

East Whatcom Community Council
Clean Air Committee meeting summary

Dec. 18, 2013

Members present: Phil Cloward, Laura Curley, Jerry DeBruin, Wain Harrison, David Moe, Julie O'Shaughnessy, Mark Schofield, Katie Skipper, Viktor Vetkov

1. Introductions – None needed.

2. Approval of Nov. 20, 2013 meeting summary – Mark moved approval. Laura seconded.

Katie pointed out that some of the action items that involved answering questions and sharing information are included in the notes.

The meeting summary was unanimously approved.

3. Open public comment – Katie observed that it was Laura's last Clean Air Committee meeting and said Laura was going to be missed.

Group members expressed appreciation for Laura. Julie especially appreciated Laura's ability to network and make connections with people.

Phil joked that Laura deserves a medal of bravery for approaching East Whatcom residents to tackle the air quality problem. He said he sincerely appreciated all her work.

Laura said she was grateful for the opportunity and deeply appreciated working with such a committed and tireless group of people.

4. Additions to the agenda

1. Air quality sign – Katie shared with the group an idea for a low-tech sign that communicated near-current air quality in Columbia Valley, according to the Northwest Clean Air Agency's monitor.

The sign would be a color-coded gauge with a moveable needle, like the gauges used on the state's online air quality monitoring network, and similar to the fire danger signs used by the U.S. Forest Service.

Jerry said he would be willing to put such a sign at the fire station and have someone check air quality online and update the sign daily.

Katie asked if the group supported the idea of an air quality sign. All agreed it was a good idea.

Action item: Look into the cost of having an air quality sign made – **Katie**

2. Business plan – Phil said he would like to add to the agenda an item to discuss the development of a business plan that identifies the scope of what the committee has to get done and some benchmarks. He said the group is making good progress and needs to continue. He said he would be willing to draft a business plan. An item to discuss development of a business plan was added to the agenda, below "identifying potential stakeholders."

5. Committee member reports

1. **Recent shooting** - Julie asked if there was any new or relevant information about a recent shooting in the community. She said she had in mind the safety of NWCAA inspectors and other committee members who were engaged in door-to-door community outreach.

Dave said the latest information is that it was a targeted attack. The shooter allegedly knew the victim and had specifically sought him out.

2. **Woodstove retrofit device** – Laura reported on a conversation she had with one of the device designers. The device, which, in tests, dramatically reduces smoke, can be mounted on the stovepipe on the roof rather than inside the house adjacent to the stove, potentially making the device a more appealing option to homeowners. The designer said very little efficiency is lost by putting it on the roof. The designers are in the process of getting the device UL tested, and it should be ready for installation by January or February.

Phil asked if a permit would be necessary. Wain said it would, but he would check into whether it could be waived as part of a pilot program.

Phil said it was important to continue promoting the use of dry wood, no matter how efficient the device is.

Katie added that the best way to control smoke is to start with clean burning. The device will be even more effective if there's less smoke in the first place.

Jerry reminded the group that they still needed to find someone who would be willing to try it.

Action item: Find someone to test the woodstove retrofit device – **Phil and Jerry.**

Action item: Check into getting the building permit waived for installing the retrofit device – **Wain**

6. Action item follow-up

1. Send the group a link to presentations from the air quality conference including information about air filters – **Rebecca – completed and sent out Nov. 27, 2013.** ([See Nov. 20, 2013 meeting summary.](#))
2. Get a Clean Air Committee presentation scheduled on an upcoming County Council agenda – **Wain**

Wain learned that any committee that's not formally appointed by the council can't usually make a presentation. But a council member can invite a committee to make a presentation.

Action item: Approach council members to request an invitation - **Wain**

3. Clean Air Committee members will think about what to ask for from the NWCAA Board, and how best to ask for it – **All**

Action item: Continue consideration of what to ask for from the NWCAA Board and how best to ask for it – **All**

4. Find someone to test the woodstove retrofit device – **Phil**. (See “Woodstove retrofit device” under “Committee member reports” above.)
5. Incorporate changes to the draft plan and event invitation and finalize them – **Katie – completed and sent out final plan Nov. 27, 2013** (See Documents [posted](#) on the [Meetings and Events](#) page of NWCAA website.)
6. Look into presto log company to see if they are willing to part with samples the outreach teams could offer to homeowners – **David - completed and sent out Nov. 27, 2013**. ([See Nov. 20, 2013 meeting summary](#).)
7. Draft a letter for the committee to consider and discuss, inviting stakeholders to participate – **Katie – continued**

Action item: Draft letter to stakeholders - **Katie**

7. Wood heating workshop recap – follow-up and lessons learned

Based on the positive responses received by committee members, the wood heating workshop was a resounding success.

