

**Low Income Energy Advisory Board Meeting  
Wednesday, April 5, 2023 1:30 – 2:35PM**

**Minutes (Draft)**

**Members in attendance:** Deb Polun (Chair), Nora Duncan, Jaime Soto, Joanne Whistnant (also designee for Theresa Washington) , Kathleen Wasilnak, Frank M. Augieri Jr. (designee for Marissa Gillet), Jessica Gouveia and Brooke Parker (designee for Claire Coleman), Gannon Long (representing Op Fuel), Nicole Lawton, Jeanne Pitney, Ruth Swift, Christian Herb, Tiffany Minakhom (designee for Bonnie Roswig), Alicia Dolce, Angel Battle, Victoria Hackett (designee for Katie Dykes), Cassandra Norfleet-Johnson, Zani Imetovski (designee for Jeff Beckham), Yessenia Santiago-Bejarano

**Absent:** April Salazar, Rich Hanratty, Lisa Rosso,

*With a quorum present, Chair Deb Polun called the meeting to order at 1:37 pm. The meeting was held via Zoom.*

Agenda Item	Discussion	Action Steps
1. Roll call/Approve minutes	Y. Santiago-Bejarano, roll call  Minutes from 2/1/22 were presented for action.	Motion <i>Christian Herb/Jaime Soto</i> to approve the minutes of the meeting passed unanimously,
2. Public comments	Kathy Fay of Neighborhood Services of New Haven raised concerns regarding the requirement for CEAP Application is creating barriers to existing programs such as REPS remediation programs. CEAP Program has the same income qualifications as other programs questioning if there was a need to complete the application. <u>Response:</u> Vicki Hackett(DEEP) commented that DSS requires CEAP application to be completed in order to access LIHEAP Funding, this is not a DEEP’s judgement call. <u>Response:</u> Cassandra Norfleet-Johnson commented (DSS) There is \$1 million funding however, not all the funding can be used for direct heat. DSS is leveraging the funds by pulling resources, so all customers get the best service. CEAP is a small portion of the overall funding, “it is not LIEAB business to operate the program ... or administrative burden.”  Sam Dynoskwi (Sierra Club) and Gannon Long (member) reiterated the concerns.	

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	<p><u>Response:</u> Chairwoman Deb Polun requested for offline public comment and have DSS and DEEP engage in further discussion to reduce barriers due to time and other agenda items.</p>	
<p>3. Program Updates a. LIHEAP b. Operation Fuel c. Eversource d. Avangrid Companies</p>	<p>a. LIHEAP- Cassandra Norfleet-Johnson presented CEAP YTD Applications and Enrolled. Board members will also receive an online invitation that will demonstrate the online application of CEAP as it stands today. The online application will be changed next year and will load into CAA source systems. The presentation will be voluntary, it will be held 4/12 at 3-4PM.</p> <p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p><u>Q&amp;A</u> Q: Christian Herb commented drastic increase in applications and inquired the status of the funding for CEAP? He also noted that the deliverable fuel side is not able to deliver. A: (by Cassandra-DSS) on target to service customers that have applied, they are closely monitoring the funding as there may not be supplemental assistance as there has been in the past. They are accepting applications for households.</p> <p>B. Operation Fuel- (presented by Gannon Long) 100% over demand, +3K applications in comparison to years prior. There is an unprecedented increase in demand. They are currently processing applications from March 2023. 5,300 applications have been processed with priority service provided to the disabled, elderly, families with children under the</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Secretary to forward CEAP YTD Report to members via email and the Invitation to the CEAP online application demo.</li> <li>2. Data from MPP Programs from Utilities and Eversource that are below budget.</li> <li>3. mid May updated from DSS on LIHEAP budget</li> </ol>

