

BOARD OF FINANCE
The Metropolitan District
555 Main Street
Hartford, Connecticut 06103
Monday, March 12, 2018

PRESENT: Commissioners Luis Caban, Allen Hoffman and Pasquale J. Salemi;
Citizen Members Ram Aberasturia and Ron Angelo and District Chairman
William A. DiBella (6)

ABSENT: Citizen Members Martin Courneen and Linda King-Corbin (2)

ALSO

PRESENT: Commissioner David Ionno
Commissioner Whit Osgood
Commissioner Domenic M. Pane
Commissioner Alvin Taylor
Commissioner Richard W. Vicino
Scott W. Jellison, Chief Executive Officer
John M. Zinzarella, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Business Services
Christopher Stone, Assistant District Counsel
John S. Mirtle, District Clerk
Robert Constable, Director of Finance
Christopher Levesque, Director of Operations
Sue Negrelli, Director of Engineering
Robert Schwarm, Director of Information Technology
Kelly Shane, Director of Procurement
Tom Tyler, Director of Facilities
Robert Zaik, Director of Human Resources
Carrie Blardo, Assistant to the Chief Operating Officer
Victoria S. Escoriza, Executive Assistant
David Silverstone, Consumer Advocate

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Salemi called the meeting to order at 5:05 PM

PUBLIC COMMENTS RELATIVE TO AGENDA ITEMS

David Silverstone, Consumer Advocate, spoke in support of approving both agenda item #4 "Consumer Assistance Program Administered by Operation Fuel", as well as agenda item #5 "Approval for State of Connecticut Financing CWF No. 657-C1".

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On motion made by Commissioner Caban and duly seconded, the meeting minutes of the Board of Finance meeting of February 5, 2018 were approved.

**CUSTOMER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
ADMINISTERED BY OPERATION FUEL**

To: Board of Finance for consideration on March 12, 2018

In recent years, the District considered and researched the establishment of a Customer Assistance Program to assist customers with financial hardship to pay their water bills. One obstacle to initiation of such a program was the internal administrative costs. The District also elected to wait until upgrading its electronic billing system to allow customers the ability to voluntarily contribute to a customer assistance fund through their bill payments.

After recommendation by the Consumer Advocate, District Staff is proposing the creation of a Customer Assistance Program administered by Operation Fuel. Operation Fuel already runs energy assistance programs throughout the state. The District's Customer Assistance Program will utilize the towns' social services departments to assist interested customers in completing the Operation Fuel application in order to receive assistance. If a customer meets the eligibility criteria, he/she may receive a grant of up to \$500 per year.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED that it be

VOTED: That the Board of Finance recommends to the District Board passage of the following resolution.

RESOLVED:

Staff is hereby authorized to enter into an agreement with Operation Fuel to create a Customer Assistance Program administered by Operation Fuel as more fully described in the following proposal. Staff is authorized to allocate \$50,000 for the Customer Assistance Program of which \$44,000 shall be utilized for customer grants to pay customer water bills and \$6,000 to be paid to Operation Fuel for administrative costs and fuel bank fees.

Respectfully Submitted,

Scott W. Jellison
Chief Executive Officer

**Operation Fuel, Inc.
Proposed Water Assistance Program
The MDC Operation Fuel Water Assistance Partnership
Background**

Operation Fuel has provided energy affordability solutions, education, and support to Connecticut residents for forty years. Our core mission service, to which this request relates, is providing year-round emergency energy assistance grants to low and moderate income households. Last year we provided assistance for over 20,000 individuals from 7,830 households statewide.

With our network of 106 community-based fuel banks, we provide support to people who are not eligible for or have exhausted their government energy assistance benefits, including our state's working poor and people on fixed incomes. But Operation Fuel does more than distribute energy assistance grants. In collaboration with our community partners we work to significantly improve energy assistance distribution systems and find new ways to address Connecticut's energy affordability crisis. For example, in recent years we launched a burner repair program, to help people in need of emergency furnace repairs, and helped hundreds of small businesses make energy efficiency upgrades through our small business grant program.

