

Low Income Energy Advisory Board Meeting

Wednesday October 4 2023, 1:34pm-2:32pm

Minutes (Approved)

Members in attendance: Claire E. Coleman (Chair), Nora Duncan (Vice Chair), , Frank M. Augieri Jr. (designee for Marissa Gillet), Jessica Gouveia (designee for Claire E. Coleman), Kenya Van Eyken(designee for (Op Fuel), Laura Robidoux (designee for Infoline) Katie Wilt, Matthew Dillon (Designee for Rafie Podolsky) Ruth Swift, Nikey Kollie (designee for Christian Herb), Rich Hanratty , Bonnie Roswig, Alicia Dolce, Rhonda Evans, Victoria Hackett (designee for Katie Dykes), Cassandra Norfleet-Johnson (designee for Andrea Barton Reeves) , Danielle Palladino (designee Zani Imetovski) Yessenia Santiago-Bejarano

Absent: Lisa Rosso, Jaime Soto, Theresa Washington, Angel Battle, Greg Kirschner

Agenda Item	Discussion	Action Steps
1. Roll call	Y. Santiago-Bejarano- collected via chat.	Implemented suggestion from the survey, attendees wrote their attendance in the chat feature of the Zoom call.
2. Approve minutes	Motion by Rich Hanratty to correct September 14, 2023, Minutes indicating he was marked both absent and present, to absent only.	Approval of Minutes as amended by Rich Hanratty with the Motion by Kathleen Wasilnack and second by Victoria Hackett.
3. Public comments	No members of the public presented comments.	
4. Program Updates a. LIHEAP b. Operation Fuel c. Eversource d. Avangrid	a. LIHEAP- (report by Cassandra Norfleet Johnson, DSS) there are three weeks of CEAP Reports, from September 9th through September 23 rd . Pointed out the 1st and 2 nd report has the same dates for YTD for 2022 and 2023 as they did not run the week 1 of this year towards last year. The numbers in week one of this year in comparison to last years were lower due to the approval of the online application. There was an increase in participants due to the online application reflecting that it is working, and it is reducing the administrative burden. On the date of the report from 9/16 the applications approved was a 34% increase which is a 34% change as the agencies are doing a fabulous job. DSS put in a request to the CAA's if they are aware of the online application that they can start educating the public to use the website where they can start applying for CEAP online. Page two of the third report	

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	<p>reflects the year-to-date deliverables in addition to incomplete applications. Incomplete applications account for any missing information from the application. The CAA will send out a letter to the applicant and if there is no response from the applicant, the CAA can close this application out after a certain number of days. The other column reflects two or more missing items on the applications for instance if an application was completed via the telephone the applicant is then mailed the application to sign however, the applicant did not return the completed signed application. We are trying to capture more items for the two or more missing items in this area. See reports here</p> <p>Q: (Kathleen Wasilnack) Is there a website to guide the applicants.?</p> <p>A: (Cassandra Norfleet Johnson, DSS) I will drop the website link in the chat. Cassandra Norfleet-Johnson also provided a live demonstration on where the applicants can go for the application process, see link for the online application.</p> <p>b. Operation Fuel- (presented by Kenya Van Eyken) Report was reviewed indicating over \$1 million of the budget has been spent with the largest number of monies going to the electricity assistance. The program is closing this Friday by 5:00 PM, end of business day as they have received over 3,000 applications. There is consideration of reducing the seasonal window for applications as there has been an increase in demand. Moving forward the priority of applications will be given to those who have shut off notices and those of vulnerable populations. Operation fuel will resume accepting</p>	

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	<p>applications on January 2nd of 2024. Operation fuel also created a specific e-mail for fuel vendors to submit “oil tickets” so vendors can receive payments quicker or troubleshoot any issues. Operation fuel is happy to announce that they have hired two more staff members to their team, a program operations specialist who can assist with any technical glitches that they have with their data system Hancock. Both the members that were hired are bilingual staff. See report here.</p> <p>Q: (Chairwoman Claire Coleman) there's \$1 million and you're closing on Friday, what is the total budget to be spent?</p> <p>A: (Kenya Van Eyken) We do not want to go over the \$2 million budget that is in place as they want to have a surplus of funds for next year. This does not account for the utilities money that was spent in the prior year, the \$2 million budget is the regular budget for this year.</p> <p>Q: (Katie Wilt)- if the application is submitted by end of business on Friday will it still be processed?</p> <p>A: (Kenya Van Eyken) Yes. Also, operation fuel is working with Hancock to change any of the status symbols in the system to identify vulnerable populations.</p> <p>c. Eversource presented by Joanne Whistnant: indicating that there was an increase in applicants for the MPP program, it has overall doubled in the amount of applicants and recipients for this program. See report here.</p> <p>Q: (Chairwoman Claire Coleman) Will the low-income discount rate numbers be presented in the future reports by Eversource?</p> <p>A: (Joanne Whistnant) Yes, we're excited to be able to present this data.</p>	

