

**Low Income Energy Advisory Board Meeting
Wednesday, August 2, 2023 1:32 – 2:54PM**

Minutes (Draft)

Members in attendance: Deb Polun (Chair), Nora Duncan (Vice Chair), Joanne Whistnant (also designee for Theresa Washington), Kathleen Wasilnak (and designee for Jaime Soto), Frank M. Augeri, Jr. (designee for Marissa Gillet), Claire Coleman, Gannon Long, Nicole Lawton, Jeanne Pitney, Mathew Dillion (designee for Rafie Podolsky), Bonnie Roswig (designee for Martha Stone), Peter Hadler, Victoria Hackett (designee for Katie Dykes), Cassandra Norfleet-Johnson, (designee for Andrea Barton Reeves), Danielle Palladino (designee for Zani Imetovski) Yessenia Santiago-Bejarano

Absent: Jaime Soto, Lisa Rosso, Rafie Podolsky, Ruth Swift, April Salazar, Alicia Dolce, 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 2. Approve minutes	Y. Santiago-Bejarano, roll call Minutes from 6/14/23 and Special Meeting 7/11/23 were presented for action.	Motion (Christian Herb and Gannon Long) to approve the minutes of the 6/14/2023 with absentia from Claire Coleman, meeting minutes passed unanimously. Motion (Christian Herb and Kathleen Wasilnak) to approve the minutes of the 7/11/2023 meeting, meeting minutes passed unanimously.
3. Public comments	No members of the public presented comments.	
4. Program Updates a. LIHEAP b. Operation Fuel c. Eversource d. Avangrid Companies	a. LIHEAP- (presented by Peter Hadler-DSS) presented CEAP applications YTD, LIHEAP final numbers for CEAP 105K approved applicants, 15% increase from last year and 20% increase in applications up to 127K applications were filed. Reflective of hard work from CAA's and DSS staff to help socialize the availability and accessibility of the program. Strong program growth to help CT households with their needs. There will be a supplemental payment for the summer and anticipates the payment to be up to an estimate	1. CEAP YTD Report to be presented on or before next meeting of October 2, 2023. 2. Avangrid to provide a breakdown of customers who chose MPP vs. BPF by level of arrearages. 3. DSS to provide the amount of funds available for supplemental cooling assistance. 4. Eversource: to provide data regarding

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	<p>payment up to \$150.00 that will be a benefit for CEAP customers.</p> <p>Comment: Deb Polun, Chairwoman: Let’s focus on program year before moving into the FFY 2024 LIHEAP Allocations Reports.</p> <p>Q: Kathleen Wasilnak: The supplemental payment will be about \$150.00; will it be applicable to all electric accounts (regardless of which account customers originally received their CEAP award to) as in prior years?</p> <p>A: Peter Hadler-DSS, Yes.</p> <p>Q: Bonnie Roswig- Can you help explain how the supplemental funds are provided?</p> <p>A: Peter Hadler -DSS. The supplemental amount is determined by federal budget and the start-up budget for next year. This year there were less crisis assistance applicants and so these funds will go towards supplemental assistance.</p> <p>Q: Bonnie Roswig: Why is all the supplemental assistance being allocated to electric or not heat or is it electric heat, is it Eversource vs. Avangrid?</p> <p>A: The supplemental assistance is not Utility specific, it’s meant to provide an assistance for cooling, there is no preference in cooling system/method, but it is best way to maximize this supplemental benefit.</p> <p>Q: Bonnie Roswig- how does the customer find this out [supplemental assistance] and how is it reflected on the bill?</p>	<p>customers who were not able to enroll in New Start as there was not an auto enroll option.</p> <p>5. Eversource: Breakdown of customers who chose MPP vs. New Start by level of arrearages.</p>

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	<p>A: Peter Hadler-DSS- Yes, it's paid to the electric company and how it's reflected on the bill, I will leave it to the Utilities to answer.</p> <p>A: Kathleen Wasilnak (UI)- once payment is received, it is a line-item credit, a separate line item reflected on the customer's bill.</p> <p>Q: Bonnie Roswig-105K recipients were awarded energy assistance for 125K applications, why were those applications denied?</p> <p>A: Peter Hadler, DSS: some applications were denied as they were: incomplete applications, over income applicants, applicants who were unable to confirm eligibility or did not provide their bill.</p> <p>Q: Bonnie Roswig- Was there data sharing from UI on the applicants that were denied?</p> <p>A: Peter Hadler, DSS- yes data sharing has been available for years, customer is able to apply online and in real time it is matched with DSS, if they apply via paper or phone, the CAA can then approve their application as they have access to the program/data sharing with UI information.</p> <p>Comment: Claire Coleman, my question was answered previously, asked and answered.</p> <p>Comment: Deb Polun, Chairwoman, allocation plan will be updated later.</p> <p>Q: Gannon Long (Op Fuel)- was CEAP report sent?</p> <p>A: Peter Hadler, DSS- unsure.</p>	

