

HEAP Block Grant Advisory Council Meeting

Thursday, February 1, 2024

A meeting of the Block Grant Advisory Council was held via WebEx on Thursday, February 1, 2024. The meeting began at 1:00 pm.

Attendees

Andrew Bryk, Director, HEAP & LIHWAP, OTDA

Andy Stone, Executive Director, NYS Weatherization Directors Association

Emily Urban, NYS OTDA HEAP

Kenneth Gossel, National Fuel Gas

Paul Brady, Executive Director, New York Public Welfare Association

Kira Pospesel, Commissioner, Greene County Social Services

Shiran Ybanez, New York City HEAP

Joe Handford, Acting BGAC secretary

Discussion

Joe Handford: Good afternoon, I'm Joe, I'll be filling in for Vivvy today running the meeting. Welcome to the first quarter Block Grant meeting for 2024. One quick thing is there is an adjustment to the agenda, where it says updates on the 2024 to 25 program that should be 23/24 and a little lower where it says the 2023/24 HEAP State Plan, that's going to be the 24/25 HEAP State Plan. Does everybody from the Block Grant want to introduce themselves?

Ken Gossel: That would be great, Ken Gossel, National Fuel Gas.

Andy Stone: Andy Stone, NYSWADA.

Kira Pospesel: This is Kira Pospesel, Commissioner of Greene County DSS.

Andrew Bryk: Andrew Bryk, New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance Home Energy Assistance Program.

Emily Urban: Emily Urban, New York State Office of Temporary Disability Assistance Home Energy Assistance Program.

Shiran Ybanez: Shiran Ybanez, New York City HEAP.

Ken Gossel: Terrific, well, let me jump in, thank you Jeffrey for leading. This is Ken Gossel. Really appreciate everybody joining today, and those joining online. I wanted to first ask if everybody had an opportunity to review the meeting minutes from November 2nd, that Vivvy had provided, and if so, would you let me know if you had any proposed changes to those minutes?

Kira Pospesel: Ken, this is Kira, and I'm just going to jump in before Paul Brady jumps in, but he was definitely at that meeting, and his name is missing from the attendees. The two of us were sitting next to each other in one room, so that's why I know he was definitely there.

Ken Gossel: We will have him added to the minutes please. Jeffrey, if you could make a note of that.

Joe Handford: Yes, will do.

Ken Gossel: I did not have any changes, Paul or anybody else?

Kira Pospesel: If there are no changes, would you like me to offer you a motion to approve them?

Ken Gossel: Accepted, may I have a second please?

Andy Stone: I'll second, Ken.

Ken Gossel: Thank you. All in favor?

All: Aye.

Ken Gossel: Any opposed? Thank you, there being none, meeting minutes are passed. We will jump into the next item on the agenda then, the updates to the 2023/2024 program, Andrew is that yours to take away?

Andrew Bryk: Emily, take it away.

Emily Urban: That is me. Joe, you're changing the screen from the agenda.

Ken Gossel: Thank you, Emily, I didn't see you on there, sorry.

Emily Urban: No, problem.

Ken Gossel: Sorry to interrupt, thank you for sending out the e-mail with the information, that's very helpful.

Emily Urban: Great, good afternoon, everybody. So, yeah, I am going to provide some updates on the funding, the first item on the agenda. So, our current 2023/2024 Nation Wide LIHEAP

