

April 13, 2026

ERAC Meeting Notes

Present: Heather Sanborn, Amy Turner, David Zachow, Derek Davidson, John Bliss, Jess Fay, Mark Morissette, Lisa Henaghen, Deirdre Schneider, Victoria Forkus, Kathy Largay, Kiera Reardon, Kathleen Bowman, Ian Burnes, Alf Anderson, Sharon Klein, Kris Winther

The meeting opened with updates on recent legislative and policy developments:

- **Baseline LIHEAP Funding Fix:** Heather Sanborn highlighted the importance of ERAC’s role in securing baseline funding for LIHEAP. She noted that LD 705 (the errors bill) will correct a budget issue to ensure the funding is properly included on an ongoing basis. She also acknowledged collaboration and oversight from AARP in identifying the issue.
- **Low-Income Protections Enacted:** LD 2203, CEP low-income protection bill was recently signed into law by the Governor, marking a significant policy milestone.
- Recent Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) decision that Return on Equity (ROE) for New England Transmission Owners has been set at a rate that is higher than what is fair and reasonable since 2011. They ordered refunds to customers going back to 2014. This will likely be litigated, but is another affordability win.

Meeting Schedule through the end of the year:

Date all meetings @2pm	Location Plan
5/11/26	@Department of Energy Resources with Teams option
6/8/26	Via Teams
Summer break	Meeting only if needed
9/14/26	In person, Location TBD
11/9/26	Via Teams
12/14/26	Via Teams

Updates from the two working groups:

- **Focus group** (Sharon): Group is compiling information from studies that have already been completed in recent years. Working off a shared document to compile notes on each study and help determine what questions remain to be

answered. Group has honed in on the Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) framework as a good way to identify our target audience.

- Heather noted that LD 1949 passage has two new policy directives regarding affordability. First, the statute adds the concept of affordability to the statutory objectives of the Commission in all its decision making. Second, the PUC must open a proceeding to come up with an affordability metric. The document that the group is creating may be useful in helping inform that inquiry.
- **Winter Moratorium Group (Amy):** Group has focused on the amount that receivables have increased and have identified three groups—those receiving assistance to afford their bill, those who can't afford their bill but don't qualify for assistance (ALICE), and those who can pay but are choosing not to. The group is looking at Chapter 815 of the Commission's rules to see what additional reporting information could be requested from the utilities to better characterize the increase in arrearages and develop policy suggestions based on data. Examples included identifying how many customers make no payment all winter, breaking down those with arrearages by whether they receive LIAP, determining the size of the balances to distinguish between those with a very small arrearage and larger unpaid balances.
- **Other Discussion:**
 - Fees: Utilities are permitted to charge late fees, the Commission sets the rate. Those receiving low-income assistance are not charged late payment fees.
 - Preventing Abuse / Learning from Other States: There is interest in reviewing models from other states to identify safeguards that prevent misuse of winter protections while still supporting those in genuine need.
 - Customer Behavior and Cost Impacts: Jess reflected on the potential ratepayer impact of customers choosing not to pay during winter and suggested:
 - Increasing awareness of how nonpayment affects other ratepayers
 - Exploring alternatives like prepayment or seasonal billing structures to mitigate impacts

Working Group Progress and Policy Direction:

- Both working groups are reportedly converging on similar metrics, particularly around distinguishing between customers who cannot pay versus those who choose not to.

- Continued focus on improving Chapter 815, including more granular reporting, was viewed as a positive development.
- Overall, the groups are making steady progress on complex policy issues.

Closing:

- Alf Anderson (AARP) thanked the group for a successful legislative session and their efforts to support Maine residents.
- The next meeting scheduled for **May 11 at 2:00 PM** at the Cross Office Building.