

Draft meeting notes

Thursday September 29, 2022, 9:30 AM – 3:30 PM

Webex Virtual Meeting

Board Member Attendance:

Present: Shiroma, Delgado-Olson, Wimbley, Castaneda, Medina, Watts, Irwin, Hernandez, Tang

Absent: Castilone, Stamas

Meeting Recording: <https://www.adminmonitor.com/ca/cpuc/other/20220929/>

Meeting Presentations: <https://liob.cpuc.ca.gov/previous-liob-meetings/>

Please note: Agenda Items are listed in the order they were discussed. Some items were discussed out of numerical order.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Board Chair Delgado-Olson opened the meeting of the Low Income Oversight Board (LIOB) at approximately 9:30 AM. Commissioner Shiroma provided opening remarks and noted the term expiration of Valarie Hernandez, from Southern California Edison (SCE), after this meeting. A new electric and gas corporation representative will be appointed by the next quarterly LIOB meeting. Commissioner Shiroma also shared that she would be unable to attend the afternoon portion of the meeting.

Board Member introductions followed, with Board Members Castaneda and Watts asking if Item 10, Subcommittee Reports, could be moved to earlier in the meeting. Board Chair Delgado-Olson suggested combining Items 10 and 6, Joint Investor Owned Utilities Status Report. Commissioner Shiroma agreed with this agenda structure and suggested scheduling the subcommittee reports earlier in meeting agenda for the 4th Quarterly meeting.

2. Approval of the July 21, 2022, Meeting Minutes – Action Item

Commissioner Shiroma moved to approve the [minutes from the July meeting](#) and Board Member Castaneda seconded the motion. The LIOB approved the minutes unanimously.

3. Public Comment

There was no comment provided by members of the public.

4. Comment from Community Based Organizations & Special Presentations – California Department of Developmental Services

Board Chair Delgado-Olson introduced Tamara Rodriguez, the Emergency Preparedness and Response Officer for the California Department of Developmental Services (DDS). The Board Chair noted the connections between the DDS population and the Medical Baseline programs. Ms. Rodriguez provided a [presentation on the organization](#) and highlighted opportunities for partnership.

Board Chair Delgado-Olson asked for confirmation that the Regional Centers operated by DDS assist with income and health verification, which if so, could help individuals apply for the Medical Baseline program. Ms. Rodriguez responded that this is an opportunity for the department to look into. Board Member Wimbley commented that participation in the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) automatically qualifies a customer for the California Alternate Rates for Energy (CARE) program, and asked if there was a similar opportunity of a program that verifies both income and medical conditions, which could be used for the Medical Baseline program.

Board Member Medina asked how to integrate the care givers of individuals with special needs, who may live separately. Specifically, how policies that allow for family members to assist in applications.

Board Member Castaneda expressed support for Board Member Wimbley's suggestion to create a type of categorical eligibility for Medical Baseline. Board Member Castaneda asked about the batteries provided by DDS regional center and whether they are intended for Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS). Ms. Rodriguez commented that part of the intention of portable back up batteries is to keep people in their home as long as there is not a threat of fire.

Board Member Wimbley commented on the Medical Baseline customer base being "hard to reach" and asked if there were opportunities to increase outreach. Ms. Rodriguez answered that DDS works through Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and would want to work with them to identify gaps in outreach.

Board Member Medina acknowledged the utility Medical Baseline presentation occurring subsequently in the meeting and suggested the creation of help desk to promote cross organization collaboration.

5. Medical Baseline Program Overview

Board Member Hernandez provided brief opening remarks and introduced Zeynep Ozfatura of Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E), who provided a joint utility overview of the [Medical Baseline Program](#).

Board Chair Delgado-Olson asked what the barriers would be to granting regional centers the ability to enroll customers in the Medical Baseline program. Ms. Ozfatura commented that

some benefits that could come from the regional centers would be raising awareness and assistance in filling out online forms. However, the Public Utilities Code requires verification from a qualified healthcare professional and must comply with Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

Commissioner Shiroma commented that it would be good to know how many Medical Baseline customers there are currently, and also asked about SCE's tribal community engagement for this program. Kerri Gardner of SCE answered that their utility has outreached to several tribes this year and that the slide the Commissioner referenced may be incorrect.

