

NEUAC Board Meeting Minutes – 6/30/20

Present: Alison Donovan, Ariel Drehobl, Billie Kaumaya, Bonnie Temme, Britton Gabel, Chere Coleman, Cheryl Stowell, Connie Sanchez, David Carroll, David Conn, David Rinebolt, Debbie Brown, Debra Moss, Edith Baltierrez, Edward Gingold, Paul Griffin, Enrique Hernandez, Erica Lambert, Faye Kinner, Frank Rapley, Gary Swan, Gerri Drummond, Haly Laasme, Jackie Holmes, Jacquie Moss, Jess Jubran, John Godfrey, John Rich, Joe Diamond, Kathy Kerr, Katrina Metzler, Keelie Gustin, Kelly Caplan, Kim Campbell, Kim Rikalo, Liz Berube, Lorena Shah, Maria Delaplain, Mary Wilkins, Mike Bradford, Mike Sullivan, Eric Behna, Octavio Verduzco, Rhonda Harper, Sarah Schaffer, Saunteel Jenkins, Scott Thach, Sheila Ruffin, Tanasia Poke, Tanya Jones, Tasheenah Brown, Thelma French, Theresa Kullen, Steve Whitworth, Zoe Ahlstrom, Kathryn Maddux, Celia Andrade, Brian Caudill, Patrick Strickland, Sheila Pressley, Rosa Pagnillo-Lopez

Joining late: Francine Artis

Call to Order/Quorum Established/Roll Call: Saunteel Jenkins at 12:02pm.

Motion to approve prior meeting's minutes: Enrique Hernandez, second by Rhonda Harper. All in favor, none opposed, none abstained.

Presentation of 2020-2021 Governance Board: Gary Swan

Motion to approve governance board: Kelly Caplan, second by Dave Rinebolt. All in favor, none opposed, none abstained.

Presentation of 2020-2021 Advisory Board slate: Saunteel Jenkins

Motion to approve advisory board: Rhonda Harper, second by Bonnie Temme. All in favor, none opposed, none abstained.

Presentation of 2020-2021 Officers slate: Katrina Metzler

- President: Saunteel Jenkins
- 1st Vice President: Rhonda Harper
- 2nd Vice President: Kim Campbell
- Treasurer: Mary Wilkins
- Secretary: Kim Rikalo

(slate voted on at end of meeting)

Financial report: Mary Wilkins presented a powerpoint detailing continued financial growth at NEUAC over the past several years, allowing the organization to weather the COVID storm.

Kim Rikalo – appreciated how Mary put it together, visuals explain it very well. Kudos for taking the time to do this. Saunteel echoes Kim sentiments.

Motion to approve financial reports: Gary Swan, second by Rhonda Harper, All in favor, none opposed, none abstained.

Committee updates

Executive Committee: Saunteel Jenkins reported on several items the Executive Committee has worked on since the last board meeting.

- December 2019 and 2020 meetings will count as in-person per the bylaws
- 2020 awards will be awarded in person in San Diego at 2021
 - Dave Rinebolt chosen as Sister Pat Kelley awardee for this year
 - No nominations for Victorine Q. Adams award
 - All NEUAC member utilities will be honored for excellence in addressing pandemic challenges
- Planning meeting and board meeting in September 2020 will be virtual
- Three governance board members resigned
 - Fuel Fund MD continuing on Advisory Board
 - Pickaway County Community Action Agency
 - Maricopa County Department of Human Services
- Board member attendance will be tracked and requirements will be enforced
- Multiple letters to Congress in support of \$4.3b additional for LIHEAP
- Support water affordability funding in conjunction with NCLC and NRDC
- Entered into contract for legal services
- Entered into contract for Advocacy Associates

Motion for board to accept Executive Committee decisions: Dave Rinebolt, second Steve Whitworth, all in favor, none opposed, none abstained.

