

Low-Income Energy Advisory Board Meeting

April 3, 2024 via Zoom & Broadcasted via CT-N

Wednesday April 3, 2024 1:31PM-2:48PM

Zoom Recording [Link](#)

Minutes -Approved

Members in attendance: Claire E. Coleman (Chair), Nora Duncan (Vice Chair), Lydia Santiago, Jaime Soto, Joanne Whistnant , Frank Augeri, Brooke Parker (designee for Claire Coleman), Mike Turaj (designee for Gannon Long), Nicole Lawton, Katie Wilt, Matthew Dillon, Christian Herb, Nikey Kollie (designee for Christian Herb), Richard Hanratty, Bonnie Roswig, Rhonda Evans, Victoria Hackett, Cassandra Norfleet Johnson, Zani Imetovski, Yessenia Santiago-Bejarano

Absent: Theresa Washington, Kathleen Wasilnak, Ruth Swift, April Salazar, Greg Kirschner, Alicia Dolce, Angel Battle.

Chairwomen Coleman called meeting with a formal roll call at 1:31PM, noting CTN is covering the meeting today.

Agenda Item	Discussion
1. Roll Call	Y. Santiago-Bejarano
2. Approval of 2/14/24 Meeting minutes	Chairwoman Claire Coleman requested approval of the 2/14/24 Meeting Minutes which was held in the Legislative Office Building. Christian Herb moved for a motion and Vice Chairwoman Nora Duncan second the motion, No objections, or abstentions, motion passes.
3. Public Comments	No comments were presented via audio call or virtual chat or Q&A chat box. Chairwoman Claire Coleman noted there will be another opportunity for public comment at the end of the meeting. Chairwoman requested the board’s flexibility in amending the agenda by moving agenda item 5a. DEEP WAP State Plan PY2024 above item 4. Energy Assistance Program Updates as DEEP has indicated meeting conflicts. No objections or abstentions to this change, approved unanimously.
5a. DEEP WAP State Plan PY2024	Victoria Hackett, Bureau Chief of DEEP- thank you everyone for the schedule change. Brian Biernat will present for DEEP today. Brian presented on the Program Year 2024, 1-4 Unit Weatherization Assistance Program(WAP) . The draft plan we are discussing today is for Federal funds only the 1-4 unit weatherization systems, program plans and budget for the Federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) WAP (multifamily program),information may be found on DEEP’s webpage. Total Federal Allocation is \$4,028,266 (Program: \$2,966,244, Training and Tech Assistance: \$651,5458.00 Weatherization Readiness Funds: \$380,474.00). Grantee and Subgrantee Distribution figures were outlined on a table (slide 3). The subgrantees are the ones delivering the services to clients, this total is \$3,049,287 and is split amongst two service providers in the State of CT. The state has been divided into two regions; each region has the same population of households that meet the 60% SMI definition of low income which is a federal requirement. Fairfield and

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NH County subgrantee is Center for Ecotechnology (CET). Community Renewal Team (CRT) will be providing services to: Litchfield, Hartford, Tolland, Windham, New London and Middlesex Counties. The selected Subgrantees have contracts that extend through PY2025. DEEP will continue to give funding of the Weatherization Readiness Funding to the Residential Energy Preparation Services (REPS) Program to address health and safety barriers to weatherization. The sub grantees will also be given a smaller portion of WRF funds to address whole home ventilation requirements. DEEP is asking for feedback from our sub grantees re: If the proposed split between reps and sub grantees is appropriately balanced? DEEP will also transition to Dept. of Energy (DOE) Weatherization Assistance Web Suite of software NEAT/MHEA that is cloud based. This transition from traditionally was the desktop system to a cloud-based system is required by DOE. The cloud-based system will allow for more streamlined yet secure access. DEEP will continue to pursue the use of Hancock's energy audit tool, which is an online system called Mint. Mint connects with the programs data management software which we are trying to implement this year.

Production goals: The goal is a total of 241 units (121:CRT; 120: CET) these unit estimates are based on the average cost per unit established by DOE.