Board Member Medina commented on the definition of baseline and expressed that it is critical that this information be communicated clearly to customers. Board Member Medina reviewed the various utility program websites and noted that all the utilities ask customers to print an application, which may be difficult for some individuals. Additionally, the Board Member Medina commented on the marketing language on program eligibility, such as low-income and fixed income, as some customers may not recognize themselves in those categories.

Board Member Wimbley commented that Medical Baseline program could benefit from the DDS regional centers, in terms of understanding how many eligible customers there might be that are not being served. Board Member Wimbley acknowledged the short term and long-term opportunities for improvement. In the short term, he asked if there was an opportunity to expand utility contracts to regional centers to support them informing individuals about the program. For the long term, Board Member Wimbley suggested reexamining the Public Utilities Code to make sure that the Medical Baseline program is administered in a way that most benefits customers and prevents unnecessary barriers for them.

Erin Maturo of San Diego Gas and Electric (SDG&E) commented to explain that the medical baseline program is not income eligible, but rather is just based on medical condition. Board Member Wimbley acknowledged the differences between Medical Baseline and CARE, but explained that in getting to hard-to-reach populations, it would be helpful to limit application barriers and use information that is provided for other programs. Ms. Ozfatura also responded that Medical Baseline does not have dedicated program funding, like CARE. Ms. Gardner of SCE shared that the regional centers do currently have the ability to help customers fill out applications for utility programs, but limiting barriers is something to strive for.

6. Joint Investor-Owned Utilities Status Reports

Board Chair Delgado-Olson noted the time and asked for permission to delay the lunch break until approximately 12:30 PM to allow for a full hour for this agenda item. A representative of each IOU presented a one slide summary for program status updates from their respective utility before Board Member discussion. More information on [low income programs](#), as well as [disconnections and arrearage management](#), was provided to the Board in advance.

Board Member Castaneda commented on SCE's suspension of enrollments and creation of a customer waitlist for the Energy Savings Assistance (ESA) program. Board Member Castaneda also asked about the public goods charge, specifically when it is suspended and collected, and more detail on what the estimated eligible enrolled population is in terms of the new eligibility guidelines. SCE answered on the question of collections that they would be using unspent funds to offset future collections. Board Member Castaneda responded that he would like to know about the impact of not collecting funds due to unspent funds.

Commissioner Shiroma asked about the ESA program year-to-date expenditures and whether all the utilities are on track to spend their allocated budgets by the end of the year. Representatives from the four IOUs confirmed that they are on track for their respective budgets, but explained that much of the spending comes in the second half of the year.

Commissioner Shiroma asked if SCE and SoCalGas were coordinating on enrollments. SCE answered that since SCE's budgets and targets are so much lower than SoCalGas's, they have decreased joint enrollments from contractors. Commissioner Shiroma responded that it is important to report on the multiyear budgets and lessons learned from the new program implementation.

Board Member Medina asked if in the future the IOUs could gather information on Arrearage Management Programs (AMP) customers who will be reported to credit services, as that reporting will negatively affect their overall financial wellbeing.

Board Chair Delgado-Olson noted the theme of data sharing as a milestone for better program enrollment. The Board Chair expressed that he would like the IOUs to inform the LIOB on what the challenges of data sharing currently are at an upcoming subcommittee meeting. SCE responded that what might better facilitate data sharing would be legislation or a CPUC directive. PG&E also supported SCE's comments by sharing that without statewide legislation, there has to be customer consent. PG&E also clarified their previous comments on the expected full expenditure of budgets by sharing that the pilot programs may not fully expend their funds this year, but in that case, would move the funds forward into the next program year.

Board Member Wimbley commented that there are two forms of data sharing, one from customers and another macro data sharing of aggregated data. The latter of which can be worked on in the immediate. Board Member Castaneda responded that macro level data would be helpful in the Southern California, where there are multiple utilities serving customers.

Board Member Castaneda referred to the smart thermostat information included in the IOU slide deck and noted the differences between offerings from utilities. Board Member Castaneda recommended the Board issue a recommendation on how smart thermostats are provided. Commissioner Shiroma responded that it is important to go back to the decision language for the Summer Reliability proceeding regarding how they are distributed to customers and workforce education and training. Board Member Castaneda agreed with the Commissioner to

refer back to the decision language and use the subcommittee to monitor the implementation of those requirements.

At this point in the meeting, the Board adjourned for lunch and Commissioner Shiroma departed from the meeting for the rest of the day.

