

Draft meeting notes

Thursday December 10th, 9:00 – 4:00 PM

Webex Virtual Meeting

Board Member Attendance:

Present: Shiroma, Delgado-Olson, Stamas, Castaneda, Watts, Wimbley, Medina, Linam, Irwin, Castilone, Lim

Absent: None

1. Welcome and Introductions

Board Chair Delgado-Olson opened the meeting of the Low Income Oversight Board (LIOB) at approximately 9:00 AM. Board Chair Delgado-Olson welcomed Board Member Lim of Southern California Edison (SCE) as the newest appointed Investor Owned Utility (IOU) representative. Commissioner Shiroma of the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) provided opening welcome remarks. Board introductions, starting with Board Member Lim, followed.

2. Public Comment

Rod Williams of Embertec provided comment by sharing an update on energy savings related to a new power strip with savings approved by Energy Division and expressed interest in offering this measure to Energy Savings Assistance (ESA) customers.

Allan Rago of QCSCA commented on the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) reimbursement topic, previously discussed at a LIOB subcommittee meeting, and asked the IOUs to clarify what can be done to pay for PPE. PPE should be treated as similar health and safety measures that are reimbursed by IOUs.

Ron Garcia of Reliable Energy provided public comment on the advance payments for contractors, which allowed contractors to pay employees, however this advance ended on June 1. COVID cases in Los Angeles are very high and employees are still at risk. Mr. Garcia expressed desire to continue to use the advances to pay for employees and asked for IOU flexibility in this regard.

Josie Ochoa of Energy Efficiency expressed support for continued virtual enrollment via virtual signature, but making it easier for the customer who may be limited by technology or current circumstances.

Bruno Sabatier, District 2 Supervisor for the County of Lake, provided comment on Golden State Water's planned rate increases and its impact on low income consumers. In Clearlake, which receives water from Golden State Water, there is an extremely high poverty rate and the community is severely impacted by any rate increases. Mr. Sabatier expressed that the

company should use grant funds for infrastructure increases and not put the costs back on the ratepayers. Commissioner Shiroma referred the speaker to the General Rate Case for Golden State Water for interested parties to participate.

3. Approval of the September 17, 2020 LIOB Meeting Minutes – Action Item

Commissioner Shiroma moved to approve the minutes from the September 17th meeting and Board Member Stamas seconded the motion. The LIOB approved the minutes unanimously.

4. Comment from Community-Based Organizations

Commissioner Shiroma introduced Jeff Fehler from the Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD), a public utility provider. Mr. Fehler shared information on low income program offerings, such as weatherization, bill assistance, and rate assistance, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on these programs, as well as on outreach.

Board Chair Delgado-Olson asked about the outreach to other social service programs and Mr. Fehler responded that the outreach list includes around 1,000 organizations of traditional low income and nontraditional low income agencies.

Board Member Wimbley thanked SMUD for its coordination with California's Low-Income Weatherization Program (LIWP) and asked when the moratorium on disconnections would be extended to. Mr. Fehler answered that the date is being discussed, but likely will go through April 2021. Board Member Wimbley also asked how responsive customers had been to outreach and Mr. Fehler answered that for weatherization, response is around 35%, but for typical outreach, the rate is lower. Board Member Wimbley asked if SMUD was looking at any debt forgiveness programs and Mr. Fehler responded affirmatively, that this is an ongoing topic for discussion and planning, but no decisions have been made yet. Board Member Wimbley expressed interest in having SMUD present at a future LIOB meeting.

Board Member Castaneda thanked the Commissioner for inviting SMUD to speak and asked how SMUD came to determine eligibility for low income programs. Mr. Fehler answered that staff are passionate about meeting low income need and are able to come up with flexible adjustments and get quick management approval.

Board Member Lim thanked SMUD for the presentation and noted the importance of utilities to share best practices.

Commissioner Shiroma asked if SMUD has the ability to securitize some of the customer bill debt and Mr. Fehler answered that he was not sure, but SMUD is looking at many options to address the debt.

Commissioner Shiroma introduced the second speaker, Jennifer Hernandez of the California Department of Social Services (CDSS). Ms. Hernandez presented on the programs managed by

CDSS, specifically on CalFresh and CalWorks, the impacts from COVID-19, and the statewide verification project, which will streamline eligibility verification for state assistance programs.