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	<p>A: Cassandra Norfleet Johnson, DSS- still working out the final numbers and I will send out shortly.</p> <p>Q: Bonnie Roswig- Peter what was the additional monies left over after the applications granted?</p> <p>A:Peter Hadler-, DSS. I don't have that figure.</p> <p>Q: Bonnie Roswig- can you ballpark?</p> <p>A: Cassandra Norfleet-Johnson, DSS- no ball park figure at this moment.</p> <p>Comment: Bonnie Roswig requested Chairwoman Deb Polun to share info this information.</p> <p>Chairwoman Deb called on Operation Fuel for their report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. Operation Fuel: Opened online application yesterday, working through the hiccups, everyone is encouraged to continue to submit applications. Some of the CAA's are waiting until September for budget allocations but may be misinformed regarding Operation Fuel, it is open and we don't want to have clients wait for assistance, as we are open as of yesterday. <p>Comment: Cassandra Norfleet Johnson, DSS: all CAA's have been waiting for Operation Fuel to open as customer's have outstanding utilities, if there is a CAA that is not providing accurate information, please share offline so we can provide correct information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. <i>Continued report by Operation Fuel.</i> OP has agreements with Eversource and UI to enroll Tier 2 (160% FPG 	

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	<p>customers, 50% discount on total electric bill) in the Low-Income Discount Rate starting 8/1/23. Additionally, we are working with Aquarion to enroll their customers in the Low-Income Rate Assistance Program (LIRAP), which provides a 15% discount to Aquarion customers earning 60% or below of SMI. Special emphasis on customers being aware that customers can access water assistance program and energy assistance in the program year via Operation Fuel (only one energy assistance grant available per year, but Operation Fuel can give both a water and an energy grant in the same program year).</p> <p>c. Eversource: Joane Whistnant presented. A total of 24,353 customers have been served in CT New Start Forgiveness program. There is an increase in the number of customers as this year auto open enrollment was not provided.</p> <p>Q: Bonnie Roswig- Why there are 3k fewer than last year?</p> <p>A: Joanne Whistnant - there was not an autoenrollment in January due to the rate increase.</p> <p>Q: Bonnie Roswig: What happened to those customers?</p> <p>A: Joanne Whistnant - don't have the numbers which were successful applicants.</p> <p>Q: Bonnie Roswig - what happened- did they get termination notices, since they were protected? I am concerned.</p>	

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	<p>A: Joanne Whistnant - will get the numbers for next meeting.</p> <p>Q: Claire Coleman (OCC) has Eversource evaluated the data to see which customers choose MPP vs. New Start Program?</p> <p>Q: Joanne Whistnant - as to what a customer would benefit from? (as to Claire Coleman question above)</p> <p>A: Claire Coleman (OCC) As to the data of what program the customers choose.</p> <p>A: Joanne Whistnant - I can get the information from the analytic team.</p> <p>d. Avangrid Companies - presented by Kathleen Wasilnak . These numbers are from the end of June. We served a little under 22K customers in July. We did a mini match as CAA’s were still accepting applications through May and commitment files weren’t provided until June, so we went back into the program and were able to provide assistance. The Covid plan allows up to 24 months given of protection and payment plans. Since Covid plan has ended, we still have almost 2k enrolled in the programs.</p> <p>Q: Claire Coleman, OCC: Do you have a sense in trends in which program the clients choose to select?</p> <p>A: Kathleen Waslinak - we have not made a comparison, if a customer is an electric heat, we will try to enroll in MPP, if they go to CAA they will automatically go into MPP as CEAP application, if client has a</p>	

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	<p>larger balance they can choose to go to BFP. They can enroll MPP year after year only difference is the amount of payment as lowest payment on MPP \$50.00 and BFP might be a larger budget payment agreement.</p>	
<p>5. Docketed and/or Legislative Matters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. PURA b. DEEP c. DSS d. Committee member comments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. PURA (presented by Frank M. Augeri Jr.) - back on the 24th, UI rate case, highlight out of \$131m, agency approved only \$2m, the final decision will be out at the end of August. Energy Affordability due 8/17 with a decision on 11th of October. 21-05REI03 Hearing is coming up. PURA quarterly newsletter was sent out, recommended signing up for the newsletter. b. DEEP (presented by Victoria Hackett) – no updates at this current moment. c. DSS - FFY 2024 allocation plan-general structure is the same as done in the past, small but significant changes, reduction in client benefits and funding items, we are expecting a return to the Federal Funding base plan. We expect continued growth, we need to be in our federally funded budget, reduction in basic benefits, heating repair reduction assistance, weatherization assistance reduced \$120m to base grant of \$70m, this requires us to adjust across the board. This was submitted recently. Overall less dollars to go around. <p>Comment: Deb Polun, Chairwoman, - on the bottom of the introduction, there is a</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. DSS to review the language in the FFY 2024 Allocation Plan regarding funding budgets and eligibility. 2. DSS to forward the report on energy household burdens received from HHS. 3. Utilities to provide written comment to LIEAB Recommendations that were voted on Special Meeting of July 11, 2023 by 8/11/23.

