

East Whatcom Community Council Clean Air Committee (CAC)

Meeting summary

October 7, 2015

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.

Committee Guidelines:

1. Listen to understand, not to respond; seek clarity.
2. Voice opinions and questions openly in the meeting and not after; speak for yourself; everyone's opinion is valuable and worthy of attention.
3. Conflict over a topic is healthy; take nothing personally; engage in debate.
4. Do not expect consensus or certainty.
5. Explain why you don't agree with a proposal, but when a decision is made, buy in.
6. If people look like they have something to say, encourage them to speak.

Chair: Phil Cloward, East Whatcom Community Council

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

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

Agenda items:

1. **Introductions** – Lorena Shah, Opportunity Council, and the Clean Air Committee (CAC) introduced themselves. Lorena works with Mark Schofield and is currently working on the cord wood voucher pilot project.
2. **Approval of September 2, 2015 meeting summary**
Motion:
 - Wain Harrison moved to approve meeting notes.
 - John Wolpers seconded the motion.
3. **Open public comment** – No public comment.
4. **Announcements**
 - **Clean Air Committee (CAC) outreach and notification** - Mark asked how notification of the CAC meetings, specifically the new location at the Fire District No. 14 conference room, is provided to the public. Julie said that the meeting agenda is posted to Northwest Clean Air Agency's (NWCAA) website and a notice of the meeting relocation was posted at the East Whatcom Regional Resource Center (EWRRC) prior to the meeting. Wain commented that outreach of the CAC's efforts, in general, may be lacking. Mark said that outreach highlighting the committee's continued efforts would be beneficial. Jerry offered the fire district's assistance by posting to their website, Facebook page, and sign in front of the fire hall. Lorena mentioned that the EWRRC has a monthly newsletter that may be a way to advertise. Phil said that the CAC meetings are already included in the meeting schedule of the newsletter. Julie

said that NWCAA can develop a sandwich board sign to advertise the meetings. NOTE: Phil mentioned that the Facilities Committee is evaluating concurrent uses at the EWRRRC which may address the noise issue that prompted the change in meeting location.

- **Committee chair - Phil** confirmed that Lou Piotrowski will not be returning to the CAC as Chair. Phil will serve as committee chair.
- **Wood smoke reduction grant – Julie** received informal notification from Rod Tinnemore, Ecology, that NWCAA will receive \$80,000 for the next biennium wood smoke reduction grant for Columbia Valley.

5. Cord wood vendors and vouchers

Lorena – Reported that the cord wood voucher pilot program is moving forward and final details are being worked out. How to consistently and meaningfully define and use terms – seasoned, dry, and moisture percentages – is being discussed and will be resolved before launching the program. Lorena spoke with Julie who recommended that if the term “seasoned” is used that it be defined consistent with the Washington Administrative Code (WAC 173-433 – Solid Fuel Burning Device); wood that has 20% or less moisture content. Lorena said the draft wood vendor form refers to “seasoned (dry) wood - 20% or less.” The moisture content of the wood will be checked by a third-party as part of the quality assurance process.

Phil – Stated that it’s important to use industry terminology and that the term “seasoned” is fine. However, practically speaking, moisture content may be slightly above 20%. Also, the WAC is not the law, it is legislation. The Revised Code of Washington (RCW) is the law. A graduated range of acceptable moisture content is necessary to have a successful program. Moisture specifications and terminology will be included in discussions with the wood purveyors. Phil will work with Lorena to schedule a meeting with the purveyors.

Julie – Agreed that the WAC defines seasoned wood as 20% or less moisture content and requested that if the term “seasoned” is used that it is defined consistent with the WAC. Using acceptable moisture ranges versus defined terminology may be helpful. She emphasized that NWCAA’s focus is and will continue to be on the amount of smoke (opacity) coming from stacks, not on testing the moisture content of wood. Moisture content evaluation will be in the context of the Opportunity Council’s quality assurance program administered by the Opportunity Council, independent of NWCAA.

6. Biomass committee update

Phil – Recent emphasis has been on the light industrial property inside the urban growth area. Phil has a meeting scheduled with the Port of Bellingham to discuss project funding and job potential.

7. Residential wood sheds update

Julie – Thanked Phil for his efforts in getting written bids for the residential wood shed construction materials and for contacting Mt. Baker and Nooksack High Schools about the possibility of building the sheds as part of their curriculum. Funding is again available and the project can move forward. Julie and Aly Anderson of Opportunity Council, met and discussed revisions to this year’s wood heating outreach, including the two new projects: Cord wood vouchers through Opportunity Council’s energy assistance program and residential wood sheds. Also discussed was how to possibly incorporate wood shed questions with the general intake process.

