

## East Whatcom Community Council Clean Air Committee (CAC)

### Meeting minutes

October 15, 2014

4:30-6:00 pm

**CAC Charge:** 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.

#### **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:** Lou Piotrowski (excused)

**Acting Chair:** Phil Cloward

**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

#### **Agenda items:**

**1. Introductions:** Members present introduced themselves to new member, John Wolpers.

- **Mark Schofield**, Opportunity Council – Conservation Programs Coordinator. Works with families to reduce their energy burden and make their homes more efficient. Also, involved with the woodstove change-out program which is the key involvement component of this committee.
- **David Moe**, WCFPD #14 – firefighter. Assists local community in his firefighter capacity and as a member of the CAC committee.
- **John Wolpers**, Whatcom County Health Department – Environmental Health Manager. Works to help protect the health of Whatcom County citizens. Received and accepted Lou Piotrowski's invitation letter to help facilitate and support the CAC's mission.
- **Julie O'Shaughnessy**, Northwest Clean Air Agency (NWCAA) – Special Projects Manager. Primary contact at Northwest Clean Air Agency for the wood smoke reduction program in Columbia Valley. Previously served as Director of Compliance.

- **Phil Cloward**, Member of East Whatcom Regional Resource Committee (EWRRRC) – Vice Chair of the Clean Air Committee, acting Chair for Lou Piotrowski, who is currently excused.
- **Rebecca Brown**, NW Clean Air Agency – Inspector. Works in the area of compliance which includes the woodstove enforcement and the wood smoke reduction program. Previously worked for the Whatcom County Health Department.
- **Jerry DeBruin**, WCFPD #14 – Fire Chief. Assist local community in his capacity as Fire Chief and as a member of the CAC committee.

## 2. Approval of August 20,2014 minutes:

### Motion:

- Mark Schofield moved to approve minutes.
- David Moe seconded the motion.

## 3. Open public comment: None, no public present.

## 4. Announcements:

- Julie updated the committee that Viktor Vitkov's email address associated with the EWRRRC email group was incorrect and as such has not received recent group emails. His address has since been corrected.
- Viktor agreed to ground truth the winter outreach postcards prior to printing after translation by The Language Exchange is complete.

## 5. Strategic plan update:

- Phil originally emphasized the need to develop a CAC strategic plan. He suggested, however, that as CAC actions continue to progress, the importance of developing a strategic plan may apply more to the Biomass Committee. Phil's perception is there hasn't been a great deal of enthusiasm to develop a strategic plan and asked for feedback and comments on this perception. He also said the biomass committee still intends to develop a business plan.
- Mark agreed that the development of a business plan fits well with the biomass committee, but still supports the identification of broad goals, specific objectives, actions, and timelines of CAC activities in a written format. By default, activities that fit into our charge have already been done and others are underway, such as winter outreach. Mark supported the development of a more formal CAC planning document that identifies achievables, measureable objectives, and timelines.
- Phil volunteered to create a CAC plan for review by the committee that would reflect items identified by Mark.
- Julie summarized the results (spreadsheet) of the committee's previous work session where primary stakeholders identified their affiliation and areas of involvement which support the CAC charge.
- The committee supported the development of a written CAC plan as identified by Mark and Phil.

## 6. Winter outreach/community event:

**Community event:**

- Wood-heating workshop is scheduled for December. Exact date has yet to be confirmed.
- Location will be the EWRRRC.
- The event will include Zigiz Gadomski's "Burn it Smart" presentation and woodstove demonstrations.

