

East Whatcom Community Council
Clean Air Committee meeting summary

Sept. 18, 2013

Members present: Rebecca Brown, Phil Cloward, Laura Curley, Jerry DeBruin, Wain Harrison, Lou Piotrowski, Mark Schofield, Katie Skipper

1. **Introductions** – none needed
2. **Approval of August 21, 2013 meeting summary** – Phil moved to accept the meeting summary. Mark seconded. The summary was unanimously accepted.
3. **Open public comment** – Mark complimented NWCAA staff for the quality and detail of the meeting notes. Others expressed appreciation.
4. **Additions to the agenda** – Committee members added the following items to the agenda:
 - NWCAA proposal for winter wood-heating outreach
 - Update to Foothills Medical Center Committee
 - Laura’s future plans
5. **NWCAA proposal for winter wood-heating outreach – Katie**

With winter coming, NWCAA has been considering how to most productively continue its work to identify sources of air pollution on days the agency’s monitor shows air quality is poor, and provide information and assistance to residents.

Katie proposed a joint effort, with resident committee members and NWCAA inspectors doing door-to-door outreach to homes that are generating a lot of smoke. The team could offer information and answer any questions. It would also be an opportunity to talk about the committee’s work and the woodstove change-out and incentive programs.

Phil said that the activity should be limited to January and February, meaningful information materials should be provided, and the committee should discuss in advance what messages should be conveyed. He said that the outreach should be friendly and proactive and that enforcement shouldn’t enter the conversation at this time. He added that resident committee members’ local knowledge and relationships with their neighbors would be an important component of the outreach.

Rebecca said that in her work as an air quality inspector, she found that listening to people helped her tailor her response and provide the most meaningful help. She said she enjoys learning what people need and working with them to solve problems.

Phil said that the committee should do preliminary outreach to lay the groundwork for the winter work.

Jerry and Lou discussed combining fire prevention and air quality outreach in advance of winter. Jerry said the fire department might be able to do a winter preparation effort, offering residents a free fire-safety inspection of their woodstoves and chimneys, and provide the air quality information at the same time. Perhaps they could offer to check the moisture content of any wood they're planning to burn this winter.

Lou said he liked the personal approach of knocking on people's doors and talking with people.

Phil said the preliminary outreach work would also be a good opportunity to gauge how people react and make adjustments to our approach.

Phil added that another good place to start educating the community was to work with wood cutters in the area. He pointed out that the wood cutters feel pressure to sell wood, whether it's dry or not, to make a living. He talked to one wood cutter about the possibility of buying wood for a wood bank at a set price, making a valuable resource readily available and relatively inexpensive. The idea was well received.

Action item: Katie will draft an outreach plan for the group to review at the next meeting.

6. Update to Foothills Medical Center Committee – Lou

Lou and Jerry met Tuesday, Sept. 17, with the Foothills Medical Center Committee, a group of about 20 people who meet quarterly (planning to meet more frequently) to work toward a clinic as part of the Resource Center.

Lou updated the group on the work of the Clean Air Committee. The information was well-received, especially by the nurse for the local school district. She thought another way to reach people in the community is to provide information to children that they could deliver home. She told Lou that something needed to be done to help all the kids with asthma. She said kids in the community have an exceptional asthma problem. In addition to smoke, she attributed the problem to the damp environment, which promotes mold growth.

Laura said NWCAA has a nationally recognized indoor air quality expert, and the agency could provide information about mold to accompany smoke-related air quality information.

The nurse may not be able to participate on the committee, but she is willing to talk to the superintendent about finding a school district representative.

Lou committed to keeping her updated.

(Wain Harrison arrived at 5:30.)

7. Laura's future plans – Laura

Laura shared with the group that after 22 years with NWCAA, she would be leaving at the end of the year. She said it was a good time for her to pursue other passions

she has in her life, and said she feels confident she's leaving the committee in good hands.

She expressed her love, respect and admiration for the committee members.

Group members said they were sorry to hear that she was leaving and said they would miss her. Lou said the committee wouldn't have come together and gotten to this point without her.

Katie said everyone at the agency was sad to see her go. Laura has approached all her work with the same passion that she has shown in the Foothills community.

8. Action item follow-up - none

9. Committee member reports - none

10. Stakeholder subcommittee report – Lou

Lou and Phil explained the subcommittee's process to categorize and prioritize the list of stakeholders the group brainstormed at previous meetings.

The stakeholders were put in three priority groups:

1. A core group that would participate regularly on the committee and be primarily responsible for plan development.
2. People who might come to meetings occasionally, and whom we might call in for technical assistance.
3. People we would provide information to, and who might be good resources, but the chance of them coming to meetings is low.

Katie noticed medical/health interests weren't in the primary group and she felt strongly that they should be. She said everything we were doing to address air quality issues in the area stems from the health effects resulting from breathing particulate pollution. The federal and state Clean Air Acts that NWCAA is tasked with implementing are founded on protecting health. The reason the state Department of Ecology was providing funding and was so interested in our work in this community is because our monitor shows such unhealthy levels of pollution. There is a growing body of research and information about respiratory problems, cardiovascular problems and premature death associated with breathing particulate pollution.

Phil disagreed that health was the main reason we were working to improve air quality. He said people should be able to drive down the road safely and have more efficient and better use of natural resources, and create a better environment overall in the community. He made the point that while medical professionals might provide information about the health effects of air pollution, they didn't need to be present at every meeting. They wouldn't be key to developing solutions.

Katie countered that there was still a large gap between community understanding of why smoke is a problem in the first place, and finding solutions. She thought working toward any solution should involve making people aware of the health risks. She also felt medical professionals would be the best advocates for

protecting health. Vulnerable populations, who are the most immediately affected by air quality problems in the area, would be represented on the group, but they aren't necessarily their own best advocates because they don't know the risks.

Lou said he wasn't opposed to a doctor being involved.

Mark said that even if we didn't get the best expert, having a health professional on the committee would lend credibility to our work. He said he'd like to see someone representing health interests continually coming to the meetings.

Lou proposed renaming the "medical professionals" group in Category 3 to "medical organizations" and adding a "health professionals" group to Category 1.

The group agreed.

The group discussed the possibility of a health professional who might fill more than one role. For example, participation by a school nurse could cover health, schools and vulnerable populations.

The group made other adjustments to the stakeholder list. They agreed that it is still a draft/working document and would revisit it at the next meeting.

Action item: Reach out to health professionals - All

The group agreed to carry the remaining items forward to the next agenda and closed the meeting.

- 11. Continue - Discuss process for selecting stakeholder representatives and the vision for their role/involvement with the committee.**
- 12. Identify potential individuals to represent stakeholders/stakeholder groups**
- 13. Upcoming monthly meeting schedule – 4:30 – 6 p.m., third Wednesday, East Whatcom Regional Resource Center:**
 - Oct. 16
 - Nov. 20
 - Dec. 18

Approval of September 18, 2013 meeting summary: -On motion by Phil, seconded by Wain, the summary of the September 18, 2013 meeting was unanimously approved.