funding is still at \$3.7 billion. This is what I reported at the last Block Grant. We are funded under the continuing Appropriation Act of 2024, other Extension Act signed on September 30th, 2024. As of today, 90% of that has been released which is \$3.6 billion, excuse me \$100 million has been released under the infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, so again \$3.7 billion nationwide. New York State has received about 10% of those funds, so, \$360 million. Again, this is the same number I reported at the last meeting in November, and we have not received that remaining 10% of funds as of yet. So, that nationwide LIHEAP appropriation is more than \$2 billion less than last year, so last year it was \$6.1 billion, so this is affecting all states including New York. Some states have not been able to serve the same number of households as they have in previous years, they've had to shut down their programs earlier, other states have offered smaller benefits, that's what New York had to do. So, the whole country is adjusting to this smaller number that we are funded at this year for LIHEAP. Prices are still very high, so there has been a call to Congress to fund LIHEAP back at the \$6.1 billion level as last year. No word on that yet, but we have put the ask out, New York State is working with the other state LIHEAP grantees to justify that to let Congress know that there is a need that the states are suffering, the low-income households are suffering as a result of the lower LIHEAP funding. So, nothing right now to report on that, but we are closely watching the news, and always pushing for that higher number. But as of right now, \$360 million, we do anticipate to at least get the remaining 10% of that, so we hope to land about \$390 million if we don't receive any other funding. So, with that, the plan that we had put forward for this year was to operate regular, emergency, heating equipment repair replacement, clean and tune, and cooling, I provided the dates last time, but I will just provide and update with where we are with each of those benefits. The regular benefit component opened up on November 1st, 2023, right now we are 1.38 million benefits and \$192 million in expenditures. That does not include pending applications. To compare this to last year, last year we were at 1.34 million benefits, so pretty much the same amount of benefits as we were last year, so really on track to servicing the amount of households, but because we had to reduce our regular benefit amounts, those expenditures are quite a bit lower, so this time last year we were at \$245 million in regular expenditures, and again, this year is \$192 million. So, that is a direct result of having to lower those regular benefit amounts which were increased last year with the supplemental funding.

Regular is on track or scheduled rather to close on March 15th, 2024. We will evaluate whether we have funds to extend that program any later than March 15th and believe we should have the funds to run through at least March 15th, but if anything changes, that will be announced on OTDA's website if we have to close any sooner or if that program is extended or if it closes right on time on March 15th.

The emergency component opened up on January 2nd this year, so a few weeks ago, and right now it's only been operating a couple of weeks but we are at 14,500 benefits, and \$9 million in expenditures compared to last year we were about 18.8 thousand benefits, and \$13 million in expenditures. So, kind of hard to make a direct year to year comparison right now because it's only been a few weeks, but we are down a little bit from where we were last year. We do only have the one emergency planned for this year as we always do each year, and this is the time of year we start evaluating whether there is a need for a second emergency benefit, and whether funding exists or is available for a second emergency benefit. So, right now the numbers are kind of on par with where we were last year. Is there any kind of flavor out in the

districts of whether there is a need for this? Have you received calls, Commissioner or Shiran, any news in Greene or New York City for second emergency?

Shiran Ybanez: There is already a lot of people who are waiting for second emergency, especially the oil because it's pretty cold this time. So, oil is really like the household consumes a lot of oil at this time.

Emily Urban: That's good to know, thanks Shiran.

Shiran Ybanez: You're welcome.

Kira Pospesel: Yeah, I mean, the same thing in Greene. The price of oil is up but the other thing we've seen is the rent prices are so much higher too, so it's hit them very differently.

Emily Urban: Okay. Alright, so that's really good to know. It's always good to hear from the districts to hear what you are hearing, what the need is, if people are running out of those first emergency benefits right now, so we will evaluate whether we can operate that second emergency. Once we know if and when we will be operating that, we will announce that publicly on our website and to the local districts, but more to come on that, but this is good to have the input, so thank you.

Heating Equipment Repair Replacement and Clean and Tune, I'll cover those together. Those are both operating year-round, so the 2024 program opened up on October 2nd, 2023, for both Heating Equipment Repair Replacement and Clean and Tune. Repair replacement, we are at about 1,000 benefits and \$3 million in expenditures compared to last year 875 benefits and \$2.6 million in expenditures. So, approximately the same, a little bit up over last year. We did increase the resource amount, excuse me, the resource amount for emergency and for the equipment repair replacement, so households are able to have up to \$10,000 in liquid resources and still qualify for Heating Equipment Repair Replacement, last year that was, Andrew, I don't have it in front of me, I believe it was \$2,500 and \$3,750...

Shiran Ybanez: It was \$3,000 for HERR.

Emily Urban: \$3,000 thank you, Shiran. You're always looking out for me, so \$3,000 last year \$10,000 this year so that could be the reason why we have more repair replacements going on this year and that is just to align with the increased resource limit for temporary assistance.

Clean and Tune, we are at about 2,000 benefits and \$650,000 in expenditures as opposed to 1,700 benefits last year and half a million in expenditures at this time last year. So, also up on Clean and Tunes this year. We always like to hear it. We did spend the full \$2 million on Clean and Tune last year and we hope to do the same again this year. Really pushing that as always.