New Technical Consultant/Monitors- CT WAP is in contract negotiations with Association for Energy Affordability (AEA) for Desk Consultant Services (desk reviews, waiver reviews, technical writing) and CT WAP is in contract negotiations with True View Consultants (TVC) or Field Monitor Services (in-progress monitoring, final inspections, annual technical monitoring).

Opportunities for Public Input:

1. DEEP is seeking comment on the input length of the “reasonable period of time” a renter is protected from rent increases due to weatherization being provided as it relates to Weatherization Program Notice 22-13 ([slide, 9](#)).

2. CT WAP seeks input on regarding fuel switching and transitioning to newer, more efficient technologies as it relates to Weatherization Program Notice 23-6([slide 10](#)) CT WAP is proposing to work throughout PY24 to seek approval from DOE to minister fuel switching in our programs. Deep is seeking public input on how to best ensure fuel switching does not negatively impact low-income access to energy assistance

Low-Income Energy Advisory Board Meeting

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Zoom Recording [Link](#)

3. CT WAP seeks public input on the allocation of WRF funding to REPS, and WAP sub grantees for addressing health and safety concerns, as it relates to Weatherization Program Notice 23-4 ([slide 11](#)). Specifically, this funding is targeted to reduce the frequency of deferred homes that require services outside the scope of weatherization before the weatherization services can commence.

There will be several Public Hearings: Monday April 29, 2024 at 10:00-11:00AM and 5:00PM-6:00PM, both meetings are hybrid via MS Teams and DEEP Public Hearing Room 2 (10 Franklin Square, New Britain, CT. Written Comments may be sent to DEEP.Energyburea@ct.gov, Full Notice may be found on [DEEP Weatherization webpage](#) Comments on the second draft are due by April 29, 2024 at 11:59PM.

DEEP is requesting a vote from LIEAB on the proposed plan.

Chairwoman Coleman opened the floor for questions or comments on the WAP presentation.

Q&A:

Claire Coleman: I just wanted to clarify the funding stream. So, the REPS program addresses health and safety barriers. How that overlaps with the WAP program, I think REPS, was originally started with ARPA funding. I think if it's my recollection Vicki, I think we work on that together.

A: Victoria Hackett, DEEP: Yeah, Brian, I'll talk about the original funding, and then you can talk about what we're asking about in for these comments. Yes, the ARPA was the prevalent source of funding for REPS. But there's also a small amount of LIHEAP funding for REPS so the WAP program feeds into the REPS program just the same as the C&LM programs do. People who get deferred for health and safety barriers from both WAP and C&LM can be referred into REPS.

Response: Okay, so REPS is like the common program implementation vehicle with a different funding source that is fed into it.

Victoria Hackett, Yes.

Brian Biernat: We get DOE formula funding for doing the weatherization work, and we also have, with the WRP which is supposed to address health and safety barriers are beyond what we would traditionally consider the DOE weatherization work. A portion of that funding goes to our subgrantees to do additional works, i.e.. whole house ventilation because of our extensive air ceiling. Then

Low-Income Energy Advisory Board Meeting

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Wednesday April 3, 2024 1:31PM-2:48PM

Zoom Recording [Link](#)

another portion of the funding, (t)he majority of the WRF funding goes to the REPS program so they can do that additional weatherization work through a contractor, ICast. The combination of those other funding sources that Vicky had stated as well, that's where the 2 programs sort of mesh together. And what we were looking for feedback on was basically that allocation of how much we want to leave to the sub grantees to do those additional weatherization measures. And how much do we want to give to the REPS contractor to do the additional weatherization measures? Both would be providing services to the same weatherization client.

Comment: Chairwoman Coleman- I think it's great that, we're expanding opportunities to address the health and safety barriers. I know that's a big challenge and limiting factor with deploying energy efficiency measures so excited to see that in both program components.

Q&A:

Chris Herb: I do share the comments that Chairwoman Claire expressed. I ...am looking for clarification about using weatherization dollars for potential conversation, Am I correct? Or is that not a correct interpretation of what you said.

A: Brian Biernat, DEEP: No, that is a correct interpretation. It is something ...allows and we have been looking at.

Chris Herb: Yup, I understand it's allowed. But can you explain to me how conversion facilitates enhanced weatherization and up the other things that we're addressing just. I don't know how those 2 things are related.

