

Draft meeting notes

Thursday December 8, 2022, 10:30 AM – 3:30 PM

In-person at Warren-Alquist State Energy Building 1516 Ninth Street Art Rosenfeld Hearing Room
Sacramento, California 95814

Virtual via Webex

Board Member Attendance:

Present: *In-person:* Delgado-Olson, Tang

Webex: Shiroma, Castaneda, Stamas, Watts, Irwin, Bierman, Medina, Castilone

Absent: None

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

1. Welcome and Introductions

Board Chair Delgado-Olson opened the meeting of the Low Income Oversight Board (LIOB) at approximately 10:15 AM after brief technical difficulties related to the hybrid nature of the meeting. Commissioner Shiroma provided opening remarks, noting the Board's activities over the year and welcoming Hollie Bierman of San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E) as the energy utility representative to the LIOB.

Other Board Member introductions followed.

2. Approval of the September 29, 2022, Meeting Minutes – Action Item

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

3. Public Comment

There was no comment provided by members of the public.

4. Subcommittee Reports

Board Member Castaneda provided a summary of the [November 30, 2022 subcommittee meeting](#). Board Member Watts added to Board Member Castaneda's summary by noting the meeting's discussion of Energy Savings Assistance (ESA) program coordination between Southern California Edison (SCE) and Southern California Gas (SoCalGas).

Board Chair Delgado-Olson commented that the Low Income Needs Assessment (LINA) met on October 25, 2022 to discuss [the findings for the 2022 LINA](#).

Board Member Tang provided [a summary of the November 1, 2022 meeting of the Water & Climate Change subcommittee](#). Board Member Medina commented that the Board received a public comment related to water and inquired about the best way to respond to this comment. Board Chair Delgado-Olson recommended that the comment be forwarded to CPUC staff.

The Legislative subcommittee did not meet this quarter.

5. Joint Investor Owned Utilities Status Reports

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 Public Safety Power Shut-offs \(PSPS\), disconnections, and arrearage management, was provided to the Board in advance.](#)

Board Member Castaneda responded to a comment from Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) on a possibility of fund transference from unspent funds from Single Family Affordable Solar Homes (SASH) Multifamily Affordable Solar Housing (MASH) program funds. PG&E responded that they would need to wait until Q1 2023 to consider this transfer and submit an Advice Letter (AL) request to the CPUC. Board Member Castaneda also brought up the Family Electric Rate Assistance (FERA) program enrollment rate and recommended that the Board consider a more thorough analysis of the possible reasons for the program's low participation rate. PG&E answered that a FERA agenda item for the LIOB would be good opportunity to share what the utilities are doing to increase program participation and the barriers they are facing.

Board Member Wimbley asked about Arrearage Management Plan (AMP) program participation and disconnections, specifically, when disconnections will begin again. SCE shared that they sent letters in October and SDG&E shared that they will begin disconnections in the first quarter of 2023. Board Member Wimbley also asked if there is information on the number of customers removed from the program and the length of their participation before leaving the program. The utilities answered that they will look into whether this data is already being reported as part of the Disconnections monthly reports.

Board Vice-Chair Stamas asked about the ESA program unspent funds. The utilities shared that any unspent and uncommitted funds for a program year must eventually be returned to ratepayers. SCE answered that they are planning to spend all their funds for this program year, noting that the reports in front of the Board are from October. The IOUs also all stated that they are trying to maximize program funds during the next program year.

Board Member Tang asked how the California Alternative Rates for Energy (CARE) eligibility rate is calculated. PG&E answered that this data comes from a consultant annually and is an estimate. Board Member Tang shared that the water utilities don't have the eligibility rate but have worked with different studies in the past to determine their own eligibility percentages.

Commissioner Shiroma asked SCE about the customer waitlist and about the SoCalGas contractor transition process. SoCalGas shared information about their competitive solicitation

process which resulted in twenty or so contractors being removed from the program. SoCalGas is working with these contractors on the best offboarding process in alignment with customer need.

Board Member Castilone encouraged the utilities, especially as they work with new contractors, to better tie in with other CPUC programs, such as solar offerings. SCE answered that they have been coordinating with SOMAH and informing contractors about other CPUC programs.

Board Member Castaneda came back to the issue of unspent funds, which seems at odds with the current economic situation in California and expanded program eligibility. Board Member Castaneda also spoke about the issues of delayed 2023 contract issuance and asked SCE to provide more information. SCE answered that they will hopefully have contracts out by the end of the week. Board Member Castaneda closed by noting the work of the ESA working group and requested an ESA working group report out as a standing item. Board Chair Delgado-Olson agreed with this suggestion and recommended it be included in the Energy Division updates.