Cooling will open up in a couple of months on April 15th, 2024, which is about 2 weeks earlier than we opened last year. That is just to allow households additional time to apply and to get their cooling equipment installed before that hot weather hits. So, we will have a little bit more information on that at our next meeting in May. Hopefully, we will have good news by then on how that's going.

Andy Stone: Emily, I have a quick question. Is the medical note going to be required for cooling this year. I know you've been kind of on kind of off again with that.

Emily Urban: It is, so we do require the medical condition again this year, same as last year. So, the household will have to have someone in the house that has a medical condition that is made worse by heat. If the household has someone aged 60 or older, or under age 6, that household will meet the medical requirement without a separate medical need. So, their age is considered that medical need for an air conditioner, so they will not have to provide separate documentation. If the household doesn't have somebody by age and they do require proof of their medical condition, they do have to send that to the local districts when they apply. They have 10 days to provide that. If in that 10 days they're having trouble getting the medical documentation, they do have the option to call the district and attest to their hardship in obtaining that medical documentation, and they can provide a verbal attestation to the medical condition of the household. So, there is still that medical need, but we try to make it as accessible as possible for households to both qualify and apply for that benefit.

Any other questions on how the benefits are going this year? Okay. Not a whole lot else other to report. We have HEAP monitoring starting in about 2 weeks, we'll be going out to 10 districts to do on-site monitoring of their HEAP program. We did 10 districts last year, 10 again this year, that will be the biggest thing going on in the coming weeks. Other than that, I guess we'll move onto the next item on the agenda, if that's okay with everybody?

Ken Gossel: Great.

Emily Urban: And that is the State Plan, the 2024/2025 State Plan Needs Assessment. So, we are starting to plan next years program for 2024/2025 which will begin as always with the needs assessment comment period. Historically, this is always run in early spring so around March/April, and we will be doing the needs assessment again from about March 1st to April 15th, and historically, we have held the public hearings in July or August once that draft plan is approved and posted to OTDA's website. But there have been a lot of comments over the past couple of years about when we hold the public hearings. The comments that we've received is there isn't enough time with the draft plan to prepare testimony for those public hearings, and there isn't enough notice to attempt the public hearings. So, we've heard that. The change that we're going to make is we are going to hold the public hearings this year in April, so the needs assessment comment period will conclude with the public hearings. They will be held via WebEx again. Those have been held via WebEx since 2020 due to COVID, obviously but once we switch those over to the virtual public hearings, we found they were more accessible for everybody to attempt and provide testimony, so we will be continuing that. So, how we envision this working is, obviously we will not have the draft plan for next year available for the public hearings, so we will be holding the public hearings based on the current state plan. Because, as you know, year to year, the state plan doesn't change all that much in essence of how we are running the program. So, when we have the public hearings, it will be reviewing the current state plan for 2023/24 and the testimony provided will be the changes that you wish to see for the draft state plan before we draft it. So, this way, any testimony provided will be able to consider those comments when making changes to the draft plan. Any questions on that? I know it's very different from how we have done this in the past, are there any thoughts on that?

Kira Pospesel: Emily, this is Kira. Are you guys going to advertise that any differently, or are you going to get out the word quicker like in the next month or so, or how are you going to prepare? Because before basically it would be dropped days before, and I think that was some of the frustration that people only had a couple of days to make their response.

Emily Urban: Yes. So, what we plan to do is we plan to announce the needs assessment comment period at the same time as we announce the public hearings. So, we hope to get the needs assessment comment period all of that correspondence sent out around March 1st, and we will hold the public hearings in mid-April, so that should be about 6 weeks if everything goes as planned. So, with that needs assessment, we will be able to say we're accepting comments on the development of the state plan. You can submit your comments in writing, so people will have the option to submit comments in writing to OTDA and/or they can provide testimony at the public hearings which will be held in mid-April. So, all of the same correspondence will be going out. We will be sending letters to the BGAC, the Interagency Taskforce, we will be advertising in the newspaper, posting online, we will send letters to all of the District Commissioners, and to the New York State Legislative leader. So, all of the people that we notify for the needs assessment and the state plan and the public hearings, but they will all be done at the same time this year around March 1st. Hopefully, that makes sense.

