

Low-Income Energy and Water Advisory Board Meeting
Legislative Office Building Room 1B and via Zoom
February 11, 2026, 1:31-2:48PM
Recorded via [Connecticut Network \(CT-N\)](#)

Attendance: Claire Coleman (OCC), Nora Duncan (AARP), Lydia Santiago (CNG), Jaime Soto (SCG), Theresa Washington (Eversource), Joanne Whistnant (Eversource), Kathleen Wasilnak (UI), Brittany Wyman (PURA/EOE), Gannon Long (GPCT), Nicole Lawton (Infoline), Jannine Tarantello (CLASS), Matthew Dillon (CT Legal Services, Inc.), Nickey Kollie (CEMA), La'Mont Stevenson (Town of Manchester, Water and Sewer Dept.), Bonnie Roswig (Center for Children's Advocacy), Rhonda Evans (representative Community Action Agency), Cassandra Norfleet-Johnson (DSS), Seema Malani (DEEP).

Absent: Shayleen Alfieri (Norwich Public Utilities), Michelle Williams (CT Water), Greg Kirschner (CT Fair Housing Center), Angel Battle (representative of Community Action Agency), Zani Imetovski (OPM).

Chairwoman Claire Coleman called to order the regular meeting of the LIEWAB to order at 1:31PM on February 11, 2026, the meeting was held in person and via ZOOM. Connecticut Television Network (CTN) recorded the meeting. The Chair noted energy affordability initiatives are critical during these challenging times. Members of National Energy and Utility Affordability Coalition (NEUAC) have issued an [Open Letter in Support of the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program \(LIHEAP\) to the federal Senate and House Committees Appropriations](#); this letter will be circulated among the board via the secretary for consideration of signatures. The LIHEAP appropriations bill includes not just base level funding but another \$20 million dollar increase. The Department of Social Services (DSS) will provide the impacts of this increase throughout CT, which is important given the cold winter weather. The Governor and legislature moved swiftly to authorize [An Act Establishing Federal Cuts Response Fund](#), that provides a back stop in the event federal funds do not come through to CT for several social service programs including LIHEAP. The Governor's State of State that occurred last week, the Governor has issued a proposal of an energy rebate that can help families manage energy costs and there will be debate on this rebate over the course of this legislative session which we will follow.

1. Roll Call	(Min.0:51-3:42) Completed by Secretary, Y. Santiago-Bejarano.
2. Approval of December 3, 2025 Minutes	(Min.5:58-7:55) Chairwoman, Claire Coleman called for Approval of December 3, 2025, with corrections as noted by Gannon Long, GPCT, to correct the spelling of CT Generation Power to Generation Power CT. Motion by Co-Chair Nora Duncan. Second by Gannon Long, GPCT. No Objections. Abstention by Chair Claire Coleman, OCC. Minutes approved.
3. Public Comments	(Min.8:00-8:43) None.
4. Energy Assistance Program Updates a. Department of Social Services (DSS) b. Generation Power CT (GPCT)	(Min. 8:43-10:10) Chair Coleman highlighted a conversation with Deputy Commissioner Peter Hadler, DSS, regarding the developments with New Opportunities, Inc. (NOI) regarding funding concerns and assured the board members that this concern has not negatively impacted customers of delivery of

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c. Eversource

d. Avangrid

e. Connecticut Water Company

LIHEAP, including heating oil benefits and utility discounts. DC Hadler could not be present today as he was at a conference, but DSS may provide further update.

a. (Min. 10:10-43:33) [DSS CEAP Report](#) presented by Cassandra Norfleet Johnson. Regarding [NOI] reference, the LIHEAP program operates as intended and if there are customer concerns, they should be directed to the agency. The report details a year to date (YTD) of applications taken; it appears to be a 15% decrease in applications taken. DSS explained that the decrease is due to a data cleanup effort. The updated, de-duplicated data more accurately reflects how customers apply for services, which was a request from the board. Once an application is signed then it moves to another bucket. The second table reports the YTD of approved applications noting that applications without a signature are not considered an application. Year-to-date approval data show that 80% of applications taken have been approved, reflecting that the CAAs are in a strong position.