Operation Fuel has one simple goal: to reduce the home energy and utility burden of low and moderate income Connecticut residents. We work towards this goal in a variety of ways, primarily through the distribution of emergency assistance grants to households in need. Once only a cold weather program, we now take applications 12 months a year.

Program Description

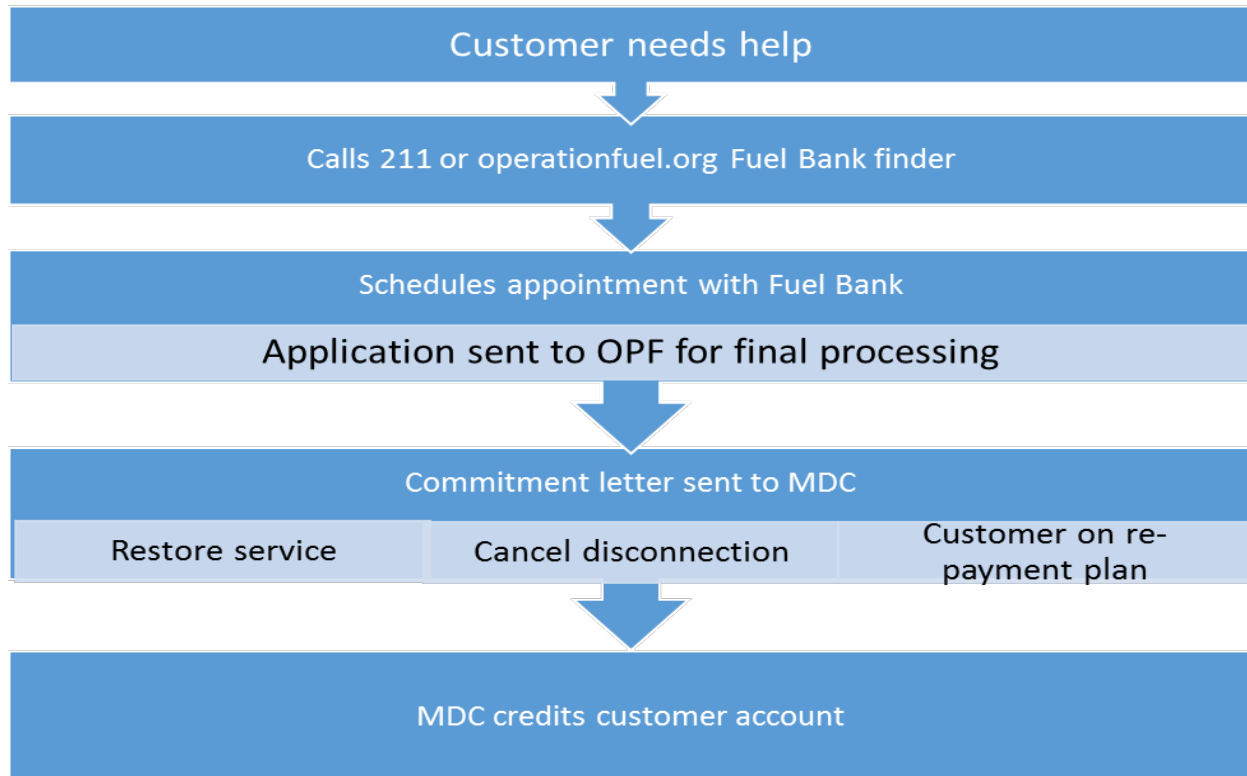
With funding from the Metropolitan District (MDC), Operation Fuel, Inc. (OPF) will provide water utility assistance grants to MDC customers in member and nonmember towns. Operation Fuel partners with over 100 non-profits, municipal governments and community action agencies that serve as our intake sites, also known as Fuel Banks. We have Fuel Banks located in Bloomfield, East Hartford, East Granby, Glastonbury, Hartford, Newington, Rocky hill, West Hartford, South Windsor, Wethersfield, and Windsor. Farmington residents seeking assistance can apply at HRA in Bristol, New Britain or Gifts of Love in Avon.

