

Low-Income Energy Advisory Board Meeting

Wednesday, December 1, 2021 1:30 PM – 3:00 PM (EDT)

1. Call to Order

Vice Chairperson Wendy Wanchak called the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m. Remote meeting held via Microsoft Teams.

2. Attendance

Members Present: *Wendy Wanchack, Nora Duncan, Rosemary Lopez, Christian Herb, Nickey Kollie, Joy Hollister, Theresa Washington, Joanne Whistnant, Ruth Swift, Tyra Peluso, Tonya Anderson, Frank Augeri, Kathleen Wasilnak, Nicole Lawton, Victoria Hackett, Carlene Taylor, Danielle Palladino, Owen Rood.*

Members Absent: *Brenda Watson, Yveson Cassamajor, Nelida Handy, Lisa Tepper-Bates, Deb Polun*

Host: *Starley Arias, Claire Sickinger*

Guests: *Lissette Andino, Alyson Ayotte, Darlene Yule, Joanne Balachak Ashley Marshall, Linette Pisani, Rhonda Evans, Kimberly White.*

3. Minutes for Approval

Minutes for Wednesday, October 6, 2021

Motion by: Nora Duncan

Second by: Tyra Peluso

Abstained: Ruth Swift

Opposed by: none

4. Old Business/ Program Updates

LIHEAP/CEAP Update: Carlene Taylor & Linette Pisani

Application Data Overview August 2 – November 26, 2021: Linette Pisani

- Year to date total 46,069 applications taken
 - 33,255 applications approved
 - 7,712 applications denied.
 - 5,102 applications pending.
- 1,092 Crisis Assistance benefits awarded
- 1 Safety Net Assistance provided.

Wendy Wanchak: Are you aware of any backlog with the Community Action Agencies in processing applications at this point?

Linette Pisani: I haven't heard of any backlog, but there is a high number of pending applications that they are working on.

Joy Hollister provided feedback from two (2) towns stating that emergency authorizations are taking more than eighteen (18) hours and applications are not being approved within forty-five (45) days.

Linette Pisani asked Joy to send the information via email in order to follow up with the agencies.

Carlene Taylor asked Joy to please inform DSS if more concerns arise and ask the towns to contact DSS as well.

Carlene Taylor stated that all the contracts have been executed and that all the agencies would be receiving their funds by tomorrow December 2, 2021.

Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP): Carlene Taylor

- We have a website for LIHWAP and the application is there.
- We have combined the application process for all energy and LIHWAP programs and are still going through the process to make sure everything works.
- We have data from the burden questions asked in August for households that were in danger of having their water disconnected or were disconnected. Houses that indicated disconnection or in danger of disconnection will be contacted to avoid having another application if they have applied for energy assistance.
- HHS guidelines have three (3) priorities on how to process household request in drinking water and waste water assistance.
 - Priority one (1): Households that have been disconnected
 - Priority two (2): Households with arrearages
 - Priority three (3): Households with large water bill.
- Payments are only submitted to Vendors and vendor documents have to be included with the application.
- Maximum benefit will be \$1,000 for drinking and waste water.

Wendy Wanchack: Are individuals applying for energy assistance being asked about water issues?

Carlene Taylor: Yes! They are being asked if they are responsible for paying for their water or waste water and have been disconnected or have an arrearage. At some point the agencies will reach out to the individual to get a copy of their water bill.

Joy Hollister: Have the rights and responsibilities form been updated and sent out yet?

Carlene Taylor: The initial forms were sent out after the public hearing. We recently combined the rights forms to cover deliverable fuel, utilities and water and both websites have been updated.

Operation Fuel Update: Tonya Anderson

- Summer to Fall program ending October 29, 2021, served 2,575 households
- A brief training with Eversource and UI was held yesterday and the Winter to Spring program is set to begin next week, Monday December 6, 2021 and will go until May 27, 2022.
- I have been visiting with fuel banks to get feedback on how we can better service the fuel banks and the customers.

Wendy Wanchack: How many fuel banks are there now?

Tonya Anderson: There are 57 fuel banks.