Commissioner Shiroma spoke to the previous low-income decision, which intended to require the utilities to come up with clear, achievable budgets that minimized unspent funds.

Board Chair Delgado-Olson asked for each IOU to share more information on the tribal mini-grant program to help with program outreach. PG&E shared that they rolled out one grant cycle, received feedback from participating tribes, and thus are issuing an updated grant opportunity in 2023. SCE shared that they were able to increase the funds available by partnering with other internal programs. SDG&E answered that they have had one tribe respond and have been working through paperwork, however, noted the reasons why tribes may not apply for a mini-grant. SoCalGas shared that they brought on a tribal consultant and are working on Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with non-federally recognized tribes.

Board Member Castilone responded to the tribal grant programs by asking about ESA table 7, which reports out the number of homes treated that are identified as located in tribal communities. Board Member Castilone noted how many homes treated in SCE territory, as well as the low response rate for the request for feedback on the tribal grant program. PG&E shared information on their outreach strategy and their process to develop an adequate amount of funding for grants. Board Member Irwin responded that the number of tribes that participated in a grant meeting, as reported by PG&E, may be counting individuals who attended rather than separate tribal entities.

Board Member Irwin inquired about SoCalGas's note on the number of residential meters that are on "leased land." SoCalGas answered that in this case, leased land refers to land that a tribe owns, but has leased to a non-tribal entity, so it's not clear if these residences are associated with tribal members or not.

Board Vice-Chair Stamas asked if there are any regulatory barriers to increasing the amount of the tribal mini-grants, given that a common theme of feedback is that the grants are too low.

PG&E answered that the amount comes from their general program Marketing Education & Outline (MEO) budgets and aren't tied to a specific amount.

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

6. California Department of Community Services & Development Update

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

Board Member 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). Board Member Wimbley shared the [2022 CAPP utility arrearages & allocations as of 11/17/2022](#).

Board Member Castaneda asked if there was new funding coming into this program. Board Member Wimbley answered no, that this CAPP disbursement is the end of the program and any uncommitted funds will be returned to the General Fund. Board Member Castaneda also noted the high rate of arrearages for PG&E and wondered if they was a relationship to affordability. Board Member Wimbley responded by noting that this program addresses arrearages incurred during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Board Vice-Chair Stamas asked about the disconnections notices that are starting to go out and whether that was tied to the CAPP or not. Board Member Wimbley answered that customers receiving CAPP funding will be protected from disconnections until the funds are applied to their account.

Board Member Medina recommended that the Board consider writing a letter to the legislature asking them not to return the outstanding funds to the General Fund, but rather keep them held in an emergency type account.

7. Senate Bill 1208 - Low-income utility customer assistance programs: concurrent application process – Action Item

Alison LaBonte from CPUC Energy Division and Robert Sansone from CPUC Communications Division gave a [joint presentation on Senate Bill 1208, principles for implementation of Section 3 of this bill, upcoming activities, and Lifeline program background](#).

Board Chair Delgado-Olson explained that the action item before the full board is the creation of a SB1208 focused subcommittee, which will provide feedback in response to the requirements of the bill to all stakeholders, outside of full board meetings.

Board Member Castaneda expressed interest in joining this subcommittee and asked if there would be a way for the subcommittee to learn more about the operations and data related to the Lifeline program. Board Chair Delgado-Olson answered that this information would probably come out in the committee process.

Board Member Medina expressed interest in joining this subcommittee and shared that this is an opportunity to consider how to better serve traditionally underserved and vulnerable communities.

Board Members Tang and Wimbley also expressed interest in joining this subcommittee. Board Vice-Chair Stamas asked if it would be possible to provide feedback if not a member of the subcommittee. Board Chair-Delgado-Olson answered that there would be opportunities for board members to provide feedback throughout the process, as well as join the subcommittee later on.

Board Member Tang moved to create the SB1208 subcommittee, which will include members Tang, Delgado-Olson, Castaneda, Wimbley, and Medina. Board Member Medina seconded. The Board approved the creation of this subcommittee unanimously.

8. CPUC Standing Reports – Energy Division Update

Kapil Kulkarni, of the CPUC Energy Division, provided an [update on the large IOUs ESA/CARE/FERA program cycle, IOUs 2022 ESA reporting, ESA Working Group, program solicitations, and the LINA](#).

Board Member Castaneda spoke to the findings of the 2022 LINA and expressed a desire to see the results of the study inform the ESA program.

Board Vice-Chair Stamas also spoke to the LINA and shared that the LIOB would like to take a more active role in developing the topic for the next LINA study.

