Low Income Oversight Board Meeting

*Draft meeting notes*

Tuesday December 10, 2019, 9AM-3PM

Civic Auditorium, Council Chambers Meeting Room

400 N. Douty St.

Hanford, CA 93230

# Board Member Attendance:

Present: Delgado-Olson, Shiroma, Castaneda, Watts, Wimbley, Rendler, Medina, Linam (arrived late)

Absent: Stamas

# Welcome and Introductions:

Board Chair Delgado-Olson opened the meeting at about 9:15AM. Commissioner Shiroma thanked the City of Hanford for hosting, and Board Member Medina for arranging this meeting. She thanked the Public Advisor’s Office, specifically Heidi Williams and Jessie Levine, for helping to facilitate this meeting. She also announced that Gillian Weaver will be the new California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) Energy Division (ED) liaison to the Board. She also looked forward to the many presentations on low-income programs.

Board Member Medina mentioned that Dolores Huerta would be attending the meeting later, and thanked Roger Snow for his assistance with setting up the meeting. Board Chair Delgado-Olson welcomed Dan Rendler of SCG to the LIOB, and began attendee introductions.

# Public Comment:

There were no comments by members of the public.

# Approval of September 16th LIOB Meeting Minutes – Action Item:

The Board approved the minutes from the September 16th meeting, with 5 votes in favor, 0 opposed, and 2 abstentions. (Board Member Linam arrived after this vote.)

# Comments from Community-Based Organizations:

Robert Alcazar, the CEO of Proteus, welcomed the Board and attendees to the Central Valley. Proteus provides services to farmworkers, and has great partnerships with the local utilities, workforce investment boards, and federal, state, and local grantmakers. Proteus has been involved with low income programs since 1985.

Board Member Castaneda commented on seeing higher level employees in organizations that once received assistance, and that you can’t go in the Central Valley without seeing a Proteus office. Proteus is a member agency of La Cooperativa, which provides emergency services to farmworkers. He also mentioned working with former Board Member Murphy-Roach on providing emergency assistance in PG&E territory.

Board Member Medina mentioned that she had been on an Energy Savings Assistance (ESA) program ride along with Proteus and commented on how professional it was.

Jeff Garner, the Executive Director of Kings Community Action, spoke about how the organization is a local anti-poverty agency, providing Head Start, child care, weatherization, domestic violence shelter, and other services to local residents. The organization also partners with Proteus and RHA on census, ESA, and other programs. Through a community needs study, the organization also found a need for utility bill assistance, and is partnering with Kings County Human Services Agency to better link weatherization to bill assistance to homelessness, for homeless prevention. Board Chair Delgado-Olson asked how the ESA program is going; Mr. Garner said that it’s been a learning curve but that RHA has been very helpful.

# Coordination Report on Low Income Weatherization Program (LIWP):

Board Member Wimbley talked about how the Community Services and Development (CSD)/LIWP and IOU coordination has been mostly limited to low cost measures so not all funds will be spent. He would like to convene a meeting next year to discuss how all funds can be spent. He also talked about how the Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS) are impacting low income households, and wants to see if CSD’s Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) can be retooled to provide emergency services to these families.

Board Member Castaneda discussed that the Legislature is interested in looking further into low income program models and eligibility. Board Member Medina and Commissioner Shiroma discussed how weatherization can improve indoor air quality. Board Member Wimbley discussed how CSD has begun to set up quarterly meetings with ED to better coordinate the CSD and IOU programs.

At this point in the meeting, Commissioner Shiroma introduced former Senate Majority Leader Richard Polanco, now representing California Emerging Technology Fund (CalETF). Former Majority Leader Polanco discussed AB 1665, approved in 2017, that proposes to increase broadband connectivity to 98 percent of households by 2022 through dedicated funding and outreach. Former Majority Leader Polanco also cited figures of low broadband awareness and connectivity in each IOU territory, and believes that the IOUs have the authority to do online outreach of broadband availability, given the Environmental and Social Justice (ESJ) Action Plan, ESA/California Alternate Rates for Energy (CARE) applications, and PSPS.

Commissioner Shiroma spoke about how she is the lead Commissioner for Lifeline and spoke about the Boost Mobile pilot program. Board Chair Delgado-Olson spoke about KingsNet, the local Internet Service Provider (ISP) built by the Kings County County Office of Education that eradicated the digital divide for all public school students in several school districts. Commissioner Shiroma spoke about the upcoming en banc (stakeholder engagement opportunities) meeting on January 22, 2020 regarding the future of the California Communications Grid, and discuss what is in the purview of the CPUC. Board Member Medina asked about creating a subcommittee and hearing presentations by the ISPs, noting that Lifeline is the segue to the internet.

