

East Whatcom Community Council Clean Air Committee

Meeting summary

September 14, 2016

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.

Chair: Phil Cloward, East Whatcom Community Council

Members: Jerry DeBruin & David Moe, WCFPD #14; John Wolpers, Whatcom County Health Department; Mark Schofield OppCo; Veronica Dearden, Kendall Watch Community Action Group; Kurt Thompson, community member; Viktor Vetkov, Slavic Church; Wain Harrison, Whatcom County; Julie O'Shaughnessy, NWCAA

Present: Phil Cloward, Mark Schofield, Wain Harrison, Seth Preston, Julie O'Shaughnessy

Agenda items:

1. **Introductions** – Clean Air Committee members introduced themselves to Seth Preston, NWCAA's new Communications Program Manager.

2. **Approval of August 10, 2016 meeting summary**

Motion:

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

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

4. **Announcements**

Julie – Provided background on NWCAA's new Communications Program Manager, Seth Preston. Seth comes from Ecology's Lacy office where he worked for 10 years. He was highly recommended for this position and NWCAA is thrilled that he accepted. Seth is originally from Sedro-Woolley and attended WWU. He is fully involved in Columbia Valley outreach development and will attend our meetings as necessary.

5. **Review of draft Strategic Plan**

Julie – As requested by CAC members, PM2.5 monitoring data that included the number of days that were unhealthy for both the general public and for sensitive groups has been added to the Strategic Plan in a table format on the first page. The only other revisions were to clarify and properly cite acronyms and to standardize the format. Julie asked if this what the committee was looking for.

Phil – Asked for clarification on the "USEPA AQI breakpoint" noted as the *** table footnote.

Julie – Agreed that the verbiage may not be clear and will change "breakpoint" to "standard" and add "(24-hour average 35ug/m3)" after "standard".

Phil – Asked if the objective in Outcome Area 1 is realistic when we know we may not accomplish it. Should it say that we are working on it and are making progress and that

air quality is improving, instead? Strategic plans should only contain what is actually achievable.

Julie – Is comfortable with Outcome Area 1's objective, because as an agency, our objective cannot be anything less than the federal standard even if it may never be achieved. The NWCAA Advisory Council recently met and they have inquired if and how much air quality has improved in Columbia Valley. Have the staff and financial investments netted any results?

Wain – Stated that air quality improvement as a result of our efforts is very difficult to measure even with monitoring stations because one heating season is different than another because of weather variables.

Phil – Believes that we are making improvements. However, the air quality reader board in front of the fire department board is still an issue. On mornings where there is a high level of particulate that improves by late morning, the sign still indicates poor air quality even though the 24-hour federal standard may not be exceeded.

Julie – The air quality reader board is adjusted every day to reflect the monitor's instantaneous reading at a particular time each day, usually the morning. It is not a representation of a 24-hour average.

Wain – Believes that the sign provides good information for the community that is useful and that additional clarification is not necessary. The sign should let people know that air quality is poor and that they should be on their best burning behavior.

Mark – Emphasized that for compliance, it's an exceedance of a 24-hour period, not an instantaneous reading. So if a high reading is registered, but air quality rapidly got better, the average would not exceed the federal standard. Regarding Outcome Area 1, knowing that an instantaneous reading is different than the 24-hour average AND that the objective does not have a timeframe or deadline, the objective works as is. In addition, our charge supports the development of an on-going, long-range plan.

Phil – With those points considered, the objective statement may be perfectly fine as is. Made a motion to finalize the Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan was unanimously approved.

Julie – Will date and distribute final Strategic Plan to the committee members.

All – Agreed to revisit the Strategic Plan twice per year (September & March).

Julie – Asked the committee if two previously discussed topics are still a priority – compiling a comprehensive timeline of actions the committee has undertaken and contacting our stakeholders to update them on our current and future actions. If so, Julie requested a paragraph summary of the biomass project and the cord-wood voucher project, as well as a list of projects/programs and timeframe from each committee member who has led an activity. Julie will draft a comprehensive summary that includes special events and/or meetings for review at our next meeting.

Phil – Stated that a summary and reaching out to the stakeholders is important and a priority.

Wain – Added that the East Whatcom Community Council Clean Air Committee program summary he wrote identifies many, if not all, of our accomplishments thus far. The difficulty might be in assigning dates. Wain will email Julie a list of activities and programs the committee is currently involved in or has accomplished.

Phil & Mark – Will provide Julie a short summary of the wood bank project and the cord-wood voucher program, respectively.

Julie – Will send a reminder to committee members to provide a list of activities they were lead on.

Julie – Provided a summary of PM2.5 monitoring data from 2010 through March 2016 and information on wood stove change-outs since 2011.

Phil – Will share the monitoring and change-out data at the next East Whatcom Community Council meeting.

6. Cord wood vendors and vouchers

Mark - Lorena Shah posted the vendor RFQ to the Opportunity Council's website, Facebook page and local newsletter which allows for vendors outside of the Columbia Valley. The deadline is was originally Friday, but it has been extended to September 23. So far no application have been submitted, but the two vendors who applied last year are considered "grandfathered" in. Lorena is following up with the two "grandfathered" vendors to confirm their inventory. The LIHEAP starts in October. The intention is to include cord-wood vouchers in the energy assistance portion of the LIHEAP program.

Phil – Still working to develop the program that allows the purchase of dry wood prior to the LIHEAP season (October 1). Phil and Paul Schissler are going to meet with Greg Winters, Opportunity Council Director about coordinating community wood supply.

7. Biomass committee update

Phil – Not much new to report. Had one meeting with Port Commissioner Mike McCauley regarding the project and there is still a commitment to support a project in the east county area.

8. Residential woodsheds; construction & delivery

Phil – Made preliminary contact with the teachers as the new school year starts. Teachers need to get their feet on the ground. Can't really start doing much before the first week of October. There are approximately 8 sheds built right now, but it makes sense to wait to secure the delivery trailer until the rest of the sheds are built.

Julie – Requested that Phil confirm the number of sheds left to build and by whom so that applications can be coordinated with availability.

9. NWCAA burn ban communications

Julie – Is working with Seth on communications. In October, the focus will be enforcement on excessively smoky stoves. In November, the focus will be on what a burn ban is and that bans will be called starting October 2017. Julie and Seth meet weekly and are developing outreach materials.