Board Member Medina commented on how to encourage businesses in the Central Valley to participate in ESA or other energy efficiency offerings. Mr. Kulkarni noted the requirement for the IOUs to use local businesses so there is definitely an opportunity to develop more relationships in the Central Valley.

8. CPUC Standing Reports - Community Help and Awareness of Natural Gas and Electric Services (CHANGES) Update

Ravinder Mangat of the CPUC's News & Outreach Division provided the [biannual update on the Community Help and Awareness of Natural Gas and Electric Services \(CHANGES\) Program](#).

Casey McFall of Milestone Consulting LLC and Anni Chung of Self Help for Elderly were available to answer questions about the program.

Board Member Castaneda asked if Lifeline was part of the CHANGES program. Mr. Mangat answered that Lifeline is included under the similar, but distinct, Telecommunications Education and Assistance in Multiple-Languages (TEAMS) program. Board Member Castaneda commented that it might be helpful to get more data from this program in the future to inform the SB1208 subcommittee. Board Member Castaneda then asked about CHANGES service to help customers understand their bill and what questions customers typically ask about their

bill. Mr. Mangat responded that there are a lot of numbers on the bill and CHANGES helps customers know what those numbers mean for them.

Board Member Medina asked if the program was tracking how the CHANGES community based organizations (CBO) are doing, because this work can be very difficult, and whether they had access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Mr. Mangat answered that these concerns are important, but not always tracked, so it is valuable that these issues are raised at a public forum such as the LIOB. For PPE, there is not a line item in contractor budgets. Ms. McFall shared that the pandemic has been very difficult for small CBOs and vulnerable communities for a variety of reasons. Ms. McFall also noted that CBOs have been compensated the same amount per case for over a decade. Board Vice-Chair Stamas asked if that amount was set in decision. Ms. McFall answered that the amount wasn't set in decision, however, the budget is approved by the CPUC and can only accommodate a certain amount.

Board Member Castilone asked about the CHANGES budget, CBOs in the Inland Empire, the number of people reached by events, and client education topics. Ms. McFall shared that there is one CHANGES CBO in the Inland Empire. Also, the client education reporting is based on what CBOs choose to present on, rather than purely driven by client demand.

Board Member Watts asked about the demographics for those that participate in CHANGES. Mr. Mangat answered that approximately half are over 60 years old, the most prominent languages are Spanish and Cantonese, but there will be more detail in the annual reports. Ms. McFall also noted that they track ethnicity separately.

9. Community Based Organization (CBO) Grant Pilot Program

Stephanie Green, Chris Moore, Asia Powell, and Hope Christman of the CPUC's Business and Community Outreach (BCO) office presented on a [CPUC opportunity to issue capacity grants](#) to community-based organizations that conduct outreach and obtain technical assistance for participation in Public Utilities Commission proceedings and activities.

Board Member Castaneda commented on the thoroughness of the program development and noted the importance of the Request for Information (RFI)/ Request for Procurement (RFP) process. Board Member Castaneda also noted that this program will help organizations learn how to participate in the CPUC process and perhaps graduate to receive intervenor compensation (I-Comp).

Board Vice-Chair Stamas asked if there was an expiration date for the funds. Ms. Green answered that they need to be encumbered by 2025 and spent by 2027. Board Vice-Chair Stamas recommended that CPUC consider some upfront payments to CBOs, streamlined application and reporting process, and that the CPUC consider ways to receive feedback from stakeholders outside of the formal proceeding process.

Board Chair Delgado-Olson asked about the Clean Energy Access and Initiatives Grant proposal, specifically about how these grants would partner with utilities. Ms. Green answered that the

proposal is still being developed, but that language was referring to an example of a project. Board Chair Delgado-Olson asked for future updates on this grant proposal be shared with the Board.

Board Member Medina recommended that these grants reflect innovation and youth-led projects.

Board Member Castilone recommended that this proposal include some technical and job training. Board Member Castilone also advised staff to be aware and sensitive of the time needed to work with tribal nations.

Board Member Castaneda asked who the author of the bill was that authorized the \$30 million in funding. Commissioner Shiroma answered that the bill's author is Assemblymember Phil Ting.

10.Wrap Up & Closing Remarks

Board Chair Delgado-Olson provided brief closing remarks that noted the Board's success in 2022. Commissioner Shiroma also provided remarks, thanking the board members for their active engagement and all the speakers for presenting to the board. Board Chair Delgado-Olson announced that the next meeting would be in-person (location TBD) and include a 20th anniversary reception.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:30 PM.