

**UTILITY CONSUMER PARTICIPATION BOARD  
SPECIAL WORKGROUP PROCESS MEETING**

OCTOBER 29, 2020

10:00 a.m.

Zoom Meeting

MEETING MINUTES

I. Call to Order and Roll Call of Members

Present: Jim MacInnes (President of UCPB), Elise Matz (Board Member), Bali Kumar (Board Member), Sam Passmore (Board Member), Paul Isely (Board Member), John Liskey, (CARE), LeAnn Droste (LARA), Greg Rivet (LARA), , Rob Rafson (GLREA), Suzy – Williams, Shawn Worden (LARA), Tanya Paslawski (MEGA), John Richter (GLREA)

Jim MacInnes went through a protocol review of meeting participation.

II. Business Items

- a. Grant Application
- b. Edit Language to create a rolling grant process

Jim MacInnes referred everyone to the grant application and the letter from the Attorney General.

Paul Isely talked about how the emphasis has changed regarding how grants are presented. He suggested that the summary page make the process clearer.

The Board discussed the need for the grant application to be more explicit regarding how grantees achieve standing and the proof that is necessary to do so. It was suggested that the funds be returned to the Utility Consumer Representation Fund (UCRF) if a grantee is not granted standing either by right or permissive.

Sam Passmore asked what needs to be part of the formal grant application and what can be placed on the Board's website. An expression of the Board's priorities may change and that could go on the website but not in the application. The Board's goal is to simplify the application process.

Jim MacInnes discussed how things have changed a lot in the 10 years since he has been with the Board and the changes in technology and what is happening in Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). The utilities are also undergoing a lot of changes. An example was the TESLA Power wall and how it makes decisions on the power use to allow the ratepayer to pay the lowest amount for their energy use. Optimizing costs to rate payers and social justice issues regarding them are both priorities currently. Priorities could change very quickly, the UCPB needs to be nimble. Ease of change should be a consideration in any decision.

Paul Isely walked through the grant application and suggested that the most important things be listed at the beginning of the application so that a new grantee can quickly

decide if applying for a grant is feasible for their group and whether they qualify for the monies.

Elise Matz suggested a numbering or bullet system on the section regarding judging the grant and taking the whole point system out of the grant application. She stated the potential dollar impact should be expanded to comport with the statute regarding the number of people impacted and the amount of impact per rate payer if the issue is disparate enough to keep in accordance with practices and rates.

Paul Isely suggested looking at the service area and how severely the individual is being affected. He stated the grant process should be fair to both new and long-standing grantees.

Sam Passmore suggested that the Board use its website to expand the grantee base.

Discussions continued regarding updates to the grant application and LeAnn Droste commented that LARA will assist with updating the grantee application and emphasized that the grant application needs to reflect how the Board makes decision for that grant cycle. The grant application could be updated yearly if the Board chooses. The grant application can be audited and therefore needs to reflect how the Board makes decisions for that grant cycle.

Jim MacInnes questioned and the Board discussed whether the grant application process is an issue for grantees and if that prevents new grantees from applying.

Elise Matz brought up the types of cases the Board can fund and making that more explicit in the grant application as well as how to use the Attorney General's letter to show how to get funding for cases that are not specifically listed in the statute.

The Board discussed ways to create more visibility for itself and its functions. It is thought that the website can help as well as asking grantees to mention their funding sources when they do press releases. Having a conversation with LARA's Interim Communications Director was also suggested.

Paul Isely suggested that having things formalized by summer would be a good goal for the next grant cycle.

The Board discussed having a liaison from the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) and the AG's office biannually attend Board meetings to discuss trends and to get a preview of what may be coming. This also could fit into an advisory section that will be a part of UCPB's new website.

John Liskey stated that keeping the customer in mind as grants are made is important, that the website is a great idea, and that requesting grantees to include a statement regarding their funding sources if they put out a press release is also a great idea.

Rob Rafson suggested that the Board hold a biannual meeting to get input from stakeholders and that the February 2021 meeting be used to review the rule making section produced by the MPSC and the impacts made by the grantees.

Jim MacInnes stated that long term vs. short term benefits to rate payers need to be weighed.

John Richter mentioned that a primer regarding how the MPSC works and makes their decisions would be helpful to grantees and that expert witnesses should be allowed to participate.

Elise Matz stated that the Institute of Public Utilities (IPU) report suggested that the regulatory process be illuminated on the website as well.

Next steps:

Elise Matz stated that she will work on the Mission Statement and a potential logo for the UCPB.

LeAnn Droste noted that LARA will use the minutes from this meeting to update the application process and that she will reach out to MPSC regarding their ability to provide a liaison to attend UCPB meetings biannually and provide an update regarding the work the MPSC is doing as it pertains to residential rate payers.

Jim MacInnes stated his preference that a new Board Chair be voted in at the February 2021 meeting.

Sam Passmore mentioned that he hopes the Board can resolve the grant application process before new members join the Board so that the current members can provide input based on their experience.

III. Public Comment

IV. Adjournment: 11:36 a.m.  
Moved: Bali Kumar, Seconded: Sam Passmore