

## LIEAB Minutes April 7, 2021

### **Meeting Attendees:**

Jake Marin, Brendan Thomas, Michael, Wendy Wanchak, Ally Ayotte, Amy McLean, Brenda Watson, Carlene Taylor, Chris Herb, Clair Sickinger, Danielle Palladino, Darlene, Deb Polun, Ellen Thon, Fowle BD, Frank Augeri, Gannon Long, James Correira, Joe Reed, Joy Hollister, Kathy, Kim White, Laura Bozzi, Leticia Colon de Mejas, Linette Pisani, Nancy J, Nelida Handy, Nickey Kollie, Nicole Lawton, Nora Duncan, Peter Millan, Richard Faesy, Ron Araujo, Rose Croog, Rosemary Lopez, Ruth Swift, Sam D, Stephen Cowell, Tasha Perreault, Theresa Washington, Whist J, Michael Li, Cassandra Norfleet-Johnson, Linette P, Brian Biernat, Jeff Brown, Joanne Balaschak

### **Approval of the March minutes**

Motion to approve March Meeting minutes by Kathy

Motion Second by Deb

### **Presentation on Heat Pumps by Jake Marin, VEIC**

What is the average percentage of energy use for heating & hot water in a single family use aside from heat pump consumption?

I don't know that # from the top of my head but I know it is well over 50%

Regarding deployment in VT - has that mostly been single-family homes, or also multi families/ apartment buildings? Is this an effective way to keep multiple housing units in the same building to be more comfortable through heat pumps?

It is a mix. We do see a lot of multifamily homes and commercial buildings. Multifamily could be a little tricky because of the ways utilities are paid. If the individual applicant is paying their own elect. You have to be careful if the housing authority then you would have to put it on a house meter or on roofs.

Can you help us think about balancing the costs of initial installation against future yearly savings? How long to payback point?

Yeah! It's really about the econ of the install. The pay back or ROI depends on the cost of fuel offsets and other factors such as heating load covered by the heat pump.

### **Presentation on Biofuels by Chris Herb & Nickey Kollie CEMA**

Nickey Kollie presents on Bioheat and biodiesel

The purpose is provide information about the changes in relations to cleanliness and price on about heating oil and illustrate how Bioheat in Connecticut is a clean alternative to traditional fuels

Major challenge is getting recognition as a renewable source of energy due to lack of awareness and education.

Renewable fuels include wind, solar and biomass.

Biodiesel is made from plant oils, animal fats or recycled restaurant oils.

The benefits of ultra-low sulfur heating oil are *lower maintenance, improved efficiency and cleaner fuel.*

Bioheat is a combination of 15ppm home heating oil blended with a minimum of 2% biodiesel.

A study conducted by UCONN concluded that most homes and businesses in the state use Bioheat

Bioheat advantages: extends the life of heating equipment, does not require system modifications, burns cleaner and more efficient than conventional heating oil, and creates jobs in Connecticut.

Chris Herb presents on research being conducted on liquid fuels

Ethyl levulinate is in the research phase as a drop in fuel.

Bioheat does not require ratepayer to contribution or taxpayers to contribute.

Q: How many homes are heated with Bio fuel from fryers in CT? How easy it to convert to this fuel vs Gas or oil?

A: There is no requirement to do any conversion. We do believe with the carbon dioxide reduction laws in the future natural gas customers will have to switch to an alternative technology such as heat pumps or biodiesel. There is not a good tracking system; we know the indigenous fuel produced in Connecticut is the recycled cooking greases and animal fat. We estimate the vast majority of the fuel used today is the restaurant cooking grease types that comes from restaurant.

Q. What is the blend of biofuels as a percent of all fuel oil sold in CT?

A. The only number I can validate is the one from UCONN that was a 7% blend. In 2015, I could not do this presentation for you because we were still learning this information ourselves. We are going to renew the study to get a more accurate number.

