

Town of Plymouth
80 Main Street
Terryville, Connecticut 06786

Human Services Commission
Telephone: (860)585-4001
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Human Services Meeting Minutes
November 15, 2022

1. Call to Order: Chairwoman Cathy Beaudoin called the November 15, 2022, Human Services Commission Virtual Zoom Meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

2. Attendance: Chairwoman Cathy Beaudoin, Vice-Chairwoman Donna Dognin, Commission Larry Chiucarello and Commissioner Mark Malley. Also in attendance: Meg McCreedy and Juan Berrios from HRA. Via ZOOM: Commissioner Karen Saccu, Helen Supinskas (HRA) and Councilwoman Roxanne McCann.

Excused absent: Commissioner Lee Ulinskas

3. Pledge of Allegiance:

Chairwoman Cathy Beaudoin led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. Invocation:

Vice-Chairwoman Donna Dognin gave the invocation.

5. Public Input: None

6. Acceptance of Minutes:

A motion was made by Commissioner Mark Malley, seconded by Vice-Chairman Donna Dognin to accept the meeting minutes of August 16, 2022. This motion was approved unanimously.

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7. Communications/Correspondence (If Needed): None

A motion was made by Vice-Chairwoman Donna Dognin, seconded by Commissioner Mark Malley to allow Ann Marie Rheault to speak about Small Wonders under Communications/Correspondence. This motion was approved unanimously.

Ann Marie Rheault reported HRA is taking the applications for Small Wonders. The distribution date is December 16th. There is a toy drive on December 3rd at Target. The online toy drive will be set up. The 4H Club out of Litchfield is having a toy drive at Walmart on December 4th. The trees will be delivered around town this weekend. The Salvation Army contacted Ann Marie about a meeting that is scheduled for this is Thursday at 9:30 AM at Thomaston Savings Bank on Main Street.

Meg McCreedy will be attending that meeting.

Erica Colonna
2022 NOV 22 PM 1:46
TOWN OF PLYMOUTH, CT
CLERK'S OFFICE

Ann Marie Rheault is still waiting to hear back from the finance department regarding the reconciliation as her balance did not agree. This request was sent on September 6th.

8. Human Services Report: *See attached report*

Juan Berrios introduced Meg McCreedy. She is the Community Services Coordinator. Helen Supsinskas is helping Meg with the transition.

Councilwoman Roxanne McCann drafted a description for the commission to present to ARPA asking funds to be spent on fuel, water, sewer and toiletries. A power point needs to be added for specifics.

A discussion took place about outreach. It will be conducted once a month. It was discussed about having Dial A Ride pick up the residents and bring them to town hall.

Juan reported that Mayor Kilduff nominated Cathy Beaudoin to the HRA Board of Directors.

Meg McCreedy introduced herself to the Commission members.

9. Old Business

Vice-Chairwoman Donna Dognin discussed that she would like the Commission to follow up on reviewing the policy and procedures and bylaws.

The following are to review the Bylaws: Commissioners Mark Malley, Karen Saccu and Lee Ulinskas.

The following are to review the Policy and Procedures for the Cleveland Trust Fund: Commissioner Larry Chiucarello, Chairwoman Cathy Beaudoin and Vice-Chairwoman Donna Dognin.

The Commission will report back at the January meeting.

Ann Marie Rheault explained the ledger balances which were created when she was the Director of Finance.

Councilwoman Roxanne McCann will talk to Mayor Kilduff about getting Grace Zweig to update the balances.

Ann Marie Rheault suggested that the Commission ask Grace Zweig for the ledger transactions. Chairwoman Cathy Beaudoin will follow up with Grace Zweig.

A discussion took place about the senior gift bags. Vice-Chairwoman Donna Dognin does not want to spend any money out of the Cleveland fund until there is an accurate balance.

Juan Berrios would like to know what has been done in the past, to see what resources HRA can come up with.

This will be discussed further after the holiday season.