Kira Pospesel: Yeah, it does and I'm hoping we're going to get lots more input. So, I guess we have to wait and see.

Emily Urban: I hope so too, yeah, I hope so. So, we've always accepted comments during the needs assessment comment period, and then we always considered those while developing the state plan. So, it's just one more way that people can provide input and it will be part of the hearing as opposed to just a comment on the needs assessment. So, we will still be considering all comments received during needs assessment the same way as we always have, and with all of those comments received at the public hearings and during needs assessment will be used while we develop the state plan in the spring and summer.

The other part of that is the model plan template that the states use to do their LIHEAP state plan, the template is scheduled to be changing this year. So, HHS has put out a federal register notice to announce these changes to the template, and right now they are accepting comments on that, and unfortunately, we don't have a copy of this draft template yet, but what we've read and what we've been told is that the new template will be more accessible. So, all the lines and the boxes those will be gone, is what we've heard anyway, the lines and boxes will be gone so it will be easier to read, easier to edit, make changes to that, and the other changes will be clarifying the questions that are currently there. There is some outdated language and confusing language in the current template, so that will be updated for clarification, and then there will be some new questions added to clarify additional information that they're looking for and to support other answers that grantees are putting into their state plan. So, all of that is pretty clearly outlined in the federal register notice. It is available publicly, we can send out that link after the meeting today and we will be including all of that information when we announce the needs assessment and the public hearing information, so we will make sure everybody is aware that we're accepting comments on both the current state plan and our potential answers to these new questions that have been proposed to be added to the state plan. Any questions on that or thoughts? Okay.

So, we will not be holding public hearings in the summer as we had previously done but we expect to post the draft plan once that is approved for public comment but not with a public hearing. Those will occur in the spring this year. And that's all I have for the needs assessment. Are there any questions or input on that? Okay, so we will be sending that out, to expect that in the next month or so. And this is not on the agenda, but I think Andrew was going to talk about some data sharing. Andrew if you're ready.

Andrew Bryk: Lucky, me, hi, everyone. Yeah, there's a lot of legislative bills that have gone through. One of the ones that we'd like to speak to was the Senate bill 4548 and the accompanying Assembly bill 4876. Those two bills have to do with data sharing of Temporary Assistance and HEAP recipients, and that data sharing is for the enrollment of additional households into the utility administered energy assistance programs that all of the public service commission regulated utilities administer in the state. So, that was passed in the last legislative session, and there is a lot of activity will be starting to support that, and the exchange of data between OTDA and the utilities to be able to accomplish that with the goal of enrolling more people, more households into the emergency efficient or energy affordability programs to reduce their energy burdens. There is also another piece of legislation that is accompanying this where we're looking to try to bring household energy burden down to 6% to align with the CLPPA that was passed years ago. So, there's a lot of energy and momentum in this state to try to share data, share information in an effort to reduce the energy burden of households through their utility programs. That will happen within this year. There was a real tight 1-year timeframe for the establishment of that, so there will be new vendor agreements that will be going out with all of the public service commission regulated utilities to facility this sharing of data, the establishment of secured data transfers, and the establishment of the data that will be exchanged. So, there's a lot of work that our agency and the utilities will be undertaking within the next 360 days. I just wanted to give everyone a heads up.

Kira Pospesel: Andrew can I ask you, are the local districts doing any additional work for you to accomplish this task?

Andrew Bryk: We're trying not to do that, at least to the Upstate districts where OTDA will take over that task. In the legislation it did allow for the Commissioner of OTDA to delegate that task to any local district. At this point, I think the only local district that might be in consideration is New York City, as New York City already had a data match established with Con Edison, Consolidated Edison, National Grid, Brooklyn Union Gas and is it LIPA, sorry, never mind, I'll mess it up, so, all the downstate utilities. So, they already have those matches established, so Commissioner, we hear ya. We're trying not to put anymore work on the counties and trying to take that over agency to agency.

Kira Pospesel: Okay, so I'm going to tell my Upstate Commissioners there's no additional work anticipated, so that's the way that happens, so, okay, thank you.

