

**Electric Assistance Program Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes
April 28, 2017**

Participants:

Rorie Patterson, Public Utilities Commission
Gary Cronin, Public Utilities Commission
Stephen Tower, New Hampshire Legal Assistance
Shannon Nolin, Belknap-Merrimack Community Action Agency
Janice Johnson, Eversource
Karen Keough, Eversource
Allen Desbiens, Eversource
Karen Ennis-Williams, NH Municipal Welfare
Nicole Harris, Liberty
Sue Corson, Unutil
Brian Buckley, OCA
Lisa Sheehy, NHEC
Celeste Lovett, OEP

Minutes-New Hampshire Legal Assistance

Agenda Items – April 28, 2017 meeting

1. Review January 2017 Minutes

The meeting began with a discussion of the minutes from the prior meeting, with those minutes being amended by deleting paragraph 4.4 from the draft and approved by the Board.

2. Competitive Electric Supply Discount Options

For the benefit of new Board members, the Advisory Board discussed the current exclusion of competitive supply customers from EAP participation and the need to change that in order to be consistent with the principles of Electric Restructuring, which requires, among other requirements, the removal of obstacles to customers' choice of competitive supply. The Advisory Board heard from the members of a subcommittee, formed at the last meeting, to review options for applying the EAP discounts to customers who chose competitive supply. The subcommittee determined that the best option is to calculate the discount for competitive supply customers based on the default service rate for the customers' first 750 kWhs of competitive supply usage (*i.e.*, "Plan B"). The consensus was that using the default service rate to calculate the discount for competitive supply customers was fair and treated those customers the same as the customers who stayed on default service. The Advisory Board recognized that in some instances, a competitive supply customer may receive a higher discount (e.g., if the supplier's rate is higher than default service) or a lower discount (e.g., if the supplier's rate is lower than default service) than customers on competitive supply. The Board also recognized that using the supplier's rate to calculate a qualifying customer's discount would be difficult given the individuality of

the supplier's rates and their tendency to change. Also, using the supplier's rate could pose a risk to the sustainability of the EAP fund, if the supplier's rate was higher than the default service rate. The utilities estimate that the total cost to the EAP, if application of the discount to competitive supply customers had been implemented in 2016, would have been approximately \$662,000. Eversource provided handouts related to this calculation.

The Advisory Board discussed whether and to what extent the competitive electric suppliers should be involved in processing the discounts for their customers. The consensus expressed was that requiring suppliers with EAP-qualified customers to use consolidated billing would be the simplest approach and would avoid the need for computer programming within the Suppliers' systems as well as any transfers of SBC dollars from the utilities to the suppliers, to compensate for discounts provided.

The Advisory Board discussed the costs of the computer program changes that would be required to apply the discount to income-eligible competitive supply customers. The utilities sought reassurance that they would be able to recover from the EAP budget the costs incurred to estimate the estimated scope of the project, to estimate the costs of scoping, to scope the program changes, and to design and implement the program changes. Commission Staff committed to discussing the utilities questions about funding and consolidated billing with the Director of the Consumer Services and External Affairs Division, Amanda Noonan, and to respond to the Advisory Board by May 30, 2017. The Board discussed that the estimate of the cost to scope should be calculated by the end of May. The Board discussed the possibility of including the programming costs in next year's budget, which the utilities typically file in August.

The Board briefly discussed the refund process for a particular competitive energy supplier who the Commission recently required to cease operations in New Hampshire and to refund customers for lost EAP discounts. Eversource and the Commission Staff described difficulties encountered.

3. Rules of Governance

The Board reviewed the Rules of Governance and approved the update to Appendix A. Commission Staff will cause the revised Rules of Governance to be posted on the Commission's web page for the EAP.

4. Triennial Process Evaluation

OEP provided an update on the status of its RFP for new software, to comply with the Fuel Assistance Program reporting requirements. OEP conducted an RFI, but it has not yet moved forward with an RFP.

The Board determined that the System Benefits Charge Annual Report is a document produced by the Commissioners, and, as such, it is not a document that the Advisory Board may contribute to. The Advisory Board posed questions about the process followed by the Commission to draft the report. Commission Staff agreed to bring this question back to Ms. Noonan.

The Board discussed the concern raised by OEP in the triennial review, that OEP, as a member of the Advisory Board, was not sufficiently disinterested to conduct the TRO. The Advisory Board recognized

that OEP was brought onto the Board, in part, to perform the evaluation, and that it is compensated out of the EAP budget to perform that function. OEP stated that it could hire a third party to conduct the evaluation if it is concerned about its lack of independence.

5. Other Discussions

The Board discussed changes made to the EAP Procedures Manual, to align it with the Fuel Assistance Program guidelines. The changes included revising the types of income that can be disregarded in the calculation of EAP eligibility, to add Supplemental Security Income paid to children in the household. A version of the revised Procedures Manual showing tracked changes was distributed via email before the meeting.

The Board briefly discussed the increase of net metering and whether net metering customers should get the EAP discount and questioned whether net metering should be addressed in the Procedures Manual. The Board also questioned whether the EAP discount should be applicable to Outdoor Lighting usage. Staff agreed to discuss these questions with Ms. Noonan and to provide a response by May 30.

The Board discussed SB 2, which would use renewable energy funds to provide a rebate to EAP recipients. Several board members postulated that the costs of implementing the rebates to individual EAP recipients may substantially outweigh the actual benefit of a very small, individual rebate to customers. Commission Staff agreed to provide the Board with updated projections for the EAP Fund, using 33,500 for enrollment.