Questions and Answers & Comments:

Q&A: Theresa Washington (Eversource) If the person has not signed the application, is it not considered as applied?

DSS: Correct. Customers may state they have applied but are missing documentation to provide eligibility and receive CEAP award, therefore, an application is considered complete once a signature is received and then the application may be processed. The signatures acknowledge “Yes, I am applying for services.”

Q&A: Chair Coleman (OCC) Do we expect that 15% to increase throughout the season? It is important that CAA’s follow up on the outstanding applications.

DSS: Yes, agencies are following up with clients and continue to educate customers on a basic benefit agreement separate from crisis benefit. It is important to educate customers to maximize their benefit. Cassie recognized Christian Herb and Nikey Kollie from CEMA who ensured that customers applied by the deadlines to maximize their benefits with deliverable fuel.

Q&A: Andrea Millard (Aquarion Water) is there conversation to add water assistance into the CEAP application?

DSS: Water assistance is not federally funded program and DSS cannot make this decision. In addition, (if there was a consideration to create a standard water assistance application) all water companies, private and public would need to provide this benefit. The board would need to make

Low-Income Energy and Water Advisory Board Meeting
Legislative Office Building Room 1B and via Zoom
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a decision regarding this request including water companies.

Comment: Chair Coleman- CEAP is energy specific, however, water assistance and reduced water charge fee with low-income discount rate are current options.

Q&A: Matt Dillion (CT Legal Services) There is a question on the data, what are some examples of applications that were taken last year that are not considered taken this year?

DSS: An example of an application taken before is an application taken via the phone, or an elderly person who does not trust an online application. The customer provides their demographics including social security number, the CAA would start the application, the system would generate a number and a date of application, but that should not be considered an application. The customer needs to make an informed decision that they are not misrepresenting a story. The attestation signature part verifies that a customer has agreed to apply for services, then we can call that an application.

Q&A: Gannon (GPCT)- When reviewing the pending applications, New Opportunities, Inc. is disproportionately higher than other CAA's and most in other categories the difference is not as strong, are there any challenges in this region, where the board can assist?

DSS- great questions, there is nothing the board can do, NOI has a large population in this region and NOI is following up with the customers to sign the applications. New Opportunities and other CAA's have different delivery service models for the applications pending with signatures. Absent the board making a recommendation for a uniform process requiring to be the same, (DSS) will not intervene so long as a customer is being served and in a timely manner, the data is being monitored. DSS will follow up on outreach survey to the board, with goal of the board to help ensure board members are aware of key application dates and directing customers to the health agency website and CAA and where customers should follow up.

Q&A: Matt Hellman (CLAS)- I have (2) questions: (1) related to applications taken and 2) other related to processes taken. The 15.2% decrease in application, looking back to the report in November, there was 14.9% decrease, do we anticipate this percentage to go down or remain the same throughout.

Low-Income Energy and Water Advisory Board Meeting
Legislative Office Building Room 1B and via Zoom
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DSS: Yes, we believe more people will apply for energy. The percentage is a base point, with respect to processing we have recently had many holidays and the snow days have impacted processing applications. We expect there will be uptake also with utility households applying for benefits.

(Q2) Processing- for applications approved- there is a big spread across the agencies, is there anything that can explain this wide range difference and is there a target percentage that DSS would like the CAA's receiving?

DSS: There is not a target percentage as we are changing the delivery systems. The (range of difference) is due to staffing and the size of the service area. DSS does evaluate the data with analysis of what is impacting these numbers, is it staffing; holidays; winter storms, or customers household eligibility.

Q&A: Chair Coleman (OCC) Does DSS require a wet signature?

DSS: (DSS) does not need a wet signature, electronic and telephonic signatures are accepted.

Q&A: Chair Coleman: The second page of DSS reports reflects applications denied as deduplicated data, is it correct to read that applications pending are not considered denied. DSS in the past provided a breakdown of denial reasons.

DSS: Yes, that is correct. DSS can provide a breakdown of the denial reasons, this was removed as the system would generate a duplicate data set and the system cannot deduplicate the data and this creates confusion as to the real denial reason.

