



LOW INCOME CONSUMER ADVISORY TASK FORCE MEETING MINUTES February 20, 2015

The Low Income Consumer Advisory Task Force convened in a regular meeting at Town Lake Center, 721 Barton Springs Road, Room 100, in Austin, Texas. Vice-Chairperson, Tim Arndt called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m.

Task Force Members in Attendance: Tim Arndt, Lanetta Cooper, Karen Hadden, Richard Halpin, Dan Pruett, Chris Strand and Kelly Weiss. Carol Biedrzycki and Cyrus Reed were not in attendance.

Staff in Attendance: Austin Energy staff included Debra Athearn, Sady Bartlett, Liz Jambor, Debbie Kimberly, Denise Kuehn, and Stacy Lewis.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES- Lanetta Cooper read suggested amendments on behalf of Carol Biedrzycki for edits to the February 6th meeting minutes. They were small grammatical changes. Dan Pruett motioned to approve the minutes as edited. Lanetta seconded. Kelly Weiss abstained because she was not present at the meeting. The revised minutes were approved by the rest of the group.

CITIZEN COMMUNICATIONS-GENERAL

Al D'Andrea, Owner of McCullough Heating & Air Conditioning-recommended that the Task Force follow the Resolution and take a comprehensive look at the low income weatherization program. He wanted them to review and provide recommendations to make the program cost- effective and efficient for the community. He was concerned that the process was starting in middle or near the end. He asked where low income fits into the climate protection plan, the 800 MW goal and other programs. He recommended that the Task Force ask what the funding should be and the expected return. He felt this should be addressed. He gave a recommendation to run the program like a business and to financially separate the humanitarian side of the program. As an Austin Energy (AE) contractor, he does not think the program can justify replacing central AC but window units could go a long way. Questions and discussion followed. In response to questions about fair access to programs, equity should be a consideration.

Mayte Salazar, Organizer with Dave Cortez from the Sierra Club- invited the group to a community meeting in the Springdale airport area. The goal of the meeting would be to discuss high electric bills and for customers to share their experience when calling AE. She said her group would compile a report for the Task Force after the meeting. She invited the members to the meeting on Feb 28th from 2-4pm at the Santa Julia Church. They would have a 2nd event in the Dove Springs area. Questions and discussion followed.

NEW BUSINESS

2. Discussion of the preliminary budget recommendations to Council- Tim read a report from Oakridge Labs that focuses on cost effectiveness considerations. He wanted the members to make recommendations for future budget not on current programs. Tim started a discussion about other cost effective models in terms of the budget moving forward. The members asked more questions and the group gave consensus that they were not ready to offer their budget recommendations at this time.

Kelly Weiss asked if the Task Force should focus on financial return of investment along with the social benefit.

Chris Strand read the Task Force Resolution and emphasized that they needed to review what they were assigned to do, stating that they needed to reduce demand and to serve the most people as possible. He asked staff for energy efficiency savings data.

Tim asked what should be the demand goal for the low and low to moderate income group and what the allocation of the rebate budget should go to the low moderate group. Chris reiterated that he needed guidance for staff on what is the cost per KW was by various measures before he could make any decisions.

Debbie Kimberly, Vice-President of Customer Energy Solutions, confirmed that staff could provide an overall program review with all the data requested in a large presentation. Staff would provide savings estimate, MW, KWh, and deemed savings data.

Karen Hadden did not think that the Task Force was limited to what the Resolution said. She would like to include higher MW goals. Karen presented a document for the members to read called "Recognizing the Full Value of Energy Efficiency". She would provide a link of the report to the group.

Dan Pruett was in favor of staff providing a presentation and providing information as to what they were doing currently and any improvements for the programs. He would like to know the fundamentals of AE programs and how AE worked with other organizations.

Dan moved to delay making any recommendations and Richard Halpin agreed that it should come at the end of the process.

3. Discussion on the organization of task force meetings within the community to gather citizen input- This item was not discussed.

4. Brief discussion of task force member's short-term and long-term recommendation priorities-The members shared the recommendations.

Chris distributed a list of his recommendations to the group. He asked that AE react to his recommendations at the next regular meeting.

Lanetta Cooper shared her list of goals. Her short-term goals were to keep the CAP weatherization money in CAP program but leverage rebates for larger savings. She wanted to use a third party to run the program. Her long-term goals were to look at other non-profits and look at rebates for the low income population.

Cyrus Reed was unable to attend the meeting but sent everyone his recommendations. Tim read Cyrus's recommendations to the group.

The group recapped what they wanted staff to deliver in their presentation. They highlighted these topics to present on:

- Overview of the weatherization program; what's working well and what could improve
- KW/KWh savings to formulate budget
- AE to review the Task Force recommendations
- Discuss possible integration with Housing Repair Coalition
- Difference between current program and rebates with a brief overview of other programs such as HPWES, MF and AEP
- Detailed measures and savings

Richard Halpin also wanted staff to include a response to contractor comments made during Citizen Communications.

