noted that some agencies have struggled with finding staff.

Carlene informed the group that fuel deliveries have already paid out \$24 million. Some households have already had crisis deliveries. She added that households below Level 5 may be eligible for safety nets benefits and she stated that there is a process for this. She advised that eligible households can have up to three safety nets. The non-vulnerable

households can get up to two safety nets. She added that there is concern that resources may run out in December but those people may be able to receive funds from Operation Fuel.

HHS has stated that Connecticut may get 90% of the allotment they expected. Carlene advised that she has written to HHS but has not yet gotten a response.

Wendy informed the group that a client went to a Community Action Agency and asked about the Clean, Tune and Test program and the staff person knew nothing about the program. Wendy noted that staff members should have a script they can refer to with a checklist they should go through at each appointment. She stated that it's hard to know who is missing out on opportunities they qualify for. Carlene advised that she would look into the matter.

Carlene advised that they are in the final stages of the online application process. The concern is whether or not applicants will provide all the information necessary to complete the application. She noted that it should be up and running within a month. Kate asked Carlene to advise her when it is all set.

Operation Fuel: Brenda stated that as of October they had served over 1500 households. She added that on Monday the Winter/Spring Program opened. She said the public intake process has been delayed. The vendor has not been able to deliver as promised so they are looking at other vendors.

She informed the group that MDC has provided 104 grants since April and noted that they received \$20 thousand from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving and this money will cover a 29 town area. Brenda also advised that 13 repairs and replacements had been done.

MPP: Kathy sent out UI's data. She provided MPP data for 2018 and 2019. Wendy noted that it is difficult to determine what the document tells us.

Nora from Eversource provided info regarding MPP and NUstart. Veronica provided information to the group and stated that she previously was an outreach specialist. She stated that they look at what is working and what

is not and they have met with Carlene several times. She added that some customers did not know they have to apply for Energy Assistance first. They have for the first time put up billboards and they are sending out a bill insert. She stated that all the information is in English and Spanish.

Nora advised Wendy that she would provide more in depth information regarding MPP percentages.

Legislative Matters and Misc: Frank advised that the Draft Decision in 18-06-02 proposed that hardship customers be placed on Standard Service. Oral Arguments are on the 11th or 12th.

Frank stated that Bonnie attended the hearing on Energy Affordability he noted that it involves grid modernization and energy affordability. Wendy said it's a good opportunity to talk about barriers to energy affordability. It was televised. Linda Foreman noted that there were very good presentations by Operation Fuel, DSS and nonprofit organizations. She stated that it was a very good dialogue.

Brenda advised that she will be putting together the subcommittee for statute review.

Frank stated that we will look into how to increase MPP success rates in certain areas of the state and they will focus on a small area first.

Nancy stated that we want to get utilities to partner with DSS. She noted that they do share information in Massachusetts. She asked if there is a way to get information and auto enroll people. Brenda noted that it is happening in other parts of the country and she wishes it could be done instead of concentrating on why it can't. Wendy agreed and said it should not have taken ten years with no results. Frank said let's look at the issues and decide where to start. He said some of the issues will have a cost factor. We have to figure out where to get resources. Wendy suggested going to towns like Willimantic and doing a private/public partnership. Nora said that is how AARP does public engagement. Bonnie said the goal is to get people into the programs. Letting them know they exist.

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 3:21. Wendy made the Motion to Adjourn and Frank seconded.

Next Meeting: The next meeting was scheduled for April 7th.