

NEUAC Board of Directors Meeting Minutes – Winter 2021

Virtual – Zoom Meeting

December 1, 2021 at 1:00 PM

1. Call to Order/Welcome

- Katrina Metzler established Quorum to start meeting. Rhonda Harper called the meeting to order at 1:05 PM
- **Attendees:** Katrina Metzler, Bridget Doran, Erin Mao, Denise Adamucci, Zoe Ahlstrom, Silvia Aldana, Tonya Anderson, Celia Andrade, Anne Armstrong, Edith Baltierrez, Elizabeth Berube, Mike Bradford, Allison Bury-Poe, Kim Campbell, Kelly Caplan, David Carroll, Jackie Castellon, Brian Caudill, Chere Coleman, David Conn, Maria Delaplain, Joe Diamond, Alison Donovan, Ariel Drehobl, Gerri Drummond, Kenley Farmer, Tiffany Gilstrap, Edward Gingold, John Godfrey, Keelie Gustin, Rhonda Harper, Enrique Hernandez, Saunteel Jenkins, Tanya Jones, Billie Kaumaya, Kathleen Kerr, Faye Kinner, Theresa Kullen, Haly Laasme, Erica Lambert, Nancy Loehr, Tammy Maynor, Tim O’Dea, Tanasia Poke, Chad Quinn, Frank RApley, John Rich, Kim Rikalo, John Sarver, Sarah Schaffer, Andrea Schroer, Lorena Shah, Angie sterner, Michael Sullivan, Bonnie Temme, Olivia Wein, Steve Whitworth, Emily Wong
- Welcome to Erin Mao!
 - New NEUAC Operations Director

2. Approve Minutes from Last Meeting (Rhonda Harper)

- Rhonda – Need a motion to accept minutes from October 20, 2021 meeting, with the following corrections:
 - Steve Whitworth – correction – add last name on motion from October 20, 2021 meeting
 - 1st: Nancy Loehner
 - 2nd: Enrique Hernandez
 - Motion passes
- Rhonda – Clarification on virtual vote procedure – utilize “emotion emoji” in Zoom application or say “yay” – specified abstentions should be sent in the chat or verbalized after the vote
- Katrina – Additional clarification on vote procedure – considered “approved” unless you put “nay” or “abstain” in the chat

3. Committee Reports

- **Finance Committee/Financial Report (John Rich)**
 - PowerPoint Review – see meeting documents on Insider Page
 - 93% assets in cash; non-cash assets of \$67,000.
 - Cash presently held in 4 accounts at 2 institutions – E. Mao will be investigating how we hold these funds/how to reorganize.

- NEUAC liabilities have increased from last year – due to credit card expenses, deferred vacation, credit card fees – normal to get us transparent on our liabilities (minimal of our overall cash amount – 2.4%)
 - Annual audit completed, IRS form 990 completed, staff retirement fund analysis completed
 - Coming Year Goals:
 - Completed ICS account (Insured Cash Sweep)
 - Work on communication of financial status to the Board
 - Work on asset retention procedure – Finance Committee
- Rhonda – Need a motion to approve the financial report present by John Rich
 - 1st: Steve Whitworth
 - 2nd: Chere Coleman
 - Motion passes
- **Conference Committee (Rhonda Harper & Katrina Metzler)**
 - Conference team meeting regularly – sent out Save the Date
 - Call for Presentations closes Friday, December 3
 - Theme: “Rising with Resiliency” – draft schedule in board packet
 - Enough room in schedule for pre-conference: Racial Healing Circles, Water Affordability Summit, LIHEAP Summit (proposed ideas)
 - Plenary sessions proposed – “Dream Team for Energy Equity” (Shalanda Baker, Tony Reames, Chandra Farley); Ramsey Greene, Chief Resiliency Officer, New Orleans, HHS Dialogue with the Feds, Jennifer Granholm, Secretary of Energy, more to come
 - On track for the conference preparations at this point
 - Open discussion regarding COVID-19 variants and terms of contract with hotel – contract negotiated pre-pandemic (no COVID language)
 - Will use *force majeure* if needed – if impossible or impracticable to hold the event, can negotiate to get out of the contract
 - Hotels often challenge us here – usually cannot enforce this clause until 60 days (or so) prior to scheduled start of conference
 - Revisit after winter – registration will not open until April 2022
- **Membership/Fundraising (Steve Whitworth)**
 - Campaign kicked off October 1, 2021
 - 2022 Goal: 230 members
 - 72 members have renewed or joined, at this time (31 nonprofits, 12 gov, 12 utilities, 3 trades, 3 tribes, 2 munis, 1 corporation, 6 unclassified)
 - 2021: 29 new members
 - Membership count is slightly ahead of 2020
 - Fundraising goal of 5% increase in revenue
 - Currently at \$90,000 of a \$430,219 goal (slightly behind this time in 2020 – behind on getting out renew reminders, per Katrina)
 - Focus on active fundraising methods – will be conducting outreach
 - Board member challenge – get the word out and pick up new members, follow up with members that have yet to renew
 - Open discussion on how to involve the conference in driving membership