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	<p>Q: (Katie Wilt) will there be training for the low-income discount rate for those in the municipality area?</p> <p>A: (Joanne Whistnant) Yes, there has been training as far as the low income discount rate is concerned, there will also be training opportunities for any municipalities who have not had it. I will get it added to the list of trainings as they're actively working with other municipal municipalities regarding current portal issues that are related to the low-income discount rate.</p> <p>Comment: (Kathleen Wasilnack, UI) also indicated that utilities will share their e-mail as well to provide further information on training with regards to UI.</p> <p>d. Avangrid (Kathleen Wasilnack) there's over \$17,000 in MPP. There has also been mini matches that have been made throughout the month of July and September, the mini matches are payments for those that either were a late enrollee or are on the MPP program but may have missed a payment and then they have made the arrearage payment in addition to their current payment to remain in good standing with the program and the mini matches are then reflective of that. There will be a phase two of mini-match payment that we will see reporting later down the road. There is no new additional enrollment in the COVID payment plan. The flex payment plan is allotted for 18 months to pay back any arrearages for those that do not qualify for the MPP or the BFP program. We also want to introduce our new member Lydia Santiago who has joined Avangrid to be a Hardship Analyst. See report here.</p>	

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<p>5. Docketed and/or Legislative Matters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. PURA b. DEEP c. DSS d. OCC e. Committee member comments 	<p>a. PURA: (Frank Augeri, Jr.) PURA will hear the CNG and SNG rate increase in November. There is an appeal on the UI rate case. Aquarion also filed a rate appeal. On October 11th PURA will be releasing the energy affordability final proposal, as the proposal has not been published an update will be provided at a later time.</p> <p>b. DEEP (Victoria Hackett) there was a Memorandum of Agreement that was executed with the Department of Social services to implement the LIHEAP funding into the RREPS program.</p> <p>c. DSS- (Cassandra Norfleet-Johnson) Expressed excitement about the Memorandum of Agreement with DEEP.</p> <p>d. OCC-(Claire Coleman) similar to the sentiments of PURA’s reporting , OCC is reviewing water discount rate. OCC recently participated in an affordability focused panel, there was an abundance of great speakers and resources that most certainly would like to share with LIEAP and possibly present to this forum.</p> <p>e. Committee Member – none</p>	
<p>6. New Business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Google Survey Results and Discussion b. Preliminary discussion on expanding LIEAB to include water on permanent bases 	<p>a. Google Survey Results and Discussion (Claire Coleman, Chairwoman): A total of 8 board members participated in the survey poll. The survey results indicated that there was an interest in changing the format of the attendance roll call to type to text attendance list in the Zoom chat box. We will try to pilot this program and see if it is effective. Another survey result was whether to continue virtual meetings versus in person meetings, the ultimate result was that there was a preference to continue virtual meetings with the opportunity to have one or two meetings in person for the upcoming 2024 calendar year. The in-person meeting may be</p>	

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	<p>February of 2024 at either the LOB or the New Britain office. There is a national energy coalition that spoke to LIEAB, possibly they have a lobby day in February we can coordinate this information with the Feb. 2024 in person meeting. Another feedback from the survey was to hear more from the Community Action agencies about their experiences in the programs in connection with the data that is presented by the utilizes. Additionally, there was interest in receiving more information about the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP).</p> <p>Comment: (Victoria Hackett, DEEP) While DEEP is happy to provide further information on WAP Program, I want to clarify that LIEAB funding is only applicable to the RREPS Program. Often there is some confusion as to what category and what monies are applicable to programming. The WAP program is funded separately through the Department of Energy, and it is not related to actual LIHEAP funds.</p> <p>b. Preliminary discussion on expanding LIEAB to include water on permanent bases: (Chairwoman Claire Coleman) I am proposing that we include the LIWAP program as part of LIHEAP and possibly create a subcommittee to determine the next steps in how they can be incorporated and be represented in the LIHEAP program. The subcommittee will focus on research and review of any statutes that would allow for LIHEAP to include water into the program. I shared a scholarly article on water it is an interest to the subcommittee.</p> <p>Comment: (Rich Hanratty, CT Water & Sewer Dept.) This is a good idea, but Washington intends to discontinue the LIWAP funds. However, there is a Connecticut water bill that is being presented to PURA that is aiming to</p>	

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	<p>decrease the water bill based off an individual's income by 2%.</p> <p>Comment: (Victoria Hackett, DEEP) PURA has the authority to provide a water discount rate through its rate making process.</p> <p>Comment: (Rich Hanratty, CT Water & Sewer Department) CT Water filed yesterday a low-income rate.</p> <p>Comment: (Cassandra Norfleet-Johnson, DSS) Aquarian reached out to the Department of Social services with regards to low-income discount rate for water.</p> <p>Comment: (Claire Coleman, Chairwoman) Aquarian reached out to the Office of Consumer Council with respects to data sharing information. PURA's decision in the Aquarion rate case led to the referral of Aquarian to the Department of Social services.</p> <p>Question: (Rich Hanratty, CT Water & Sewer Dept.) Should I invite Dan Lawrence and Betsy to the next board meeting.</p> <p>Answer: (Chairwoman Claire Coleman) We should first make the subcommittee first before doing any presentations on any type of low-income discount rate.</p>	
7. Other Updates	None	
8. Public Comment	None	
9. Adjournment	2:32pm	Motion by Victoria Hackett and second by Cassandra Norfleet-Johnson

Meeting Schedule:

December 6, 2023	April 3, 2024	July (legislative session; no meeting)
February 7, 2024	June 5, 2024	August 7, 2024