

Draft meeting notes

Friday October 13th, 9:30 AM – 3:30 PM

In-person at Community Action Partnership of Madera County, Madera, CA 93637

Virtual via Webex

Board Member Attendance:

Present (In-person): Shiroma, Delgado-Olson, Stamas, Wimbley, Castaneda, Irwin, Bierman, Medina, Tang

Present (Virtual): Watts, Castilone

Absent: None

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

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

1. Welcome and Introductions

Commissioner Shiroma and Board Vice-Chair Stamas opened the meeting of the Low Income Oversight Board (LIOB) at approximately 9:45 AM. Commissioner Shiroma introduced fellow Commissioner Douglas who was in attendance at the meeting, as well as her staff. The Commissioner also noted the upcoming [Environmental and Social Justice High Road Workforce En Banc](#) that she would be participating in and spoke to today's LIOB meeting agenda. Commissioner Douglas followed with opening remarks speaking to her background prior to the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) and interest areas. Board Chair Delgado-Olson provided remarks and spoke to the meeting setting in the Central Valley via Madera, California. Other Board Member introductions followed. CPUC staff introductions took place after the approval of the June 15 meeting minutes.

2. Approval of the June 15, 2023 Meeting Minutes – Action Item

Board Member Medina moved to approve the [minutes from the June meeting](#) and Board Member Bierman seconded the motion. The LIOB members approved the minutes unanimously, except for Board Member Tang who was absent at the June meeting and thus abstained from voting.

3. Comment from Community Based Organizations

Board Chair Delgado-Olson moved to comments from Community Based Organizations (CBO) ahead of Public Comment. The Board Chair introduced the first guest speaker, David Knight,

Executive Director of the California Community Action Partnership Association (CalCAPA). CalCAPA is the member organization representing the 60 Community Action Partnerships (CAP) covering all 58 counties in California.

Following Mr. Knight's comment on his organization and their mission, Chair Delgado-Olson asked about how CAPs manage to balance income requirements for a variety of programs in order to streamline the process for recipients. Mr. Knight answered by sharing the strength of CAP staff in understanding different programs and building community trust, as well as organizing intake information to collect income and household size, which is then reviewed by staff to determine which programs the recipient may be eligible for.

The second speaker to the Board was Mattie Mendez, the Executive Director of the Community Action Partnership of Madera County (CAPMC, the host for the meeting). To begin her remarks, Ms. Mendez answered a question from Board Member Wimbley asking about the relationship between CAPs and utilities, specifically with Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) in this region. Ms. Mendez shared that CAPMC has a good relationship with PG&E and then moved on to speak to her organization, notably on the work it does, its relationship to local government, and challenges. Her comment included back and forth with Board Members on topics such as weatherization, federal funding, leveraging funding sources, and job training. Ms. Mendez closed by sharing her willingness to participate in any efforts to increase coordination of services, especially for rural counties, such as via a state taskforce.

4. Public Comment

A member of the public attending the meeting in-person, Enoch Oliva, spoke to his challenges in paying rising utility bill costs at the same time as addressing other critical bills and without agency to have much energy efficiency improvements as a renter. Mr. Oliva was specifically put into a challenging situation when he missed a payment for arrearage management assistance for PG&E. Additionally, he noted consumers who may be unable to attend a public meeting and comment but are struggling to pay for rising utility costs. Board Chair Delgado-Olson responded to the commenter by thanking him for his thoughtful words and encouraging PG&E staff at the meeting to work with Mr. Oliva on assistance options. At this point in the meeting, the Board Chair passed meeting facilitation over to the Vice-Chair briefly.

Daniela Suarez of Central Coast Energy Services (CCES) provided public comment via the Webex platform. Ms. Suarez provided a written copy of the comments, which spoke to concerns about the underfunding of the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) in spite of high need.

LaTanya Davis of Los Angeles County provided comment via the Webex platform. Ms. Davis runs a community-based organization, nonprofit organization that provides temporary impermanent housing for foster youth. These facilities are residences, but due to hosting so many youths, there is a high demand on electricity usage which causes utility bills to be high.

Staff from Southern California Edison (SCE) responded that they could investigate whether there are any rates or other types of assistance programs that could help Ms. Davis.

5. Joint Investor Owned Utilities Status Reports

Board Chair Benito Delgado-Olson announced that agenda items 5 & 6 would be switched. For the joint investor-owned utility (IOU) updates, a representative of each IOU presented short 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 commended Southern California Gas (SoCalGas) for their work increasing collaboration with Southern California Edison (SCE) as well as contributing to the Midcycle Report. Board Member Castaneda also spoke about the tools that contractors use to calculate customer measures and savings. Board Member Castaneda recommended more budget flexibility within the ESA program to consider contractor advances to enhance the financial stability of contractors within the program. Board Member Wimbley contributed to that comment by sharing how CSD issues contractor advances for their program. CSD provides contractors with a working capital advance that is approximately 25% of their total contract. This amount gets repaid throughout the length of the contract.

Board Vice-Chair Stamas asked about the carryover funding and how that is calculated. SCE answered that the ESA program per the last decision is not allowed to carry over funds for the main program, however, utilities can commit funding for future years. The Board Vice-Chair then asked about the variances between the resumption of disconnections between utilities as well as the low completion percentage of the arrearage management program (AMP).

Commissioner Shiroma commented on the estimate amount of unspent funds for the ESA program and spoke to the intent of the decision to encourage utilities to spend ESA budgets quickly and effectively for the program, rather than letting unspent funds build up. Commissioner Shiroma also responded to comments about turning away customers due to not enough energy savings and asked utilities to continue providing services to all eligible customers. Commissioner Shiroma asked about San Diego Gas & Electric's (SDG&E) participation in the pilot plus and pilot deep programs. SDG&E answered that these pilots have not yet commenced but will begin next year.