- (ex) Conference Members -Only Reception; on-stage advocacy by the Membership/Fundraising team; submit additional ideas to Katrina
- **Public Policy & Advocacy (Brian Caudill & Allison Bury-Poe)**
 - Policy Update
 - LIHEAP \$3.75b after 2021 appropriated funds; throughout year received another \$4.5b via the CARES Act -- \$8.25b total (most in the history of the program)
 - About \$55m in emergency rental and mortgage assistance (Treasury Department) out of which utility assistance could also be paid – continue to be available for next few years
 - FY 2022: Expect Continuing Resolutions (CR) – same funding method of 2021
 - No appropriations bill interest in Congress, at this time
 - Same budget number as last year currently operating for this year – funds went out to states around November 1
 - House moved legislation for continued incremental increase (\$150m increase or so) we’ve been receiving for last five or six years
 - Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill: supplemental \$500m for LIHEAP
 - Will be spread out at \$100m/year for the next five years; likely HHS will do another calculation this year as money has become available after initial release of funds; funds are not yet distributed
 - This is the only item we are sure of, funding wise – much uncertainty surrounding appropriations package potential
 - Extra Mile Award (to member of Congress that is a LIHEAP ally)– LIHEAP Action Day
 - Not yet decided, but in process; suggest nominees to PP&A committee or email/message Brian or Katrina
 - Suggested in chat: Chris Coon (DE) – Haly Laasme
 - Vote will be made on recipient by January
 - Last year’s award went to Senator John Hoeven (ND)
 - LIHEAP Action Day: February 23, 2022
 - Training week before; virtual event (COVID-19 and security concerns on the Hill preventing an efficient in-person event)
 - Registration opening sometime this month (December)
 - All Parties Letter will be released simultaneously – goal is 1,000 signatures (slightly short in 2020)
 - Annual letter laying out support for LIHEAP and makes initial pitch for how we hope it will be funded in the next year
 - Goal – get as many signatures as possible to show support (upwards of 2000 signatures on the letter in the past)
 - Any entity dealing with home energy assistance, energy poverty is welcome to sign, regardless of whether they are a NEUAC member organization
 - Open Discussion: ERA Funds
 - ERA 1 extended to 2022
 - ERA 2 (coming out of America Rescue Plan) extended through 2025
 - Some states seeing reauthorized funding redistributions
 - How to get funds out to the customer quickly – open discussion offered offline

- White House requesting collaboration to make this happen:
 - <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/11/18/fact-sheet-biden-administration-deploys-american-rescue-plan-funds-to-protect-americans-from-rising-home-heating-costs-calls-on-utility-companies-to-prevent-shut-offs-this-winter/>
 - Discussed potential conference presentation ideas on creative outreach
 - Anne Armstrong, Nancy Loehr, Gerri Drummond, Steve Whitworth, Kim Rikalo – expressed interests as potential panel participants
- **Site Selection Committee (Chere Coleman)**
 - New Orleans 2022
 - Pre-conference: 06.27.2022
 - Conference: 06.28.2022
 - Sheraton New Orleans, \$189/night
 - San Diego 2023
 - Planning Meeting: 09.27.2022
 - Conference: 06.13-06.15.2023
 - Sheraton San Diego Hotel and Marina, \$217/night
 - Chicago 2024
 - Planning Meeting: TBA
 - Conference: 05.22-05.24.2024
 - Sheraton Grand Hotel, \$195/night
 - 2025 – Tabled for now
 - Looking at FL locations
 - Next several years – excellent locations with great rates
 - Katrina – NEUAC Email Signature forthcoming for 2022 annual conference
 - Share and get the word out!
 - Open Discussion: Eversource is a member – but not a board member – perhaps nominate them for next board cycle?
- **Executive Committee (Rhonda Harper)**
 - Advocacy Associates Contract – referred to organization by Brian Caudill (AGA)
 - Additional \$20,700 costs, as discussed in last meeting, but essential for us to have them to put on a virtual LIHEAP Action Day event
 - Gerri Drummond: Asked TECO to donate an extra \$1000 toward costs – not yet received check
 - Proposal for each utility to provide an additional \$1000 to offset costs
 - Faye Kinner: Atmos Energy pledge \$1500
 - Bridget will send invoices to entities pledging after meeting
 - Silvia Aldana: PG&E pledges to offset costs (no amount provided)
 - Kim Campbell: TXU pledges \$1500
 - Several entities volunteered to offset costs in last board meeting – please email Katrina with pledge amounts
 - Will be some logistical work with Advocacy Associates and utilities advocates that are typically in DC and set up their own appointments