Q. Where will the used cooking oil and other feed stocks come from to provide the blends in HB 6412?

A. Right now the current national nameplate capacity production for biodiesel is over 2.5 billion gallons. There is an adequate amount of supply to accommodate Connecticut laws, and there are mandates in Rhode Island and New York City and those are expanding. There is no concern on supplying.

### **LIEAB 2021/2022 Recommendations Update – Joy Hollister**

Joy provided a brief overview of the recommendations from the LIHEAP Sub-committee.

Recommendations made to DSS

- Energy Assistance Application to be integrated into an online application process
- Removal of the asset test or alternatively removal of the IRA's from the asset test for eligibility
- Maintain the income guidelines and determine fixed income guidelines
- Closely mirror the 3 tier level system that we currently have been using

Q. Chris Herb: The asset test is not a part of the federal rules? That is subject to change?

A. Joy Hollister: Yeah! We are in the minority of states that require an asset test. There are seven of us in total but with the relaxation of the program, we are testing it out. We hope that it will be a benefit to not include the asset test.

#### Recommendation to the utilities

- LIEAB recommends a Community call-in Number
- Every utility have a utility portal with instructional manuals for arrearage forgiveness and MPP
- Provide the numbers of participants in the MPP and which households are matched.
- Provide CAA's and towns with detailed information on participants who received, completed or failed MPP

#### Recommendations for Outreach

- LIEAB recommends that a portion of LIHEAP funds go toward supporting a coordinated outreach effort in the fall.

#### Recommendations for Energy Efficiency (Conservation) Investment

- Asking for 2 million for emergency furnace repairs and replacements
- Asking for 2 million to address health and safety barriers (DEEP recommendation)

#### Recommendation for Technology

- Asking for 1 million to develop technology services and to support the need for an interface between energy assistance and weatherization and the other utility providers.

Motion to accept the recommendations made by the LIHEAP Sub-committee made by Wendy. Second by Chris Herb.

Q. Amy McLean: What total amount money requested for LIHEAP each year? And what do you get?

A. Carlene Taylor: Allocations for 2021 program year is currently \$74 million dollars, which is about what we received last year before we received the CARES Act funding of \$14 million dollars. We are aware that through the Rescue Act \$4.5 billion dollars was allocated through LIHEAP. We are still waiting for guidance from HHS. We understand that our total allocations would be 80 million dollars which would need to be expended by September of 2022.

Q. Stephen Cowell: Is there a plan and impact analysis of the significantly added funding through the recent federal legislation-both LIHEAP and both Homeowner and rental assistance?

A. Carlene Taylor: I can't speak to homeowner rental assistance per say because another state agency is administrating those programs. As I mentioned we are still waiting for guidance regarding the funding we are expecting to receive from HHS for LIHEAP. We also understand that there will be funding that will be administrated through LIHEAP for drinking water and waste programs but we are also waiting on guidance for those fund.

A. Wendy: under the Rescue Act. \$225 million dollars was allocated to Connecticut for housing preservation eviction prevention. There is a portion of that money dedicated to utility arrearage payments. The details of the plan are being worked out through PURA, DEEP, the Department of

Housing and other entities but their application process is ongoing and the program is called Unite CT. You can access it through the Department of Housing.

Q. Leticia Colon: Additional funds will be allocated to LIHEAP. As the acting Commissioner of Latino Affairs... I am interested in how we can use these funds to LIFT our communities giving a hand up vs a Hand out. This is one of our policy tenants for 2021.

A. Carlene Taylor: There are 16 assurances that LIHEAP has to adhere to regarding the administration of the program. So, we have to follow those 16 assurances regarding the allocations and expenditures of those funds.

Brenda: We had a motion on the floor, are there any more discussions of the 2022 plan?

Carlene: Just for clarification, these are recommendations that are being voted on to present to the DSS and OPM for consideration because the agenda said it was to vote on the plan.

Brenda: Correct.

Joy: I think the same person you were referring the question before is asking can the funds be used to help connect our communities to support removal of housing barriers that ham them. I think that goes under energy efficiency recommendation B: we are adjusting up to 2 million for health and safety barrier.

