

East Whatcom Community Council Clean Air Committee
Meeting summary
Feb. 19, 2014

Members Present: Rebecca Brown, Phil Cloward, Jerry DeBruin, David Moe, Julie O'Shaughnessy, Lou Piotrowski, Mark Schofield, Katie Skipper

Lou opened the meeting by thanking everyone for all the work that was done while he was gone. He apologized for being absent and said that although his health is improving, he isn't quite out of the woods.

Members of the group responded that they were happy to see him back and feeling better. They said his health was primary, and no apology was necessary.

1. **Introductions** – none needed.
2. **Approval of Jan. 15, 2013, meeting summary** – Mark moved to approve the meeting summary. Jerry seconded. The meeting summary was unanimously approved.
3. **Open public comment** – None.
4. **Additions/changes to the agenda** – Lou requested to add "evaluation" as a second item under "winter outreach check-in, update."
5. **Identify individuals to represent stakeholder groups**
Phil suggested that any new group members should be expected to hit the ground running and get involved right away. The existing group members shouldn't spend a lot of time bringing new members up to speed. The group agreed that an introduction, short briefing and instructions on how to access previous meeting summaries should be adequate.
The group then spent most of the remainder of the meeting identifying individual stakeholders to represent stakeholder groups and assigning existing group members to contact those who required a personal invitation.

Action item: Group members agreed to contact Katie with any additional suggestions. Katie will add them to the stakeholder spreadsheet, a working document that will be posted once finalized by the group. – **All**

The group also discussed the draft invitation letter that the group intends to send to stakeholders who would have less direct involvement in the committee's ongoing activities. (The group had reviewed a draft at the last meeting and agreed to forward to Lou for his review because, as chairman of the committee, he would be signing it.)

Lou said his biggest question was who should be listed as the contact for stakeholders who receive the letter to respond to. He also said he thought the invitation should be limited to one page. He provided an alternate draft.

The group agreed that Katie would be an appropriate person to collect invitation responses. Katie said she would forward any questions or community-related concerns to non-agency group members, starting with Lou.

Katie said she thought tone and content were more important than brevity in this case, especially since the logos from all the participating groups took up so much space on the original draft. She said she like the tone in the original draft better.

Rebecca also said she preferred the tone in the original draft.

In the interest of time, the group agreed to compare the drafts and send comments and suggestions to Lou and Katie to consider. Lou and Katie agreed to work together to finalize the invitation.

Action item: Review two versions of stakeholder invitation letter and send input to Lou and Katie. – **All**

Action item: Lou and Katie will work together to incorporate edits and suggestions and finalize the letter. – **Lou and Katie**

6. Continue discussing committee next steps, develop “business plan” – brainstorm necessary elements of a long-term strategy, benchmarks and timelines

Katie provided a draft of the results of the previous meeting’s brainstorming session that she reorganized for the group’s consideration.

Although the committee did not have time to continue its discussion of the plan, Phil pointed out that the group had actually begun work on the outline of a strategic plan rather than a business plan. He said he realized the committee needs the strategic plan first before developing the business plan. For the business plan, the committee would have to define the flow of income and expenses, identify funding sources, and develop budget estimates for individual projects.

Committee members agreed that the approach Phil suggested made sense.

Jerry shared information about a meeting he recently attended, suggesting that the Clean Air Committee’s strategy should be mindful of the community’s needs. He said David Webster from the Opportunity Council expressed concern about the poor condition of children’s clothes and homes in the community, and that when social workers go to homes, they see a lack of wood for heating homes. He said Webster identified the Columbia Valley urban growth area and Kendall grade school as the area where the most students in Whatcom County had to be removed by child protective services.

Phil likes the idea of job creation and programs in the community to help the community. One idea he had was a wood-producing machine. At 20 cords a day, he estimated it would cost \$35,000 to \$40,000 dollars. Those are the kinds of projects he would like to see and budget for in the committee’s plans.

7. Community outreach check-in, update

Jerry said that during the last round of outreach visits, he was asked if there is a possibility for a “tiered” energy assistance program.

Mark said he would look into it, but that the grant that funds the Opportunity Council’s work has very specific requirements.

Lou said the Clean Air Committee needs to begin to look at how it can help people who can’t qualify for low-income energy assistance. He said it seems to be one of the central parts of the plan we need to come up with.

Phil said there is the need to address repairing the homes that do opt for another heat source. He said people can end up investing almost as much in home repairs as the heat source itself.

Katie agreed there is a clear need for help with repairing people’s homes – otherwise people would be much less likely to apply for another heat source. But the grant requirements are limiting in that respect. It requires people who accept another heat source to have their wood-burning devices removed, and it won’t pay for home repairs. The committee would need to be creative.

Phil said the key would be to create competition for people’s business. He suggested that the community could develop a pellet factory to provide fuel for pellet stoves.

The group agreed to continue the outreach check-in at the next meeting.

Lou said he wanted to make sure to discuss some measurement tools at the next meeting.

8. Committee member reports

1. Brief update on Whatcom County SEPA process for proposed Red Mountain development (see attached) – **Katie**

Katie reported that she had contacted Whatcom County about the status of the county’s SEPA determination. The county has put its SEPA process on hold pending mitigating conditions proposed by the Northwest Clean Air Agency. The agency is working with the developer to draft mutually agreeable conditions to mitigate air quality impacts. The developer has been positive and cooperative about working with the agency.

2. Communicating Air Quality - National Association of Clean Air Agencies 2014 conference – **Katie**

Katie shared that she had met a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency staff member who had expressed interest in helping to quantify the number of homes in Columbia Valley that would be willing to convert to a heat source other than wood-burning, and help to estimate how much that would cost. Katie told him that she was interested in alternatives to the woodstove change-out grant because the grant is so limiting and doesn’t take into account real community needs. She said simply changing out old woodstoves for new woodstoves wasn’t necessarily the best solution. What about giving people the option to choose high-efficiency electric heat pumps, along with a propane generator backup system for days when the power goes out? And what about subsidizing people’s electricity on cold, windless days so they can

afford not to burn? The EPA staff person said he would talk to people at his agency about possibly setting up some kind of pilot program.

Phil and Lou said it would be best to approach the idea of involving EPA with caution so they don't come in and take over. They like the idea of getting help, but they believe local people have more knowledge about how best solve problems.

Additional item – Lou suggested the group should consider forming one or two subcommittees to do some additional planning between full committee meetings. Katie said that she and other Northwest Clean Air Agency committee members were already stretched thin, and that the agency likely could not commit more time or staff than it already is to the committee. Lou suggested that the subcommittees be made up of local committee members.

The committee agreed to carry the remaining agenda items forward to the next meeting:

9. Winter outreach check-in, update

1. Summary of recent community outreach visit – **Rebecca**
2. **Lou added** - Evaluation

10. Action item follow-up:

1. Air quality sign – **Katie**
2. Draft a letter for the committee to consider and discuss, inviting stakeholders to participate – **Katie**
3. Approach county council members to request an invitation for the Clean Air Committee to make a presentation during an upcoming County Council meeting – **Wain**
4. Clean Air Committee members will think about what to ask for from the NWCAA Board, and how best to ask for it – **All**
5. Contact Friends of the Foothills - **Katie**

11. Upcoming meetings, 4:30 – 6 p.m., East Whatcom Regional Resource Center:

March 19	June 18	Sept. 17	Dec. 17
April 16	July 16	Oct. 15	
May 21	Aug. 20	Nov. 19	

Lou adjourned the meeting at 6:20 p.m.