



LOW INCOME CONSUMER ADVISORY TASK FORCE

MEETING MINUTES

March 6, 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. Chairperson, Carol Biedrzycki called the meeting to order at 10:07 a.m.

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

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

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES-Tim Arndt and Lanetta Cooper requested changes to the February 20th meeting minutes. Tim requested under Citizen Communication, Al D'Andrea's comments, to insert "*financially separate the humanitarian side*". Lanetta added after questions and discussion followed, "In response to questions about fair access to programs, *equity* should be a consideration." Tim moved to approve the edited minutes, Lanetta seconded. All were in favor. The minutes from the February 20, 2015 meetings were adopted.

CITIZEN COMMUNICATIONS-GENERAL

Al D'Andrea, Owner of McCullough Heating & Air Conditioning-reported that City budget timeline is a problem for the programs. Programs are seasonal; they get work in the summer but none in the winter. He clarified that when a contractor replaces an air conditioner (AC), the vast majority are replacing working units. He noted a study at the University of Texas that shows typical AC is putting out 60-63% of its capacity. Austin Energy (AE) launched a program to help contractors raise the AC capacity factor and get more out of AC investment. Instead of replacing the unit, they should address the performance issues. Questions and discussion followed.

NEW BUSINESS

2. Current Challenges in Putting Solar on Multi-Family, Housing Sunshine Mathon, M. Arch., LEED Homes AP Design + Development Director, Foundation Communities- Sunshine provided the group with a handout. He reported the following needs and benefits:

1) The construction cost of interconnecting 140 individual arrays vs. 1 solar array is substantial. On the order of 10-15% of the total solar project cost, we need AE to work with us to find a solution to have one large solar array (with production distributed to individual residents of the multifamily rental property).

Such a solution would provide financial benefit to providing solar at scale to low income families without incurring AE cost.

2) AE already provides a 25% nonprofit boost to other energy efficiency rebates the utility offers. Providing such a boost to solar would be dramatically effective in facilitating the success of getting solar to low income renters.

3) The current commercial net metering cap is 20kW though the commercial incentive, PBI (Performance Based Incentive) is capped at 200kW. We will be pursuing net positive commercial building soon and the net metering cap needs to align with the PBI cap to allow the financial numbers to work. Questions and discussion followed.

3. Discussion of Budget Issues-Members asked staff what happened with unspent budget money. Cyrus Reed asked for clearer understanding. Debbie Kimberly, Vice-President of Customer Energy Solutions, stated she could provide a written explanation. Lanetta wanted as an agenda item to review the mechanics of the budget; the losses and surpluses of the energy efficiency budget with the last 2 years. Richard Halpin wanted feedback and a model of the budget cycle. Clarification was made regarding AE's draft budget to Council. Debbie explained the budget process. Carol informed that they need to complete their preliminary budget recommendations by April 1st.

OLD BUSINESS

4. Discussion on the organization of task force meetings within the community to gather citizen input- The group discussed dates and location to hold public meetings. The timeframe would be in late June or early July. They would give their final budget recommendations to Council by June 12th. Staff would check on the availability of Council Chambers for late June or July 15th at 5:30 pm to 8:00pm or 6-8pm. Cyrus Reed mentioned that his organization, the Sierra Club, would be holding meeting and he could look into coordinating with their existing meetings.

5. Discussion of short and long term recommendations-A discussion was made regarding Task Force recommendations. Carol provided the group with a list of her draft recommendations along with a handout of her March 2, 2015 presentation to Council. The group reviewed the recommendations and they listed their ideas on a post-it easel board to be used in subsequent meetings.

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

7. Discussion and possible action of a draft resolution, "Study of weatherization cost saving measures"- Lanetta drafted this resolution. She requested to withdraw her proposal.

8. Discussion and possible action of a draft resolution" City Auditor study on improving the efficiency of City programs and/or services addressing affordable housing"-Lanetta drafted this resolution. She recommended passing the resolution but needed to revise the language to direct Council, not the City Auditor. Richard Halpin motioned to recommend to Council the resolution. Lanetta seconded. Discussion followed. All were in favor to pass the resolution with amendments as discussed.

9. Discussion and possible action regarding the location of future task force meetings- Carol noted that this item was already discussed in item #4. No further discussion was made.

BRIEFINGS & REPORTS

10. Austin Energy staff update on the weatherization program job status-Denise Kuehn, Energy Efficiency Director, confirmed that this update would be presented at the next meeting.

11. Status of data requests- Liz Jambor, Data Analytics and Business Intelligence Manager, provided the group with a handout on staff's response to Lanetta's questions regarding HVAC analysis.

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-
There were no reports from the subcommittees.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

13. Discussion regarding future agenda items including a schedule of topics and issues and topics raised during briefings and citizen communications- On the agenda for the next meeting to be held on March 13th, there will be 1 hour allocated for the panel discussion regarding financing options. The rest of the meeting will focus on discussion of draft recommendations to Council.

ADJOURNMENT-The meeting was adjourned at 12:01pm without objection.