Brenda: That is correct.

Brenda took a vote on the recommendations. All voting members voted in approval of the recommendations.

Brenda asked Carlene what the next steps are.

Carlene Taylor explained the next steps are for the chair to send the recommendation to the Secretary of OPM and the Commissioner of DSS for their consideration.

### **Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) update – Brian Biernat**

Brian provided an overview of the WAP 2021 program year and requested feedback from the board members for the upcoming program year.

#### **WAP Program Updates for PY 21**

- Administration Budget: Administration increase from 10% to 15%. Grantee (DEEP) receives no more than 7.55 and the sub-grantees (CRT & NOI) receive no less than 7.5%
- Rolling Re-weatherization Date: Homes that received weatherization services 15 or more years ago from WAP, LIHEAP, HUD or USDA are now eligible for re-weatherization by WAP.
- Other Notable State Plan Changes: V.7 Health & Safety Plan, V.8.4 Training and Technical Assistance Approach and Activities, and V.9 Energy Crisis and Disaster Plan (COVID-19 Updates)

Brian explained that the total budget for the PY21 application is \$13 million dollars due to carryovers from PY17 & PY 18 and the DOE allocations for the PY19-PY21 three year budget plan.

The total available funds of \$10 million was determined by subtracting the PY19 and PY20 total spending from the application budget.

Brian explained how the budget is allocated to the sub-grantees by the total number of expected units served in each state region.

Sub-grantee/State Region	Expected units	Estimated Total Allocation
CRT: Region 1	193	\$1,952,756
CRT: Region 2	205	\$2,071,034
NOI: Region 3	97	\$953,056
NOI: Region 4	101	\$989,433
NOI: Region 5	246	\$2,418,109

The statewide unit goal is 842 and the estimated total Sub-grantee Allocation is \$8,384,390

A Public Hearing on the PY21 CT WAP State Plan is scheduled for April 13, 2021 from 6:00 to 7:00 PM, and the written comments period ends April 27, 2021 at 4:00 PM.

Q. Chris Herb: I understand the need for the admin budget increase for the CAA's, but can you explain why DEEP needs additional admin dollars? What does DEEP use those dollars for? and what is the need to increase them?

A. Brian Biernat: What I presented was what the federal regulation was looking at. We are still determining what the exact amount that DEEP will be taking. I think the general plan is to not increase the DEEP administration budget per say and actually dedicate more than that 7.5% to the sub-grantees to administer the program. Federal regulation says we can't take more than 7.5 but we can take less and that is our goal to provide more to the sub-grantees.

Q. Deb Polun: The program year for weatherization is July through June and the program year for LIHEAP starts in October. What is the connection and timeline between the two programs? And do you have to go before the legislator?

A. Brian Biernat: For WAP we don't typically have to go before the legislator. Sometimes they ask questions during the LIHEAP period regarding WAP. That's where it can get confusing but we are not required to go before the legislator. It's administered by our agency as the grantee from DOE and that is why we have a different program year from LIHEAP because it comes from DOE.

A. Carlene Taylor: The Federal Fiscal year start October 1- September 30. Most states follow that cycle for LIHEAP. Weatherization have more flexibility for how they want to run their program cycle. Connecticut has chosen to run it from July to June.

Q. Deb Polun: So even though it is a federal program they can go based on the State fiscal year?

A. Brian Biernat. Right! Nationally some states start April 1, some start in June and I believe there is a third start date out there as well. It helps the program officers who oversee the program and review the program if they do not get 54 applications, including the territories all at the same time by using different start dates.

## **CEAP Update – Carlene Taylor & Linette Pisani**

Linette provided an overview of the current LIHEAP numbers

- 80,488 applications taken
- 54,614 approved

Currently seeing an increase in applications and a decrease in denials. Expecting to see a larger increase in approval of applications based on data provide by the community action agencies.