Operation Fuel will use the current Fuel Bank model which assists struggling households with energy and utility grants to assist MDC customers with water utility arrearages or customers in danger of termination or shut off. Our experienced Fuel Bank staff will also develop custom approaches for each customer recognizing that many are struggling based on circumstances unique to each applicant (job loss, illness, disability, domestic turmoil or unexpected expenses). Solution oriented strategies include:

- One time grant paid to customer's water bill

- Customer with high arrearage agrees to re-payment schedule in addition to grant paid towards bill
- Customer with poor payment history required to make good faith payment of \$100.00

Using a shared web-based application system, Fuel Banks will enter MDC customer requests for assistance. OPF staff will process the applications for approval and send the MDC an approval letter to credit the customer account, or prevent shut off, or re-connect water service. If for any reason, the customer is denied for assistance, the fuel bank will be notified by OPF staff.



Media

Media and publicity will be coordinated by Operation Fuel, with a clear objective of placing emphasis on The MDC and recognizing that financial constraints, albeit temporary or long term, are a fact of life for many customers. The Water Assistance partnership with Operation Fuel is intended to find a payment solution for customers that are faced with financial hardship. Operation Fuel's media consultant will write a press release and coordinate a press conference at a mutually agreed upon location.

Program Benefits and performance measures

- Reduce collections
- Promote bill paying among hardship customers
- Expand public image
- Reduce call time with hardship customers
- Performance measures
 - # of disconnections per year

- # of arrearages
- Delinquent accounts committed to payment plans
- Success rate of payment plan

Expense Item	Notes	Total Projected Budget	MDC Funds	Operation Fuel Funds
MDC Client Grants		\$ 44,000	\$ 44,000	\$ -
Client Application Processing and Payment	\$33.67 x 3/hr x 52wks	\$ 5,253	\$ 4,900	\$ 353
Fuel Bank Fees	\$25 x 44/grants	\$ 1,100	\$ 1,100	\$ -
Program Oversight	\$33.67 x 1/hr x 52wks	\$ 1,751	\$ -	\$ 1,751
Marketing		\$ 1,800		\$ 1,800
Critical Infrastructure (insurance, rent, utilities, etc.)		\$ 4,513		\$ 4,513
Operating Expenses (accounting, employee benefits, payroll, travel, etc.)		\$ 9,243		\$ 9,243
Total		\$ 67,660	\$ 50,000	\$ 17,660

[OPERATION FUEL SAMPLE WATER PROGRAM GUIDELINES 2018](#)

Operation Fuel is a private, nonprofit statewide organization that provides water assistance to lower and moderate-income working families, elderly residents and individuals with disabilities.

GUIDELINES

Beginning April 16, 2018 Operation Fuel will administer a water assistance program for MDC customers in member and nonmember towns who need aid with meeting their water utility needs. This program will be for households living up to 75% of state

median income. There will not be an assets test. The maximum grant amount will be up to \$500.

To qualify for water utility assistance, clients must have a shut-off notice or have no water utility service or must need assistance with making a required payment in order to prevent a shut-off, or have a past due balance of 30 days or more.

Grant Amount

One time grant up to \$500 per household.

*All final approvals will be made by Operation Fuel Staff

Program Dates

The Program will start April 16, 2018 and end May 31, 2019. Closing date is funding dependent.

Eligibility Guidelines

Some emergency examples can include but are not limited to the following:

- Client is suffering from job loss and is collecting un-employment or exhausted un-employment benefits
- Client health or housing is threatened
- Water Utility grants – Client has made a total of 4 payments within the 12month period of which the client is applying. Clients must show a pattern of payments. If client makes all 4 payments within one month or days prior to applying, they will not qualify.