Matching Payment Program Update:

Eversource LIHEAB Data October 2021: Theresa Washington

- MPP Initial Phase I Matches: \$7.5 Million
- New Start Forgiveness January 1- October 31: \$18.89 Million
- Active MPP with balance: 30,945 total customers with balance over \$45.1 Million.

Wendy Wanchak: You suggested that the Unite CT dollars are helping with the New Start customers. Can you explain that process?

Theresa Washington: Unite CT payments post as customer payments to the account. If the customer is enrolled in New Start the payment posts to their account and they get the forgiveness that is allotted to 1/12 of the enrolled balance. If it covered multiple payments then it got multiple forgiveness.

Carlene Taylor: Would that have applied to supplemental payments made?

Theresa Washington: The supplemental is energy assistance which is separate so no match is made to those.

AVANGRID MPP Data October 2021: Kathleen Wasilnak

- Phase 2 MPP: 3,961 customers; matched \$1.3 Million
- Auto Arrearage Program: 19,068 customers total between UI, CNG and SGC.
- MaPP program UI: 5,843 customers; total balance of \$10.3 Million
- Active COVID Payment Arrangements: 19,751 customers; total balance \$22.46 Million

Wendy Wanchak: Have these customer been notified about the Unite CT funds.

Kathleen Wasilnak: Yes, we have been doing robo-calls. We have submitted files to Unite CT for balances totaling \$1.4 Million and are waiting for those funds.

Carlene Taylor: Is there any way that a list could be generated for the appropriate Community Action Agency so that they could reach out to those individuals.

Kathleen Wasilnak stated customers are informed upon enrollment and letters are sent out. Kathleen stated that information sharing with agencies will need to be further explored and will follow up with Carlene.

Theresa Washington stated that Eversource kicked off an automated call campaign welcoming individuals to the program and that email alerts and text message alerts are now available.

PURA Dockets: Frank Augeri

Frank commented that there was a settlement on the Clearview Case and no updates on the RE11 Energy affordability cases. Wendy Wanchack asked about the sub-metering docket and Frank stated that he would follow up with the group.

5. New Business

Voting of the Bylaws Wendy Wanchak:

- Thank you those who had submitted comments, questions or suggestions.
- We do not have the platform to electronically vote at meetings.
- There are no requirements or mandates for DEEP to take minutes at Committee meetings in the general statutes.
- The names of the LIEAB members are listed in Article I of the bylaws as they appear in the statute.
- The committee has decided that not to limit agenda items at this time but it is subject to change.
- The statute does not mandate that notice of meetings be published on other websites.

Wendy Wanchak opened the floor for additional questions.

Theresa Washington: How do the functions of LIHEAP interact with the Energy Efficiency Board?

Wendy Wanchak: I think that this is a discussion that this group should have. I am not sure how LIEAB was tasked with energy efficiency. That statutes are dated and it requires a broader discussion about how we could do a better job of advising on about energy assistance programs, utility rates, the impact on low income households and other things.

Motion to Adopt the Bylaws.

Motion by: Ruth Swift

Second by: Chris Herb

Opposed by: None

Abstained by: None

Nominate and Vote for Chair:

The board opted to create a nominating committee. Chris Herb, Nora Duncan, and Danielle Palladino volunteered to work on it with Wendy Wanchak and Brenda Watson on the committee.

This agenda item was moved to the next meeting on February 2, 2021.

6. Public Comments

Theresa Washington asked if the board has documented or listed legislative items that require change; highlighting that information sharing has been a recurring issue for the board and the agencies that participate on it.

Wendy Wanchak responded that there are not any list that she is aware of made a motion for the formation of a committee to investigate perspective legislation affecting low income energy clients and legislative changes to functions of the board.

Ruth Swift, Chris Herb, Tyra Peluso, and Wendy Wanchak volunteered for the committee. Wendy will serve as Chair.

Motion by: Wendy Wanchak

Second by: Ruth Swift

Opposed by: None

Abstained by: None

7. Adjournment

Motion by: Wendy Wanchak

Second by: Ruth Swift

Opposed by: None

Abstained by: None