

**Low Income Energy Advisory Board Meeting  
Wednesday, June 14, 2023 1:32 – 2:31PM**

**Minutes (Draft)**

**Members in attendance:** Deb Polun (Chair), Nora Duncan (Vice Chair), 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 Jessica E. Coleman), Kenya Van Eyken (designee for Gannon Long), Nicole Lawton, Jeanne Pitney, Ruth Swift, April Salazar, Bonnie Roswig (designee for Martha Stone), Alicia Dolce, Victoria Hackett (designee for Katie Dykes), Cassandra Norfleet-Johnson, (designee for Andrea Barton Reeves), Yessenia Santiago-Bejarano

**Absent:** Lisa Rosso, Rafie Podolsky, Christian Herb, Richard Hanratty, Greg Kirschner, Angel Battle

*With a quorum present, Chair Deb Polun called the meeting to order at 1:32 pm. The meeting was held via Zoom.*

Agenda Item	Discussion	Action Steps
1. Roll call/Approve minutes	Y. Santiago-Bejarano, roll call  Minutes from 4/5/23 were presented for action.	Motion ( <i>Joanne Whistnant and Jaime Soto</i> ) to approve the minutes of the 4/5/2023 meeting passed unanimously.
2. Public comments	No members of the public presented comments.	
3. Program Updates a. LIHEAP b. Operation Fuel c. Eversource d. Avangrid Companies	<p>a. LIHEAP- (presented by Cassandra Norfleet-Johnson, DSS,) presented CEAP applications YTD noting over 102,000 households served, a 20% increase from last year's numbers.</p> <p><u>Q&amp;A</u>            Q: Jaime Soto: Will there be supplemental funds?            A: (by Cassandra Norfleet-Johnson, DSS -) We are working on finalizing and processing all applications and then can account for any supplemental assistance.</p> <p>Q: Bonnie Roswig- Have all applications been received/processed by the CAAs?            A: (Cassandra Norfleet-Johnson, DSS)- Any applications post-marked by 5/31/23 will be processed.</p> <p>Q: Nicole Lawton: How many applications are pending?            A: (Cassandra Norfleet-Johnson, DSS) That data is to be determined, CEAP YTD</p>	

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	<p>data reflects the number of applications taken as of 6/3/23 and when all applications are finalized we can then provide that information.</p> <p>b. Operation Fuel (presented by Kenya Van Eyken) due to the influx of applications the deadline of applying was changed to 4/13/23. Operation Fuel served over 6,7000 households during the Winter/Spring program season. Our Summer/Fall Program season is set to open on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023. Contemplating putting a cap on number of apps received (weekly or monthly) as to not be over subscribed. OPF is currently working on organizing a workshop to meet with vendors to discuss challenges and solutions the staff faced during the program season. Gannon Long is the new Chief Programs Officer. OPF will officially move into the new office on July 3<sup>rd</sup>.</p> <p><u>Q&amp;A</u>  Q: Deb Polun (Chairwoman)- what is the new address of the office?  A: (Kenya Van Eyken, Op Fuel)- same address, we are moving into Building 1.</p> <p>c. Eversource (presented by Joanne Whistnant): Decrease in New Start recipients, Increase on Matching Payment Plan and Arrearage Forgiveness Program YTD.</p> <p><u>Q&amp;A</u>  Q: (Bonnie Roswig) Why is there a decrease in the NuStart Program? What is the timeframe from the time the LIEAB funding is awarded and reflected as a credit on the account?</p>	

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	<p>A: (Joanne Whistnant) Batch payments are made to all recipients, but I will need to get back to you on exact time frame.</p> <p>d. Avangrid Companies - Approximately \$13 million provided in the Matching Payment Plan; this excludes any late enrollment, of that \$4.8 million was paid during Phase I of MPP. Decrease in Covid-19 Payment plan.</p>	
<p>5. Docketed and/or Legislative Matters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. PURA</li> <li>b. DEEP</li> <li>c. DSS</li> <li>d. Committee member comments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. PURA (presented by Frank M. Augieri Jr.) - UI rate case is pending a Draft Decision, which will be released in July. On July 24<sup>th</sup>, there will be the Annual Review Affordability Conference via zoom. PURA is still reviewing/processing the information of Senate Bill 7, which contained many energy provisions.</li> </ul> <p><u>Comment-</u> (Nora Duncan, AARP) supported this legislation, this legislation is a follow up to “Take Back the Grid” from 2022, where consumers will not have to pay for lobbyist; if there are outages for a long duration, it includes a section regarding payment assistance on medications impacted by loss of electricity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b. DEEP (presented by Victoria Hackett) – REPS will have \$125 million bond funding revolving loan fund in multifamily homes and communities of need.</li> <li>c. DSS (presented by Cassandra Norfleet-Johnson, DSS) Legislative Bill concerning CEAP</li> </ul>	

