

**Austin Energy Low Income Consumer Advocates
Resolution 20131107-052 Meeting #3
March 19, 2014**

Attendees- Dan Pruett, Kathy Stark, Kathleen Hopkins, Vanessa Sarria, Kerry Overton, Angel Ramirez, Ruby Roa, Carol Biedrzycki, Tonda Owens, Gloria Cueva, Linda Perez, Lanetta Cooper, Pat Macy, Mark Widoff, JJ Gutierrez, Robena Jackson, Lisa Tamez, Ronnie Mendoza, Sandra Castillo, Lori Kirchgatter, Melissa Davis, Irene Nemitsas, Jessica Twining, Shannon Halley, Nan Wang, Dave Cortez, Kaiba White

- Goals and Objectives
 - Facilitator states goals and objectives of working group and reviews meeting agenda.
 - Recommendation that the group have an additional meeting (suggested date: March 28) to make additional progress on work.

- Updated PA Data Set presented by JJ Gutierrez
 - 1st Chart: Number of Residential DPAs by Month/Year
 - 2nd Chart: Dollars of Residential DPAs by Month/Year
 - 3rd Chart: Frequency chart
 - AE representative informs the group that the graphs provide a year to year comparison for what was put in place for customers as well as raw data for the group to utilize while working on their charged activities.

- R. Mendoza provides presentation regarding Customer Assistance Programs
 - AE representative instructs group to review Payment Arrangement Design Policy Worksheet and to notice that the Customer Assistance Programs corresponding to each target population is on the right side of this worksheet.

- Facilitator recommends to the group that they begin to discuss the deferred payment arrangement policy and informs group that a subset of the working group has proposed policy guidelines
 - A presentation was provided regarding a proposed DEFERRED PAYMENT ARRANGEMENT policy developed by group members (L. Cooper, R. Roa, C. Biedrzycki, B. Batlan, K. Stark, and M. Widoff)
 - Proposed policy safeguards include:
 - Austin Energy having flexibility in creating payment arrangements
 - Austin Energy and Austin Water have a memorandum to create a follow up plan with a customer for water leaks

- A presentation was provided regarding highlights of arrearage report written by Consumer Law Center for Massachusetts
 - Report showed that 88% of customers who had trouble paying their bill had an event that created the challenge
 - Focus of program is to get customers to pay their current bill set by levelized billing

- If the customer receives financial utility assistance, this is taken into consideration when creating their levelized amount
 - The utility company for this program writes off the customers debt
 - Clarification on the utility debt policy and law was requested
 - AE representative informs that Austin Energy cannot forgive utility debt
- Facilitator instructs the group to review the matrix which builds on the Council ordinance passed in December and reiterates that Austin Energy has flexibility on creating payment arrangements
 - AE representative refers back to Part 3 of the resolution and informs that any customer is eligible to receive a 24 month payment arrangement
 - AE representative informs that Austin Energy's customer service representatives determine a customer's monthly payment arrangement simply by asking the customer what they can afford as a monthly payment arrangement amount and does not ask for a customer's income
 - Facilitator asks for an Austin Energy representative to clarify its application of the resolution and to explain why some customers are ineligible for a payment arrangement
 - AE representative provides example: a customer who has had 8 payment arrangements calls in for another arrangement and has amassed so much debt, and they were possibly only provided with one payment arrangement option by the representative they were working with
 - Issue: Should Austin Energy require a down payment from regular customers to be paid for a payment arrangement
 - In favor: 10 votes
 - Opposed: 0 votes
 - Sustained: 4 votes
 - This measure has been passed by the group: a down payment for regular customers will be required when creating a payment arrangement
 - Issue: Should Austin Energy not require a down payment from CAP and MVR customer to be paid for a payment arrangement
 - In favor: unanimous
 - Opposed: 0 votes
 - Sustained: 0 votes
 - This measure has been passed by the group: a down payment for CAP and MVR customers will not be required when creating a payment arrangement
- Facilitator directs the group to begin discussion on the number of payment arrangements allowed and reviews the current payment arrangement policy
 - Issue: How many payment arrangements should customers be allowed
 - All regular and CAP customers get an unlimited number of payment arrangements if the customer brings their balance to 0 dollars, but

- Those customers that cannot fulfill their payment arrangement agreement and break their payment arrangement are limited to 3 PAs. Customers with a bona fide reason can be provided with a 4th payment arrangement
 - In favor: unanimous
 - Opposed: 0 votes
 - Sustained: 0 votes
- Parking Lot Issues:
 - Should Austin Energy require customers to pay a deposit for a payment arrangement
 - How to handle past due debt accrued before returning to area
- Facilitator reminds the group that the next regularly scheduled meeting is scheduled for April 16
- Action items:
 - Austin Energy to provide reasons for a customer being disqualified from receiving a payment arrangement