

**East Whatcom Community Council**  
**Clean Air Committee meeting summary**

Aug. 21, 2013

**Members present:** Phil Cloward, Laura Curley, Jerry DeBruin, Veronica Dearden, Wain Harrison, David Moe, Lou Piotrowski, Mark Schofield, Katie Skipper, Viktor Vetkov

**Visiting:** Carole Sharpe

**1. Introductions:**

Lou introduced his wife Carole Sharpe.

He said she had read to him a paragraph by Wallace Stegner on the way to the meeting that he wanted to share with the group. He emailed the following on Aug. 23, 2013:

“During the Intro item at yesterday's meeting, I mentioned that Carole Sharpe had read a paragraph to by Wallace Stegner on the way over that spoke to me about issues relevant to our proceedings. I wanted to read a paragraph, but since the book was still in the car, I decided to share it with you in writing.

First, just a little background. Stegner, born in Iowa in 1909, won a Pulitzer Prize in 1971 while he was teaching at Stanford University. Often referred to as the Dean of Western Writers, one of his students at Stanford was Wendell Berry, one of my favorite writers. Berry is a poet, essayist, novelist who farms along the Kentucky River. So when Carole mentioned that Berry was prominent in *Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs*, Stegner's autobiographical sketch of living and writing in the west published the year before his death in 1993, I wanted to hear more. Below is the paragraph I would have read yesterday.

*Back to Wendell Berry, and his believe that if you don't know where you are you don't know who you are. He is not talking about the kind of location that can be determined by looking at a map or street sign. He is talking about the kind of knowing that involves the senses, the memory, the history of a family or a tribe. He is talking about the knowledge of place that comes from working in it in all weathers, making a living from it, suffering from its catastrophes, loving it's mornings or evenings or hot noons, valuing it for the profound investment of labor and feeling that you, your parents and grandparents, your all-but-unknown ancestors have put into it. He is talking about the knowing that poets specialize in.*

– Wallace Stegner (1992) –

**2. Approval of July 17, 2013 meeting summary:**

The following items were revised:

**6. Review EWCC operational policies and procedures:**

Lou ~~would like to start putting together a~~ will maintain a “Policy Policies and Procedures” document for the committee that ~~would~~ will include the group’s charge, facilitation and support procedures, etc.

**Action item:** Laura will compile her notes and send them to Lou. The committee will continue developing policies and procedures. Lou will ~~start developing a~~ maintain and add to the document as necessary, ~~notebook~~ and will present a final draft to the ~~full~~ EWCC Board of Directors for review and approval.

### **7. Review charge of Clean Air Committee:**

The group agreed on the charge as follows:

The charge of the EWCC 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.

**Action item:** Present committee’s charge to the ~~full~~ EWCC Board of Directors for review and approval - Lou

Lou went on to explain the structure of the East Whatcom Community Council. All residents of the Foothills region are considered members of the full council. Residents elect the Board of Directors, which is responsible for policymaking and decisions on large issues that affect the community. The Board of Directors has no staff. Committees do the work. The Board of Directors’ fiscal agent is the Opportunity Council.

Phil moved to accept the meeting summary as amended. Mark seconded. The summary was unanimously accepted.

### **3. Open public comment:**

Lou thanked everyone in attendance for their dedication to making the Foothills region a better place to live.

### **4. Additions to the agenda:**

The group agreed to move up Item 10, regarding planning for an upcoming community potluck, to follow Item 6, “Committee member reports.”

### **5. Action item follow-up:**

- **Action item:** Mark will look into how the Opportunity Council has administered previous government grants and loan programs, and what the application and administration requirements were.

**Follow up:** Mark checked into how the Opportunity Council might apply for grant funds or administer a revolving loan program for repairing heating sources. The Opportunity Council’s initial response was that, as a 501(c)(3), his organization may not have the authority to apply for or develop such a program, but it is possible that it could be the fiscal sponsor that administers a grant. He pointed out that similar services may already be available through existing Opportunity Council programs. For example, the Opportunity Council has a low-income weatherization program that includes heating system upgrades for people who meet certain income eligibility requirements.

There is also the Community Energy Challenge through which residences and businesses can receive support and get access to refunds that help with weatherization and efficiency upgrades.

The group agreed that this information would be useful in determining what the community's needs are and where there are gaps in services as air quality improvement plans take shape.

As a next step, after the Northwest Clean Air Agency (NWCAA) receives the latest round of state woodstove change-out grant funding and renews its contract with the Opportunity Council, the committee will plan a workshop to share with the community what assistance is available and who is eligible.

Discussion followed about the change-out program and what heating sources are eligible.

- **Laura provided a woodstove change-out grant update.** The Washington Department of Ecology had provided unofficial confirmation that NWCAA would be receiving more woodstove change-out grant funds, and that Ecology was interested in using Columbia Valley as a pilot project area for an afterburner retrofit device. The devices are said to greatly reduce smoke from wood burning devices. They cost about \$300 each, not including installation. The devices aren't likely to be ready for broad distribution until next winter, but a few demonstration models may be available this winter.

The group agreed that compared with the cost of a new woodstove, the afterburners would be an inexpensive upgrade, and resident members would be willing to promote the device.

- **Action item:** Jerry will check with David about placing meeting notices in the Foothills Gazette.

**Follow up:** The Foothills Gazette will publish the meeting notices.

- **Action item:** Laura will compile her notes and send them to Lou. The committee will continue developing policies and procedures. Lou will maintain and add to the document as necessary, and will present a final draft to the EWCC Board of Directors for review and approval.