Andrew Bryk: Yeah, and I know Paul is on the phone too, so I've gotta make sure what I'm saying. Hi Paul, that was a joke. So, yeah, there's a lot of work going on in this space. There was also another bill that did not pass to establish an emergency program, we already have an emergency program. There is also legislation right now that's being commented on about establishing an autopay for automatic enrollment into HEAP for TA and SNAP recipients. So,

we will be providing comment that function is already taking place at OTDA. Lots of ways to improve it. Go ahead.

Paul Brady: ...because I saw that I saw that Assembly bill and my understanding is that there's a corresponding Senate bill, and when I read through it, I couldn't understand how it was different than the current autopay. Is there something I'm missing?

Andrew Bryk: No, not at all. You know my face, it's a straight face you're seeing it, so no, I think there was good intention and I believe that we will alleviate some of the consternation about this informing them and making people educated about the program and what we do at OTDA. I know last year there was testimony in front of the legislature that echoed the same sentiment that in some parts of this state, people are able to automatically receive HEAP and in other parts of the state, they have to apply. That is a real misconception, and so we're trying to do our best to make sure everyone knows, we run an autopay for all households in receipt of ongoing SNAP and TA on the run date, if they're in receipt, we authorize a benefit to them. The only households that have to reapply are new households applying, and households that is going to receive the benefit in the prior year that are not in receipt of Temporary Assistance or SNAP, we send out over 100,000 applications and do early outreach to everyone who received that benefit of HEAP only in the prior year. So, we're trying to make sure that everyone is aware of what we do. Are there gaps? I'm sure there are people that we're not reaching, but that's why we all, you know, this is where I do look to the local districts. We ask the local districts set up your certification network, make sure you're serving your population. Make sure you're looking at your disadvantaged communities or areas where you have high area need, and make sure that we're doing outreach into those areas to make sure, and I use those bad terms, shake the bushes, make sure that we're making sure that people are aware that they're aware of the program. And how do we expand access to the program? Especially this year. I think Emily articulated it really well, federally the money is less, huge, huge difference in money. We know there is a great CNN article that NEADA just put out and it really articulated about how utility arrears, we did such a great job during the pandemic, and we tried to pull them down, they are at historic levels across the nation right now. With reduced funding, there are states, there are areas that aren't able to serve all of the population that are potentially eligible for the program. Fortunately, in New York, we do first come first serve, and we try to make sure that the funds go out in that fashion. And fortunately, we've been able to serve all of the households or at least the same number of households on an ongoing basis, but there are many states, many territories and tribes that weren't able to do that this year. And without that additional funding release from Congress, there are states that may not be able to get out through the cold weather period. There was a call from NEADA last week out to all states, tell me about what your application rate is, what is your outlay of funds, what do you have left? There is a big push and a push to Congress. Emily said it earlier, they are trying to get on the hill to make sure that we have a new champion, that there are champions in our elected officials that continue to support this program, but they're trying to solidify that because as we all know, Congress right now it's broken. I don't want to say broken but we have strong positions either way. But there was agreement that the pandemic supports that were supported for the last 3 years, they were not included in this year's continuing resolution. So, it's a tough position for states to be in. I hope, I know that my utilities they advocate there is a lot of toe holds to be able to continue making the argument that there is an unmet need, and the demand for energy just continues to go up exponentially, and so as long as we're all speaking the same voices, and we have those

champions in Congress, there is hope, unfortunately, this year, I think we all got really comfortable with the higher funding level that we've seen over the last 3 years which anyone who is into the program in this space, you know it's not about throwing money at a problem, this money solves our problems. And there's still so much more need to be had. So, I will get off my soapbox, cause you guys all know I'm passionate about this. So, there's a lot of work going on, how can we collaborate, how can we maximize leverage the funds that we have whether that be state, federal, or rate payor dollars to be able to minimize to reduce the energy burden of our most neediest households in the State. So, I just thank you all for all the work that you guys do, and with that, if you have any questions for me, I'm open to any questions you have, otherwise I will throw it back out for open conversations and back to Emily.

Ken Gossel: Andrew, I would just say thank you, that's very informative, and we look forward to working with you, with the commission on establishing great protocols for identifying those customers as always, the best data match and a clean process is going to benefit your clients and our customers the most. So, sort of to the extent that there is any cleanup or to the extent that we should consider some sort of unique identifying or something, or find ways to, because customers might have different addresses, different names, could be the same client as our customer, but it might not be readily apparent. Of course, since we have so much of the HEAP data, that's a very good way to track those customers. But for new that may be eligible through some of these other programs for EAP participation, the best data will help you to communicate which clients are eligible. So, thank you and I look forward to working with you guys.