**Winter outreach (general):**

- Rebecca stated that as part of NWCAA's overall strategy to improve air quality in Columbia Valley, NWCAA was planning a winter outreach campaign to help establish rapport with the community. This will include a winter-long door-to-door campaign to let people know who we are, what programs are available, and tips to burn cleaner and more efficiently. The outreach will include a short survey asking about:
  - Source of heat
  - Age and certification status of woodstove
  - Impressions of air quality in the area, especially during the winter
  - Health issues of family/household members
  - Ideas for the CAC to assist the community
- Mark inquired about the purpose of the health question.
- John inquired about survey data and how it will be collected, summarized, and used.
- John and Jerry stated the importance and difficulty in collecting and synthesizing data to determine a meaningful relationship between health and particulate exposure.
- Rebecca stated that the intent is to help people associate high particulate levels with potential heart or lung issues and would refer people to the air quality monitor to help avoid exposure during periods of poor air quality, but would not offer health advice since she is not a health care official. The health information would be used anecdotally to help NWCAA develop further strategies to improve air quality.
- Julie said a standardized form will be used to ask and record answers to questions for which people are willing to provide responses. The information will be collected, summarized, and used anecdotally to help identify unknown areas of need or concern and help NWCAA develop further strategies to improve air quality.
- Jerry said that people are also interested in outdoor burning regulations and the impacts smoke from these fires have on neighboring residents, especially persons with health problems.
- Mark suggested that if household with young children who have asthma are encountered, Opportunity Council's Healthy Home Program, which serves low-income families with children, may be a valuable resource to help assess the health of the home to identify and eliminate asthma triggers. Mark will provide program brochures to be handed out during the outreach campaign.
- John said that the health department has personnel that are certified in healthy homes that may also be of assistance.
- The committee supported the technical assistance and educational approach of the outreach program prior to proceeding with enforcement.

- Phil asked Mark if the woodstove change-out program can be expanded to include pellet stoves. Mark said that as the program exists today, only heat pumps and woodstoves are allowed.
- Phil stated that garbage burning is also a problem which needs to be included in the outreach campaign and addressed in follow-up actions.
- John said that solid waste regulations prohibit garbage burning and their office receives complaints of this type. Immediate complaint response can be challenging because of location, therefore, their approach is typically educational. In January, all solid waste issues will be entirely shifted from Whatcom County Public Works to the health department who will address all solid waste issues. Education and outreach will be a large part of the initial effort. The health department anticipates adding one FTE to the solid waste program.
- Julie asked if the county ordinance requiring garbage pickup still exists. John responded, yes.
- Rebecca said that she works with Sanitary Services to confirm whether or not a residence has garbage pickup and if not has referred the situation to the city code enforcement officer (Bellingham).

**Winter outreach tools for review and comment:**

- Draft talking points to assist in delivering a consistent message.
  - Clearly identify each team member's affiliation.
  - Flexibility is necessary in order to hear individual's personal experience and concerns, such as outdoor burning. Deviation from the standardized outreach list is ok.
    - Include and acknowledge garbage burning as an issue of concern and identify ways people can address their concern and whom to call.
    - Inform people of the 20 minute start-up and every 4-hour opacity exemption.
    - Include definition of dry wood.
    - Modify "unhealthy days" data to represent winter heating seasons versus calendar years.
- Door-to-door and leave-behind postcards:
  - Postcards have not been printed or mailed.
  - Postcards and other info are viewed as necessary outreach tools for an effective outreach program.
- Canvassing:
  - Winter outreach will be delayed an additional week since postcards are not complete.

**7. Woodstove bounty program:**

The NWCAA plans to hold an event in the spring where individuals can receive a \$250 voucher in exchange of recycling old woodstoves. Details and frequency of the program will be provided as spring nears.

**8. Biomass committee update:**

Mark received an email from Paul Schissler who has drafted a letter to be sent to the Port of Bellingham to support a biomass venture market analysis.

Phil said and Mark agreed that the Opportunity Council has delayed their involvement of the dry fuel project for this year, but is interested in pursuing and supporting the program next year possibly using energy assistance funds.

Phil learned that the necessary component to activate the Columbia Valley industrial zone is a financed commercial project.

#### **9. Air monitoring update (NWCAA):**

- A meteorological station has been added to the existing water district monitoring location. The instrument records temperature, wind speed, wind direction, relative humidity, and barometric pressure.
- Two additional nephelometers will be added to NWCAA's monitoring network to collect data throughout this winter's heating season. One on Shamrock Road, the other on Holly Lane.
- Permanent monitors were chosen over mobile monitoring as they are more effective, efficient and reliable.
- Data will be polled manually at least two times a month and posted to NWCAA's website. The two new stations will supplement the existing monitor's data and help provide a broader picture of Columbia Valley air quality.

#### **Miscellaneous:**

The committee as a whole supported keeping the 4:30-6:00 meeting time.