Phil – Since several months have passed since obtaining original material bids and making contact with the schools, bids will need to be reconfirmed, both high schools

contacted, interim storage site(s) determined, and the delivery process coordinated. He asked how referrals will be managed and recommended that the process remain as local as possible, perhaps also involving the EWRRRC staff. Reiterated the importance of acknowledging the schools for their community service in the form of a nice plaque.

Lorena – Asked who will coordinate the wood shed referrals/eligibility information gathered by the Opportunity Council as part of their intake process as well as receipts of wood shed delivery.

Julie – NWCAA will be the recipient of the wood shed referral forms and will collect and manage the delivery information. How to coordinate delivery with residents still needs to be determined. Julie will draft questions for wood shed recipient screening, ask CAC members for comments, and confirm with Ecology the award of grant funds and notify Phil.

Mark – Suggested that Opportunity Council work with current and past clients of the woodstove change-out program to help identify wood shed recipients. Suggested that a media opportunity exists with acknowledging the schools for their community service.

8. NWCAA complaint response strategy

Julie – As the CAC continues to develop a multi-faceted approach to improving Columbia Valley air quality, NWCAA staff is developing plans for enforcing requirements limiting smoke from chimneys. Julie said NWCAA will continue to participate in the committee's ongoing efforts, focusing on education, resources, and community involvement.

Due to limited resources, complaint response strategy during the 2015-2016 wood-heating season will differ when air quality is good versus when air quality is impacted as determined by the Columbia Valley particulate monitor data. During periods of non-impacted air quality, first-time complaints will receive a letter and educational information about proper wood burning techniques and wood storage.

During periods of impacted air quality, complaint response will occur as follows:

- ❖ First steps:
 - Deploy agency staff (with additional voluntary support by fire department) to patrol and observe Columbia Valley community chimneys during periods of impacted air quality. Intended goal: Identify addresses that are significantly exceeding opacity limits, because they are the biggest impact to air quality in the area.
 - Document addresses with chimney smoke observed exceeding 20% opacity, and if possible, make immediate contact with persons at the residence (by knocking on the door) to bring their attention to the opacity, determine what factors may be contributing to the high opacity as well as provide education and resource information.
 - Observed opacity in excess of 20% may result in a written warning handed to the persons at the residence during the immediate contact.
 - NWCAA will record these warnings in the agency database for future reference.
- ❖ Later steps:
 - Escalate enforcement as needed to achieve clean burning in residential wood heating devices. Enforcement includes issuing formal notices of violation and penalties to individuals who are documented repeat offenders.

Wain & Lorena – If you get a complaint about a certain address prior to deploying inspectors, will you still reach out to them with information when doing complaint investigation, whether there's smoke or not?

Julie – Yes, they would be on the list to visit as well as residents noted to have high opacity during the inspector’s rounds. The intent is to make sure that the community has the tools and resources to succeed so that enforcement can be avoided. Enforcement is a tool we have available to help improve air quality and will be used gradually and transparently.

Phil – A gradual escalation with notice to the public will help sell the program. It’s also important to distinguish neighborhood feuds from legitimate complaints. Is there a way of showing people what 20% opacity looks like? It would be helpful to point that out using trees as background.

Jerry – This approach will help address repeat offenders where outreach hasn’t been effective. It’s a balanced approach that also includes resources to help address the issue.

9. Outreach

Julie – Door-to-door outreach will occur as frequently as fire department, Opportunity Council, and NWCAA staff are available. In addition, NWCAA is looking into the viability of developing a “leave behind” packet and will be checking with our attorney to see if it’s possible. We want to be sensitive to the community’s concerns and make sure we’re not setting them up for any type of targeting by leaving material at homes where no one answers.

Jerry – Thinks the leave-behind packet is a good idea.

John – Said the health department staff leaves information behind.

Phil – Stated that the water district also leaves notices on door handles.

10. Upcoming community events

Julie – No discreet formal event is scheduled for this wood-heating season. The wood shed project is the focal point and will occur on an ongoing basis.

Jerry – Supported efforts and resources utilized in this way.

11. Strategic plan

Phil – Nothing new to report.

12. Monitoring & complaint summary

Julie – No air quality exceedances or wood stove complaints since last meeting.

2015 meetings, 4:30 – 6:00 p.m. – Whatcom County Fire District #14, 7528 Kendall Road, Maple Falls, WA (starting October 2015 and until further notice):

Jan. 21	April 1	July 1	Oct. 7
Feb. 4	May 6	Aug. 5	Nov. 4
March 4	June 3	Sept. 2	Dec. 2