10. New Business:

Commissioner Larry Chiucarello would like to discuss a budget at the next meeting to present to the Mayor. He would like to include: HRA expenses, office expenses and what the commission wants to include.

11. Chairman's Comments:

Chairwoman Cathy Beaudoin will be attending her first HRA board meeting. Details will follow.

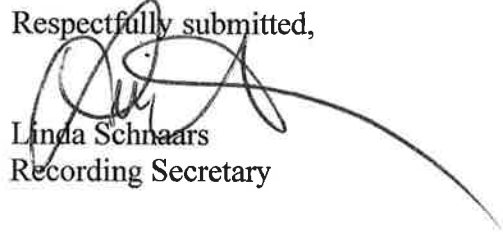
12. Council Liaison's Comments:

No comment.

13. Adjournment:

There being no further business of the Human Services Commission, a motion was made by Commissioner Mark Malley, seconded by Vice-Chairwoman Donna Dognin to adjourn. This motion was approved unanimously. The meeting ended at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Linda Schnaars
Recording Secretary



**Human Resources Agency of New Britain, Inc.
Community Services Department**

Plymouth Human Services Monthly Report

September 2022

Submitted by: Helen Supsinskas and Juan Berrios

Reporting Period: September 1, 2022 – September 30, 2022

Services	Total Count
Phone Calls	181
Walk-ins	25
Appointments	32
Energy Assistance	25
Rental Assistance	0
Medicare Savings Program	1
SNAP Applications/Renewals	2
Private Fuel Bank	0
Senior Housing Outreach	0
Renters Rebate	30

Staffing Update: HRA has assigned Helen Supsinskas, Community Services Program Manager, to the Plymouth Town Hall while we complete the hiring process for a new coordinator. Helen is the Program Manager for all of HRA's Community Services Programs which include Case Management, our Food Pantry, SNAP Outreach, Victims Advocacy, and COVID related programs.

HRA management, along with Helen, have been interviewing candidates for the position during the month of September. The hope is for a new staff person to be hired and start working at the Plymouth Office for the month of October and trained by Helen.

Funding: HRA's Assistant Director of Operations, Juan Berrios, has been meeting with several community stakeholders alongside Mayor Kilduff on several private funding sources the Town of Plymouth has acquired in several years. Juan will continue to work with the commission to renew these private sources for residents of the town and will report on any relevant activities as needed.



**Human Resources Agency of New Britain, Inc.
Community Services Department**

Plymouth Human Services Monthly Report

Renter's Rebate: The application period for the Renter's Rebate program ended on October 1st. A total of 30 applications were completed during the month of September. The State of Connecticut provided us with a notice that there will be an extension for any individual who did not apply up until November 15st, 2022. Checks for approved applications will begin to be mailed out starting on October 25th, 2022.

Private Fuel Bank: There were no requests for assistance through the Town's Private Fuel Bank this month. If anyone has an urgent need for an emergency oil delivery, please contact the Human Services office.

Energy Assistance: The Energy Assistance Program opened up its application process on September 1st, 2022 for the 2022-2023 program year. There were a total of 25 applications completed in the office for the month of September. **A grand total of 102 Plymouth Residents have applied to date with 65, or 64%, being approved for Energy Assistance.**

Clients applying for Energy Assistance are also automatically enrolled into the Low-Income Home Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) which assists eligible households with paying for Water and Wastewater services. The Town of Plymouth's Water Vendor participates in this program. However, the wastewater vendor does not.

This year will be a difficult year for Energy Assistance as the State of Connecticut is moving back to a "level-funded" budget since it has exhausted all CARES Act and ARPA federal dollars for the program. What this means is that benefit levels have been greatly reduced for the program year. The State will be receiving nearly 20 million in funds for the program due to Congress passing an emergency allocation for the program. However, we still do not know how the state will allocate these dollars in regards to benefits. There is a push within our network for the state to also allocate unspent ARPA dollars for the program as well.