- Bridget and Katrina have met to discuss and believe registration tool will capture this information
- Registration tool will ask you to tell NEUAC which meetings you'd like to attend OR allow NEUAC to schedule your meetings
 - Open discussion on how lobbyist role in scheduling appointments changes
- Registration should launch sometime next week
- Executive Committee approved for Katrina to sign contact with Advocacy Associates – need a vote to ratify Executive Committee's decision to
 - 1st: Saunteel Jenkins
 - 2nd: Enrique Hernandez
 - Motion Passes
- LIHEAP.org – Ongoing Discussion—What should it be?
 - Katrina, Bridget, Rhonda met with Michael Bracy to pitch purchase of LIHEAP.org from him – feel it is more appropriate for NEAUC to own it
 - History: Organization “Campaign for LIHEAP” operated by a K-St. firm Bracy works with – he was in charge with LIHEAP
 - Firm worked with utilities to advocate for LIHEAP
 - Role diminished over time – sunset campaign for LIHEAP in 2019
 - Michael and team retain rights to liheap.org – “stranded asset” – not currently maintained
 - Michael seeking a way to make website relevant; approached NEUAC and other national partners about coming together for a mutual agreement to maintain the website
 - Issue: No resources (staff, funding) to maintain website to the level it needs to be; we do not own the asset – would be developing asset for another entity
 - Executive Committee would like to see ownership and take credit for developing the asset, should we get involved
 - Status: Michael asked for time to think about it; Executive Committee will revisit the issue
 - Also want to discuss not duplicating what is available at LIHEAP Clearinghouse (recently relaunched); National Energy Assistance Referral Hotline also being updated to send to local offices within the next month
 - Open discussion of using benefits.gov to learn about LIHEAP – only works for states with threshold at 150% of poverty (not above nor below); how do we make new information relevant for each state?

4. Executive Director's Report (Katrina Metzler)

- Welcome to Erin Mao – getting oriented to take on tasks
- Re-presentation of 2022 Budget Overview
 - Finance Committee asked for re-presentation after incorporating retirement and health insurance, as well as Advocacy Associates pledges
 - With new incorporated costs, still about \$18,512 in the hole

- Treasurer encouraged Katrina not to go make cuts in other areas; we may need to dip into reserves to get into this year; have not incorporated pledges made for Advocacy Associates assistance at this meeting
 - Budget includes meeting fundraising goal of 5% for 2022 – even with meeting that goal, we will still be in the negative
 - Revenue from pledges is booked in the year NEAUC receives the pledge
 - This budget reflects an update in payroll tax line item – only includes portion of FICA NEAUC pays instead of all taxes coming out of NEAUC paychecks – creates a more transparent budget that demonstrates clearer salaries for NEAUC staff; numbers are the same at end of line item, but reorganized for increased transparency
 - Reminder: The budget is a projection of what NEAUC intends to do/raise in FY 2022
 - Rhonda called for a motion to approve the revised budget, with the incorporation of retirement, healthcare, and Advocacy Associates costs
 - 1st: Nancy Loehr
 - 2nd: Chere Coleman
 - Motion passes
- Energy Affordability Policy Discussions
 - Emphasis on providing cooling assistance; PP&A discussing \$5.1b request for LIHEAP Action Day to provide resources for this endeavor
 - Heavy media coverage of energy affordability—particularly projected increases and costs of heating
 - CNN article – quoting Katrina and Mark (NEADA)
 - Washington Post – Massachusetts and Arizona – weather and affordability issues
 - NEADA’s website – links to media coverage
 - Collaboration with National Consumer Law Center (NCLC) regarding medial protections
 - ICU physician working on project – what seeing in field regarding energy affordability needs in the emergency room/ICU
 - Paper and RFP for NEAUC conference forthcoming with additional information on this project
 - Link to report: <https://www.nclc.org/issues/energy-utilities-a-communications/protecting-seriously-ill-consumers-from-utility-disconnections.html>
- Presentations
 - NARUC: National Association for Regulatory Utility Commissioners– Louisville
 - Customer Assistance Panel
 - Gas Subcommittee Panel
 - South Carolina Community Action Conference
 - Plenary Speaker
 - Learning about conducting an in-person conference post-COVID
 - Weatherize Ohio
 - Celebration of Dave Rinebolt
 - Session on LIHEAP
- Annual Report
 - Previously accumulated information in several places – Sponsorship form, social media, etc.
 - 2021 – Compiling into an Annual Report, in writing – in board packet

- Will send out printed copies of the final version to NEAUC Board Members – governing, advisory, and ex-officio
- NEADA Project
 - Collaborate with National Application Day for LIHEAP – likely Q1 2022
 - Beginning stages of discussion; board members asked to support and promote at local level
 - (ex) Host Super Saturday at local levels?

5. Other Business (Rhonda Harper)

- None

6. Adjournment (Rhonda Harper)

- Rhonda called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.
 - 1st: Enrique Hernandez
 - 2nd: Chere Coleman
 - Motion Passes
- Meeting adjourned at 3:38 PM.