Andrew Bryk: Ken, it's awesome to have somebody like you at the table with us. So, thank you, you're very thoughtful, and I appreciate that, thank you.

Ken Gossel: We appreciate the help. Thank you.

Andrew Bryk: Okay, Em, you want to get into Block BGAC member recruitment, and I will defer to you on the rest. Thank you all.

Emily Urban: Sure. So, we are still trying to recruit for new members. We had letters that went out to Governor Hochul, Speaker Heastie, Senator Stewart-Cousins to request nominations for BGAC members. We have had a little bit of traction with trying to get new members, but we are still working towards it. So, as always, we are going to ask again if you know anybody who would be good for the Council, please let us know. We can make those arrangements to try to put their names forward, get them in touch with the right people, because we would love to have a more robust conversation with a smaller group, but we would love to have a larger conversation because the more input that we get, the better our program can be. So, still working on that to get more members. But if you have anybody, please feel free to reach out, reach out to myself or Vivvy or ah Joe, Vivvy's stand-in. Any thoughts there on new membership recruitment? If everybody could continue thinking about that.

Just to kind of touch on what we talked about last time for the May meeting, the quarter 2. Vivvy is working on getting that meeting to be held in person, so more to come on that for the date and hopefully, we can all get together in person at the media center and have an in-person discussion next time. So, again, Vivvy is going to work on that, work with the media center and our public office, and hopefully we can make that happen, and we will get that information out as

soon as we know so everybody can make those plans. And, of course, we will have the call-in option for anybody that can't make it in person. Any thoughts on that or any objections.

Andy Stone: Emily, I think we agree that it would be a good idea to do at least one in person, so that's great, when the weather is better.

Emily Urban: Yeah, alright. Anything else? Andrew just added to the chat, oh that CNN article that Andrew had reference, that's in the chat, we can also send that in the e-mail afterward with that federal register notice, but if anybody would like to check out that CNN article, it really does a great outline of what's going on in the other states with their programs.

Andy Stone: Excellent.

Kira Pospesel: If I can just, Emily, if I can just request two things from the local districts, is there anyway you guys can put together for the local district staff, because obviously, staffing issue is a particularly sore subject for all of us, for any sort of WebEx training on like the furnace replacement repairs and the Clean and Tune? Because by the time we get into that crunch hour, we're changing our frontlines again. So, if we have something on WebEx training that they could just bring up again and redo the training, I potentially could rotate additional staff through that. That's number one. Number two, if you guys could really think about maybe streamlining something in the process and helping us out with the double phone calls, the double apps, something to be able to get the assistance for the clients faster through the queue, because the additional phone calls slow us down, the additional apps slow us down, we have to touch them again, and our staffing crisis is just continuing, and it looks like the State of New York is going to fill their positions before we're going to fill them here in the local districts. So, we're just looking for some sort of additional assistance.

Emily Urban: Okay, noted about the assistance, but just to go back to training, do your staff taking the training space trainings? Because there are modules on training space for both Heat Equipment Repair Replacement and a separate module for Clean and Tune. Does your staff take those?

Kira Pospesel: Okay, so, you said, we'll they go through training through the HSLC so training space I'm assuming is what you do after you go through those other networks?

Emily Urban: So, there is the live training that we offer once per year, the regional training, and the ECT eligibility and certification training, but when those live trainings are not available all year round on training space, there are trainings available, they're not live, they are self-led, but they very thoroughly cover, there's one module for Heating Equipment Repair Replacement and other module for Clean and Tune, I believe there is one for Cooling. There is a longer eligibility and certification training, ECT is actually not up right now, but we are working on getting those updates. But those are available year-round.

Kira Pospesel: Okay, let me have staff development take a look at that, and then I will get back to you if they can't find them.

Emily Urban: Yeah, no, we're happy to give any information on that and direct your staff to the right place for that. But if there are unmet training needs in your district, please feel free to reach out and we're happy to work with you to see what would work for your staff and you. Go ahead Andrew.

