

East Whatcom Community Council Clean Air Committee (CAC)

Meeting minutes

November 19, 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

Meeting called to order at 4:35 pm.

Members present: Phil Cloward, Jerry DeBruin, David Moe, John Wolpers, Mark Schofield, Wain Harrison, Rebecca Brown, and Julie O'Shaughnessy

Agenda items:

1. Introductions – None necessary. No new members present, no public in attendance.

2. Approval of October 15, 2014 minutes:

- Amended minutes presented that included:
 - i. Addition of John Wolpers as a committee member
 - ii. Typo (tense) correction on page 2
 - iii. Additional information about garbage burning on page 4
 - iv. Additional statement that committee members support the 4:30-6:00 meeting time on page 5
 - v. Correction of Shamrock Lane to Shamrock Road on page 5

Motion:

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

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

4. Announcements:

General:

- Phil provided update on Lou Piotrowski's status and stated that although Lou is doing better, he is still not ready to rejoin the committee at this time.
- Julie reported that Northwest Clean Air Agency Board of Directors approved Resolution 505 at the November meeting which allocates approximately \$90,000 towards efforts to improve Columbia Valley air quality. The Resolution includes a breakdown of the projected budget items and allocation of each.

Biomass committee update (Phil):

- A great deal of effort is focused on developing a business plan for the biomass committee. A meeting is scheduled with David Webster and the rest of the finance committee regarding project funding, quality control criteria, and unit cost for different levels of seasoned wood.
- Phil and Paul Schissler met with a mechanical engineer with background in biomass and project funding.
- A letter and scope of work was sent to the Port of Bellingham approximately 10 days ago. The Port has acknowledged receipt of the information, stated that they will review it, and provide feedback.
- Working to secure a financed project to demonstrate viability of Columbia Valley industrial zone prior to presenting to Whatcom County Council.
- Wain suggested that a preliminary scoping discussion with the County might be helpful. Phil agreed and stated that attendance from the Port of Bellingham would also enhance the viability of the project.
- Anticipate that 10 local jobs created by this project.
- Phil has an attorney working on the project and is confident that by next fall there will be clean, dry wood available to the community as well as expanded projects such as wood pellets and other biomass products.
- Phil stated the need to include pellet stoves as an approved device for the energy assistance and/or change-out programs.

5. Strategic plan update:

- Phil has completed a rough draft that needs to be forwarded to Mark and Julie for review before presenting it to the committee as a whole. Mark stated that he is ready and willing to review the draft for comment. Phil stated that it basically follows the pertinent points identified by the Clean Air Committee, but is in a "strategic plan" format. The draft will be brought to the committee following review by Mark and Julie.

6. Winter outreach/community event:

a. Door-to-door outreach – Nov. 1st update (Rebecca):

- Two outreach teams visited 52 homes on the initial outreach event on November 1st in the Flair Valley Drive area. The community's response was varied, but mostly positive. Some people were aware of poor air quality in the winter months, but a larger number thought the air was good, or even the "best in the world." Moisture meters were given to residents who would use them and didn't have already. Regardless, they provided an opportunity to start a conversation. Flyers were left behind in most cases and mention of the wood-heating workshop in December was made.

- In some cases, no one was home, had no time to talk, the house was abandoned, gates were locked, or no trespassing signs were clearly posted. For these residents no contact was made, but it was noted if a wood stove or stack was visible.
- **Jerry** shared that lady who changed from a wood stove to a pellet stove raved about it stating it was cheaper, more efficient, and cleaner.
- Residents voiced concern about garbage burning; both inside and outside homes.
 - **Wain** mentioned that FD #14 does a lot of work regarding outdoor garbage burning, but that the County is willing to assist in any way possible.
 - **John** confirmed that Rebecca's referral to the Health Department was the correct approach and that their standard approach is still educational first. He also reiterated the health department's commitment to address solid waste education as a whole, starting January.
 - **Wain** stated that the County's initial approach to illegal burning situations is educational as well.

b. Door-to-door outreach – Nov. 22nd planning (All):

- Outreach is scheduled for this weekend. Three NWCAA employees will be participating. **Jerry** will see if he can get three volunteers to participate and partner up.
- **Julie** said that the Jerry Thramer, owner of Innovations, voiced interest in participating in our weekend outreach and wood heating workshop. He offered to set up a wood stove outside of Misty Mountain Realty on December 6th (tentative outreach day) and on December 13th at the wood heating workshop to draw more attention and interest.
- **Julie** told Thramer that she would present his offer to the CAC for discussion.
- After discussion, the CAC decided that for December 6th outreach, the CAC is neutral and would not directly endorse, support, or be associated with a wood burning demonstration and that the December 13th wood heating demonstration should come from an exclusively educational entity.
- **Julie** sent Thramer an email informing him of the committee's position.

c. Wood heating workshop update (Julie):

- The workshop is confirmed for Saturday, December 13th from 2-6:00 pm. Last year's event was on a weekday evening. It is unclear if a weekend date will have more participation.
- Zigi Gadomski is confirmed to present a power point presentation and a wood burning demonstration which includes certified versus uncertified stove and wet versus dry wood.
- **Phil** offered to provide both wet and dry wood.
- The overall agenda was discussed which included time allocations and a short introduction by each CAC member/affiliation present. The committee agreed that the focal point should be Zigi's presentation and that only a short amount of time should be spent on introductions.
- **Innovations'** participation was again brought up. It was reiterated that a private dealership's participation in this event is not appropriate. However, participation in a wood heating "fair" setting where multiple heating vendors participate, would be.
- **Phil** suggested holding a fair wood heating fair in February that includes education.

Phil departed here at approximately 5:30 and designated Julie as chair to complete the meeting.

- **Attendees - Mark** will attend and hopes to have intake personnel to conduct on-site eligibility. **Jerry** will attend for sure along with Dave, possibly. **John** intends to be there, as well.
- **Julie** will send an email to the committee asking for attendance confirmation. Flyers will be sent out to all Columbia Valley residents 10-14 days before the event.

d. Woodstove bounty program overview (Julie):

Jerry asked for a quick review of the program.

- It is essentially a recycling program intended to get old, uncertified, poorly operating stoves out of circulation in lieu of a \$250 voucher.
- The voucher is not tied to required replacement of the recycled device.
- **Jerry** suggested that a wood stove fair (heating system fair) and the bounty program may be a natural "pair".
- **Julie** voiced support for the program, but noted that available funding will help determine which programs we're able to host.

7. Air monitoring update (Julie):

a. Overview of National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) health-based standards

- Provided overview of health-based (NAAQS) for 6 criteria pollutants of which particulate (PM2.5) and explained why it's important to stay in attainment for all pollutants and what can happen if an area becomes non-attainment for a particular pollutant (loss of funding, maintenance plan, etc.).
- Columbia Valley has exceeded the 35 ug/m3 standard in the past several years, and recently exceeded it again due to meteorological conditions and accumulation of wood smoke (particulate).

b. Calling burn bans

- Burn bans are called in anticipation of an area exceeding the particulate standard through forecasting, prior to exceeding the standard.
- Several advisory levels exist to address rising particulate levels. The first is an "advisory" which is the most conservative and does not prohibit burning activity, but encourages it. The second is a stage 1 burn ban which prohibits outdoor burning and any burning in uncertified devices and the third is a stage 2 which prohibits any burning in any device unless it's your only source of adequate heat.
- NWCAA has formed an internal committee to ensure that our protocols and policies are up-to-date and ready to implement.