



Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity

Bruce Rauner, Governor

Low Income Energy Assistance Policy Advisory Council Minutes of Meeting Held on June 18, 2015 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Attendance in Chicago

Members: *Aimee English, Citizens Utility Board; Emily Monk, Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity (DCEO); Jennifer Montague, Commonwealth Edison*

Guests: *Kimberly Burdine, ComEd; Brian Glasgow, CEDA; Nancy Kane-Richards, Community Contacts; Lana Kennebrew, CEDA; Shelby Montgomery, CEDA; Shahi Nawab, CEDA; Susan Satter, Attorney General's Office; Jennifer Schmidt, CEDA*

Staff: *Maria Gallardo, DCEO*

Attendance in Springfield

Members: *Deborah Bursey, Ameren; Dalitso Sulamoyo, Illinois Association of Community Action Agencies (IACAA)*

Guests: *Melanie Brown, Ameren; Mindy Browning, ERBA; Dan Manfredo, IACCA; Kathy Walk, CEFS*

Staff: *Dennis Gorss, DCEO; Kevin Harrison, DCEO; Janet Hawes-Davis, DCEO; Patty Hughes, DCEO; Ben Moore, DCEO; Amy Park, DCEO; Mick Prince, DCEO*

Attendance via Conference Telephone

Members: *Joan Howard, Illinois Commerce Commission; Doc Mueller, Illinois Municipal Electric Agency; Ellen Rendos, Nicor Gas; Chris Wheat, City of Chicago; Kris White, Will County*

Guests: *Dave Baron, People Gas/North Shore Gas; Latoya Butler, CEDA; Allen Cherry, Attorney General's Office; Latoya Crowe, ComEd; Jen Fenske, Nicor Gas; Cassandra Frickie, CEDA; Carol Hill, CEDA; Mary Miller, Nicor Gas; Jim Monk, Illinois Energy Association; John Pady, CEDA; Lauren Pashayan, Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance; Cindi Reyes, Nicor Gas; Barbara Richardson, Legal Assistance Foundation of Metro. Chicago*

Call to Order

Emily Monk called the meeting to order.

Approval of Minutes

Dalitso Sulamoyo brought up that both sets of minutes were on incorrect letterhead. Aimee English made a motion that the March 19, 2015 minutes be accepted when placed on current letterhead. Kris White seconded the motion, motion carried.

Deborah Bursey made a motion that the April 16, 2015 minutes be accepted when placed on current letterhead. Ellen Rendos seconded the motion, motion carried.

Fiscal Report

Ben Moore covered the provided fiscal overview.

In Weatherization, OEA currently has \$29.9 million out in grants to the LAAs. The LAAs have spent about \$22.4 million, leaving about \$7.5 million. OEA issued the DOE carry-over modification grants near the end of the program year so many agencies are working to get as much done as they can in this last month.

In LIHEAP there is about \$234.9 million out to the LAAs and about \$231.7 million has been expended, leaving about \$3.2 million available.

Yesterday a procedure letter went out announcing the 2016 Weatherization Grants. DCEO is only including HHS and DOE money in the grants because of the suspension of the State funds. Discussion followed that the grants would be processed with all necessary signatures, but could not be executed until DCEO has an active appropriation.

Discussion came up about LIHEAP and the suspension of the State funds. Ben explained that anything currently in process would be paid, even if it is paid after July 1, because it would be out of 2015 State funds.

Weatherization

Emily Monk covered the issue that came up with several people regarding the Quality Control Inspector language in the State Weatherization Plan. Emily explained that OEA made a change to the State Weatherization Plan that covered the QCI requirements being tied to the DOE funds only. Mick Prince explained it a little further and answered questions.

Dalitso Sulamoyo made a motion that we accept the State Weatherization Plan as revised. Deborah Bursey seconded the motion, motion carried.

LIHEAP/PIPP

Maria Gallardo provided program updates on LIHEAP and PIPP, reviewing the information provided in the Program Status Summary.

Maria stated that LIHEAP ended on May 31, 2015, as far as taking new applications. LIHEAP has spent \$163.2 million on behalf of 282,022 households.

Maria discussed the proposed changes for the 2016 LIHEAP heating season assuming the only funding available will be the federal allocation of an estimated \$155.9 million. The first proposal is to push the priority periods of LIHEAP to October and November to coincide with the HHS federal fiscal year award. The second proposal is changing the reconnection assistance policy. OEA is proposing changing the reconnection assistance limit from \$1,000 to \$750 and to provide the benefit only when the assistance will result in reconnection. The third change is to give reconnection assistance to

disconnected clients only. The fourth proposal is to reduce the benefit matrix by 12% across the board. Given that the cash benefit is low, OEA proposes to leave it at the same level.

Maria explained that if the State funding is reinstated, OEA would still consider leaving the program start date as October given that the State funding is mainly being utilized to fund PIPP. If the State money is reinstated, OEA may consider not making the 12% reduction to the benefit matrix or the reconnection assistance changes. However, further analysis and discussions need to take place. Maria indicated that the current income guidelines, of 150% of the poverty level, will remain the same. The program changes will be part of the State LIHEAP Plan that needs to be submitted to HHS by September 1. There will be a public hearing and a PAC meeting before the plan is submitted.

Maria said that OEA is preparing to drop all PIPP clients based on the Governor's press release of June 2 suspending State LIHEAP funding for FY 2016, in the event that there is no budget agreement by July 1. Maria discussed the recommendation made by the PIPP Steering Committee at the meeting held on June 11. The recommendation was to wait to notify the PIPP clients until June 30, 2015, in the event that the funding issue is resolved by then. Maria talked about the concerns the LAAs had mentioned regarding the PIPP recertification appointments for PIPP clients in July and August, whether they should cancel them or not. Discussion followed regarding how the PIPP process might work if there was a budget passed after July 1 and all the PIPP clients had been dropped. PIPP would likely be offered as a choice to clients when the LIHEAP program started in October. The question was raised that if State LIHEAP funds were restored after July 1, could the LAAs have clients come in and offer them PIPP in September, and just do a paper application that would be held until October 1, thus giving the clients that were dropped a better chance of getting back on the program. Kevin Harrison spoke about the system issues that would prevent that from being a viable option because of the contract with Capitol Strategies ending on June 30, 2015, due to the suspension of funds. Emily Monk discussed the process of getting the PIPP drop letters produced and sent to the PIPP clients and when it would go out to the LAAs and the PAC.

There were questions and discussion about the PIPP drops that are happening no matter what happens with the State LIHEAP suspension. How will the utilities handle the outstanding arrearages for the dropped clients, and does DCEO's legal office consider them "plan participants" once they have been dropped from the PIPP? There will be further research and discussion.

New Business

Emily Monk indicated that the Energy Assistance Conference has been pushed back to August in the hope that everything will be calmer and OEA will know what the program is dealing with by then.

Meeting Schedule

The next meeting of the Policy Advisory Council is July 16, 2015. It was later rescheduled to July 23, 2015.