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	<p>age of 6. Currently they are tracking payment to vendors. The Online payment platform for electronic check payments (to pay vendors) will go into effect on Monday 4.10.23. There was some technical issues that caused some delay in the rollout of the online payment platform. Due to increased demand, Op Fuel shut down during the month of March to process applications; they reopened on 4/3. Challenges to program: vendor payment, administrative support to handle call volumes for program inquiry and needs. Op Fuel expects to close down for the season by the end of April.</p> <p>Chairwoman Deb Polun commented, she spoke with Energy Directors this morning, their offices are also receiving phone calls and in-person applications for Operation Fuel. Chris Herb and Gannon Long are appreciative of information and collaboration.</p> <p>C. Eversource: presented report and deliverables of Matching Payment Plan and CT New Start Forgiveness.</p> <p>D. Avangrid Companies -. Deadline for intakes is 5.31.23. refer to data sheet for information on Matching Payment Plan, Bill Forgiveness Program, some clients still under a COVID-19 payment plan. <u>Comment:</u> (by DSS- Cassandra) Due to the launch and transition of the online application additional extensions will not be provided.</p>	
5. Docketed and/or Legislative Matters	a. Frank M. Augieri Jr.- Aquarion rate case decision was denied,	

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<p>a. PURA b. DEEP c. DSS d. Committee member comments</p>	<p>currently is going into Appeal process to CT Superior Court. PURA Agency Newsletter is live and link was shared via chat, self-register to receive the Newsletter.</p> <p>b. Vicki Hackett- no update, WAP will present later on during the meeting.</p> <p>c. Cassandra Norfleet-Johnson- no report from DSS.</p> <p>d. Chairwoman Deb Polun commented Senate Bill 1110 passed out of Human Services Committee with substitute language. Section 4codifies 10-business-day requirement for CAAs to pay vendors vs. current statutory 30 days. Requirement for CAA’s to offer vendors option of EFT (electronic funds transfer). This bill also introduces concept that agencies pay vendors on discount from retail price</p> <p><u>Comments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cassandra (DSS) this will be administratively burdensome to monitor. This rate could come out of direct customer assistance and also put a stressor on existing collaborative relationships due to the unknown.</li> <li>• Chris Herb- Retail supermarkets are not asked to discount products for SNAP customers.</li> <li>• Nora (AARP)- heeds caution because this is an “agency bill” and will receive priority. Worried that any new payment system does not take away from clients/customers.</li> <li>• Zani (OPM)- “agency bill” concern of reducing benefits [to customers] and decreased</li> </ul>	

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	<p align="center">block grant funding. OPM has “flagged it” for review</p>	
<p>4. Other Updates  a. LIHWAP  b. WAP</p>	<p>a. DSS Reports- \$9 million total budget for LIHWAP Program inclusive of administrative cost. DSS has expended \$4 million so far. A large number of Public Water Authorities don’t want to participate or are claiming statutory exemption; however, there is current collaboration to roll out this program. The LIHWAP program may be an annual benefit and there is current marketing to make customers aware of this annual benefit. Challenges to the program: unknown how long/duration of the existence of this water assistance program. Homeowners and renters are responsible for water combined sewer bill. Checks and balance issue if the landlord includes water/sewer bill in the monthly rental fee agreement double checking if renters receive the credit. Primary challenge are water customers who have an active debt with a collection agency account, cannot receive direct payment from this program as the water company must be the direct recipient and they have sold off their bill to the collection agency. In addition, the collection agencies need to collect on their interest of the existing debt.</p> <p>Q: Chairwoman Deb Polun: Are there specific geographic areas benefiting from this program?  A: (DSS)- We don’t have data at this time.  Q: How many authorities have signed up with LIHWAP?</p>	<p>1. Secretary to distribute WAP presentation.</p>

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	<p>A: (DSS)30 Public Authorities have not signed up to date.</p> <p>A: (Gannon Long)- Aquarion, CT Water and MDC are participating.</p> <p><u>Comment</u>- (Nicole Lawton)- Water authorities are not signing up for this program as they won't accept partial payment for existing water usage on an account with active arrearages with a debt collector. Receipt of any payment will also add a 3-month waiting period to rebill on usage charges.</p> <p>b. Becca Trietch presented on WAP programs (presentation to be forwarded). Public Hearing on 4/20/23. Formal Notice Hearing will be distributed.</p>	
8. New Business	None	
9. Public Comments	Follow for water issues and legislative development.	
10. Adjournment	2:47PM	Motion <i>Gannon Long/ Kathy Wasilnak</i>

**Next meeting: June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023**