**Follow up:** Lou said that when we have more, we will add to it, but that we're not quite ready to present it to the EWCC Board.

- **Action item:** Present committee's charge to the EWCC Board of Directors - **Lou**

**Follow up:** Lou asked to submit the charge to the EWCC Board for its Oct. 3 meeting.

- **Action item:** **Laura** will compile the list and send it to Lou for circulation as soon as possible.  
**Committee members** will talk to neighbors for more ideas and report back at the next meeting.

**Follow up:** Done. The following additions were made to the stakeholder list:

- area developers
- U.S. Department of Health
- Mount Baker Lions Club
- Washington State Department of Natural Resources
- asthma clinic
- PeaceHealth
- school nurse

- Readiness to Learn Coordinators (Mount Baker School District has two. Paula Stratman was suggested)
- Port of Bellingham
- Foothills Medical Center Committee (currently the Interfaith Committee)
- U.S. Department of Health

Elaborating on the last item, Lou said that when he and Phil started working in 2002 to develop the Community Resource Center building, there were three parts: The structure, a gymnasium and a health clinic. He said they have not given up on the other two parts. With recent changes in federal health care laws, some funds may be available for a clinic. The committee is now 12 to 15 people and a couple more are going to be added. At the next meeting, he said he thinks they are going to change the name.

**6. Committee member reports:**

- Katie updated information she had provided on power outages at the last meeting. She checked with Puget Sound Energy after some committee members expressed skepticism about the numbers because they experienced much longer periods without power. PSE responded that the numbers provided were averages, and that some people may have experienced outages that were twice as long as the hours reported.

The group agreed that it was important to work with PSE because there would be little hope of promoting alternatives to wood heat if people aren't confident in the power supply.

- Lou said he met with Port of Bellingham Commissioner Mike McCauley and shared the idea of a community run wood bank. He said the idea was well received and was in line with the port's economic development goals. He suggested that the group should look for ways to engage the port by continuing to think about our plans from an economic development perspective.

Discussion followed about possible economic development opportunities.

The Port of Bellingham was added to the stakeholder list.

**7. Review Clean Air Committee's plans for joint Kendall Watch and EWCC September potluck:**

Veronica said the potluck to celebrate the Kendall Watch anniversary was booked at Kendall Elementary School in the gym on Monday, Sept. 9. Setup would be from 4:30 to 6 p.m., and the potluck would be from 6 to 8:15 p.m. She will send out invitations. Unstaffed tables would be available for the Resource Center, Opportunity Council, Kendall Watch, the fire department and Chamber of Commerce to provide information.

**8. Review/update preliminary list of stakeholders:**

- Whatcom County Health Department
- East Whatcom community residents
- Vulnerable populations (children, the elderly, people with heart or upper respiratory disease or illness)
- School officials – Kendall Elementary and Mount Baker School District
- Media

- Emergency responders
- Medical professionals
- Puget Sound Energy (PSE)
- Opportunity Council
- Timber industry
- Kendall Watch
- Whatcom County government
- Northwest Clean Air Agency (NWCAA)
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology)
- Realtors/property managers
- American Lung Association
- Chamber of Commerce
- Local businesses
- National Institute of Health
- Woodstove retailers
- Slavic community
- Food bank
- Local churches
- Opposition
- Insurance companies
- EWRRRC staff
- Local residential and commercial real estate developers
- State Department of Health (DOH)
- Mount Baker Lions Club
- Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
- Asthma clinic
- PeaceHealth
- School nurse
- Readiness to Learn coordinators
- Port of Bellingham
- Foothills Medical Center Committee (currently the Interfaith Committee)
- U.S. Department of Health

**9. Discuss process for selecting stakeholder representatives and the vision for their role/involvement with the committee:**

Committee members began discussing at what level they would engage stakeholders and what the stakeholders would do.

The group agreed that some on the list should become active, regular members of the committee, some would be good sounding boards and information resources that would be called on/invited to attend or review plans as necessary, and some should be kept informed of committee activities if they were appropriate avenues of physical, monetary and/or political support.

The group began considering what the relationship between the committee and stakeholders should be and how to establish criteria and categories for participation.

Katie felt it should be a priority to have health interests and parents of young children represented on the committee.

Phil thought the port would be willing to attend meetings and participate regularly. He added that he thought DNR should sometimes participate and sometimes act as a sounding board. He said the people already seated around the table generally are going to put together a plan, and would work with some of the people on the stakeholder list as resources and experts.

Lou suggested developing criteria and categories for selecting stakeholders. The group brainstormed the following list:

- Divide into categories
  - Resources for expertise (DNR, for example)
    - Technical
    - Regulatory
  - Financial resources/economic development
  - Residents
  - Health
  - Political
  - Influencers, advocates

**Action item:** Lou requested that a subcommittee get together to work on the criteria and come back with a draft for the group to consider at the next meeting. Phil, Lou and Laura volunteered. Lou said he would also ask Jerry, who had to leave early with David for a fire call, to participate.

The following agenda items will be carried forward to the next meeting of the EWCC Clean Air Committee:

**9. Continue - Discuss process for selecting stakeholder representatives and the vision for their role/involvement with the committee.**

**10. Identify potential individuals to represent stakeholders/stakeholder groups**

**11. Upcoming monthly meeting schedule – 4:30 – 6 p.m., third Wednesday, East Whatcom Regional Resource Center:**

- Sept. 18
- Oct. 16
- Nov. 20
- Dec. 18