Karen Hadden wanted to know the current outreach to customers.

The agenda for the meeting on February 27th was changed to accommodate a presentation from staff on the above topics.

OLD BUSINESS

5. Discussion on utility on-bill financing and other energy efficiency financing options- This item was moved for discussion before item #4 concerning the budget recommendations. The group wanted to have a special meeting regarding on-bill financing and other financing options. They discussed potential dates, the meeting format and panelist to invite.

Kelly Weiss shared her response to the on-bill financing information that was provided by AE and noted Cyrus's information about WHEEL. She noted that there were two pots of money; a social investment piece and an AE business piece. They should be kept separate but leveraged. She recommended that the Task force keep an open mind and stay informed. Kelly was concerned that they did not ask the right questions to City Legal.

Dan asked the members for clarity in preparation for the meeting. He wanted the members to frame their questions to ask the panel. The panel should consist of subject matter experts that could speak intelligently about the topic with AE staff on the panel to answer questions. There should not be much else on the agenda. He noted it is better to be slow and thorough. Dan wanted to make ensure that every member could ask their questions. He also wanted someone on the panel who is on the opposition to the subject matter- to offer the pros and cons on the subject. He would like to know the fundamentals of AE programs and how AE worked with other organizations. He was not sure the group was ready yet to discuss on-bill financing with a panel. Tim asked if it was premature. Dan needed more information and clarity on the subject before he could frame any questions.

Lanetta was in agreement with Dan; they needed a panel of subject matter experts. She asked for recordings to be posted to website.

Richard wanted the group to discuss cordially and to be organized. Tim agreed and recommended preparing questions beforehand.

Staff liaison, Sady Bartlett reminded the group that in their previous meeting, Carol wanted them to submit to her a list of their recommended panel invitees. Carol had made a list of people to invite. Tim read the list to the group. The list included the following people:

- Janee Briesmeister; utility expert, recently retired from AARP
- Doug Lewin-SPEER
- Mark Rogers with Guadalupe Neighborhood Development Corporation
- Kate Zerrenner with Environmental Defense Fund
- Ruby Roa-Ladies of Charity
- Representative from Velocity Credit Union

Further discussion was made about whom should be invited.

Chris suggested inviting AE General Manager, Larry Weiss. He questioned the expertise of the listed panelist and wanted to make sure that the invitees were experts on the topic not just advocates. He didn't want to make any conclusions on the subject until they had a discussion with the experts. Chris referenced papers he read from Kelly regarding on-bill financing. Tim asked Kelly to share the paper.

A question was asked if anyone knew anyone to invite that was opponent to Energy Efficiency financing. No one gave a response.

Debbie recommended City Legal to be on the panel. Karen agreed that they needed someone to address the legal side of the subject. She also recommended inviting someone from the Regulatory Assistance Project, Guadalupe Electric Coop, and other utilities. Debbie would contact her counterpart at CPS Energy.

Staff suggested that they framed their questions and decides what they wanted to accomplish with on-bill financing. Dan stressed that he needed information and clarity on the subject before forming any questions.

Sady questioned if one week was enough time period to invite people. Richard recommended moving the date of the panel discussion. He motion to move the date of February 27th and Dan seconded. There was no discussion made. Everyone was in agreement. They decided they needed at least 2 to 3 weeks and set up questions ahead of time. Richard asked for larger room for the on-bill financing discussion. Richard asked the members to get their suggestions to Carol and Tim by the following Wednesday.

A special panel discussion meeting was set for a target date of March 13th and a backup dated for March 20th. Tim asked Dan to work with him and Carol to prioritize the list. The group agreed that Dan would have an unbiased opinion on the panel selection because he was least familiar with the topic.

6. Discussion on the inclusion of HVAC equipment and refrigerators in the weatherization program- This item was not discussed.

7. Discussion and possible action on a draft resolution, "Study of weatherization cost savings measures"- This item was not discussed.

8. Discussion and possible action on a draft resolution, “City Auditor study on improving the efficiency of City programs and/or services addressing affordable housing”- This item was not discussed.

9. Discussion and possible action regarding the location of future task force meetings- This item was not discussed.

BRIEFINGS & REPORTS

10. Austin Energy staff updates on the weatherization program job status- This item was not discussed.

11. Status of data requests- This item was not discussed.

12. Committee Reports – possible reports from the Low Income Energy Efficiency Program Committee, Low-Moderate Income Energy Efficiency Program Committee, and/or Affordable Rental Property Committee- This item was not discussed.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

13. Discussion regarding future agenda items including a schedule of topics and issues and topics raised during briefings and citizen communications- The date of February 27th was set for special called meeting for AE to give a presentation on the low income programs. March 13th and 20th was set as tentative dates for a discussion panel on on-bill financing and other financing options.

ADJOURNMENT: Karen moved, Dan seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 12:09pm with no objection.