7. California Department of Community Services & Development Update

Board Chair Delgado-Olson reconvened the Board at approximately 1:10 PM.

Board Member Jason Wimbley provided a status update from the California Department of Community Services and Development (CSD) on the California Arrearage Payment Program (CAPP) and the Low Income Weatherization Program (LIWP). For the 2021 CAPP, CSD is wrapping up final reports and disbursements. Estimates are that 1.4M residential and commercial customers were served with \$989M in relief funds. For the 2022 CAPP, the legislature approved \$1.2B for second iteration of the program. The 2022 program is focused on debt relief to active residential customers who accrued arrearages between March 2020 and December 2021. Utilities have 30 days to apply for application funds and CSD has through January 2023 to distribute funds. Energy utilities are prohibited from disconnecting customers for non-payment of arrearages throughout the duration of this process.

8. CPUC Standing Reports – Water Division Update

Viet “Kevin” Trương of the CPUC Water Division provided an [update on current Customer Assistance Program \(CAP\), Conservation, and Water Utility Acquisitions Proceeding](#).

Board Member Tang provided context for conservation efforts and noted CPUC rule 14.1. Board Member Tang also shared that water usage is very weather dependent and the summer/early fall period is an important time to conserve outdoor water usage.

Board Member Medina acknowledged the statewide messaging on water conservation.

Board Chair Delgado-Olson mentioned the differences in water usage in different parts of the state and asked if there were policies targeting specific regions that have had a more difficult time meeting conservation goals. Mr. Trương answered that there are discussions on conservation based on regional differences, but defer to the water utilities on how to meet conservation goals. Board Member Tang seconded these comments and explained that many water decisions are made at the local level.

8. CPUC Standing Reports – Energy Division Update

Kapil Kulkarni, of the CPUC Energy Division, provided [updates on the large IOUs ESA/CARE/FERA program cycle, including IOUs 2022 ESA reporting, the ESA Working Group, ESA program solicitations, and the Low Income Needs Assessment \(LINA\)](#).

Board Member Castaneda asked if there was an opportunity for the working group to introduce variables into the potential and goals study. Mr. Kulkarni answered that the study will evaluate

the savings potential and the working group will have an opportunity to comment on the methodology and how to capture that savings potential.

Board Member Castaneda asked if the CPUC is looking at IOU solicitation contracts to see how they align with the decision requirements. Mr. Kulkarni answered that Energy Division has worked with utilities to review contract documents and provided feedback.

Board Member Medina asked for clarification on the document that Commissioner referenced reading and Mr. Kulkarni answered that it is the decision in the proceeding docket card. Board Member Medina also noted the use of words, such as a “solicitation,” which may have multiple meanings to people, and suggested using more work friendly language to promote diversity in contractors. Mr. Kulkarni responded that part of the intent of making the bidding process public was to make sure the opportunity to contract was made available to many businesses.

Board Member Castaneda commented on the ESA program’s success in attracting and educating contractors from diverse communities, and on the program’s complexity in administration.

Board Chair Delgado-Olson asked when the scoping for the next LINA will begin. Mr. Kulkarni answered that it will begin as soon as the 2022 LINA is concluded, approximately early in 2023.

8. CPUC Standing Reports Legislative Update

An [update on legislation relevant to low income customers](#) was provided by the CPUC Office of Governmental Affairs (OGA) to the LIOB in advance of the meeting. OGA Director Grant Mack was available to answer questions and provide a brief update on the status of bills, including which bills from previous updates were passed and which did not.

Board Chair Delgado-Olson asked about Senate Bill 1020 and the creation of an authority within it. Mr. Mack answered the bill did not have any funding attached to support an authority, however, some of these ideas were moved to a different bill, Senate Bill 846. Senate Bill 846 requires that the California Energy Commission must develop a Clean Energy Reliability Investment Plan, due to the Legislature by March 1, 2023, that supports programs and projects that accelerate the deployment of clean energy resources, support demand response, assist ratepayers, and increase energy reliability. Board Chair Delgado-Olson responded by asking about the discussion of the public purpose programs surcharge and whether that conversation would continue as funding for new programs were considered. Mr. Mack answered that the intent was to assist with bill affordability, however, the administration of the public purpose programs surcharge is extremely complicated and was not resolved in the most recent legislative session.

Board Member Castaneda expressed the desire for low income program stakeholders to have a seat at the table for these large discussions around affordability, clean energy, reliability, etc. Mr. Mack responded that it is important for all stakeholders to discuss this, and one area of

potential opportunity of improvement in implementation would be to bundle or group programs together.