Brian: we look at conversion as potentially moving from a fuel source that is not running at as much efficiency, or it is potentially more efficient to another fuel source that runs using less energy for their heating needs. We will provide a clearer answer in writing.

Chirs Herb: I would ask for that in writing, because, you know, being in the fuel ...and the energy industry. Fuel types don't equate to energy efficiency technologies that consume fuel types equate to efficiency. I would like a more thorough answer to that cause, I would be concerned.

Response: Victoria Hackett, DEEP- We would welcome your input in this.. We're not giving an answer at this point as this is one of the things we're asking for public input on, whether we should use this funding for conversions. As far as whether conversion can promote energy efficiency, I'm not sure that that I would agree with your characterization

Low-Income Energy Advisory Board Meeting

April 3, 2024 via Zoom & Broadcasted via CT-N

Wednesday April 3, 2024 1:31PM-2:48PM

Zoom Recording [Link](#)

	<p>of it, but I'm not sure this is the place to get into that. I think we're looking for feedback. Certainly, a conversion to a heat pump could increase efficiency for people. And I'm comfortable saying that so.</p> <p>Chris Herb: Understood. And as you said, you were looking for feedback from people here, and I'm one of those people. So, thank you.</p> <p>Victoria Hacket: We welcome your feedback. But I do think it's fair to say that you can increase somebody's efficiency with a conversion to a heat pump from another fuel source. If the conversion leaves to a more efficient outcome. But we welcome your comments on that.</p> <p>Chairwoman Claire Coleman: Any other questions or comments from the board. I do not see any other hands raised. If there's no further questions, I'll ask for a motion to approve the 2024 WAP State plan.</p> <p>Vice Chairwoman Nora Duncan: I'll move to approve the 2024 WAP State Plan.</p> <p>Jaime Soto: I'll second.</p> <p>Chairwoman Claire Coleman: Great the motion to approve the 2024 WAP State plan has been moved and seconded. Is there any further discussion? I think we'll have a full vote on that motion all in favor. Could you say Aye.</p> <p>Vote: 5 votes in favor, 1 Opposed</p> <p>Chairwoman Claire Coleman: the motion has passed.</p>
<p>4. Energy Assistance Program Updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. DSS -- CEAPb. Operation Fuelc. Avangridd. Eversource	<p>DSS- Cassandra Norfleet Johnson: The department (just) issued an updated report for the period ending March 30, 2024. I'm going to report on the most current data that was just issued and not the item that's in the (last) report.</p> <p><i>Comment</i> Yessenia Santiago-Bejarano- DEEP Secretary- the report being presented on the screen is from March 30th and will be circulated after the meeting.</p> <p>DSS- Cassandra Norfleet Johnson: No problem at all. We're really excited about the data tied to the applications and the information of applications approved. If you look at the number of applications year and the transition, they're slightly down. But if you look at the number of applications approved, they're up. And we're excited about the work that the Community Anchor Agencies (CAA's) network has been doing, (important to really highlight because the last day for authorizations was April 1st. (There was) a heavy, heavy lift of getting that information out the Department, (we) also reached out to Chris at CEMA, and asked for his</p>

Low-Income Energy Advisory Board Meeting

April 3, 2024 via Zoom & Broadcasted via CT-N

Wednesday April 3, 2024 1:31PM-2:48PM

Zoom Recording [Link](#)

assistance, ...making sure that the vendors and households, ...are able to get the deliveries again. Chris, thank you very much again for your assistance on getting that word out to folks. While not on the agenda under the larger DSS auspices we will be issuing a supplement payment for water as there was some additional resources, to those households that received a benefit in 2023. Communication has already been distributed regarding the Water supplemental assistance, there are approximately 9 vendors who will be issued payments in an estimated amount of \$280.00. This payment will be kept as a credit on the customer's account, approximately 9,915 households will be served. Also, there was a special session regarding the ARPA dollars, the contracts have been executed. The CAA's and Operation Fuel have been getting benefits out to households as of March 30th. The CAA's network has served approximately 15,000 households with these supplemental payments for households that have exhausted benefits. Operation Fuel will be getting us the data next week. Any questions.