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	<p>sentence that language “same benefits as last year”. This would need to be clarified as the budget is not the same.</p> <p>Response: Peter Hadler- we will take this back for review.</p> <p>Comment: Jeanne Pitney, we are not talking about funding benefits but eligibility benefits.</p> <p>Comment: Deb Polun, Chairwoman, in the sentence that I point out as benefits levels, but Jeanne noting is that the sentence can also reference the tiers that were provided.</p> <p>Response: Peter Hadler, worth clarifying this section.</p> <p>Q: Chris Herb: Does DSS plan on asking the administration to allocate budget assistance to this program?</p> <p>A: Peter Hadler, DSS: that is up to the legislative decision, our charge is to put together federal funds to allocate.</p> <p>Q: Chris Herb: Did the administration make an effort to present recommendations from LIEAB.</p> <p>A: Peter Hadler, DSS: The discussion is still at federal level for additional monies but working with what was designated.</p> <p>Q: Kathleen Wasilnak: when do you expect the plan to be approved?</p> <p>A: Peter Hadler, DSS: that is generally hearing set that is prior to Sept. 1st, towards the end of August.</p> <p>Q: Kathleen Wasilnak: What are the income guidelines? Do the federal and state poverty guidelines need to be</p>	

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	<p>approved or can this information be shared with CAA?</p> <p>A: Peter Hadler, DSS: we submit it to our legislature, they approve, then goes for federal approved. However, the Federal and State median levels don't change until January of next year and the ones referenced in the plan are applicable for this year.</p> <p>Comment: Gannon Long, Operation Fuel: 211 provides State Median Income, not sure if 211 is expecting this to change.</p> <p>Response: Cassandra Norfleet Johnson, DSS: these are issued on an annual basis and we share the CAA's.</p> <p>Q: Gannon Long: referenced page six, household energy burden- is there data or are we tracking quantifying this?</p> <p>A: Cassandra Norfleet Johnson, DSS: we publish a report from HSS and we provide the information on an annual basis.</p> <p>Response: Gannon Long: can you direct us where to find that data.</p> <p>Response: Cassandra Norfleet Johnson, DSS: yes will send this via LIEAB.</p> <p>Q: Nora Duncan, Vice Chairwoman: Is there a comparison on the recommendations that LIEAB Special meeting proposed as to what was and was not considered?</p> <p>A: Peter Hadler, DSS- some recommendations are operational, some of them are suggestions i.e.. Data sharing is operational and in place. We don't have parallels.</p>	

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	<p>Comment: Deb Polun, Chairwoman: in the past we had a chart with the recommendations and yes or no or comment. Can this be done?</p> <p>Comment: Nora Duncan, VP Chairwoman: we would recommend written comment as we have a hearing and we would need to provide testimony prior to hearing date.</p> <p>d. Committee Member Comments- Comment - Deb Polun: we can continue the review of the FFY 2024 Allocation Plan until 2:45PM as we have other agenda items. We will put together some testimony with the recommendations and a letter attached detailing what was approved and what is not.</p> <p><u><i>See additional response by DSS to review of LIEAB Recommendations for the FFY 2024 Allocation Plan by DSS here, Eversource here and Avangrid here.</i></u></p> <p>Comment: Claire Coleman, OCC: we will ask the UI to provide a written response also, written response to the recommendations provided and feedback to that.</p> <p>Comment: Kathleen Wasilnak: okay week and a week and a half. Jaime was a part of the subcommittee so he would agree recommendation.</p> <p>Comment : Joanne Whistnant: we will get a written comment.</p>	
6. Other Updates	a. Online application update: Cassandra Norfleet Johnson-DSS: we will share a live demo	DSS to forward Online Demo invitation

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	<p align="center">of the online application at a later date.</p> <p>Comment: Peter Hadler, DSS: kudos to Cassandra lots of work has been put into this program.</p> <p>Comment: Deb Polun, Chairwoman: second the kudos especially with all the daily user testing.</p>	
7. New Business	<p>a. Election of Chair and Vice Chair –</p> <p>Comment: Deb Polun: announced that she will be starting a new position, my last day is 8/16. There is an opening for Chairperson, this position would be until June 30th of 2024.</p> <p>Comment: Nora Duncan, Vice Chairwoman: nominates Claire Coleman for the position.</p> <p>Motion to Vote presented by Nora Duncan and Chris Herb.</p> <p>Comment: Deb Polun, Chairwoman: do you accept this nomination?</p> <p>Comment: Claire Coleman, OCC: accepts the nomination.</p> <p>Voted unanimously.</p> <p>No absentia or declines.</p> <p>Comment: Chris herb- great job for Deb Polun for leading the LIEAB Group.</p>	
9. Public Comments	Jeanne Pitney- retiring Sept 6 th and CLASS will someone to take her position.	
10. Adjournment	2:54PM	Motions by Christian Herb and Gannon Long

Next meeting: October 4, 2023