By Julie’s count, 53 people attended. All the tables and the woodstove demonstration trailer got a lot of interest. People took brochures and asked a lot of questions.

Rebecca distributed 36 moisture meters and collected 33 surveys, answering questions and providing tailored information to each person.

Phil heard appreciation from attendees for the information about what they could do to help address the problem. He said at previous events, there were always one or two negative comments, but at this one, everyone was positive. He said he received about six phone calls after the event from people saying they didn’t initially buy into what he had been saying, but now they are convinced. They told him they were glad the locals got involved.

Mark said a bunch of people picked up pamphlets from the Opportunity Council table. Six people signed up for follow-up about the woodstove replacement program, and one person signed up for follow-up about the Clean Energy Challenge incentive program. Two of the people have already gone through the eligibility application process.

Information provided at the workshop later prompted one person to complain to the fire department about smoke from a neighbor. Dave was able to visit the offending home to offer help and address the problem.

Katie said one woman said she appreciated the information and said the event was excellent. The woman said she had no idea of the severity of the problem, and she wasn’t aware of the effects of smoke. She said events like the workshop were exactly what the community needed to raise awareness and get involved. She spent some time with Katie learning about how to check air quality online and track the progress of the committee.

Katie heard one negative comment about the letters sent by the Northwest Clean Air Agency the previous winter.

Julie asked if anyone had heard from attendees that Zigi's presentation should have been longer. No committee members present had heard that. (Rebecca, who was unable to attend the committee meeting, said later that she had heard from a few people that they wished his presentation had been longer.) Katie thought it was just right for that particular event, but suggested that a future event could be organized as more of a class taught by Zigi. Others agreed that the presentation portion of the evening was long enough, and that Zigi did a good job of enticing people to come outside to the demonstration trailer to ask questions.

The group agreed that the event started too late and timing could have been managed better. Perhaps in the future, the moisture meters – a popular draw – should be placed farther from the door to reduce crowding. Also, people could be encouraged to take surveys with them and bring them back when they are finished, rather than standing at the table to fill them out.

Julie asked if any non-English-speaking Slavic community members were in attendance, and wondered what it might take to increase participation.

Laura suggested something like a "master burner" program, through which community members learn clean burning skills and pass on their knowledge and act as a resource to other community members.

Viktor said it's a difficult audience to access. Even if we reach out to young people, the information doesn't stay in the community because young people often move away. Many older adults have a language barrier, are less receptive to change, and aren't motivated to participate in community activities. Many don't trust efforts that involve government. Viktor plans to help with door-to-door winter outreach, and that might help build trust. When residents in one house see that committee members are just there to offer help, neighbors might begin to talk to each other about it being a positive experience. But he said it's important to make it clear that there are laws and rules that apply, and there are consequences for noncompliance.

Jerry said the outreach teams should get back out in the community.

Viktor suggested a presentation to his church congregation might help after the first of the year, and asked if Katie would be willing to do that. She said she would be happy to.

Viktor also thought it would be helpful to offer something such as fire starters or Presto Logs. Katie said the agency would look into funding for that.

Phil pointed out that the committee is just starting its work. He said that there is going to be a lot to offer. Beyond materials and services, there will be health and safety from having clean air. He said the community is going to have to do the work to effect any real change. The committee needs to encourage involvement so people are out doing their own outreach.

Action item: Arrange time to talk with congregation of Viktor's church. Look into NWCAA funding for providing fire starters – **Viktor, Katie**

8. Discuss 2014 meeting schedule – The group agreed to maintain the meeting schedule as it is for 2014 – the third Wednesday of the month from 4:30 – 6 p.m., at the East Whatcom Regional Resource Center.

Action item: Schedule meetings for 2014 at the Resource Center. **NWCAA**

The following agenda items were carried forward to the next meeting:

9. Continue review of latest draft of stakeholder committee list

10. Identify potential stakeholders – messaging/invitations/outreach

11. Discuss development of a business plan