
From: Trotman, Pamela
Sent: Thu 4/1/2010 7:50 AM
Subject: Low Income Energy Advisory Board

LIEAB Members:

*As a reminder, the next meeting of the Low Income Energy Advisory Board is on **Monday, April 5** from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. at DPUC in New Britain. Attached please find correspondence from the Chair, Ray Wilson, draft agenda and meeting minutes for March, DSS reports, and DSS response to the CEAP streamline recommendations.*

Thanks

Pam

*Pamela Trotman
Office of Policy and Management
450 Capital Avenue
Hartford, Connecticut 06106
860.418.6359
860.418.6495 - Fax*

Low-Income Energy Advisory Board

Monday, April 5, 2010

1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

**DPUC
Ten Franklin Avenue
New Britain, CT**

- I. Welcome
- II. Approval of March Meeting Minutes
- III. Discussion on Legislative Proposals
- IV. DSS Response to CEAP Streamline Recommendations
- V. Reports
 - DSS Report
 - Operation Fuel Update
 - Utility Program Updates
- VI. Next Meetings

- May 3, June 7, August 2, September 13, October 4*, November 1 and December 6

Draft
 Low-Income Energy Advisory Board Meeting
 Monday, March 1, 2010
 1:30 p.m.

New Opportunities of Greater Meriden
 74 Cambridge Street
 Meriden, CT

Attendees: Ray Wilson, AmaliaVazquez Bzdyra, Kammy Spence, Mary Ellen Zang, Joanne Balaschak, Pamela Giannini, Tom O'Brien, Laura Gonzalez, Shirley Bergert, Steve Bartha, Lindsay Parke, David Thomas, Sean Gail, Paula Claydon, Kelly Porter, John Dobos, Deb Polun, Brenda Watson and Patricia Wrice.

Agenda Item	Action
Welcome	Chair Ray Wilson convened the meeting at 1:35 p.m. Members and guests introduced themselves.
Approval of February Meeting Minutes	John Dobos moved approval of the February meeting minutes and the motion was seconded by Mary Ellen Zang. The minutes were approved on a voice vote.
Chair's Report	The chair provided a brief update on the current legislative session relating to energy issues. There is no information on the status of the Discounted Rate legislative proposal. Amalia Vazquez Bzdyra stated that DPUC was considering opening a docket within the next four to five weeks regarding a Discounted Rate Program and is in the process of researching similar programs administered in other states. Patricia Wrice offered to share the "Apprise Report and Evaluation Report".
Update Smart Meter Pilot Program	The presentation on the Smart Meter Pilot Program was put on hold indefinitely.
DSS Report	DSS reported on (CEAP, SAFA, and CHAP) through March 1, 2010. A total of 110,978 applications taken; 90,050 eligible; 17,114 denied; 3,814 pending certification, 31,117 received Crisis Assistance and 7,323 received Safety Net Assistance. More households are receiving Crisis Assistance and Safety Net Services as compared to last year. March 15 is the end date for fuel authorization (oil customers). Financial status - \$107 million – program services, \$81.3 million committed and \$30 million uncommitted and available to cover clients until the end of the program. No guarantee of available funds to carry

	<p>forward to next fiscal year.</p> <p>DSS reviewed the Caseload/Eligible Caseload Comparison charts thru 3/1/10. The caseload comparison chart reviewed showed a 3% increase in cases from FFY 2009 to FFY 2010. Eligible Caseload Comparison chart showed an 8.3% change from FFY 2009 to FFY 2010.</p> <p>ARRA Weatherization Program :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2009/2011 contract for the regular DOE program that includes supplemental funding for two years and regular DOE funding for one year: \$5,372,567. • Program Year 2010 regular funding: \$1,972,276. • Expenditures through 12/31/2009: \$2,374,276 • Units weatherized 4/2009 – 12/2009: 704 units. • Goal for same period: 492 units. • Policy Advisory Council Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 9, 2010. • Public Hearing is scheduled for Tuesday, March 16, 2010. • Public Hearing will also cover proposed amendments to the ARRA Weatherization Plan.
<p>Operation Fuel</p>	<p>Operation Fuel reported on the following expenditures: \$90,000 Emergency Funds, \$204,000 Mission Funds and level funding of \$430,000 for the Add a Dollar Program.</p>
<p>Utility Program Updates</p>	<p>CNG: For the period covering January-February 2010 a total of 6,035 awards granted for a total of \$4,511,045.</p> <p>SCG: For the period covering January-February 2010 a total of 4,298 awards granted for a total of \$3,214,194.</p> <p>UI: For the period covering January-February 2010 a total of 1,081 awards granted for a total of \$858,480.</p> <p>CL&P: For the period covering November 2008-October 2009- a total of 6,184 awards granted for a total of \$773,486.</p>

	<p>YG: For the period covering November 2008-October 2009- a total of 4,550 awards granted for a total of \$220,117.</p>
<p>CEAP Intake Process Subcommittee Update</p>	<p>The CEAP Streamline Subcommittee reported on recommendations to streamline the CEAP process. Board members engaged in a lengthy discussion regarding the recommendations. Shirley Bergert made a motion to accept the concept of the recommendations submitted by the subcommittee with the provision that DSS will review, prioritize and attach timeframes to the recommendations. The motion was seconded by Amalia Vazquez Bzdyra. The motion was approved on a voice vote with DSS and OPM abstaining.</p>
<p>Next Meeting</p>	<p>The next meeting will be held on March 5, 2010 at DPUC. Amalia Vazquez Bzdyra will chair the meeting in the absence of the Chairperson.</p>

LIEAB Members:

The April 5th meeting of the LIEAB will be held at the DPUC begin at 1:30.