Comment- Chair Coleman noted the data would still be important to see.

Comment: Rhonda Evans (CAA representative)- I think it is important to mention-that Administering the LIHEAP and CEAP program- is complicated program to administer. The CAA administer the application with DSS and their partners. The (CAA) network is intentional in the application process, we are following all the federal guidelines and protocols that have been established by DSS with the goal being- to get the benefit to the customer to avoid a crisis benefit. We do this in a way that meets all the goals of the program and accomplish this with a low error rate. We have concerns with any reduction in numbers, it is important to acknowledge the level of data analysis and the many

Low-Income Energy and Water Advisory Board Meeting
Legislative Office Building Room 1B and via Zoom
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changes in how the program is run, even the changes this year as to the definition of what is considered an application was a an area of concern for the network especially for agencies in regions that receive a large volume of telephonic applications and an application was not accounted for until a signature was received. There are a lot of contributing factors that CAA's manage with thousands of applications and these considerations should be considered when (reviewing) high level data.

b. (Min.43:13-53:19) [Generation Power CT report](#) presented by Gannon Long (GPCT) – We have (2) reports to share, the second is a fact sheet comparing cycle demand with the new delivery service model. We would like to thank you to DSS for helping us to get funding and thank you to the legislature last year for allocating (\$500k budget) to GPCT for this year and \$1million for next fiscal year. We are thankful for the support and Governor's approval. We are working in collaboration with DSS and the Attorney General's Office to deploy the funds for the final cycle of the year.

GPCT has been involved with Public Utilities Regulatory Affairs (PURA) in the docket of the evaluation of medical protection that is extremely data intensive, which is the PURA report to the General Assembly regarding the evaluation of medical protection. The study and presentation during the technical meeting are linked to the report. We are still reviewing all the cycles and what the demand has been. There has been an increase in assistance with electrical use households, in the past there has been increase in deliverable fuel which is different. This third cycle received the most applications in comparison to the prior two cycles, there has been a lower number of shut off's or out of fuel due to winter moratorium.

GPCT also provided information on the annual applications for water assistance programs of Aquarion, CT Water and MDC, these run on the company's fiscal year, it is their money. MDC does not have offer a low discount rate program. We want to acknowledge CT Water who provided an additional \$160k to accommodate the need for water assistance, which is beyond the budget. CT Water was able to provide support for customers throughout the entire year.

Comment: Theresa Washington (Eversource) there are 4 cycles, this is the first full year of this new cycle model, and it will be difficult to compare to prior years data as this is a new model.

Low-Income Energy and Water Advisory Board Meeting
Legislative Office Building Room 1B and via Zoom
February 11, 2026, 1:31-2:48PM
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GPCT: It is a different model, but it has given predictability and transparency to clients, which has also been helpful with planning with a fixed budget, while the demand increases. We don't have the resources to be open all year; yet when a customer calls, we can inform the customer of the next cycle date and the documentation needed to apply. The previous model allowed for less reliability for customers of when funding might be received. We are open to feedback from customers with this new cycle model.

Q&A: Jaime Soto (SCG) Do you have a timeline for future cycles for the remainder of the year?

GPCT: We may be able to provide a future timeline by the end of this fiscal year, possibly in June of 2026. The next cycle is in March 2026, with determination concluding at the end of April. We expect to promote the program by the summer.

Comment: Theresea Washington (Eversource)- I am following up with an outstanding question from Bonnie Roswig from the last meeting, regarding how the CEAP award is applied to customer balances. The final affordability plan was filed regarding process and CEAP is applied to outstanding balance.

c. (Min.53:57-59:50) [Eversource](#) report presented by Joanne Whistant (Eversource) - reviewed data CT New Start Forgiveness Program, enrollment of Low-Income Discount Rate (LIDR), and year to year comparison of these programs.

Q&A: Chair Coleman Q&A- There is an overall reduction in the arrearage forgiveness program is there a corresponding reduction in actual arrearages?

