

East Whatcom Community Council Clean Air Committee
Meeting summary
January 11, 2017

CAC Charge: The charge of the East Whatcom Community Council Clean Air Committee is to work jointly with the Northwest Clean Air Agency to develop a comprehensive, community-based, long-range plan designed to improve the air quality in the East Whatcom County Region.

Chair: Phil Cloward, East Whatcom Community Council

Members: Jerry DeBruin & David Moe, WCFPD #14; John Wolpers, Whatcom County Health Department; Mark Schofield OppCo; Veronica Dearden, Kendall Watch Community Action Group; Kurt Thompson, community member; Viktor Vetkov, Slavic Church; Wain Harrison, Whatcom County; Julie O'Shaughnessy, NWCAA

Present: Phil Cloward, Jerry DeBruin, Mark Schofield, Wain Harrison, John Wolpers, Julie O'Shaughnessy

Agenda items:

- 1. Introductions** – Introductions were not necessary. Only Clean Air Committee members were present.

- 2. Approval of December 14, 2016 meeting summary**

Motion:

- Wain Harrison moved to approve meeting notes.
- Mark Schofield seconded the motion.

- 3. Open public comment** – No public comment.

- 4. Announcements**

No meeting next month (February)

Motion:

- John Wolpers moved to cancel February meeting
- Wain Harrison seconded the motion

- 5. Outreach ideas**

Julie – Would like to discuss possible ways to inspire community involvement, possibly a master burner program or an award program for people who are burning well. A recent conversation with Jerry at Innovations pointed out the potential need of community members to call on other community members to help with burning techniques or unforeseen challenges. Several examples are, effectively starting a fire with pressed-wood logs, what is an appropriate fire size for the current weather conditions, and what is the general "maximum" number of pressed-wood logs to burn at any one time.

The Opportunity Council is responsible for providing wood stove operation education to change-out recipients (contract item with NWCAA) which realistically can't anticipate and address the full spectrum of challenges that may occur. Additional support, instruction and resources after having operated the stove for a period of time may be more meaningful. This community would allow for the nuances of how to burn efficiently and effectively in "your" home to be addressed.

Wain – How would a master burner or award program be structured and implemented?

Phil – Has received and responded to several calls from community members requesting his assistance on various wood stove operation challenges.

Suggested a video on how to properly operate a certified wood stove, possibly aired by local television stations as a helpful tool. Photos depicting proper wood burning techniques would also be helpful.

Julie – Rebecca Brown, Air Quality Specialist, is reading a book, “The Influencer” which stresses the importance of positive feedback as a motivator. She suggested a reward system of some type.

John – Positive reinforcement/reward provides another way in which to engage people and help them burn properly and continue to do so.

Wain – If a video is produced, it may be helpful to provide it to wood stove vendors to distribute to their clients. A visual aid is much more effective than verbal instruction.

John – Affirmed that “selling” how to operate a stove properly is as important as selling the stove itself. Everyone learns differently and visual aids add value.

Mark – It would be interesting to have community members available to assist other members in their home. A master burner program may have merit.

Jerry – Agrees that an instructional video and a local resource community member would be a good thing.

Julie – Stated that NWCAA may already have an instructional video. Will check and report back at next meeting.

6. Biomass committee update

Phil – The Washington Woodland Coop is working to secure a contract with Whole Foods to provide bundled firewood for sale.

Working on several different grants, one with the Department of Commerce that allows for payback “in-kind” with the product produced. This approach may be helpful when developing the light industrial area in Columbia Valley.

7. Residential wood sheds; construction & delivery update

Phil

The weather has had a significant impact on shed deliveries. The current snow and ice conditions create an unsafe situation for delivery volunteers. One previous delivery effort during icy conditions with AmeriCorps volunteers was enough. Communication and coordination between Phil and volunteers is on-going and the sheds will be delivered as soon as reasonably possible.

Julie

Updated Doug at Westside Building Supply about the delayed delivery of wood sheds because of the inclement weather. Requested a rental extension and asked Doug for any possible reduction in the rental rate since we've been unable to use it for the past month or so.

8. NWCAA burn ban communication strategy

Julie – Tabled at the Foothills Foodbank with Aly Robinson (OppCo) and attended Community Connections meeting to share NWCAA's newest campaign, "Are burn bans in your future?". Planned to attend the KendallWatch meeting as well, but it was cancelled because of weather.

Info on future burn bans will continue to be distributed and opacity patrols will occur during periods of degrading air quality as budget allows.

9. Update on NWCAA smoky chimney readings

Jerry – Asked how things are going in regard to opacity observations and excess chimney smoke warnings.

Julie – Approximately 15 people called NWCAA after receiving an excessive chimney smoke warning. Each packet includes the warning, "What to do Next" summary, a picture of the smoky chimney, a summary of the 3-day air quality trend, and an air quality level explanation sheet.

Excess chimney smoke warnings were sent to 60 residents for observations made on December 14 and to 12 residents for observations made on January 5.

NWCAA staff continues to evaluate and refine the process to ensure a clear and positive approach that fosters community relations, support and accountability.