

**East Whatcom Community Council Clean Air Committee**  
**Meeting summary**  
**July 13, 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, Jerry DeBruin, John Wolpers, Julie O'Shaughnessy

**Agenda items:**

1. **Introductions** – No introduction necessary. Only committee members present.

2. **Approval of June 1, 2016 meeting summary**

Motion:

- Wain Harrison moved to approve meeting notes.
- Jerry DeBruin seconded the motion.

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

4. **Announcements**

**Julie** – Katie Skipper has taken a new position with a communications company as a conference producer. Although we are very happy for her, her absence will impact our education and outreach efforts this winter. Her replacement has been hired and will be joining the NWCAA team in August. However, it will take some time to get acquainted with our programs and to develop program materials.

Mark Asmundson, Executive Director, has formally announced his retirement to the Board of Directors. His last working day will be mid-September.

Dave Blake, Indoor Air & Asbestos Specialist, also retired within the last month.

5. **Cord wood vendors and vouchers**

**Mark** – Informed the committee that Lorena Shah is back and will be sending out Request for Approvals (RFA) next month to all cord-wood vendors. Delivery of wood will correlate with LIHEAP season which starts in October. Lorena is willing to go outside the Columbia Valley area to secure potential vendors.

**Julie** – Asked if there is any possibility of qualifying residents prior to the start of LIHEAP season so that wood can be delivered earlier.

**Phil** – Stated that he is pursuing a different approach to provide dry wood to community members now from the same purveyors, independent of LIHEAP requirements.

6. **Biomass committee update**

**Phil** – Still need to meet with Wain and the Port of Bellingham regarding the proposed pellet plant; Wain about applicable code requirements and the Port regarding land ownership and usage. In addition, Phil and Paul Schissler will meet with the new Director of the Opportunity Council, Greg Winter.

Phil has contacted the water district regarding water availability. One of the main issues is septic. Phil is investigating the possibility of collecting and hauling waste to the treatment plant instead of building a designated septic system for the biomass project. Phil also discovered a lead on a 500KW steam generator to be used at the site.

**Wain** – Some businesses related to biomass may be permitted outright without any code changes or special permits. There are some industrial plants that have centralized systems that collect flow and haul to treatment plants. Approval of septic design is based on the number of persons it serves.

**John** – There is currently a system in Blaine, similar to the one Phil described, where flow from independent septic tanks is routed to a common line that feeds the sewage treatment plant. However, permitting of a permanent facility that collects and hauls waste on a regular basis may not be allowed.

**Julie** – NWCAA should be contacted to ensure that all permitting requirements are addressed.

**Phil** – Acknowledged that contact with NWCAA regarding permitting is necessary.

## **7. Residential woodsheds; construction & delivery**

**Phil** – The wood shed program has wrapped up and the trailer returned for this school year. Construction and delivery of the remaining 25 sheds will start again when school starts back up in the fall.

**Julie** – Looking for new and additional opportunities to connect with community members regarding wood sheds and change-out recipients.

**Phil** – Coordinating efforts with Community Connections contact person on outreach efforts.

## **8. NWCAA burn ban communication strategy**

**Julie** – As a result of staffing changes in the communication department, the following is in place for NWCAA:

- There will be no burn ban enforcement this winter because of insufficient time and resources to deliver a clear message as to what a burn ban is and what it means.
- The delivery of two very important messages, what is a burn ban and what happens when a burn ban is called, is too ambitious for one heating season.
- Outreach for winter-heating season of 2016-17 on burn bans (stage 1 and stage 2), exemptions (what is an exemption is and how to apply- low income, breakdown, inadequate source of heat, emergency exemption), and available resources will continue.
- Work to establish notification systems that will inform the community about burn bans (local websites, Facebook, resource center newsletter, etc.).
- Continue effort to issue warnings and/or violations for excess opacity during poor air quality or for recalcitrant burners who have been previously contacted.
- Develop communications materials with our new Communications Manager.
- Establish enforcement and penalty protocol, including a path to zero penalty.

**Phil** – When burn bans are in place, there should be some means of monitoring it so that when the air quality is below the burn ban threshold people are notified that they can burn again. There only 5-10 days out of the year that would qualify for burn ban days. Winter in the valley lasts about 160-180 days. There is a need to be proactive and say that when air quality is getting poor, that is the time to pay attention. This is more effective than a punitive approach.

**Jerry** – A continued positive message to burn cleanly is very important. This may help avoid the need to call a ban.

**Wain** – Perhaps there can be a sign at the fire department that indicates whether the burn ban is on or off.

**Julie** – Is open to considering the installation of a sign just for burn bans.

**Phil** – Advocates for NWCAA's potential support for a new sign in front of the resource center.

**Mark** – In terms of the exemption, does a person have to actively apply prior to the burn ban or is there an "after-the-fact" exemption?

**Julie** – There is one emergency exemption, but the goal is to have exemptions filed with NWCAA prior to a burn ban being called. Will work with Mark (OppCo) and Skagit Community Action to coordinate completion of exemption forms during Opportunity Council intake process.

Regarding burn bans, a one-day exceedance of the federal standard does not necessarily mean that a burn ban will be called. A burn ban may be called when it's predicted through forecasting that the 24-hr average will reach or exceed 35 micrograms per cubic meter (federal standard) within 48 hours and weather conditions are highly unlikely to help decrease particulate.

**Jerry** – To capture people's attention, perhaps putting flags up during air quality burn ban levels would be effective.

## 9. Strategic Plan

**Julie** – Emailed committee members the requested strategic plan documents from several years ago. Not sure how useful they are currently since they were preliminary in nature.

**Wain** – It seems like we need the bulk of a meeting to get started on drafting a current strategic plan. The handout, Strategic Plan General Overview, is only a framework.

**Julie** – If useful, can take components that we've identified and put them into a format similar to NWCAA's strategic plan. Outcome areas broadly describe the Agency's work. For each outcome area goals, objectives, strategies, and measures associated with the outcome areas are identified.

**Wain** – Several months ago a summary of what the committee has done was sent to Whatcom County Council. Perhaps that summary would be a good starting place to populate a draft strategic plan.

**Julie** – Will send NWCAA's strategic plan to committee members for their feedback as to whether or not parts or all of the plan would be useful for the committee's purpose. (Plan sent to committee members during the meeting).

**Phil** – Would like to propose that next meeting is largely committed to focusing on the strategic plan.

**Wain** – Will have family in town next meeting, but will plan to attend to work on the strategic plan.

**Mark** – Components of NWCAA’s strategic plan make sense.

**Phil** – Important and valuable to provide stakeholders with overview of committee’s objectives and milestones and to solicit periodic feedback for consideration and modification of strategic plan.

**All** – August meeting will be largely focused on strategic plan.

**2016 meetings, 4:30 – 6:00 p.m. – East Whatcom Regional Resource Center, 8251 Kendall Road (starting March 2016).**

**NEW – Starting July 13, 2016 all meeting will be held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of the month.**

Jan. 6	April 6	July 13	Oct. 12
Feb. 3	May 4	Aug. 10	Nov. 9
March 2	June 1	Sept. 14	Dec. 14