Q&A:

Jaime Soto: Is there any way where the application intake could be broken down by assistance type, i.e.. oil, electric or gas?

A: Cassandra Norfleet- Johnson, DSS, Next year's build out we will have that data, we know the systems can do it because of the Low-Income Discount Rate (LIDR). The work has been done at the back end but is not ready for reporting for this year. And we have been looking at that kind of conversation tied to the utility heated and the deliverable fuel. And we're looking at the moratorium. What does that trend look like. So, we're all excited about this.

Chairwoman Claire Coleman: Cassie, are you referring to next fiscal year or the next annual year? So, we have a sense of timing.

A: Cassandra Norfleet-Johnson The plan year.

We want to make sure we're reporting clean data. It gets messy when you start comparing different apples and oranges and everything else. Next year's reports will have those little data indicators, and we'll be able to make those kinds of assumptions and look at the trend if you will of what's going on with the data.

Q: Claire Coleman: recollecting the special act that passed. I believe it directed the funding to those who had previously exhausted benefits. So, the statewide totals in terms of applications wouldn't necessarily be impacted by that. Is it just the total dollar value?

Low-Income Energy Advisory Board Meeting

April 3, 2024 via Zoom & Broadcasted via CT-N

Wednesday April 3, 2024 1:31PM-2:48PM

Zoom Recording [Link](#)

A: Cassandra Norfleet-Johnson Correct.

Q: Jaime Soto, are we projecting that for gas and electric heating customers, the end date for intake is going to be May 31st. Has there been any conversations regarding extensions?

A: Cassandra Norfleet-Johnson: There has not been any talks about extension at this moment.

b. Operation Fuel (Mike Turaj) See [report](#). Our program season ended on March 15th, we were able to extend it because of the ARPA money received. We are still processing applications. We have spent roughly \$925,00.00 on all fuel types excluding water. Op. Fuel will give utility clients a supplemental benefit up to \$1k with the ARPA funds... The supplemental benefit is only for utility clients not deliverable fuel clients unfortunately, we don't have the capacity nor the time to handle all the fuel vendor invoicing due to ARPA deadline. Op. Fuel was made aware of the COVID-19 Moratorium that will end on May 1st and hope that this extra benefit for utility customers can alleviate the financial burden.

Comment- Cassandra Norfleet Johnson, DSS. I am looking at the data and what you are saying, and it is unclear which part of the money is being utilized for which activity? I just want to make sure we have clean data.

Response: Mike Turaj- Yes, we can work on providing this data.

Q: Jaime Soto- Is the supplemental payment for either electric or gas customers? Is it an additional \$1k or did the benefit allowance increase from \$500.00 to \$1k?

A: Mike Turaj: The applicant will be approved an initial \$500.00, and they could get supplemental assistance up to \$1k. I am unsure if it will apply to all utilities but could check and get back to you.

Q: Chairwoman Claire Coleman, I had a clarifying question in the chart. It lists both household applications approved so far, and then number of total clients assisted, what is the distinction?

A: Mike Turaj: The first line-item number is considerably low, the second number is the total number of people assisted within the 1, 945 households (the first line item).

Q: Chairwoman Claire Coleman, I think you mentioned that you have applications pending. Do you have a sense of how many applications are pending?

Low-Income Energy Advisory Board Meeting

April 3, 2024 via Zoom & Broadcasted via CT-N

Wednesday April 3, 2024 1:31PM-2:48PM

Zoom Recording [Link](#)

A: Mike Turaj, We received 8,000 applications throughout the program season, we approved approximately 2,000.00, denied a couple of hundred and still have a lot of applications to process.

Q: Chris Herb: Do you have an estimate, you mentioned that the Covid Moratorium was ending. Do you have an estimate on how many people you may be able to avert shut off because of the allocation of those dollars to the utility households opposed to deliverable fuels? It'd be nice to know how many people you might be saving from having to try to work their way through that difficult thing. Although we're not, obviously thrilled that there's not an ability to include deliverables. The money is going towards a much-needed area.

A: Mike Turaj: I could circle back with you later.