# Self-Help Enterprises Update on San Joaquin Valley Proceeding efforts:

Abigail Solis of Self-Help Enterprises presented on the San Joaquin Valley proceeding efforts. Board Member Castaneda asked about remediation costs that exceed $5,000; Ms. Solis responded that replacing appliances and related equipment has a high cost due to the fuel conversion. Board Member Watts asked about landlords’ restrictions for raising rent; Ms. Solis responded that the restrictions are in place for five years. Board Member Linam asked about incentives for landlords to pass water savings on to tenant given master-metering; Ms. Solis responded that local water districts often have their own discount programs that the landlords must adhere to. Board Member Medina commented on how subprime lenders and other bad actors are using electrification projects to their advantage. Ms. Solis commented that she is doing lots of coordination with the IOUs, like a coworker, and that educating customers, through marketing materials and application packet, is key. Board Member Castaneda said there were lots of landlord-tenant issues; Ms. Solis will come back and provide updates. Board Member Wimbley asked about property protection; Ms. Solis responded that the participation agreement is tied to the house so move-outs aren’t an issue.

# TEAM and CHANGES Report on outreach methods:

Ravi Mangat of the CPUC’s News and Outreach Office announced that the program was on a five year contract. He mentioned that his team is working with the Energy Division on a solar guide for residents, as well as a one-page interactive map. Casey McFall of Milestone Consulting then presented on the program, discussing how participating Community Based Organizations (CBO) decide how to do outreach in their communities. She also mentioned how the events are only about outreach and do not include education (which would take too long). She also mentioned how traditional marketing and outreach does not work; social media also does not work since few participants are on it. She cited the example of a PG&E customer that received seven $1 texts about PSPS that they did not sign up for. She also mentioned that bill fairs don’t work in spread out territories like Los Angeles.

Board Member Watts commented that it is too easy for some vendors to commit fraud with a one-button electronic approach through an iPad, and prey on customers who don’t know they can only receive a wireline or wireless Lifeline discount. Board Members Medina and Wimbley asked about issues with solar contractors and the guidebook; Ms. McFall responded that the solar guidebook only helps with customers who are interested in solar and does not address customers who aren’t in the market for solar but are getting scammed anyway. Commissioner Shiroma mentioned bringing in an expert panel on customer protection for best practices for use by the LIOB and low income community, and reiterated that vendors have to follow the law.

# CPUC Standing Reports:

A revised CPUC Legislative Update was included in the agenda packet.

Kapil Kulkarni of the CPUC’s Energy Division presented the Energy Division update.

Subcommittee Reports:

Board Chair Delgado-Olson said that the Low Income Energy Assistance Programs (LIEAP) subcommittee met to discuss the upcoming motion. He also mentioned that the Legislative subcommittee will reconvene in March 2020. He also mentioned that the Low Income Needs Assessment (LINA) subcommittee will meet in January 2020. Board Member Linam provided an update of the Water and Climate Change subcommittee meeting from December 2, 2019, including a summary of the Low Income Rate Assistance draft report required by AB 401. The draft report is being reviewed by Governor Newsom’s office and includes three program design scenarios, including a discount program, a renters’ credit, and a utility-administered program, totaling $600 million in costs per year.

# Marin Clean Energy Presentation on its Application for a Multifamily Whole Building program under ESA:

Alice Havenar-Daughton presented on Marin Clean Energy’s (MCE) Low Income Families and Tenants (LIFT) program. Board Member Castaneda confirmed that the current program is for deed-restricted buildings, whereas the new proposed program would include all buildings. He also mentioned that the use of Area Median Income (AMI) is a complex issue, and that Sacramento (the Legislature) may have an issue with a household earning $100,000 being classified as low income under AMI rules. Board Chair Delgado-Olson asked for ED to provide continuing updates on the applications.

# Lunch

At this point, the meeting was adjourned for lunch. After lunch, Board Chair Delgado-Olson invited Dolores Huerta, of her eponymous foundation, and co-founder of United Farm Workers, to speak. Ms. Huerta spoke about California being the richest state in the country, but there is still high poverty in the San Joaquin Valley. She mentioned her foundation’s work to reduce childhood poverty, which includes 450,000 children statewide, including 250,000 in deep poverty.

# ESA Multi-Family Single Administrator Issue:

Board Chair Delgado-Olson spoke about the background of the issue and motion, to have the LIOB provide recommendations for a third-party administered Multi-Family (MF) program that incorporates best practices. The board also highlighted and thanked Vice Chair Stamas and Boardmember Castaneda for their work and joint leadership on this issue. Board Member Castaneda spoke about the need to continue using the Multi Family Working Group (MFWG). Commissioner Shiroma spoke of her gratitude of the work done to present the motion, but will abstain on the vote.

The Board then introduced the motion and passed it, with the vote of 7 in favor, 0 opposed, and 1 abstention.

Updates on the Technical Advisory Committee, Disadvantaged Communities Advisory Committee, and related proceedings:

Board Chair Delgado-Olson said the next TAC meeting to discuss barriers to sharing data between IOUs and agencies will meet in early January.

Board Member Castaneda said there was no update from the Disadvantaged Communities (DAC) Advisory Committee, and Board Chair Delgado-Olson stated since Vice Chair Stamas is absent, there is no update on the Disconnection or Affordability proceedings.