Board Member Watts commended the utilities for working closing with contractors on the new ESA program model shift because of the most recent Decision and thanked them for listening to and acknowledging contractor concerns. Board Member Watts also expressed support for the idea of contractor advances mentioned by Board Members Castaneda and Wimbley. Likewise, she expressed support for more bulk purchasing of appliances and asked whether that should be a topic for the ESA Working Group. Board Member Bierman recommended having each utility consider that idea before discussing it at the Working Group.

Board Member Castilone issued praise to the utilities for trying to create positive change in serving tribal nations via creative ideas and streamlined solutions. Board Member Castilone asked for more information on the tribal mini grants, including lessons learned, to be shared at a future meeting.

Board Member Wimbley asked about the unspent funds that are unable to be carried over and expressed concern that there are commitments to serve customers that are not being met. Board Member Wimbley offered ideas for policy improvements, such as extending the period in which to spend or commit funds, to promote program resiliency and adaptiveness.

Board Member Bierman thanked the Board members for their comments and highlighted the work of the ESA Working Group, which is another avenue for these program discussions to happen.

Board Irwin asked about comments made by utility staff that FERA eligible customers may be self-certifying as CARE customers in order to receive a higher discount, and whether there was evidence to support this assumption. PG&E answered that this is a theory but would like to investigate further via third party analysis.

Board Member Medina asked if CARE and FERA can be in the same household and the utility staff answered that they cannot. Board Member Medina then asked about the funds for AMP customers that do not end up being distributed to customers due to them falling off the program. Utility staff answered that those funds would go to another eligible customer, and they are not “use it or lose it.”

Board Vice-Chair Stamas asked about the unspent FERA subsidy funds and utility staff answered that the funds would just not be collected via the two-way balancing account via the annual rates true ups.

Board Member Wimbley asked about the AMP and whether there was going to be program evaluation. Utility staff answered that will be program evaluation and more information on that would be available next year.

The board took a break for lunch during agenda item 5 at approximately 12:40. In order to accommodate presenter availability, when the Board returned from lunch, the order of business was adjusted slightly. Following lunch, the board heard from staff on legislative and water updates, before returning to the joint IOU status updates.

6. CPUC Standing Reports – Legislative Update

Henry (Hank) Brad, new Director of the CPUC Office of Governmental Affairs (OGA) introduced himself to the Board and was available to answer questions on the [Legislative summary](#) that was provided to the Board in advance of the meeting. Mr. Brady shared that the Governor has until October 14th to either veto or sign passed legislation into law.

Board Vice-Chair Stamas asked about Assembly Bill 414 (Reyes) - Communications: Digital Equity Bill of Rights, that was vetoed by the Governor. The Vice-Chair asked if this bill was always just a principles bill, or if there ever was any funding attached. Mr. Brad answered that this was always a principles bill.

7. CPUC Standing Reports – Water Division Update

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

Board Member Tang responded to the Water Division presentation by speaking to the various water arrearage assistance programs currently available. Water utilities are committed to leveraging and accessing all available funds to make sure income eligible customers receive all the assistance that is available.

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, Concurrent Application System \(CAS\) Working Group, Upcoming Events, and Affordability Proceedings updates](#).

Board Member Tang asked for clarification about the word “territory” used in the potential and goals study update. Mr. Kulkarni answered that the word refers to each respective utility’s service area.

The Board Vice-Chair asked about the ESA program additional considerations slide, which had budget numbers, and whether these numbers are amount available or a new proposal. Mr. Kulkarni answered that these are existing budgets.

Board Member Castaneda commented on the Potential and Goals study and recommended members read it for more detailed information on where energy savings measures lie. Board Member Castaneda also spoke about the Mid Cycle Report and the comments that he had provided on the report. These comments included recommendations for Health Comfort & Safety measures and budgets.

9. CPUC Standing Reports – Equity Initiatives and Clean Energy Access Grant Program Update

Chris Moore of the CPUC News & Outreach Office, provided an update on the [CPUC’s Equity Initiatives and Clean Energy Access Grant Program](#). Mr. Moore acknowledged that the Board has heard updates on these grant opportunities before, but the most recent update is that two of the three grant opportunities are now live.

There were no questions from members of the Board.

10. 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. Mr. Ravinder closed his presentation by noting the increased need and requesting that there be consideration of a budget increase for the program.

Board Chair Delgado-Olson asked about the procedural process for increasing the CHANGES budget. Commissioner Shiroma answered that staff could follow up on that and share more information in the future.

Board Member Medina asked if public comment was part of the CHANGES evaluation to see what consumers would like to see changed or improved in the program.

11. Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Creation – Action Item

Board Chair Delgado-Olson introduced this item for the Board's consideration and possible voting. Board Chair Delgado-Olson spoke to the history of the Board's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and the intent to revise the current TAC's focus to be one providing guidance to Low Income proceedings and decisions. After discussing the current draft and noting feedback from the CPUC's legal liaison, the Board Chair proposed deferring this item to the next quarterly meeting. At the next meeting a revised version of the TAC proposal will be provided to the Board.

12. Subcommittee Reports

None of the LIOB subcommittees met this quarter.

13. California Department of Community Services & Development Update

Board Member Wimbley did not have any significant updates at this time.

14. Wrap Up & Closing Remarks

Board Chair Delgado-Olson began the closing remarks of the meeting by sharing that there would be more information on the next meeting date to come. The Chair thanked CAPMC and Mattie Mendez very much for their generosity hosting this meeting.

Commissioner Shiroma also provided closing remarks that expressed her appreciation of farm worker communities in the Central Valley, especially given her personal background as the daughter of a farm worker.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 4:30 PM.

DRAFT