Comment: Chairwoman Claire Coleman: since you're working with the utility companies to apply those credits. There might be an ability to identify customers with arrears. Operating under the presumption that you know the clients in arrears, upon a second check you would be able to see whether, they're on a payment plan, because if they're not on a plan with the arrears there, more likely to subject to the termination process.

Response: Mike Turaj: we could hopefully work through that, and I will bring this back to Gannon.

Q: Bonnie Roswig: is it possible rather than to give those monies (ARPA) to people who are out there in need, but haven't gotten a first go around from Op. Fuel?

A: Mike Turaj: I think it boils down to the deadline, and we have to spend the ARPA money as well as the time capacity it takes our staff to go through all the applications. Getting 8,000 applications is much more than we received in the past.

Q: Bonnie Roswig- What is the deadline?

A: Mike Turaj: I don't have the exact date, but the estimate is the end of June.

Q: Cassandra Norfleet Johnson, DSS (I want to confirm) Operation Fuel is not accepting any new applications for households? I want to make sure we are making the appropriate referral when we pick up the DSS 1-800 line.

A: Mike Turaj: We are accepting applications for water. But not for the other fuel types. So, if they applied through us they could check on the status of their application.

Low-Income Energy Advisory Board Meeting

April 3, 2024 via Zoom & Broadcasted via CT-N

Wednesday April 3, 2024 1:31PM-2:48PM

Zoom Recording [Link](#)

Q: Frank Augeri: Are the payments going directly to the electric companies and gas companies.

A: Mike Turaj: it is an award to the applicant.

A: Jaime Soto: Frank to answer your question. The monies do come to the, to the utility. It doesn't go directly to the customer.

Q: Frank Augeri: Is Op. Fuel finishing, processing the current application before adding the additional \$500.

A: Mike Turaj: The additional \$500.00 less supplemental funds are applications going forward on starting this Monday until we reach the end.

Q: Chairwoman Claire Coleman: So, the answer to that is No? Then, Mike, just to clarify that you are not getting through the full application pool prior to starting the round of supplemental funding?

A: Mike Turaj: we would start with the applications we're currently reviewing and then go through to the end of it. Then, with time we could circle back to the customers that we approved beforehand.

Q: Chairwoman Claire Coleman: Will there be customers who don't make it in to get any benefit with that process? If you're processing new applications at the same time as you're providing supplemental payments, you might go through all the funding before getting to those applicants who are being processed for the first time?

A: Mike Turaj: We are hopeful that as we get through the applications, we can distribute the \$500 assistance to all of them.

Comment: Cassandra Norfleet Johnson I'm trying to understand, related to fairness of who gets a supplemental payment? Or what if there are not enough resources for everyone to get a supplemental payment and a benefit?

Response: Mike Turaj: when we go through the rest of our applications, ...everyone will get if they're approved, they'll get the \$500. But if they're utility clients they could get up to the \$1,000 with the supplemental.

Chairwoman Claire Coleman: We are reconvening in June. We look forward to talking further and understanding the process and results in a little more detail.

d. Avangrid:

Jaime- Avangrid –see the [report](#), enrollment data and balances spent was presented for Matching Payment Plan, Bill Forgiveness Program, COVID-19 Payment plan, Flexible Active Payment Plans. The enrollment data of

Low-Income Energy Advisory Board Meeting

April 3, 2024 via Zoom & Broadcasted via CT-N

Wednesday April 3, 2024 1:31PM-2:48PM

Zoom Recording [Link](#)