Chair Delgado-Olson thanked Commissioner Shiroma for inviting Ms. Hernandez to present and shared that this information supports the LIOB Technical Advisory Committee's (TAC) effort to connect enrollment in low income energy programs to state managed assistance programs, as there is a high level of overlap in eligible households. Chair Delgado-Olson then asked if each County verifies the income of applicants. Ms. Hernandez responded affirmatively, however, some counties do it differently so there are efforts to uniform the process.

Commissioner Shiroma thanked Ms. Hernandez for her presentation and her work to support low income families in this difficult time.

Board Member Medina expressed support for the CDSS team and single point verification for programs. She asked about the P-EBT card process and whether there is a third party managing some part of the program. Ms. Hernandez shared that the cards do look different, there were some issues in automatic distribution, and there is a contractor working on the program. Board Member Medina also asked if there were coordination efforts with the IOUs and Ms. Hernandez answered that not currently, but opportunities could develop in the future.

5. California Lifeline Update

Commissioner Shiroma introduced the California Lifeline update and states the LIOB's relationship to low income communication programs. CPUC staff Mary Rottman & Joanna Perez-Green presented information on the iFoster pilot program and on D.20-10-008 respectively, as well as shared information on openings on the Universal Lifeline Telephone Service Trust Administrative Committee (ULTSAC).

Board Chair Delgado-Olson shared that in his gainful employment there is a high desire for electronic equipment such as the equipment the pilot provides and asked if there any plans to expand the program to include more youth. Ms. Rottman answered that this program serves 13,000 youth, but there is interest from other parties to participate. Since this is an active pilot, all proposals and points of interest are being looked at.

Commissioner Shiroma shared that the Commission is also working on an early release incarcerated persons' program to offer signups for lifeline.

Board Member Medina asked if there is a way to track the increased community need for cell phone service as a result of the pandemic and whether the consumers are being informed of the offerings. Ms. Perez-Green shared that the challenges with the program is that it must be aligned with the federal program and that it's not regulated so there is less ability to track data, however, the CPUC can reach out to customers in need and conduct program assessments.

Commissioner Shiroma asked if there is a family plan offering and Ms. Perez-Green answered that there are two plans available at cost, an upgrade plan for more data, as well as a family plan, however none of the current providers have a family plan.

Board Member Castaneda shared his experience with farmworker communities, where phones were often shared among several family members. This limits a family's ability to communicate throughout the day or in an emergency. Ms. Perez-Green responded that if a provider offered a family plan, it would be supported.

6. CPUC Standing Reports – CHANGES

Ravinder Mangat of the CPUC's News & Outreach Division and Casey McFall of Milestone Consulting LLC provided the biannual update on the Community Help and Awareness of Natural Gas and Electric Services (CHANGES) Program.

Board Member Medina asked about the low number of dispute resolutions and Ms. McFall answered that the IOUs are being very responsive and that the type of cases are changing away from disputes to connection needs. Ms. McFall anticipates more customer disputes to come when the disconnection moratorium ends. Board Member Medina asked about Net Energy Metering (NEM) issues and Ms. McFall responded that most NEM cases are around solar and can take about a year to resolve.

Commissioner Shiroma thanked the CHANGES staff and implementers for their work and noted that the program is equipped to work in 78 languages, including indigenous farmworker languages, and can contract out for additional languages.

6. CPUC Standing Reports – Water Division

Viet "Kevin" Trương of the CPUC's Water Division presented on several Water Division Updates: current low income assistance enrollment and the water low income proceeding.

Board Member Linam shared that the energy and water data sharing has been useful in increasing low income enrollment. Board Member Linam also noted that there are water disconnections protections from pre-COVID-19, as a result of Senate Bill 998.

There were no Board Member questions.

6. CPUC Standing Reports – Energy Division

Kapil Kulkarni of the CPUC's Energy Division presented on several Energy Division Updates: ESA and California Alternative Rates for Energy (CARE) proceeding (A.19-11-003) and the Potential & Goals Study.

There were no Board Member questions.

At this point in the meeting, the Board adjourned for lunch.

7. Disconnections Proceeding Update

Justin Fong, advisor to Commissioner Guzman-Aceves, shared an update on the Disconnections proceeding, R.18-07-005.

Board Chair Delgado-Olson asked about protections related to extreme weather and Mr. Fong shared that customers should not be disconnected during extreme weather.

Commissioner Shiroma shared that this proceeding was well underway before COVID hit, but has been timely for preparing for when the COVID-19 disconnections moratorium lifts.