Town Residents can apply for Energy Assistance through a variety of different ways. In-Person Appointments are available at the Human Services Department in Town Hall or at HRA's Bristol Office on 55 South Street. In addition, residents can apply by telephone, mail, email, or online this season. For more information on the Energy Assistance Program please visit HRA's website at www.hranbct.org and under "Programs" click on "Energy Assistance."

Free Income Tax Preparation: HRA's Free Income Tax Preparation Program ended on April 15th, 2022. The Town of Plymouth's Tax Site performed very well completing 70 tax returns this filing season which returned \$59,010 in Federal Refunds alone. The site, however, was down 27.84% in returns completed from the previous year. This is predominately due to lack of volunteers at the Plymouth site.

We are asking the commission to promote volunteer recruitment for our tax site for the coming season. More information will come soon!



**Human Resources Agency of New Britain, Inc.
Community Services Department**

Plymouth Human Services Monthly Report

Senior Farmer's Market Nutrition Program: HRA once again applied all of its Food Market Vouchers for seniors to the Human Services Department. This program is operated by the State of Connecticut Department of Agriculture. The Department provided HRA with 40 booklets to be utilized by eligible residents aged 60 or higher who met income eligibility guidelines. All 40 booklets were distributed during the program period which ended on September 14th, 2022.

Outreach at Senior Housing: Outreach is scheduled for Gosinski Park and Eli Terry senior housing next month. Services and information will be provided to residents. Outreach will be completed on the fourth Thursday of every month.

ARPA Funding: HRA received its contract for ARPA funding to operate its Client Support Services fund which covers our entire service area (Bristol, Burlington, Farmington, New Britain, Plainville, and Plymouth). Our ARPA dollars will be able to assist ARPA eligible individuals and/or households with Emergency Housing (Rental Assistance, Mortgage Assistance, and Security Deposits); Emergency Utility Assistance (Utility, Deliverable Fuel, Water/Sewer, and Internet) and other categories. All applicants must be income eligible at/or below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level and must have been negatively impacted by the economic effects of COVID-19 at the time of the established need. Residents can apply at the Human Services Office for assistance.



Connecticut Energy Assistance Program (CEAP) 2022/2023 Benefit Matrix

Maximum Income Eligibility								
Household Size	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Annual Income	\$39,761	\$51,996	\$64,230	\$76,465	\$88,699	\$100,933	\$103,227	\$105,521

BASIC BENEFITS (Both Deliverable Fuel and Utility - Heated Households)			
Benefit Level	Income Level	Vulnerable	Non-Vulnerable
1	Up to 125% Federal Poverty Guidelines	\$600	\$550
2	126% Federal Poverty Guidelines – 200% Federal Poverty Guidelines	\$450	\$400
3	201% Federal Poverty Guidelines – 60% State Median Income	\$300	\$250

CRISIS ASSISTANCE BENEFITS (Deliverable Fuel-Heated Households Only)				
Benefit Level	Income Level	1 st Benefit	2 nd Benefit	3 rd Benefit*
1	Up to 125% Federal Poverty Guidelines	\$430	\$430	\$430
2	126% Federal Poverty Guidelines – 200% Federal Poverty Guidelines	\$430	\$430	\$430
3	201% Federal Poverty Guidelines – 60% State Median Income	\$430	\$0	0

*The third Crisis Assistance Benefit is for vulnerable Level 1 & 2 households only.

RENTAL ASSISTANCE BENEFITS		
Benefit Level	Income Level	Benefit
1	Up to 125% Federal Poverty Guidelines	\$150
2	126% Federal Poverty Guidelines – 200% Federal Poverty Guidelines	\$125
3	201% Federal Poverty Guidelines – 60% State Median Income	\$100

Low Income Household Water Assistance Program

In May 2021, the State of Connecticut through its grantee, the Department of Social Services (DSS), received an award of \$9,756,536 to administer the new Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP). The funding came from two sources: \$4,286,703 through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 and \$5,469,833 through the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021. Funding rules required that LIHWAP funds be used to make payments to owners or operators of public water systems or treatment works on behalf of low-income households with: disconnected services; pending disconnections or arrearages; or current bills (no arrearages). Up to 15% of the grant funds can be used for the costs of planning and administering the program. The budget period for the use of the funds is May 28, 2021 through September 30, 2023.