Documentation

- Applicant must provide water utility shut off notice or water utility bill that is 30 days past due and payment history
- Documentation of all household members with income (last 4 weeks of income)
- Application must be signed by client and Operation Fuel staff

Operation Fuel is an emergency energy assistance organization. Operation Fuel energy grants are for households which fall within the income guidelines and are faced with financial crisis.*

*An Operation Fuel energy grant is not an entitlement to all Connecticut residents who fall within the income guidelines. Grants to households are approved at the discretion of Operation Fuel. * Financial crisis is defined as the inability of a family to pay their water utility bill. Financial crisis is considered to be a situation in which a family must choose between paying for their water utility needs, buying food, paying the rent or mortgage, or paying medical bills as a result of unemployment, illness, death, or other emergencies.*

On motion made by District Chairman DiBella and duly seconded, the report was received and resolution adopted by majority vote of those present. Commissioner Hoffman and Citizen Member Angelo opposed.

**APPROVAL FOR STATE OF CONNECTICUT FINANCING
CWF NO. 657-C1**

To: Board of Finance for consideration on March 12, 2018

Staff seeks approval from your Board to execute and deliver the First Amendment to Project Loan and Grant Agreement CWF 657-C1, Interim Funding Obligation and Project Loan Obligation to the State of Connecticut for CWF No. 657-C1, previously approved on December 4, 2017 with a principal amount of \$153,789,886.83 and now having a principal amount of \$155,269,638.73 and an interest rate of 2.00%. This is an increase of \$1,479,751.90 in principal amount of the loan and an increase of \$843,979.10 in the grant over the amounts previously approved on December 4, 2017.

The low interest loan and grant will fund the construction of new headworks, dual use primary clarifiers, wet weather treatment disinfectant and odor control at the Hartford wastewater treatment plant and the construction of modifications and upgrades to the Rocky Hill wastewater treatment plant, including modifications to the biological nutrient removal system for effluent nitrogen reduction, modifications to various parts of the plant for increased hydraulic capacity and upgrades to various parts of the plant which are nearing the end of their respective useful lives.

The State of Connecticut, through the Clean Water Fund Program, will now provide \$228,568,563.96 in state funding with approximately \$73,298,925.23 in grants and \$155,269,638.73 in low interest loans at 2.00% to fund the expenses associated with this agreement.

Bond Counsel prepared the following resolution for your approval.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED that it be

VOTED: That the Board of Finance recommends to the District Board passage of the following amended and restated resolution from Bond Counsel

RESOLVED:

Section 1. This resolution amends and restates a resolution of the District Board, passed at a meeting of the District Board held on December 4, 2017.

Section 2. The Chairman and the District Treasurer or Deputy Treasurer are authorized to execute and deliver the First Amendment CWF No. 657-C1 to Project Loan and Project Grant Agreement to be entered into with the State of Connecticut (the "Agreement") and any and all Interim Funding Obligations and Project Loan Obligations for CWF No. 657-C1 in the aggregate amount not to exceed \$155,269,638.73. Such Interim Funding Obligations shall be dated as of their date of issue, shall mature within six months of the Scheduled Completion Date, shall bear interest at the rate of two percent (2.00%) per annum, shall be payable as to principal and interest as provided in the Agreement and, to the extent not paid prior to maturity from The Metropolitan District funds, may be renewed by the issuance of Interim Funding Obligations or Project Loan Obligations, all as provided in the Agreement. The prior actions by the Chairman and the District Treasurer in furtherance of this resolution are hereby confirmed and ratified in all respects.

Capitalized terms used herein and not defined shall have the meanings ascribed to them in the Agreement.

Section 3. The Project Loan Obligations shall be dated as of their date of issue, shall mature no later than twenty years from the Scheduled Completion Date, shall bear interest at the rate of two percent (2.00%) per annum and shall be payable as to principal and interest as provided in the Agreement.

Respectfully Submitted,

Scott W. Jellison
Chief Executive Officer

On motion made by Commissioner Hoffman and duly seconded, the report was received and resolution adopted by unanimous vote of those present

OPPORTUNITY FOR GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENTS

No one from the public appeared to be heard.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:50 PM

ATTEST:

John S. Mirtle, Esq.
District Clerk

Date of Approval