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	<p>program and we are still unpacking the bill as it recently passed last week and DSS will be able to report back more information in our next meeting.</p> <p>d. Committee Member Comments- (Deb Polun Chairwoman) commented Senate Bill 1100 codifies what CAAs were already doing regarding allowing for electronic payment to vendors and authorizations to be processed electronically by the vendors choice. The bill also includes language regarding the price of deliverables by county/region.</p>	
<p>6. Other Updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. REPS update</li> <li>b. Online application update</li> </ul>	<p>a. REPS- As follow-up to requests made at the April LIEAB meeting, DSS and DEEP met to discuss how to best align programs with the CEAP application requirements. DEEP and DSS reached out the HHS re: income requirements in hopes to eliminate any burdens and redundancies for applicants in the next program year.</p> <p><u>Comment-</u> Chairwoman Deb Polun thanked the agencies for blending funding and open floor for any Q&amp;A. There were none.</p> <p>b. Online Application- (Cassandra Norfleet-Johnson, DSS) The portal is currently on the “user acceptance testing” phase. Customers had many complaints regarding the application and one area of improvement is that that a user will only need to apply once, one can save the application midstream and return later and upload documents. The portal will also have an “impact test” to see if the household is</p>	

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	<p>already on a DSS program, which will make ease of application. Furthermore, if an applicant is under a ¼ tank, it will mark the applicant as a “priority” which the customer will also see on their application status.</p> <p><u>Comments:</u> Bonnie Roswig- Data sharing is critical with the impact test. Response- Cassandra Norfleet-Johnson, DSS noted that further information regarding data sharing will need to come from Pete Hadler.</p> <p><u>Q&amp;A</u> Q: Chairwoman Deb Polun: What is the frequency of user testing check-ins? A: DSS Cassandra Norfleet-Johnson, DSS)- There are daily check-ins with the CAAs as they are currently completing the User acceptance testing and all levels of CAA’s personnel are participating from intake staff all way to quality assurance.</p> <p><u>Comment:</u> Chairwoman Deb Polun: for the record, once the online system is up for next year, the applications can still be applied for in person.</p>	
8. New Business	<p>a. Ad hoc committee to advise on 2023-2024 LIHEAP Plan- Chairwoman Deb Polun noted there is a need for 3 to 5 volunteers needed to meet over the next 5 weeks for about 60-90 minutes followed by email communication, regarding 2023-2024 LIHEAP Plan.</p> <p>b. Volunteers – Deb Polun, Ruth Swift, Joanne Whisnant</p>	1. Secretary to distribute the Plan.
9. Public Comments	AARP Event: Nora Duncan, Vice Chairwoman, noted AARP will have a telephone town hall on June 27 <sup>th</sup> at	

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	<p>10AM to give people info regarding electric rates, 3<sup>rd</sup> party vendors. This telephone town hall is being held in conjunction with the Office of Consumer Council and Dept. of Education. There will be a live stream event via Facebook and the phone number is 833-946-1529.</p> <p>LIHWAP- April Salazar noted that she was not able to attend last meeting due to schedule conflict with another conference. April indicated that there is an accessibility issue with the information that is available online, the links for LIHWAP return a user to the DSS website for LIHEAP, not LIHWAP. April also clarified that some of the billing concerns were more from the sewage companies. Moreover, this program was not a part of the Fiscal Federal Budget.</p> <p><u>Comment:</u> Deb Polun, Chairperson noted that the program has ended, and Congress may reauthorize it, but we may not know until 10/1.</p>	
10. Adjournment	2:31PM	Motions by Nora Duncan/Joanne Whistnant

**Next meeting: August 2, 2023**