On August 20, 2021, the legislative committees of cognizance approved the LIHWAP grant allocation plan ("the Plan"). Although the Plan submitted to and approved by the legislative committees stated that it was for FFY 2022, the plan that was approved by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services covered the full budget period through FFY 2023. As such, DSS is proposing to amend the previously approved Plan to extend it to the full grant budget period, with minor updates. DSS is projecting that approximately 50% of the funds will be available for use in FFY 2023, and therefore DSS is proposing to submit an amendment to the Plan for the following:

1. Allow households to apply for LIHWAP benefits using the same schedule as the Connecticut Energy Assistance Program (CEAP) for FFY 2023;
2. Adjust the LIHWAP Basic Benefit eligibility levels to match the CEAP Basic Benefit eligibility levels;
3. Allow households that are not directly billed for water/wastewater services to apply for benefits; and
4. Adjust the budget for funds remaining in the grant.

Using the single application (online and paper), households will be able to apply for both LIHWAP and CEAP starting in September 2022.

For FFY 2023, program dates are as follows:

November 1, 2022	First day that the program will make water assistance payments.
May 31, 2023	The last day that a household can apply to establish its eligibility for benefits.
June 16, 2023	Last day to submit water utility bills.

Basic Benefits, which are available for households who are income-eligible for the program with no arrearages or disconnection notices, are revised as shown in the table below. (There are no changes in the Plan to Crisis Assistance Benefits, which are available to eligible households with disconnections, pending disconnections, or arrearages.)

BASIC BENEFITS

Level	Income Eligibility	Vulnerable * Households	Non-Vulnerable Households
1	At or below 125% of Federal Poverty Guidelines (FPG)	\$300	\$150
2	126% FPG – 200% FPG	\$200	\$100
3	201% FPG – 60% State Median Income (SMI)	\$100	\$ 50

** Vulnerable households are those households in which one or more members is elderly (defined as 60 years of age or older), has a disability or is under the age of six.*

Continuing the approach authorized in FFY 2022, the Basic Benefit will be available only after income-eligible households with disconnection notices (priority 1) and arrearages (priority 2) are addressed. Households with water and wastewater costs included in their rent will be eligible for the Basic Benefits.

If federal funding is increased or reduced compared to the estimated funding level used to develop this Plan, DSS may adjust the Basic Benefits and/or income eligibility criteria to reflect the difference.

Date: September 30th, 2022
To: Plymouth Human Services Commission
From: Tomasz Kandybowicz, VITA Site Coordinator
Re: Town of Plymouth 2022 Tax Site
CC: Juan Berrios, Assistant Director of Operations, HRA
 Dianne Martinez, Financial Services Program Manager, HRA
 Mayor Joseph Kilduff, Town of Plymouth



For the fourth year, HRA partnered with the Plymouth Town Hall operated a VITA site at Plymouth Town Hall, 80 Main Street, Terryville, CT.