9. Community Based Organizations (CBO) Pilot Proposal (D.22-04-037)

Claire Coughlan of PG&E and Tom Knox of Valley Clean Air Now (Valley CAN) provided a presentation on [D. 22-04-027 regarding a CBO Arrears Case Management Pilot proposed to address current gaps in assisting customers.](#)

Board Member Tang asked about what the financial education for the customer, as proposed by the pilot, would entail. Mr. Knox answered that the details would be confirmed by the program administrator, but the intent would be to educate customers on debt management and the availability of other assistance programs.

Board Member Medina commented on how it would be helpful to learn from the AMP and to learn more about rural communities. Board Member Medina also noted that this pilot could help educate all members in a household, not only account holders, as well as create a system for CBOs to ask for assistance.

Board Member Watts asked about for more information on the target zip codes. Ms. Coughlan answered that they are zip codes identified as Affordability Areas of Concern (AAC) by the CPUC. Board Member Watts asked if there was overlap with CalEnviro Screen Disadvantaged Communities. Ms. Coughlan answered that there is some overlap, but not completely. The full list of zip codes is available in the [August 2022 compliance filing.](#)

Board Chair Delgado-Olson noted the similarity to the CHANGES program service model and asked if there would be coordination with those CBOs. PG&E answered that the pilot is patterned after that model, but the CBOs who participate in the pilot will be expected to follow customers for two-years and create a customized plan.

10. Subcommittee Reports

The Legislative and Low Income Needs Assessment (LINA) subcommittees did not meet this quarter. Board Member Tang shared that the Water & Climate Change subcommittee will meet next quarter.

Board Member Castaneda provided a detailed [update from the last Low Income Energy Assistance Programs \(LIEAP\) subcommittee meeting](#) in advance and summarized this information at a high-level verbally. Board Member Castaneda expressed that the first step is to share these findings to the larger board and then to share them with the ESA working group.

Board Chair Delgado-Olson expressed appreciation for Board Member Castaneda's role on the ESA Working Group and discussed the quarterly LIOIB meeting structure, which has been adjusted to allow for more discussion on low-income assistance programs. The Board Chair expressed that it is important to thoughtfully structure the opportunities to review and discuss

IOU budgets and program applications with enough time to provide an impact. Board Chair Delgado-Olson closed by noting that budget flexibility has been an ongoing issue.

Board Member Castaneda responded that he spoke with The Utility Reform Network (TURN) on unspent budgets and that it is not definitive why there are historically unspent funds in the program. Board Member Castaneda spoke to the importance of understanding how cost-effectiveness is calculated and how health, comfort, and safety measures are considered.

Board Member Wimbley asked for clarification on the proposed next steps. Board Member Castaneda answered that he would like to formalize these recommendations to put forward to the ESA Working Group to come up with solutions.

Board Member Watts commented on smart meters and issue of not having broadband, but noted that there are new products on the market that don't rely on a customer's internet connection. Board Member Watts also expressed that the Board should change how they rethink the program, from homes treated, to energy efficiency and energy saved. Board Member Castaneda responded affirmatively and pointed out some of the differences between weatherization measures and energy efficiency measures.

11. Future Quarterly LIOB Meeting Options

Board Chair Delgado-Olson noted that this agenda topic was an opportunity for board members to discuss how they would like to meet, either virtually, in-person, or hybrid, in for the next year. Board Member Castaneda supported the idea of having a 20th year anniversary celebration event in person in an area convenient to low income and energy efficiency stakeholders. Board Member Castaneda also suggested meeting in person at a tribal nation at the future, as well as at a physical space where an ESA contractor provides services to customers. Board Chair Delgado-Olson supported both ideas.

Board Chair Delgado-Olson stated that the Board will keep working offline on the meeting details for the December meeting, but was supportive of an in-person option.

12. Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Updates

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) did not meet during this quarter, however, Board Member Wimbley commented that the TAC may be able to support efforts on data sharing in general, and with the Medical Baseline program in particular.

13. Wrap Up & Closing Remarks

Board Chair Delgado-Olson provided brief closing remarks and thanked Board Member Hernandez for her service on the LIOB. Board Member Hernandez thanked the Board for the opportunity to serve. Board Members Medina also provided closing remarks.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:30 PM.