As previously noted to the Board, this meeting date is problematic for OPM and DSS as it coincides with the need to submit mandatory reporting under the ARRA programs that we are administering. Accordingly, neither DSS nor OPM will be attending the meeting.

Attached you will find the preliminary agenda for the meeting, the draft minutes of the March meeting, and regular reports that DSS typically provides on the CEAP program “numbers”.

In addition, as requested at the March meeting, DSS has organized the preliminary recommendations from the CEAP Early Intake Coordination subcommittee into three groups: Short Term, Intermediate, and Long Term. This information is also attached.

I request that the subcommittee incorporate this information and provide a draft set of recommendations for transmittal to DSS and/or OPM. I propose that the document be submitted to the Board electronically for voting by April 15th rather than wait until the May meeting to vote on the final recommendations. I would hope that the recommendations would be presented in a format that provides sufficient information to put the recommendation into context and details what goal is trying to be achieved by implementing the recommendation. It also would be helpful if the Board included in its recommendations relevant statements regarding any anticipated costs or savings that can be attributed to the recommendation.

Lastly, as was indicated in February I had recommended that two subcommittees be formed to deal with the issues that were brought up by various members with regard to the impact the early intake process has had. The above mentioned subcommittee has focused on recommendations with regard to the CEAP program and potential improvements to the operation of that program.

I recommended that a second subcommittee be formed to focus on the impact that early intake has had on the utility arrearage/forgiveness programs. I believe the timing is opportune for this new subcommittee to convene and continue the dialogue on ideas that may involve into recommendations for changes in how the utility programs are administered. These recommendations can then be transmitted to the DPUC once adopted by the Board. I suggest that preliminary recommendations be developed and available for discussion by the Board at the May meeting (or June if more time is needed). Final recommendations could then be prepared and submitted sometime in July.

OPM will endeavor to arrange the first meeting of this Utility Program Early Intake Coordination subcommittee. Please let Pam know of your interest to participate in that effort.

As per the March meeting of the Low Income Energy Advisory Board, the Department was requested to review the “proposed recommendations” and assess them as to their feasibility. Below are the results of our assessment. We have divided the recommendations into three categories; short-term, intermediate and long-term.

Short-Term

We believe that the recommendations in this category are among the most likely to be successfully implemented. They include -

- **CEAP Plan should be drafted earlier** by DSS/OPM and the legislature should review and approve the Plan earlier. Plan approval process should be completed prior to the start of early intake (August 1st). In order to accomplish this, the Plan would have to be drafted in spring (perhaps May 1st).
 - Recommendation would go to:
 - DSS/OPM re: drafting and submitting of Plan to legislature,
 - Legislative committees of cognizance (Human Services, Appropriations, Energy & Technology) regarding scheduling hearing for plan review and approval.
 - DSS regarding timely submittal of approved Plan to HHS.
- **Earlier vendor registration** - Fuel vendors must reregister annually in order to participate in the energy assistance program. Early intake is complicated by the fact that the vendor registration does not occur until after the Plan is approved. Agencies are left to survey vendors to see if they think that they will be participating in the program. This recommendation is predicated on the early review and approval of the Plan.
- Develop a **pilot** with the following components:
 - **Year around intake**, where,
 - A household applies for, and is determined eligible for the current CEAP program year and for the upcoming CEAP season.
 - Intake would include:
 - Determination of eligibility for CEAP;
 - Application for CAA administered DOE funded weatherization and any available utility weatherization services;
 - Certification of hardship status for winter shut-off protection;
 - Arrearage forgiveness application processing;
 - Below Budget Worksheet processing (where necessary).

Intermediate

Recommendations in this category require further discussion which would make their adoption unlikely for the FFY 2011 program year. They include –

- Expand the use of **mail-in applications** - Perhaps initially for a limited group of applicants, i.e, utility heated households on fixed incomes. Implementation of this recommendation would require further discussions.
- DSS to **modify the program notifications** that it mails to **include household income amounts.**
- Develop a **pilot for online CEAP intake.**
- To facilitate release of information by DSS for purposes of processing energy and weatherization assistance, and ensuring other protections available to the poor, **recommend that DSS add a statement on all application and redetermination forms authorizing DSS to release information to the CAAs for energy and weatherization assistance and the utilities for winter shut-off protection, access to low income payment programs and conservation assistance administered by the utilities.**

Long-Term

Recommendations in this category require further discussion, including fiscal analysis and information technology implications.

- **Data Portal** – Develop on-line connectivity between utility companies, CAAs and DSS. This would require many more conversations, especially with IT staff at all levels.
- **Scanning** of supporting documentation (income & assets verification, utility bills). Need to determine impact on intake processing time.
- Recommend that **DSS reactivate the EMS computer system fields identifying the primary and secondary heat source company and account numbers.** For any household with a primary heat other than electricity, the secondary heat field should be used to identify the electric account, regardless of whether it is a secondary heat source. DSS used to provide energy assistance benefits directly for anyone receiving cash assistance and food stamps from DSS. Given that fact, it is likely that these fields are still available in EMS. The information could be collected at the time of application or eligibility redetermination for all DSS program beneficiaries (including those with heat included in their rent or those in subsidized housing where they do not qualify for the benefits administered by the CAAs) and forwarded as follows:
 - To the utilities via computer run to identify hardship cases.
 - To the CAAs via computer for all households that may be eligible for CEAP (household has payment responsibility for a primary heat source and rent is less than 30% of gross household income), for processing energy assistance applications.