Executive Committee continued report: Saunteel Jenkins

- Executive Director review is underway and will be completed in the next couple of weeks
- Creation of a more formalized process for nominations and award of yearly awards
- Working group is reviewing documents and processes associated with elections for board members, officers, and requirements.
 - Governance Board Annual Agreement
 - Advisory Board Annual Agreement

Motion to approve annual agreements for Governance Board and Advisory Board: Sarah Schaffer, second by Chere Coleman, all in favor, none opposed, none abstained.

Conference Committee: Kelly Caplan

- Kudos to team for revamping sessions and moving virtual
- Conference Tuesday August 4, Wednesday August 5, 12-4:30pm
- Soft launch yesterday, went live 11am today
- Live sessions and recorded sessions available
- Matthew Desmond keynote
- Enrique said everyone from his organization is welcome to participate due to the great content and low price, expects 20 participants just from EOC

Bylaws Committee Update: Rhonda Harper

- Rhonda provided an overview of the changes to the bylaws, provided in the executive summary
- Need a motion to approve proposed bylaws pending attorney review. If attorney recommends substantive changes, we will open up for comment/review again

Kelly Caplan remarked that she was voted in as parliamentarian last year, supposed to be re-elected?
Will be addressed in Katrina's report

Dave Rinebolt commented that Rhonda deserves kudos for steering the committee through the process over the past year.

Kathy Kerr – motion to approve with amended changes and any changes recommended by attorneys
Second – Chere Coleman

Steve question – we're pre-approving attorney's changes?

Saunteel – any substantive changes will be brought back to the board for 30 day comment period

Kim – one or two words can change context

Rhonda – any changes from the attorney that change the intention will cause us to send to board again

Motion to approve bylaws as amended pending approval by the attorney: Kathy Kerr, second by Chere Coleman, all in favor, none opposed, none abstained.

Public Policy and Advocacy update: Brian Caudill

- In the next six weeks, Congress will discuss FY21 as well as a potential additional COVID relief that would perhaps include LIHEAP
- NEUAC on record supporting \$5.1b for LIHEAP for FY21, fully authorized amount
- LIHEAP hasn't been authorized since mid-90s, at \$5.1 during 2008 downturn
- Upcoming virtual fly-in will help make the ask for \$5.1b in FY21 and could cover \$4.3b ask for FY20 in a senate bill
- House has moved \$1.5b for HEROES Act, if Senate moves they will make their own bill
- Utility arrearage data study is underway to look at how the pandemic is affecting arrearages

Kim Rikalo says arrearage data is very important. Not seeing HEAP commitments in Sacramento, no impetus to apply for assistance without turn off notices going out.

- Brian says it's important for members to hear from LMI advocates in addition to utilities
- Saunteel – opportunity to hear from customers since it's a virtual fly-in
- John Godfrey – APPA has data, there is sympathy on the hill, the consumer aspect is important but also understanding that smaller utilities can't just write a check to solve the problem.
- Kim – we are a big utility but also struggling financially
- Steve – agencies are struggling to do intake as well due to social distancing concerns
- Rhonda – categorical eligibility. How to do quickly?

- Kathy – business continuity plans at utilities, nonprofits developing on the fly. Utility outreach to last year’s LIHEAP clients
- Bonnie – agencies had to dramatically change operations. Could screen clients faster virtually
- Connie – gathering arrearage data at Spire. Special fund for COVID - \$100 residential, \$200 small business. Report/outreach on past LIHEAP clients as well

Chat discussion happening during this time:

Haly Laasme: suggests outreach to organizations similar to NEUAC/trades but for communications, no cable bill will get paid if electricity is disconnected. Suggests communications orgs could help with Republican support.

Kathryn Maddux: which types of utilities are providing data, will it be publicly available?

Brian Caudill: NEUAC survey is focused on AGA/EI member utilities. Data will be aggregated and confidential as part of the agreement for participation.

Dave Rinebolt: in WV, LIHEAP applications are being sent to people who sign up for food stamps

Haly Laasme: only states that administer SNAP and LIHEAP from the same office can do that, in states where LIHEAP, SNAP, and TANF are administered in different offices, it’s not easy to do

Dave Rinebolt: that’s why we haven’t been able to do this in Ohio. Work with food banks instead – many of Dave’s member agencies have food pantries and hand out LIHEAP applications with boxes of food.