Andrew Bryk: Sorry, I was trying to be polite. You know, this is where I see Andy Stone up there, as I'm looking at the grid of people on the call and you know, Andy I always appreciated your knowledge. And as we get into Clean and Tune or HERR, if we're looking to, yeah, we have our training and it's about policy, right? It's about pushing things through, could I put you on the spot and ask a favor, would you be open and willing to look at our training to see if there is something that would be from the mechanical side of the house that would be more informative to local district workers that are processing furnaces? You know, it's not always intuitive as you're working on the heating equipment side. Anything that would help them as they are processing or any helpful questions or knowledge that they should have that would be above and beyond what we normally provide as far as processes or policies. Is there something that we could collaborate on, Andy?

Andy Stone: Oh, absolutely, I'm not aware of the training space so if you guys can send me a link to that stuff, I would appreciate that. I'm not aware of the online access that you have. But yeah, get in touch with me offline Andrew, and we can certainly talk about it.

Andrew Bryk: Commissioner, do you think something along those lines? I know you're still going to jump on and look at what we have online um, but just from your experience over the years, do you believe that something more a little in depth on that type of benefit would be helpful to caseworkers?

Kira Pospesel: Okay, so here's my reality. On the frontline I have young 20 some year-old women who don't even own a house, don't even know what a furnace looks like, okay? So, they need to be able to work through this to figure out what you're even talking about. So, you've gotta keep it really basic. I don't need anything in depth, I'm lucky that we even know where to find the furnace, so that's kind of my reality.

Andy Stone: Without doubt, Kira, you know we understand that. I've done training for Andrew at the annual conference before, and I know the audience. There were people in there who had never even seen a furnace let alone get into the intricacies of how they work. I mean, what I use to train doesn't go into that kind of detail. But it does provide some baseline information so that frontline workers, when they're getting estimates from contractors and that type of stuff, they can kind of sort out what it is that they're proposing or what the problem potentially is with the furnace. So, yeah, we've done this before, I've done this for Andrew a bunch of times, and I think we probably can put something up that would work for everybody. I think it's important, honestly, it's one of those things where you can't entirely take on faith what your vendors are proposing to you. I don't want to badmouth anybody in the heating industry, but you do have to keep an eye on people and you've gotta make sure that what they're proposing to you is proper and appropriate.

Kira Pospesel: Yeah, and the issue is sometimes somebody wants to sell you a Cadillac when you really only need a Rambler.

Andy Stone: Well, that too, yeah, exactly.

Andrew Bryk: And then I'll just jump in, and especially as we're moving more towards air source heat pumps, or mini splits, or different type of heating appliances, I think as the industry is changing, I think a lot of what we've done in the past, it's about a hydronic boiler, it's about a boiler, it's about a forced air system, and you know swap outs haven't been the norm, and especially if we're ever thinking about how do we collaborate a little closer with our weatherization partners to make sure that we're doing total work of air sealing, insulation, making sure we have the right furnace in there. I know we are pushing on the emergency side, but when you look at the bigger space, there's other things that how do we insert all of those other supports to make sure that we're giving the best package. I don't want to give a Cadillac, but I want to give a Cadillac enough to make sure that it's a good investment of taxpayer dollars.

Andy Stone: Without a doubt.

Andrew Bryk: Thank you, I'll stop there, cause Emily is going, Andrew, stop it, you're blue skying on me. So, I'll stop right there, but if I can get a commitment that would be something really cool to look into.

Andy Stone: Yeah, Andrew, give me a call and we'll chat some more about it.

Andrew Bryk: Thank you. Em take it away, sorry, I apologize.

Emily Urban: No, I love the discussion. Thank you for those comments, Commissioner, we will continue to look into that. Any other thoughts?

Ken Gossel: You did an excellent job of hitting everyone that I had, so nothing further here, thank you.

Emily Urban: Great, thank you. Alright, that does it for our agenda, I will pass it back to you, Ken.

Ken Gossel: Alright, the magic moment, I accept a motion to adjourn please?

Paul Brady: So moved.

Ken Gossel: Have I got a second? All in favor?

All: Aye.

Ken Gossel: Thank you all for your help today. Thank you OTDA again for your great efforts here, they are greatly appreciated by your clients and our customers. Our next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 2nd, to be determined whether that's in person or again on a WebEx. Thank you all and have a wonderful rest of winter.