Update on Solar on Multi Family Affordable Housing (SOMAH) Program:

Jae Berg of the Center for Sustainable Energy (CSE), one of the SOMAH Program administrator team members, presented on the program. Board Member Wimbley asked about eligibility and streamlining enrollment; Ms. Berg responded that eligibility is limited to MF properties that are deed-restricted with 80 percent of the units at 60 percent of AMI, or in a DAC. Ms. Berg also responded that SOMAH passes along customer information to the IOUs for ESA and other program eligibility. In responding to Commissioner Shiroma, Ms. Berg replied that the property must have a certificate of occupancy and is not for new construction. Ms. Berg mentioned that part of the 2020 outreach plan is targeted towards Local Governments, as well as increasing participation from DACs, other IOU territories (PacifiCorp and Liberty) and Tribal areas.

Ms. Berg also mentioned that the SOMAH predecessor program (MASH) created a lot of pent-up demand, especially with property owners, resulting in a wait list on the first day of enrollment in some territories. Board Member Watts asked about the $100 million in initial funding going to seven contractors in a competitive process. Ms. Berg responded that the competitive process is only required for applicants that do not already have a developer. She also responded that the multiple bid requirement received a lukewarm reception by the industry and some negative contractor feedback. Board Member Watts asked whether ESA contractors are among the seven and if they are doing project audits. In responding to Board Member Castaneda, Ms. Berg stated there are five completed installations but that projects are not required to report this until the end of the 18-month timeline.

Board Member Castaneda said that he attended the SOMAH outreach meeting in San Diego and thanked Tory Francisco of ED for his leadership.

In responding to Board Member Watts, Ms. Berg stated that the four CBOs providing outreach are Communities for a Better Environment, Environmental Health Coalition, CA Energy Justice Alliance, and Asian Pacific Energy Network.

At this point in the meeting, Commissioner Martha Guzman Aceves spoke, and thanked Commissioner Shiroma for her leadership in re-invigorating the LIOB. She also mentioned that she is the assigned commissioner for the SOMAH program.

# Investor Owned Utilities ESA/CARE Status Reports:

Due to time constraints, this item was postponed to the next LIOB meeting.

Action Item: Place on agenda for Q1 2020 LIOB meeting.

# IOU Presentations on Final Versions of their 2021-2026 ESA/CARE Applications, filed Nov 4, 2019:

The IOUs presented for about five minutes each on their final post-2020 ESA/CARE program applications, followed by Public Comment and Board Q&A.

A commenter from the United Ways of California noted that they are working with the IOUs on the digital divide and improving access to broadband. They also felt that it was appropriate to use ratepayer funds on outreach, per Decision 19-06-022.

Eduardo Gonzalez of Fresno State said that broadband is necessary for online access to the ESA and CARE programs.

Commissioner Shiroma reiterated that the LIOB is not the appropriate venue to discuss broadband, but agreed on the need for broadband for low income households. She said she can use her experience as the assigned Commissioner for the Lifeline program to bring to the LIOB.

Board Chair Delgado-Olson noted his prior experience of highlighting KingsNet as a model, specifically Kettleman City and Corcoran, and stated he is willing to work outside of his LIOB role to assist if needed.

Susan Walters of CalETF spoke about the need for broadband information to be included in IOU outreach. She also mentioned that the SDG&E territory has higher broadband penetration due to local institutions.

Board Member Castaneda appreciated all the work that went into the IOU applications, and referenced the prior LIOB recommendations white paper. He also spoke about a hierarchy of need model, and the need to reduce the energy burden and increase conservation. He also spoke about how the programs are not based enough on analytics and should not be based on consumption. He also said that eligibility is an issue in terms of who is able to qualify. He also said that the IOUs are seeking investments in Information Technology (IT) and marketing, but a better investment would be in the program providers.

Board Member Medina asked about the impact to consumers, and noted the links between the internet, communications, and energy use.

Board Member Delgado-Olson discussed the impacts of PSPS, and how this 10-year timeline eclipses that of the next ESA/CARE program cycle of six years and asked how to incorporate generators and batteries. He asked the IOUs to provide input.

Commissioner Shiroma discussed her tour of the SDG&E Operations Center, including the use of batteries for medical rate customers (100 total), funded through the medical rate program. She also mentioned that she is the assigned commissioner for Microgrids, including a meeting on December 12, 2019, and to be cautious of scenarios where customers are paying for something that third-parties are making money off of.

Board Member Castaneda asked about using CARE lists to identify households so that we have better information when emergencies hit.

Commissioner Shiroma mentioned the upcoming pre-hearing conference (PHC) in January for the ESA/CARE, which is the legal start to the proceeding. She also talked about the importance of the IOUs incorporating workforce training into the applications, as well as metrics to track past performance and future goals.

# Future Agenda Items/Closing:

Board Chair Delgado-Olson mentioned the upcoming LINA and LIEAP subcommittee meetings in January 2020, thanked former Board Members Toledo and Gross for their services to the LIOB, and noted that these vacancies are being filled. He then adjourned the meeting at about 3:00PM.

# Complete Meeting Audio:

<ftp://ftp2.cpuc.ca.gov/AudioVisualFiles/Liob_12102109workshop_morning.wav> - Morning Session

<ftp://ftp2.cpuc.ca.gov/AudioVisualFiles/Liob_12102109workshop_afternoon.wav> - Afternoon Session