Theresa Washington (Eversource)- there might be slight differences [however]there are a lot of factors: CEAP awards, increase electric rate, colder winter season allows for more usage that must be taken into consideration.

d. (Min.1:00-1:03) [Avangrid report](#) presented by Jaime Soto, reviewed data of Matching Payment Plan (MPP), active Flexible Payment Plan arrangements and Low-Income Discount Rate enrollment and a comparison to last year's data. Jaime highlighted a shift in United Illuminating (UI) data points as the bill forgiveness program (BFP) is no longer available. BFP was offered for a 3-year period. There is a decrease in the BFP and an increase in Matching Payment

Low-Income Energy and Water Advisory Board Meeting
Legislative Office Building Room 1B and via Zoom
February 11, 2026, 1:31-2:48PM
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Plan (MPP) as customers are now enrolled in this program. Customers who unenrolled in flexible payment plan can enroll in MPP if this is a better program for the customer. UI will start the Low-Income Discount Rate- 5 tier model in August of this year.

e. (Min. 1:04-1:07) [CT Water Report](#) – Chair Coleman read the following statement by Michelle Williams from CT Water “Connecticut Water representatives were not able to attend this meeting due to other conflicts but wanted to relay that since our last meeting, they were made aware of an incorrect interpretation of Public Act 15-173, which outlined 12-month timelines for income reverification in utility assistance programs. Connecticut Water’s PURA-approved assistance programs had stipulated a 24-month income reverification period. Connecticut Water believed that they had to comply with the 12-month timeline outlined in the Act, but had missed a provision that exempted the company from this stipulation, meaning that Connecticut Water customers would still be on a 24-month reverification timeline until the company’s next rate case.

Following the discovery of this error, the Company re-enrolled any customers who would have still been eligible under the original 24-month reverification timeline and provided a commensurate bill credit reflecting an average 10%, 40% or 80% water bill discount (reflective of WRAP discount tiers) for any bills that were issued to the customers during the error period.

Connecticut Water will be present at the next meeting to answer any questions about this issue and would also like to apologize for the confusion and concern this may have caused their customers.”

5. PURA Docketed Matters Updates

(Min. 1:06-1:09) presented by Brittany Wyman from PURA, As Gannon mentioned earlier there is the medical protection docket, and two rate cases re-opened, the 2026 Affordability Docket is also open and the utilities will file the application June 1st.

Comment: Gannon Long (GPCT) The energy affordability docket is currently open for stakeholder compensation and groups may want to consider applying. The deadline has been extended.

Low-Income Energy and Water Advisory Board Meeting
Legislative Office Building Room 1B and via Zoom
February 11, 2026, 1:31-2:48PM
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6. Legislative Updates	(Min. 1:11-1:12) Chair Coleman welcomed all members to provide any proposals. None were provided.
7. Public Comments	(Min) None.
8. Adjournment/ Closing Remarks	<p>(Min. 1:12-1:15) Chair Coleman highlighted the following: the board voted to provide biannual report to the legislature - this year will mark the 2nd year to provide a report to the legislature.</p> <p>LIHEAP allocation plan recommendations, similar to last year the report was completed in time for DSS legislative report. A recommendation from last year, was to further evaluate a separate formalized cooling program popular to those in southern states. If any board member is interested in providing information this would be helpful, please reach to the chair or secretary.</p> <p>The Chair and Cochair positions' terms are ending in June, if no one steps up Nora and I have agreed to stay on board. We are happy to discuss offline responsibilities associated with these positions. We will revisit term positions in the April meeting where anyone can identify their interest at that time for a vote by June. Co-Chair Nora noted she can only serve one more term per the bylaws.</p> <p>Recommendation by Theresa Washington (Eversource), to include agency affiliation in the Attendance section of the Meeting Minutes.</p> <p>Chairwoman Claire Coleman, called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Motion by Kathleen Wasilnak and second by Rhonda Evans. No objections. Meeting Adjourned at 2:48pm.</p>

Upcoming Meeting Schedule:

- April 1, 2026
- June 3, 2026ⁱ
- August 5, 2026
- October 7, 2026
- December 2, 2026

ⁱ Subject to change to accommodate planning and approval of LIHEAP Allocation Plan.