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ICC Hosts Policy Session on Energy Efficiency in Affordable Housing

CHICAGO—On Wednesday, the Illinois Commerce Commission hosted a policy session on Energy Efficiency in Affordable Housing.

Led by Chairman Brien Sheahan, the session invited leaders in the housing field and related industries to share regional best practices in green housing preservation and energy efficiency in order to explore ways to develop and implement strategies through innovative partnerships, policy development, and legislative reform.

Illinois has made significant investments in affordable housing stock and energy efficiency programs since 2007, when Senate Bill 1592 created the Energy Efficiency Portfolio Standard (EEPS), providing a substantial budget for programs and incentives to reduce electrical energy usage and demand for customers of investor-owned electric utilities. Investor-owned gas utilities were added to the program in 2011, and since the legislation, utilities in Illinois have made significant investments in programs designed to reduce energy usage and save customer dollars.

“By retrofitting existing affordable housing to increase energy efficiency, green jobs are created, low-income residents pay less in utilities, operating costs are reduced, and healthier homes are created,” said Chairman Sheahan. “Capturing these benefits requires using innovative strategies to penetrate existing market barriers, and the Illinois Commerce Commission was well poised to host a strategic conversation on this topic in order to serve as a steward of positive change.”

The Session’s first panel was moderated by Anne Evens, CEO of Elevate Energy, and provided an overview of the affordable multifamily housing stock and the potential for energy efficiency savings.

Representatives from utilities across Illinois and state agencies then discussed current utility programs and best practices in program design. Such programs represent a significant and growing resource for residential energy retrofits that remain largely untapped by the multifamily sector. The panel included a discussion by national experts from the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE) and the National Association of State Energy Officials (NASEO), who shared best practices from across the country on topics such as On Bill Financing and other low-cost financing programs utilities could offer consumers qualifying as low-to-moderate low-income. Overall, the panel’s speakers agreed that more coordination and collaboration was needed among utilities and trusted community partners in order to maximize consumer energy efficiency benefits.

The third panel analyzed best practices concerning technical solutions from an owner/developer perspective, while the Session’s final panel explored financing mechanisms for energy efficiency programs in the affordable

housing sector. Financing remains a key barrier to furthering program impact, and panelists noted additional mechanisms, such as “green” based tax credit programs and rebates, would increase incentives and feasibility for additional programming.

Speakers at the Session included John Brauc, President, Checkmate Realty; Michael Burton, Asset Management Director, Bickerdike; Sandy Fazeli, Senior Program Director, National Association of State Energy Officials; Andrew Geer, VP & Market Leader, Chicago, Enterprise Community Partners; Audra Hamernik, Executive Director, Illinois Housing Development Authority; Jim Jerozal, Managing Director of Energy Efficiency, Nicor Gas; Molly Lunn, Deputy Director for Energy & Recycling, Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity; Karen Lusson, Assistant Bureau Chief, Public Utilities Bureau, Illinois Attorney General’s Office; George Malek, Director of Energy Efficiency Services, ComEd; Keith Martin, Director of Energy Efficiency, Ameren Illinois; Chris Meister, Executive Director, Illinois Finance Authority; Patrick Michalkiewicz, Manager of Energy Efficiency and Major Accounts, Peoples Gas/North Shore Gas; Art Rendak, President, Inland Mortgage Capital; Thurman Smith, Senior Vice President and Community Development Market Manager, PNC; Suzanne Stelmasek, Senior Policy Analyst, Elevate Energy; Dan York, Utilities, State, and Local Policy Program Fellow, American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy and Stacie Young, Director of The Preservation Compact, Community Investment Corporation.

A copy of the Session agenda, which includes a full topic overview of each panel, can be viewed [here](#). Presentations from the Session will be made available on the Commission’s website at a later date.

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The Illinois Commerce Commission’s mission is to pursue an appropriate balance between the interests of consumers and existing and emerging service providers to ensure the provision of adequate, efficient, reliable, safe and least-cost public utility services. The Commission pursues this mission through three bureaus: The Bureau of External Affairs, which provides educational information on utility issues for consumers, governmental entities and communities and through its Consumer Services Division, resolves customer/utility disputes and develops rules on utility service and consumer protection; the Public Utilities Bureau, which focuses on financial and operational analysis, policy development, public safety and enforcement activities related to electric, natural gas, water, sewer and telecommunications companies; and the Transportation Bureau, which includes trucking insurance and registration, railroad safety, relocation towing, safety towing and household goods moving company enforcement activities. The ICC’s five commissioners are appointed by the Governor and approved by the Illinois State Senate for five-year terms.