

East Whatcom Community Council Clean Air Committee

Meeting summary

November 9, 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, Julie O'Shaughnessy

Agenda items:

- 1. Introductions** – Introductions were not necessary. Only Clean Air Committee members were present.

Note: Initially, four members of the committee were present. Within 5 minutes of starting the meeting a fifth joined. The committee discussed whether or not 5 members constituted a quorum and as a result the following motion was made:

Motion – Five members of the Clean Air Committee constitutes a quorum.

- Motion proposed by Wain Harrison that 5 members of the Clean Air Committee represents a quorum.
- Jerry DeBruin seconded the motion.
- The motion passed unanimously.

- 2. Approval of October 12, 2016 meeting summary**

Motion:

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

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

- 4. Announcements**

Julie – The requested presentation by the NWCAA Advisory Council on smoke reduction efforts in the Columbia Valley has been moved from December to March. The draft summary in item 5 will be part of that presentation.

Will attend "Understanding and Reducing Residential Wood Smoke" conference at the end of November and will report back to the committee any new strategies or lessons learned.

Monitoring data tracked on Ecology's website has piqued the interest of EPA who has inquired about our monitoring and smoke reduction efforts in Columbia Valley. NWCAA provided EPA with a detailed overview of our monitoring, outreach/education, community partnership, weatherization and change-out efforts. EPA will continue to track PM2.5 monitoring data and communicate with NWCAA as necessary.

The Clean Air Committee's continued efforts and goal to improve air quality in the Columbia Valley is critical, now more than ever to stay in attainment with the federal health-based standard for particulate matter (PM2.5).

5. Review draft Columbia Valley programs & activities

Julie – Asked for feedback regarding the 5-page draft summary recognizing that it's quite detailed. As provided, the format is useful for committee members and future planning, but is not intended to be used in outreach to stakeholders because of its level of detail.

Mark – Commented that a detailed summary document of the committee's activities and accomplishments is very useful. Asked if the committee has always been the "Clean Air Committee".

Phil – Originally, the group was called "The Wood Smoke Reduction Group," but changed shortly after that to the Clean Air Committee.

Mark - For items on the last page that have no dates, but are on-going, indicating "on-going" would be helpful. Also, an incorrect date was noted in line-item 62.

Phil – The summary provides a solid representation of what the committee has accomplished so far. If used for outreach purposes, a condensed version would be more appropriate. It is also a very good supplement to the CAC strategic plan.

Wain – Recommended calling the summary "Columbia Valley programs, activities and achievements".

Julie – Revisions suggested by committee members will be made and the document will become "final" as of November 9.

6. Cord wood vendors and vouchers

Mark – Unfortunately, the pilot project was not successful. Prior to our last scheduled meeting, Lorena Shah sent out the RFQ, posted it in several places and extended the deadline. Even with the deadline extension no applications were received and the two vendors from the previous year were contacted, but neither were viable participants. The net result is no cord wood.

Julie – Asked if there is a known reason as to why no participation.

Phil – Commented that the program (LIHEAP) starts too late in the wood-heating season.

Jerry – Asked if the price-per-cord or the cost of insurance was a deterrent.

Phil – Doesn't think the price-per-cord or the cost of insurance was the issue. It may have more to do wanting to maintain operation as a private enterprise and the restriction of the LIHEAP timeframe.

The results of the pilot program have provided a learning opportunity to develop a different program. Perhaps one where wood is purchased then sold to the Opportunity Council for LIHEAP customers. The LIHEAP program starts too late in the heating season for private vendors, thus the need to purchase wood prior to October to ensure seasoned wood.

Wain – The purchase of wood earlier in the year would probably be more successful. The question becomes where to store it and how distribute it.

Phil – Agreed that the program described by Wain has the greatest degree of success and would provide the greatest benefit to the community by making dry wood available. This may require the Opportunity Council using their resources to help develop a cooperative wood program as discussed with Dave Finet.

Wain & Mark – Commented that having agreements with vendors to deliver dry wood prior to the season would be beneficial because it would eliminate the need for storage and handling the wood more than once.

Mark – Opportunity Council energy assistance staff has done a good job educating eligible clients about pressed-wood assistance which provide a dry source of fuel.

Phil – Pressed-wood logs have been a program emphasis and are expensive.

Julie – Where do we go from here? Is there flexibility to purchase wood outside of the formal LIHEAP season?

Phil – Pursuit of cord-wood may be another aspect of the biomass pursuit.

Wain – Proposed the early purchase of wood via the LIHEAP program be a secondary pursuit.

Phil – A program designed outside of the Opportunity Council may provide a worthwhile community/job benefit. And the sweat equity with handling and distributing the wood may place a greater value on the commodity. We tried the vendor/Opportunity Council approach. Perhaps now it's time to pursue a different approach with more flexibility.

Mark – Will check to see if there is flexibility in the use of LIHEAP funds outside of the tradition heating season of October through March.

Wain – Asked if there's a possibility of working a "season-ahead". For example, purchasing a known amount a previous season to fulfill the demand of the next heating season.

Julie – Asked if there is an estimate on how many cords of wood would be needed by participants to heat their homes during a heating season.

Mark – Determining the need was one of the objectives of the pilot program. LIHEAP program awards depend on heating system and individual qualifying level.

Wain – There may be an opportunity to operate two programs simultaneously and separately to address community need.

Mark – Will bring back information regarding the scale and monetary investment of the LIHEAP program.

Phil – Commented that an original intent of the pilot program was to gather accurate information about the number of people burning wood in the valley and determine the need for dry fuel.

Jerry – A solid number of people are preparing for winter by keeping an adequate amount of dry wood stored and ready for burning. Is the amount of wood adequate because of their preparation or because of weather conditions?

Phil – After a general discussion regarding pellet stoves, Phil is still curious about how to address the exhaust challenge of changing from a wood stove to a pellet stove.

In light of the pilot program's challenge, how do we move forward to identify and utilize flexible funding to support a wood-bank type program? Support and funding from the Port of Bellingham in the development of the light industrial property may be a viable option.

7. Biomass committee update

Phil – Continuing to work with the Port of Bellingham to investigate the development of the light industrial area.

8. Residential woodsheds; construction & delivery

Phil – The plan is to haul wood sheds next week from the high schools to the resource center to stage for delivery the following week or so.

9. NWCAA burn ban communications strategy

Julie – NWCAA staff will meet next week to refine burn-ban communication, field-staff efforts and community follow-up.