

Low-Income Energy Advisory Board Meeting

June 5, 2024, via Zoom & Broadcasted via CT-N

Wednesday June 5, 2024, 1:30PM-2:42PM

Zoom Recording [Link](#)

Members in attendance: Claire E. Coleman (Chair), Nora Duncan (Vice Chair), Lydia Santiago, Jaime Soto, Frank Augeri, Brooke Parker (designee for Claire Coleman), Gannon Long, Nicole Lawton, Katie Wilt, Matthew Dillon, Ruth Swift, Christian Herb, Nikey Kollie (designee for Christian Herb), Richard Hanratty, April Salazar, Tiffany Minakow (designee Bonnie Roswig), Cassandra Norfleet Johnson, Zani Imetovski, Yessenia Santiago-Bejarano

Absent: Joanne Whistnant Theresa Washington, Kathleen Wasilnak, Greg Kirschner, Alicia Dolce, Angel Battle, Rhonda Evans, Victoria Hackett

Chairwomen Coleman called meeting with a formal roll call at 1:30PM, noting CT-N is covering the meeting today.

Agenda Item	Discussion	Action Item
1. Roll Call	Y.Santiago-Bejarano completed roll call.	
2. Approval of 4/3/24 Meeting minutes	Chairwomen called for motion of approval of the Minutes of 4/3/24 meeting, Christian Herb moved the motion, second by Jaime Soto. No objections.	
3. Public Comments	None.	
4. Energy Assistance Program Updates a. DSS-CEAP b. Operation Fuel c. Eversource d. Avangrid	a. <u>DSS-CEAP</u> (presented by Cassandra Norfleet Johnson) See the report. Enrollment data was provided by itemized Community Action Agency and statewide total is 117,549 applications received and 99,053 were approved. DSS will meet with the Utility companies on Friday 6/7/24 and on a quarterly basis to discuss continued support and data sharing/mapping. DSS and the Utilities will identify what data can be reported and what cannot. The data mapping will also identify current DSS benefit recipients who may not be a CEAP household. These quarterly meetings and data sharing will allow for the “deduplicated data” in the reports to be better addressed next year to identify true denials and identify barriers. The data will also identify households that are deliverable fuel, utility based, and on Low-Income Discount Rate (LIDR). DSS confirmed they are currently in data systems update phase and on target for the early enrollment for electric gas to start on Sept. 1. 2024, however, this date is contingent on joint-in person legislative sessions.	MDC water advocate position to be forwarded by Secretary. d. Avangrid to provide data in YTD for next meeting.

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	<p>b. <u>Operation Fuel</u> (presented by Gannon Long) See report. The report provides the total ARPA payments and total Energy Assistance payments with the number of household clients served and it is itemized by fuel type; 5,642 total energy applications approved; 11,729 residents supported. 2868 ARPA applications approved; 5994 residents supported. The report also noted Water Assistance for CT Water and MDC. CT Water: \$32,513.85, 73 applications, 104 residents supported. Still accepting applications; CT Water program is open year-round. MDC: \$44,363.35, 177 applications, 287 residents supported. Still have between 40-50 MDC applications pending due to lack of funds; program shut down early May 2024.</p> <p>There was a discussion regarding the number of applications pending with Op. Fuel. Op. Fuel noted there are a dozen or so applications that remain, however this will not have a major impact on the final figures that are presented as of today's report. There was also a discussion regarding Water Assistance Funding as it was exhausted early because last year's deferrals were carried over to this fiscal year. MDC is regulated by PURA and allocation of water assistance program is funded in part by ratepayers. Water bills are now reflecting a \$1.00 (one dollar) donation towards Water Assistance Programs via Operation Fuel. Chairwoman Coleman noted, the Governor had signed SB 336 which contained updates the MDC Consumer Advocate statute and noted that OCC would post an updated job description for the position and asked for the Boards's assistance in circulating the position.</p> <p>c. <u>Eversource</u> (report was distributed to members, absent a member from Eversource to present the data, this report was tabled). See the report.</p>	
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	<p>d. Avangrid (presented by Jaime Soto) See the report. Currently out of Phase 1 of the Matching Payment Program (MPP) and in Phase II. COVID-19 payment plans should be finalized by the end of next month as customers have until then to finish their 24-month payment plans. There are a total of 18,195 customers on active flexible payment plan total \$13,696, 135; Bill Forgiveness Program 24,284 customers balance total of \$54,832, 328 and LIDR Enrollments Tier 1 is 27,953 customers and Tier 2 27,472 customers.</p>	
<p>5. Updates on Legislative or PURA Docketed Matters a. An Act Concerning the Low-Income Energy Advisory Board b. LIHEAP Budget Adjustments c. HB 5426 d. Other</p>	<p>a. An Act Concerning the Low-Income Energy Advisory Board- Public Act No. 24-37 was approved, the board is officially LIEWAB. The technical titles for Legal Services and Operation Fuel were approved in addition to inclusion of water assistance programs. A Biannual report is now due Oct 15.</p> <p>b. LIHEAP Budget Adjustments- There was an additional \$1 million funding to the CEAP and \$3.5 to Operation Fuel. DSS reported that 10 households were assisted totaling \$17,200 in CEAP Benefits in level one was about 9,300 level 2 was 3,900, and then level 3 was about 38. Op. Fuel was able to process about 3, 000 more applications and was able to spend half the money prior to the money being rescinded. Op. Fuel indicates that there may have been a misunderstanding of the program dates availability as Op. Fuel extends until June 30th and the funding was rescinded at the end of April 30, 2024, which is the deadline for other Community Anchor Agency programs. DSS noted approved budgets in a legislative session is historically based upon availability of resources.</p> <p>c. HB 5426- this bill has not been signed by the Governor, but it is expected to, as it has been passed during session. There are several components to this bill, including common</p>	<p>b. OPM to follow regarding the figure amount allocated to CEAP for supplemental payments approved in February during Special Session that was advocated for and AARPA figures redistribution.</p> <p>c. Secretary to email specific language on HB 5426, so a LIEWAB member can join the working group.</p>