	<p>LIDR was presented but the report does not include those that are self-declared as LIDR, we have 43 customers pending approval for LIDR.</p> <p>Q: Bonnie Roswig- When a customer is enrolled in LIDR, assuming they are hardship certified, do they need to recertify?</p> <p>A: Jaime Soto-A customer is enrolled in LIDR for 12 months and 60 days prior to expiration of the 12th month, the customer will be given reminder notices to re-apply. The notices are given at 60 days, 30 days, and 15 days prior to expiration.</p> <p>Q: Bonnie Roswig- When did LIDR become live?</p> <p>A: Jaime Soto: Dec. 31st,2023.</p> <p>Q: Katie Wilt- For an Eversource customer who is approved for energy assistance, and it is their primary source of heat is there a way to auto-enroll them into 10% discount?</p> <p>A: Jaime Soto: I can speak for Avangrid. The CAA can enter the tier level and the commitment files will automatically enroll the customer.</p> <p>A: Chairwomen Claire Coleman: The representative for Eversource had a conflict. Will have to get back to you.</p> <p>Comment: Chris Herb- If a discount rate is applied to those enrolled in LIDR it would drive down costs and make more money available for other customers applying. But what I'm hearing is that there could be more participants on the electric side, this will cause added pressure. This goes back to ongoing discussion the need for state dollars as those numbers may increase and it will allow us to better articulate to the Legislature the need to have ongoing additional funding.</p> <p>e. Eversource: Chairwoman Coleman: Eversource had a conflict with the meeting, so rather than have Jaime Soto read the report, everyone can read the report, absent any objections, we will continue to the next Agenda Item, due to time constraints.</p>
<p>5. Agency Updates:</p>	<p>a. DEEP- presented earlier on WAP state plan.</p> <p>b. PURA- Frank Augeri, PURA has rate cases for CNG and UI at the end of May, and RAM cases will occur late April-May. PURA issued a second quarterly newsletter.</p>

Low-Income Energy Advisory Board Meeting

April 3, 2024 via Zoom & Broadcasted via CT-N

Wednesday April 3, 2024 1:31PM-2:48PM

Zoom Recording [Link](#)

	<p>c. OCC- SB 384- Our collective bill on LIEAB amendments that was voted out of committee. There was amended language voted out and we have worked with the committee to address the technical changes that both Connecticut Legal Services and Operation Fuel addressed. We will continue to advocate to get the bill on the floor for votes, for those of you doing your own legislative advocacy on other issues as well. Hope you'll add this to your list to remind our legislative leaders to bring it to a vote.</p>
<p>6. Discussion on Board Leadership-Current Terms Expire in June</p>	<p>Chairwoman Claire Coleman: Our board leadership roles as Chair and Vice Chair are up on June 30th, and we have a meeting June 5th, so we will be bringing a vote on future leadership. We're certainly open to interest from other members of the board.</p> <p>Vice Chair Nora Duncan: Additionally, I think Claire wanted to set a deadline for people to get in touch with us if you are interested or contemplative of trying to seek a position as Chair or Vice Chair. We are happy to do a nice soft handoff rather than dumping incumbent into role. Please reach out by May 15th with interest to Claire, Yessenia or me. Reminder, you must be a voting member in order serve as Chair or vice Chair.</p>
<p>7. Brainstorming for Bi-Annual LIEAB Report</p>	<p>Chairwoman Claire Coleman: I'd like to do an initial flag and brainstorm because if SB 384 does pass, we will have an impending reporting deadline. The bill institutes a biennial report that's designed to align with the budgeting timeline and really, there is a broad range of topics that we could consider. we do have this responsibility through statute, we'll spend some time in June meeting outlining items. We are open to best practices in terms of creating a subcommittee for the report or other ideas.</p> <p>Vice Chairwoman Nora- AARP can give space virtually or in person, we could refer back to an outline used during the Malloy administration, we can circulate this, this report would be in alignment with our statute and by laws. You can also email the secretary to express interest in the subcommittee.</p>
<p>8. Public Comments</p>	<p>Vice Chairwoman, Nora Duncan, I would like to make a reference point from a personal privilege- AARP will host telephone town hall a week from today, April 10th, this event is free and open to all. The CT Consumer Council will be providing information telephonically and streaming online. The discussion will focus on high utility costs, making your</p>

Low-Income Energy Advisory Board Meeting

April 3, 2024 via Zoom & Broadcasted via CT-N

Wednesday April 3, 2024 1:31PM-2:48PM

Zoom Recording [Link](#)

	voice heard and advice to save you money and ways to get involved in dockets and legislature. If anyone wants to dial in that is (833) 946-1529, and that'll begin at 10:05 am, April 10 th the board should feel free to share that with anyone they want to as well, or on their social media sites.
9. Adjournment	Chairwoman Claire Coleman called for a motion to Adjourn. Moved by Chris Herb, and a second by Jaime Soto. No objections. hearing none, adjourned at 2:45PM.