8. Affordability Proceeding Update

Ankit Jain, of the CPUC Energy Decision, provided an update on the Affordability Proceeding R.18-07-006, which is preparing an annual report and moving into phase 2 of the proceeding.

Board Chair Delgado-Olson asked if the data analysis was conducted internally in the CPUC and Mr. Jain answered affirmatively, that it was a joint effort by Energy, Water, and Communications division staff.

Board Member Castaneda expressed support for the proceeding and interest in having a more in depth discussion at a later meeting date. Board Member Lim also expressed interest in having another meeting to focus on the proceeding and report.

9. Bridge Funding - Joint Investor Owned Utilities

Board Member Lim provided opening remarks on the status of CARE ESA funding, which is authorized to use bridge funding for January – June 2021 based on expenditures from 2020. Following Board Member Lim, representatives from Southern California Gas (SoCalGas), Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E), San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E), and Southern California Edison (SCE).

Commissioner Shiroma asked if PG&E is treating a high number of first time homes, similar to SoCalGas, or whether there are other factors. PG&E answered that as there are less first time customers available every year, they are targeted differently.

Board Member Castaneda noted that there are ~900k newly enrolled households in CARE, but the authorized bridge funding budgets are significantly less than what was budgeted for 2020. Board Member Lim answered that the IOUs received guidance to use 2019 costs, CARE customers are not required to verify income currently, but since ESA customers do so, the new CARE customers will not automatically translate to more ESA customers, and finally noted that the bridge funding amounts are only for half a year.

Board Chair Delgado-Olson asked if the ESA program was planning on preparing for the likely increase in eligible customers. SoCalGas responded that there is a concern in meeting targets for bridge funding, as not meeting targets could limit funding going forward. PG&E answered similarly. SCE shared that to prepare for new customers next year, contractors can start working on outreach. PG&E also responded to comments about virtual enrollment and

switching from a temporary virtual self-certification affidavit back to standard income verification. PG&E and SoCalGas still maintains self-certification in certain zip codes with high poverty.

Commissioner Shiroma asked if there is a possibility that ESA contractors will have to lay off employees. SDG&E answered the actual spend for the ESA program is similar to other budgets. SoCalGas, SCE, PG&E expressed similar answers, while noting that the pandemic has impacted the ESA program in unforeseen ways.

After Board Member questions, the Board opened up for public comment.

Anna Soloario of Community Housing Opportunities Corporation (CHOC) shared that due to current bridge funding and the reduction in work load, she will have to lay off staff.

Board Member Castaneda shared that several ESA service providers have shared their concerns with him about having to lay off staff due to bridge funding budgets.

Board Member Watts asked about the end gap budget and SoCalGas shared that it would not affect the ESA bridge funding budget.

Commissioner Shiroma asked about how IOUs will respond to contractors like CHOC, who will be forced to lay off employees. SDG&E answered that some ESA contractors operate other programs that provide some part of their budget. Commissioner Shiroma expressed interest in continuing this conversation to protect the ESA workforce and Board Chair Delgado-Olson supported this sentiment.

Allan Rago provided public comment on bridge funding and expressed issue with the comparison of the current bridge funding period to historic ones, as the COVID-19 pandemic is completely different than previous situations. At the end of 2020, there is an increase in of ESA units and interested customers compared to the slowdown in the beginning of 2020.

Board Member Castaneda commented that PG&E's bridge funding budget should not come at the cost of low income customer needs. PG&E responded that there are several factors that influence ESA forecasts and that the end gap is not the primary driver.

Board Member Watts thanked the Commissioner and the Commission for being open to the concerns of ESA contractors.

10. Joint IOU Status: Disconnections, CARE and ESA Programs, and Unspent Funds for the ESA Program

Board Chair Delgado-Olson asked if in the interest time, the Board could come back to the topic of Disconnections at a later meeting, especially since the disconnections moratorium is in place for several more months. Commissioner Shiroma noted that the prepared slides show that there are many people in need and that arrearages are increasing.

There were no Board Member questions on the prepared IOU slides on CARE ESA status updates and unspent funds.

11. CPUC Tribal Advisor

Commissioner Shiroma introduced the CPUC Tribal Advisor, Kenneth Holbrook. Mr. Holbrook presented on the CPUC tribal advisor role, as well as the current and future projects he is working on.

Board Chair Delgado-Olson thanked Mr. Holbrook for his assistance with the tribal issues panel at the previous LIOB subcommittee meeting.