Haly Laasme: I think LIHEAP offices would like to see disconnections start before fall so that their offices are not flooded in October

Kim Campbell: in TX agencies are seeing a 50% decrease in requests for assistance compared to 2019. Worried about flood of people when disconnections resume.

Haly Laasme: Not getting disconnected has caused clients who would have otherwise received crisis benefits this summer to not apply for help. It is putting them even more behind on their electric bill. Suggests outreach to other companies who need energy to provide their services, like internet service providers, appliance retailers. Everybody is designing products and services that require electricity but nobody wants to contribute towards paying for electricity.

Fundraising/Communications: Katrina Metzler

- Virtual options for sponsorship benefits changed from in-person conference
- Refunding exhibitors
- Membership will be more important for NEUAC’s bottom line going forward

Membership: Enrique Hernandez

- 203 members as of today, goal is 220
- Importance of marketing discount rate at upcoming conference

In chat, Haly Laasme: consider organizations pursuing other social determinants of health because energy is one of the sectors specifically pointed out by WHO to be considered

Executive Director Report: Katrina Metzler

- Artisha Naidu ended internship in May

- Staff is working from home indefinitely
- Advocacy software – investigating, weighing options on investing in this type of product when finances aren't looking good
- Lawyer on retainer

Edward Gingold points out that the lawyer who reviews our new proposed bylaws should be conversant with MO state laws as we are a MO registered organization

John Rich – previous bylaws were reviewed by Benton Law Firm in Kansas City, MO. But he knows the particular lawyer is no longer with the group.

- San Diego planning meeting and board retreat/meeting are canceled in person, will be held virtually
- Email went out asking to sign up for committees, please indicate committee interest
- Site Selection will need to reconvene this year
- Virtual fly-in is moving smoothly
- Various media Katrina has participated in

Steve – how to get Katrina to participate virtually in more events to promote membership? Board members help to notify NEUAC when state conferences are happening. Short video of Katrina plugging membership in NEUAC.

Celia – will invite Katrina to a CA meeting

- Water affordability policy update - \$1.5b in HEROES Act for water assistance. Does not separate funding from HHS. Working with partners to draft better language
- Steve – county office in FL is encountering a problem because they can't pay themselves with CARES Act money
- John Godfrey – some utilities have worked around this issue by partnering with a nonprofit, issuing debit cards to customers with restricted use, or some have said they can credit customers with the CARES Act funds. Offered to send white paper detailing various approaches APPA has seen
- Britton Gabel – petitioned our board, awarded \$4m today for utility, waste water, partnered with DEF to administer. No pushback from local government. Brought growing arrearage data to the table, helped make the argument
- John Godfrey, states and local gov't are struggling to figure out how to spend their own COVID dollars, utility assistance could be a way to spend
- NEUAC has been accepted into the CFC for the next year

Last minute housekeeping items

Motion to accept slate of officers for 2020-2021 governance board: Steve Whitworth, second Chere Coleman, all in favor, none opposed, none abstained.

Motion to accept Kelly Caplan for Parliamentarian for this year: Rhonda Harper, second Chere Coleman, all in favor, none opposed, Kelly Caplan abstained.

Saunteel Jenkins final remarks, highlighting recent movement for social justice, emphasizing the violence that black men in particular experience in this country. True social equity efforts have to involve economic and environmental justice. Very important for an organization like NEUAC because we're working on behalf of these vulnerable families every day. Glad we started the conversation in February with Shirley Stancato. Saunteel is proud to be a member of NEUAC and work with this board. Wants everyone to continue the conversation in a way that will help move NEUAC forward and move families in this country forward.

Kelly offered to share resources with us to share with the board to facilitate future discussions. Erica/Katrina will share with the board and add to our resources page.

In the chat, several people thanked Saunteel for her final comments. Mary Wilkins, Alison Donovan, Jess Jubran, Gerri Drummond, Mike Bradford.

Motion to adjourn: 3:18pm. Enrique Hernandez, second by Kathy Kerr, all in favor, none opposed, none abstained.

Recorded by Erica Lambert.