Heating system repair and replacements update

- 149 oil tank, water heater system repairs approved by DSS
- 26 did not require DSS approval
- 303 clean tune and test for the year
- Expenditure estimated to be just under \$860,000

Carlene provided an overview on the changes made to the LIHEAP program this year

In response to the public health, emergency two rounds of changes were made. The first December, which the information was distributed in the previous meeting.

Focusing on the second set of changes made in March

1. We suspended the liquid assets test, making it easier for eligibility.
2. We suspended the risk assessment and provided households with an additional safety net
3. If a household was on social security or pension income for the last couple of years, we told the agencies to use that income to determine the eligibility of the household.

On Monday April 12, we are rolling out a bulk of eligibility that would make 50% of denied applications eligible for benefits.

Q. People who were denied a safety net prior to this change, they now can request a safety net?

A. Carlene Taylor: Yes! Anyone who was previously denied a safety net because of the risk assessment, the risk assessment is now suspended. In addition fuel delivery has been extended to May 20<sup>th</sup> and the application intake has been extended to June 15. The level 5 households will also qualify for a safety net.

Q. Amy McLean: Do you happen to know if the way that this is now being changed is going to make it more streamline for other types of social service programs?

A. Carlene Taylor: Part of the issues is that different programs have different guidelines and LIHEAP has to abide to those 16 assurances

Amy McLean: I think is great you're going in that direction. I think that one of the goals of the energy efficiency programs is if you are eligible for this, you are automatically eligible for that.

Carlene Taylor: I think you would have to look at all the requirements for all of the programs and have the advocacy groups determine what is uniform.

### **Operation Fuel Update – Brenda Watson**

Brenda provided an update on the status of the program.

We are coming to a slow decent as our program comes to a close at the end of May. We served over 4,000 households for energy including electricity, fuel delivery and natural gas.

We served 330 households with water utility assistance, an increase from las year.

We provided \$2.7 million in grant but are expecting a little over 3 million. These numbers are still pending but will have final numbers in June.

### **Eversource Update – Theresa Washington**

Theresa provided an update on the Matching Payment Program and Nustart Program.

We have just over 29 thousand customers enrolled between the electric and gas side for the MPP. They have balances just over \$53 million.

Nustart enrollment is down compare to the previous year, there has been more balance forgiveness at \$33 thousand.

There was a regulatory motion that was filed for auto enrollment specific to the Nustart program. For the MPP it is continued outreach for the program.

### **Avangrid Update – Kathy**

Kathy provided an update on the MPP program.

UI has a little over 2900 customers enrolled with balances totaling \$5.6 million

CNG has almost 8500 enrolled with balances approximately 7.8 million

SCG has almost 8200 customers for about \$8.2 million.

For the MAPP update, UI has 4200 customer for approximately \$7.5 million

COVID-19/ MPP has almost 12,000 customers across the 3 companies, enrolled between commercial and residential for about \$14 million

### **Public Comments**

This is a new section in the meetings.

Charles Rosenberger Save the Sound: Applauded the board for the \$2 million dollars allotted toward the health and safety barriers.

Laura Bozzi Yale Climate Change and Health: Expressed that she was pleased with the additions for cooling benefits and glad that it could be couple with weatherization and heat pumps.

Leticia Colon Commission on Latino Affairs: Thank the board for making changes to plan to remove barriers to LMI households. Would like to see metrics and report outs to expand those efforts.

Sam Genaoski CR Club: Thanked the board for the work on the plan and the coordination on how to address the health and safety barriers.

Deb Polun: What is the process for developing the meeting agenda?

Brenda Watson: There really wasn't a process but I inherited an agenda and it's been a rinse and repeat of previous meetings. So, I decided to get creative and make these meeting more than just reporting numbers and making it more educational. Clearly, there is an interest from the public so we want everyone to be involved. As far as the process, there really isn't one, which allows for flexibility.

Deb Polun made a motion to adjourn. Nicole Lawton Second.

Brenda requested that all the presentation slide and meeting minutes for this meeting and February meeting be sent in advance of the June meeting.