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	<p>application development/work. There is a portion of the bill that impacts LIEWAB. Current members have expressed an interest in joining the Working Group.</p> <p><u>d. Other- PURA</u> (presented by Frank Augeri), there is technical meeting on Energy Affordability Docket July 16th- 17th. On July 1st the Standard Service rate offered by C&LP will decrease to 8.9 cents and UI will decrease to 11.9 cents. Customers should review their bills with respect to their supplier rate as this may be an area of savings. Customers should determine if a switch back to the Utilities decreased supply rate is necessary or if they should switch their current third-party supplier to another. OCC is working on a consumer alert regarding the supply rate. Jaime Soto, UI, commented that customers enrolled in Hardship program will automatically be enrolled into the UI standard service rate if it is lower than their current supplier rate, the same is true with Eversource.</p>	
<p>6. Updated on Subcommittee for Biannual LIEWAB Report</p> <p>a. Subcommittee Membership</p> <p>b. Review of Timeline</p>	<p><u>a. Subcommittee Membership:</u> is Claire, Ruth, Matt, and Chris, there is still time if anyone else is interested in joining the subcommittee.</p> <p><u>b. Review of Timeline:</u> The report is due October 15th. The subcommittee will be in a meeting at the end of June to go over a timeline. The outline will be reviewed at the August 7th meeting with an expected full draft by Oct. 2nd meeting to be presented to the members.</p>	
<p>7. New Business</p> <p>a. Board Leadership</p> <p>b. Bylaws Amendment Process</p>	<p><u>a. Board Leadership:</u> There was no interest expressed by other members in being Chair or Vice Chair, therefore, the current Chair and Vice Chair have agreed to continue to serve for the next 2 years. One last call for any interested member to be nominated was provided.</p>	

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	<p>Christian Herb nominated Claire Coleman as Chairwoman and Nora Duncan as Vice Chairwoman.</p> <p>Chairwomen Coleman nominated Nora Duncan as VP, this motion was seconded by Christian Herb. There were no objections or abstentions. Christian Herb nominates Claire Coleman as Chairwoman, seconded by Ruth Swift. There were no objections or abstentions.</p> <p><u>b. Bylaw Amendment Process</u> - Chairwoman Claire Coleman reviewed redlined draft and it was agreed board would take the next three weeks to review and vote on the Amendments during the next meeting.</p>	
<p>8. Public Comments</p>	<p>Comment: April Salazar suggested adding Water to the Agency Reports on the Agenda. In April, CT Water Works Association received a letter from DSS stating that all the households who received LIWAP payments from the past will get a supplemental payment. Secondly, there is a House bill to permanently establish LIWAP in the 118 Congress, HRH 032, that is something to monitor.</p> <p>Q: Gannon Long, Will there be a committee for the annual LIEWAB Plan for LIHEAP/CEAP advocacy this year.</p> <p>A: Zani Imetovski, OPM, Danielle emailed agencies to begin their planning session for the annual plan. Chairwoman Claire will work on a document to share and Vice Chairwoman, Nora will look at the Testimony. Chris Herb noted there was a Special Meeting line by line the proposed plan. DSS representative said the agency is currently working on the LIHEAP/CEAP plan and would let the Board know when it is completed.</p> <p>Q: Katie Wilt- Eversource might be changing their MPP slightly, do we have current information?</p>	<p>Chairwoman Coleman will follow up with OPM and DSS regarding the Annual Plan so it may be tentatively reviewed for the August 2nd Meeting.</p> <p>Interested members who would like to be a part of the annual planning subcommittee can email the secretary.</p>

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	A: Chairwoman Coleman, that is being vetted in a PURA proceeding and we can ask Eversource to present to this group during next meeting.	
9. Adjournment	Motion by Katie Wilt, second by Christian Herb, no objections or abstentions. The meeting adjourned at 2:42pm.	