

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

### Meeting summary

April 1, 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, Olivia Rutherford, Mark Schofield, Wain Harrison, Axel Franzmann, Julie O'Shaughnessy

#### **Agenda items:**

1. **Introductions** – Committee members introduced themselves.

Also introduced:

- Axel Franzmann, NWCAA Air Monitoring Scientist, responsible for NWCAA air monitoring network.
- Olivia Rutherford, newly hired Whatcom County Health Department, Public Health Nurse. Will be working with the Mt. Baker and Nooksack School District to identify capacity for program development. Here to gain insight on east-county communities.

2. **Approval of March 4, 2015 meeting summary**

#### **Motion:**

- Wain Harrison moved to approve minutes.
- Mark Schofield seconded the motion.

The motion unanimously passed.

Julie asked the committee to confirm that corrections made to the motion at the March meeting were accurately reflected. The committee confirmed they were. Julie also asked if the motion was to be shared at some point with an audience outside of the committee or if it was just for the record. Several committee members said the motion was a way to reflect cooperation amongst committee stakeholders with varying perspectives that are

working to resolve the air quality issue and acknowledge that a burn ban is inevitable after all measures to ensure success are complete. Note: NWCAA staff members present did not vote on the motion.

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

**4. Announcements**

**John – Tire amnesty**

- Announced that the Health Department, who has taken over Public Works' role in solid waste, is offering tire amnesty in the Glacier, Kendall, and Maple Falls area during the first three weekends of May at the Cedarville disposal site. Residents will have to provide proof of zip code to dump up to 15 tires each weekend (rimmed or un-rimmed). If the program proves to be successful, it will be held more frequently. Advertisement flyers will be distributed throughout the community. The health department lead for the tire amnesty is Jeff Hegedes.
- **Phil** – Suggested that contact be made directly with the following private gated communities to promote the program: Camper's Paradise, Black Mountain Ranch, The Glenn, The Rim, Snowline, and Snow Water.

**Julie – Wood stove bounty**

- Intends to proceed with the wood stove bounty program this spring rather than this fall as grant funding is available. Approximately \$25,000 will be allocated to the program and residents turning in their old operational wood stoves will receive a voucher for \$250. The exact date and the amount of available funds will be finalized when a precise count of change-outs "in progress" is determined by Kyle at the Opportunity Council.
- Informed the committee that Rebecca's involvement with the committee will be less frequent and on a more "as needed" basis due to workload demands and budget limitations.

**5. Air monitoring; data summary and future monitoring**

**Axel** – Provided an overview of the particulate monitoring network, including the enhanced monitoring conducted this heating season between November, 2014 and March, 2015. The highlights are as follows:

- Background:
  - Monitoring started in 2007-2008 in response to a citizen's complaint about poor air quality during winter-heating season. A pilot station was located at their residence and showed very high levels of particulate.
  - This prompted NWCAA to find a more appropriate long-term location that was less densely treed and generally, representative of the area. The monitor was then located at the water district office on Azure.
  - The "permanent" water district monitor on Azure operated only during the winter wood-heating season until 2013. After 2013 it was left in place to monitor particulate emissions year-round.
- Enhanced monitoring network:
  - Two additional monitor were added this wood-heating season (November, 2014-March, 2015) to compare with the Azure monitor data to see if that monitor was representative of the area. The additional monitors were pulled yesterday (March 31).
  - Data collected from the two additional monitors demonstrated a reasonable correlation with the permanent monitor located on Azure Way and the two additional monitors will not be re-installed.

- Data obtained from the two additional monitors is labor intensive. Data is manually downloaded while on site. In contrast, the permanent Azure monitor feeds data to NWCAA's office in Mt. Vernon on a continuous basis.
- Monitor (nephelometer):
  - A monitor was brought for "show and tell" and an explanation on how it works, what it measures, and how data is obtained and analyzed was given.
  - The monitor is very sensitive and measures particles that are  $\leq 2.5$  microns in size; typically combustion particles of diesel and/or wood smoke. It can be impacted by a passing cigarette, but typically not by pollen because the particles are too large.
  - Although the monitor can be used as a mobile monitor, it is designed to be used as in a permanent location.
  - Wood smoke generated during fire season, whether produced locally or from the east-side of the mountains, will register on the monitor. However, impacts during summer months are less because temperature inversions and air stagnation events are rare.
  - An ultrasonic wind speed device is co-located with the nephelometer at the water district. It measure wind speed, direction, humidity, barometric pressure, and temperature. This information is also automatically uploaded to NWCAA's Mt. Vernon office.
- Data:
  - Data trends and exceedances from November, 2014 through March, 2015 were presented. The health-based standard was exceeded two times this year, lower than in several years past. This may or may not be due to our mild winter.
  - Monitoring data from all three stations essentially went up and down together, although some slight variability amongst the three monitors was noted. When one monitor showed an exceedance of the health based standard, all monitors showed it as well. This provided some reassurance that the "permanent" monitor is located in a representative spot and is reasonably representative of air quality in the community.
  - Trends show higher values occur during evening and early morning hours and decrease in the middle of the day.
  - Mobile monitoring results demonstrated a localized impact from wood burning during the winter months when the air was stagnant. High levels of particulate were noted in the Columbia Valley residential areas, but were essentially non-existent at Limestone Road.
  - A high concentration of wood smoke along with stagnant conditions creates poor air quality in a localized area.
  - Data averaged on an hourly basis over a month's period of time consistently showed that higher levels of particulate occur during the early morning hours and in the evening. Particulate levels during the middle of the day are typically low, even during periods of air stagnation.

**Wain** – Commented that Axel's presentation was very meaningful and would be great to share with the community at an outreach event in the future. It explains very clearly how localized the problem is and why.

**Phil** – Concerned that Azure is not representative of the entire valley and would like to see another monitor located on the west side of the valley.

**Axel** – Explained that operating 3 monitors in a small area, like Columbia Valley, is very unusual and not viable long-term. Typically, there is one monitor for a large area. For example, the entire Bellingham area has one monitor.

## 6. Strategic plan update

**Phil** – No new progress to report at this time.

**7. Biomass committee update**

**Phil** – The committee is addressing the need to make dry wood available to people who want to buy it and to people who are income eligible and qualify for assistance. This has presented a bit of a challenge and is currently being worked on. Funding potential from the Port of Bellingham has increased faster than originally thought and may help to accelerate biomass production (pellets) and the creation of jobs. The big deliverable with the Port of Bellingham money is the creation of jobs. The wood bank is still expected to be up and operational by September 15<sup>th</sup>.

**8. Winter outreach/community event update**

**Julie** – Wood stove bounty program will be pursued and help from the committee may be requested. Working with Kyle and Lorena to see if an OppCo staff member is willing to help with door-to-door outreach. Outreach has been conducted twice this month at the Foothills Food Bank and once at the Mobile Food Pantry. The KendallWatch meeting was also attended by Julie.

Connecting with the Slavic community which makes up around one-third of the community, has been challenging. Julie's attempts to connect with Viktor have netted intermittent responses.

Efforts to connect with community events, such as the library and trail committee, will continue.

**Phil** – To get any type of reasonable access into the Slavic community, it's important to go through Viktor. Phil offered to contact Viktor to get an idea of his perspective and interest in the committee's activities.

**John** - Art has been rehired at the Health Department and will be available to assist the committee as necessary; outreach, attend meeting(s), translation, etc.

**Complaints** – Two complaints were received in the Flair Valley area during the last month.

**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