



**Illinois  
Department of Commerce  
& Economic Opportunity**

Bruce Rauner, Governor

**Low Income Energy Assistance Policy Advisory Council  
Minutes of Meeting Held on July 23, 2015  
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**

**Attendance in Chicago**

Members: *Emily Monk, Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity (DCEO); Jennifer Montague, Commonwealth Edison; Ellen Rendos, Nicor Gas; Kris White, Will County*

Guests: *Allen Cherry, Attorney General's Office; Latoya Butler, CEDA*

Staff: *Maria Gallardo, DCEO; Angela Westbrook, DCEO*

**Attendance in Springfield**

Members: *Dalitso Sulamoyo, Illinois Association of Community Action Agencies (IACAA)*

Guests: *Mindy Browning, ERBA; Jim Monk, Illinois Energy Association; Kathy Walk, CEFS*

Staff: *John Hathaway, DCEO; Janet Hawes-Davis, DCEO; Patty Hughes, DCEO; Marie McLean, DCEO; Ben Moore, DCEO; Amy Park, DCEO*

**Attendance via Conference Telephone**

Members: *Aimee English, Citizens Utility Board; Joan Howard, Illinois Commerce Commission; Wanda Hopkins, South Austin Coalition; Julie Hubbard, Illinois Area Agency on Aging*

Guests: *Donna Alexander, Ameren; Melanie Brown, Ameren; Jen Fenske, Nicor Gas; Nancy Kane-Richards, Community Contacts; Michelle Machay, Peoples Gas; Debra Moss, Nicor Gas; Barbara Richardson, Legal Assistance Foundation of Metro. Chicago; Julie Vahling, AARP*

**Call to Order**

Emily Monk called the meeting to order.

**Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of the June 18, 2015 PAC meeting were deferred since there wasn't a quorum present.

**Fiscal Report**

Ben Moore covered the provided fiscal overview.

In Weatherization, OEA currently has approximately \$30 million out in grants to the LAAs. The LAAs have spent about \$27.9 million, leaving about \$2.1 million.

In LIHEAP there is about \$235 million out to the LAAs and about \$232 million has been expended, leaving about \$3 million unspent.

### **Weatherization**

Emily Monk explained with no State budget there is nothing to report in Weatherization. As issues come up at the LAAs OEA is dealing with them one on one. OEA is getting the grants as far in the process as we can, so that once there is a budget they can move forward as quickly as possible.

There was a question raised about extending the grants because of the start date being delayed. Ben Moore said that it wouldn't work with the WeatherWorks system. If you go beyond one State fiscal year it would overlap with the next year's grant because it pulls by funding source not grant number. OEA will start looking to IT to see if there is a solution to the system problem.

### **LIHEAP/PIPP**

Maria Gallardo explained that the focus of today's meeting would be the proposed changes for the 2016 LIHEAP State Plan. The plan is due to HHS by September 1, 2015. OEA plans to post the public hearing notice on July 29, 2015. The public hearing will be held on August 12, 2015. OEA will hold a conference call with the PAC on August 27, 2015 covering any comments that came out of the hearing, and then ask the PAC to vote to approve the LIHEAP State Plan.

Maria covered the proposed changes to the draft of the LIHEAP State Plan. The dates have been changed throughout the plan to 2016. The next proposed change is to push the priority periods of LIHEAP to October and November to coincide with the HHS federal fiscal year award. The third proposed change is changing the reconnection assistance (RA) policy. OEA is proposing changing the RA limit from \$1,000 to \$750 and to provide the benefit only when the assistance will result in reconnection and only offer it to disconnected clients. OEA is proposing starting RA in November for non-priority groups, because it is an HHS requirement that OEA provide RA funding until March 15, 2016.

There was a lot of discussion about combining the priority groups in October in order to allow the general population to start applying in November. There was discussion regarding not having trained staff at the LAAs to handle the start of the program due to the state budget impasse. The LAAs asked how they would handle a client that came in during the priority period, that hasn't had service since March but RA doesn't start until November. There was also discussion about starting RA in October.

Maria asked the LAAs their thoughts on Furnace Assistance. Does OEA offer a furnace component through LIHEAP in 2016? Do we transfer the furnace assistance to Weatherization? The consensus was that they preferred not to run the furnace program in order to have more RA money.

Maria discussed the other proposed changes to the State LIHEAP Plan.

Emily Monk discussed PIPP. If we do get State funds back it would take time to get things running. LAAs said that offering PIPP after LIHEAP has started would be a nightmare because the clients that came in before PIPP was offered, wouldn't have been given PIPP as a choice.

Emily Monk indicated that the Annual Energy Assistance Conference has been cancelled due to the state budget impasse. The information will be shared in different forums.

**New Business**

OEA does not anticipate offering a summer cooling program due to funding availability. The Department's decision not to administer a Summer Cooling Program this year is necessary to ensure adequate funds are available for the Winter Heating Program.

**Meeting Schedule**

The next meeting of the Policy Advisory Council will be a conference call on August 27, 2015.