Board Member Castaneda noted a previous tribal coordination project between SCE and the Chemehuevi tribe. Board Member Lim commented that she is aware of this previous coordination and supports similar endeavors with tribes.

12. Low Income Energy Assistance Programs (LIEAP) & Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) – Action Item

Board Chair-Delgado Olson shared that the LIOB has been working on a letter of recommendations for the current ESA CARE proceeding, A.19-11-003, following a LIEAP subcommittee meeting to which focused on tribal outreach and impacts of COVID-19. This letter would be approved by the full board and sent to the CPUC. Board Chair Delgado-Olson presented on the proposed recommendations in advance of board discussion and voting on the final recommendations.

Board Member Wimbley thanked the Board Members responsible for working on recommendations in advance of the meeting. Board Member Wimbley commented on PPE and whether the recommendation should be expanded to any unforeseen costs related to COVID-19 safety.

Board Member Lim shared that she would abstain from voting today in the interest of the IOUS having the opportunity to review these recommendations in more detail. Board Member Lim responded to the recommendation of a future meeting on PPE by noting that the IOUs are bound to anti-trust laws and asked the CPUC legal division to be involved in any future meetings.

Commissioner Shiroma stated that due to her role as the assigned Commissioner for A.19-11-003, she will abstain from voting today. She also noted a previous comment from Board Member Castilone on the need to increase education to Community Based Organizations (CBOs) on how they may participate in the CARE capitation program.

Board Member Castaneda expressed support for the letter and encouraged the LIOB to work with CPUC legal.

Board Member Irwin stressed adherence to the consultation requirements in the previous decision and meeting the current requirement to consult with all eligible tribes by the end of 2020.

Board Vice-Chair Stamas asked if the recommendation should specifically name the Low Income Weatherization Program (LIWP) program and also asked if the letter could recommend reducing energy burden. Board Chair Delgado-Olson noted these two additions for the final draft of the recommendations letter.

Board Chair Delgado-Olson summarized the changes suggested in the meeting discussion and confirmed that they would be included in the final version of the letter. Board Member Watts moved to approve the contents of the letter and Board Member Medina seconded. Board Members Delgado-Olson, Stamas, Castaneda, Watts, Wimbley, Medina, Linam, Irwin, and Castilone voted affirmatively, with Commissioner Shiroma and Board Member Lim abstaining.

13. Other Subcommittee Reports

Carol Edwards of SCE and the Low Income Needs Assessment (LINA) Study team provided an update on the status of the LINA.

Board Vice-Chair Stamas asked if in the bidding process there were input or bids from academic institutions or non-profits. Ms. Edwards replied that she could not share details of who bid, but that there were more responses than previously.

Board Member Medina asked if a waiting list could be created for a larger pool of potential applicants. Ms. Edwards responded that the current process is fairly open to apply.

Board Member Wimbley asked about the assessment of new members and whether the study would look at customer needs through the lens of health, comfort and safety. Ms. Edwards answered that the research plan is open and will probably include that in the survey questions.

Board Member Castaneda commented that there is a new matrix of issues since the LINA was created, such as affordability disconnections, and COVID-19. For affordability, there are existing data resources related to affordability at the CPUC. There are also one million new CARE customers, which will increase the need for low income programs. Ms. Edwards answered that some of those topics can be taken into consideration, but others may be out of scope for this current LINA and would have to be taken up in the future.

The Legislative and Water & Climate Subcommittees did not meet this quarter.

14. Coordination Report on Low Income Weatherization Program (LIWP)

Board Member Wimbley shared that there is no update on coordination on with the LIWP program at this time.

15. Disadvantaged Communities Advisory Group (DACAG)

Commissioner Shiroma shared that the DACAG presented an annual report at a November CPUC voting meeting and she asked if there was an opportunity for the two board's leaderships to meet. The DACAG Chair expressed interest in meeting with LIOB leadership to discuss synergies.

16. Wrap Up

Board Chair Delgado-Olson shared that the first quarterly meeting of the LIOB will be March 11, 2021.

Commissioner Shiroma provided closing remarks by thanking CPUC staff, the regulated utilities, public participants, and the Board for their continued work during the course of the pandemic, as well as stating that the Commission is committed to problem solving.

Board Vice-Chair Stamas expressed similar sentiments and thanked the Commission for their leadership.

Board Member Medina shared that this work is especially important given the pandemic and expressed interest in more public participation.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 4:00 PM.