

East Whatcom Community Council Clean Air Committee (CAC)

Meeting summary

March 4, 2015

4:30-6:00 pm

CAC Charge: The charge of the East Whatcom Community Council 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

Present: Phil Cloward, Jerry DeBruin, John Wolpers, Mark Schofield, Wain Harrison, Rebecca Brown, Julie O'Shaughnessy

Agenda items:

1. **Introductions** - No introductions necessary. Only committee members present.
2. **Approval of February 4, 2015 meeting summary**

Phil – The motion (regarding the timing of burn ban implementation) as reflected on the bottom of Page 4 of the February 4 meeting summary is not representative of what he understood at the February meeting.

Jerry – Understood that burn bans would be delayed through the next wood heating season (November 2015 – March 2016).

Phil, Wain, Mark, John – Concurred they understood the motion as Jerry did and supported clarification to the motion to delay burn bans through the next wood heating season (November 2015 – March 2016).

Motion:

- John Wolpers moved to approve minutes, as amended.
- Jerry DeBruin seconded the motion.

3. **Open public comment** – No public comment.
4. **Announcements**

NWCAA's burn ban policy and procedure development

Rebecca – Stated that NWCAA is continuing to make progress on the development of a burn ban implementation policy and procedures. The program will take months to fully develop and once finalized, is what will be used in Columbia Valley when burn bans are called. NWCAA is researching other agency's programs to ensure a fair and consistent process, and to help expedite policy development.

Julie – Brought up the state rule (WAC 173-433 Solid Fuel Burning Devices) that provides health departments and fire departments the ability to enforce air quality burn bans and episodes. She said that, at some point, NWCAA will be approaching committee members about their willingness and ability to participate in burn ban enforcement, if necessary.

Community Connections Fair

Julie – EWRRC's Community Connections Fair held on February 26 had more than 30 stakeholder tables. The event had great public participation, and it was a lot of fun. Julie spoke to more than 20 people at the event.

5. Woodstove replacement program

Mark – Provided a detailed overview of the change-out program, including:

- Funding amount and source - \$240,000 from Ecology administered through NWCAA
- Change-out options – new solid fuel burning device or ductless heat pump
- Grant deliverables – 35 change-outs in total, 28 thus far
- Grant timeframe – biennium, ending June 30, 2016

Mark asked the committee members for any additional outreach opportunities they may know of to further connect with qualifying households to ensure completion of deliverables prior to June 30, 2016. Outreach efforts have included Opportunity Council presence at EWRRC, Misty Mountain Realty, Community Connections, Foothills Food Bank, and, next weekend, the Mobile Food Pantry.

Jerry – Asked if the difficulty is in reaching people or in qualifying people because they can't meet the conditions.

Mark – An Opportunity Council staff person works to qualify people for either the change-out program or the Community Energy Challenge (CEC) program, depending upon their income. If their income is over the change-out threshold and they qualify for the CEC program, residents can receive a \$1,000 incentive.

Phil – There needs to be more information out in the community about all programs available to residents of varying income levels so that people apply for and participate in the appropriate program.

Mark – Gave committee members a new flyer that describes both programs. The flyer was mailed to a significant number of Columbia Valley residents. The flyer specifically identifies both programs and the \$1,000 incentive.

Julie – Added that in November 2014, NWCAA's Board of Directors passed a resolution allowing the agency to use penalty money to supplement, leverage, or fill resource gaps related to grant funds, directly or indirectly, to reduce particulate pollution in Columbia Valley. This will help additional people who might not otherwise qualify.

Phil – Recommended getting and sharing testimonials from people who have participated in either program to further promote the programs.

John – Asked if Opportunity Council and health department staff have connected to become aware of the available programs. He offered to help facilitate coordination between the two and distribute the new flyers to health department staff to help get the word out.

Jerry – Mentioned that the Trail Connectivity Committee is holding an open house at the end of April at the EWRRC that might provide a possibility to conduct outreach. The trail committee has a meeting next week, which might be a good time to explore the possibility. Mark will follow-up with Jerry.

6. Strategic plan update

Phil – No new progress to report at this time. However, earlier discussions about how to determine if the committee has explored and taken all possible steps to help improve air quality ties very well with the strategic plan development. Phil will consider this, as well as how the biomass projects fit into the overall strategy, when working on the plan.

7. Biomass committee update

Phil – Today received from Paul Schissler, today, a revised project description that incorporates ideas from Whatcom and Skagit counties. The wood bank and pellet mill are still under consideration by the Department of Commerce for funding, and the Port of Bellingham has offered to match funds. The Opportunity Council and the Port of Bellingham are committed to have the wood bank in place by this fall.

Wain – Clarified that the EWRRC location is zoned General Commercial, and that the retail function of the wood bank is allowed outright. If on-site activities expand to bucking and splitting, potentially a manufacturing process, General Commercial doesn't support that. Wain requested ongoing communication with Phil to ensure that potential challenges are identified proactively, including requirements associated with hoop buildings.

Phil – Provided, for discussion purposes only, draft criteria for a standard cord of wood. The draft criteria are meant to be a conversation starting point for marketing and purchasing purposes.

8. Winter outreach/community event update

Julie – Provided an update on outreach efforts that Opportunity Council and NWCAA have been involved in or plan to attend.

- Community Connections Fair:
 - Connected with Mt. Baker School District, which included change-out information in its newsletter.
 - Contacted Foothills Food Bank to get approval to attend and conduct outreach on Tuesday, March 10.
- Mobile Pantry – conduct outreach on March 14.

Optimistic that planned outreach will generate additional qualified candidates. Also, woodstove bounty program will most likely be delayed from this spring to this fall to allow money to be spent on the greatest number of change-outs.

Mark – Asked about door-to-door winter outreach efforts.

Julie – Reported that no outreach was conducted in February, but should start back up again in March. The commitment is to continue door-to-door outreach through October.

Mark – Shared that residents have contacted the Opportunity Council after door-to-door outreach effort.

9. Future events/strategy – See above.

10. Air monitoring and complaint update

Julie – Reviewed NWCAA’s monthly air quality report (available on website) that compares all monitoring station data within NWCAA’s jurisdiction. This provides a clear visual of where and how often air quality standards are exceeded. Julie also provided a summary of the three monitoring stations in Columbia Valley, one of which measured an “exceedance” day in February.

Rebecca – Provided an overview of recent complaint activity. NWCAA received five complaints from three different complainants in February. This is fewer than previous months. None of the complaint investigations resulted in any enforcement action.

Jerry – Brought up the recent rash of calls associated with smoke from outdoor fires and the accumulation of branches and yard debris that have been dumped in rights-of-way. Several years ago, there was a fire (natural vegetation) behind Chisholm Trail of similar material.

Julie – Asked about the viability of a “clean green” program in Columbia Valley – another potential component to help the community succeed in improving air quality.

Phil, Wain, Jerry – Discussed the possibility of bringing in a chipper, how chips may be used, and what resources would be necessary to do so.

John – Reiterated the health department’s role in solid waste and the possible implementation of new programs, including a “Tire Amnesty” and possibly the development of a program that includes clean green material. Proposed collaboration between the health department and NWCAA to potentially address this issue.

2015 meetings, 4:30 – 6:00 p.m. - EWRRRC, 8251 Kendall Road, Maple Falls, WA:

Jan. 21	April 1	July 1	Oct. 7
Feb. 4	May 6	Aug. 5	Nov. 4
March 4	June 3	Sept. 2	Dec. 2