Plymouth

	2021	2020	Change
Returns	70	97	-27.84%
Clients	94	106	-11.32%
Refunds	\$67,336	\$82,958	-18.83%
EITC	\$20,859	\$5,699	266.01%
Returns with EITC	20	-	
Average AGI	\$27,155.89	\$20,083	35.22%
Median AGI	\$15,811.50	-	
Average Age	68	67	1.49%
Median Age	71	-	
Seniors (65+)	59	71	-16.90%
Direct Deposit	48.68%	-	

- Of the 94 clients served on the Plymouth EFIN, 59 of them were seniors or 62.77%. 4 or 4.26% of the 94 clients were youth or young adults (under 25 years old).
- 48.68% of the clients served by the Plymouth EFIN requested to have their refunds deposited into their bank accounts.
- VITA saved our clients a total of \$16,720 in tax preparation fees based on the average cost of \$220 from Intuit for a standard Form 1040 without Itemized deductions plus a corresponding state return
- \$67,336 dollars flowed back into the communities served by the Plymouth EFIN as refunds.
- 20 of the 70 returns leveraged \$20,859 in EITC to help either reduce their tax balance or increase their refunds.

Recommendations

1. The only recommendation would to be find local volunteers to increase operations in a location that has seen an enormous increase in demand for tax preparation. Even though there was a decrease in the number of returns prepared, the decrease was relatively minor when taking into consideration that for Tax Year 2020 there were 2 preparers at the site and in 2021 there was only 1.



Human Resources Agency of New Britain, Inc.
Community Services Department

Plymouth Human Services Monthly Report

October 2022

Submitted by: Helen Supsinskas and Juan Berrios

Reporting Period: October 1, 2022 – October 31, 2022

Services	Total Count
Phone Calls	192
Walk-ins	20
Appointments	55
Energy Assistance	40
Rental Assistance	0
Medicare Savings Program	1
SNAP Applications/Renewals	1
Private Fuel Bank	0
Senior Housing Outreach	0
Renters Rebate	2

Staffing Update: HRA has hired Meg McCreedy as the new Community Services Coordinator for the Human Services Operations at Plymouth Town Hall. Meg comes to HRA with prior experiences in human and social services in the Community Action Network, which HRA is a member of. In addition, Meg has prior municipal social services experience with the Town of Thomaston as well.

Renter's Rebate: The application period for the Renter's Rebate program ended on October 1st with an extension period through November 15th. A total of 5 applications were completed during the month of October. Checks for approved applications have begun to be mailed out.

Private Fuel Bank: There were no requests for assistance through the Town's Private Fuel Bank this month. If anyone has an urgent need for an emergency oil delivery, please contact the Human Services office.



Human Resources Agency of New Britain, Inc.
Community Services Department

Plymouth Human Services Monthly Report

Energy Assistance: The Energy Assistance Program opened up its application process on September 1st, 2022 for the 2022-2023 program year. There were a total of 40 applications completed in the office for the month of October. **A grand total of 202 Plymouth Residents have applied to date with 147, or 73%, being approved for Energy Assistance.**

Clients applying for Energy Assistance are also automatically enrolled into the Low-Income Home Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) which assists eligible households with paying for Water and Wastewater services.

Town Residents can apply for Energy Assistance through a variety of different ways. In-Person Appointments are available at the Human Services Department in Town Hall or at HRA's Bristol Office on 55 South Street. In addition, residents can apply by telephone, mail, email, or online this season. For more information on the Energy Assistance Program please visit HRA's website at www.hranbct.org and under "Programs" click on "Energy Assistance."

Outreach at Senior Housing: Outreach that was scheduled for Gosinski Park and Eli Terry senior housing did not take place this month due to ongoing renovations at Gosinski Park and new staff at Eli Terry. Services and information will be provided to residents. Outreach will be completed on the fourth Thursday of every month.

ARPA Funding: HRA received its contract for ARPA funding to operate its Client Support Services fund which covers our entire service area (Bristol, Burlington, Farmington, New Britain, Plainville, and Plymouth). Our ARPA dollars will be able to assist ARPA eligible individuals and/or households with Emergency Housing (Rental Assistance, Mortgage Assistance, and Security Deposits); Emergency Utility Assistance (Utility, Deliverable Fuel, Water/Sewer, and Internet) and other categories. All applicants must be income eligible at/or below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level and must have been negatively impacted by the economic effects of COVID-19 at the time of the established need. Residents can apply at the Human Services Office for assistance.