

East Whatcom Community Council Clean Air Committee
Meeting summary
December 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, John Wolpers, Julie O'Shaughnessy

Agenda items:

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

2. **Approval of November 9, 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

Conference –

Attended a national conference at the end of November on understanding and reducing residential wood smoke. The conference included air-monitoring case studies, health impacts, and possible ways to reduce residential wood smoke from stoves and boilers. Attendees included federal, state and local agencies.

Provided several conference attendees an overview of the air quality challenge in Columbia Valley and of our Clean Air Committee's goal and community-based approach to reduce residential wood smoke. Several agencies (HHS and EPA) and the Alliance for Green Heat remarked on the uniqueness of our program to establish a cooperative community-based approach to resolve the issue.

Discovered from several wood stove vendors that change-outs from wood stove to pellet stoves do not require roof repair. For these types of change-outs the solution is to insert a smaller pipe inside the existing pipe and change to exhaust cap.

Wain – Commented that as long as the stack was installed properly (adequate height above the roof and the correct pipe), it should be fine. The important issue is clearance distance to combustibles.

Julie – Will check with local vendors to confirm what was learned at the conference about wood stove to pellet stove change-out.

Julie – Returned a call to EPA to provide additional details on how and what we are doing to address air quality in Columbia Valley. At this point, NWCAA's response to EPA of providing additional details on the efforts of this committee and NWCAA is sufficient. However, EPA mentioned the possibility of NWCAA participating in the EPA, PM Advance Program. The PM Advance Program's purpose is to develop a program to prevent areas which are close to exceeding the federal health-base standard from actually exceeding the standard and becoming "non-attainment". In my opinion, the PM Program would not provide any benefit beyond what we're already doing.

Inspector opacity readings –

NWCAA developed opacity patrol instructions which establish protocol for NWCAA field response during periods of degrading air quality. In accordance with those instructions, NWCAA inspectors are currently out in the Columbia Valley documenting chimneys with heavy smoke. Chimney smoke warnings will be sent to the residents observed to have excess opacity.

An update of the inspector's findings and follow-up action will be provided at our next meeting. Smoke patrols will continue to occur during periods of degrading air quality.

5. Biomass committee update

Phil – Recently attended a biomass meeting at the WSU extension service in Mt. Vernon and a Washington Wood Coop meeting.

Continued efforts to secure grant(s) to fund heating systems to pellet-fuel heating systems. Also looking at the possibility of retrofitting the East Whatcom Resource Center which will take the support of the Whatcom County Council.

In addition, there are continued efforts to identify creative ways to establish a pellet production biomass project.

Projected infrastructure at the Columbia valley light industrial location will be on-site-storage for waste water and open-ended buildings.

Wain & John – On-site-storage is a common way to address waste water. Review of project on a case-by-case basis determine the requirements of a project.

Mark – Asked for an estimate on the number of employees the project would employ when fully operational.

Phil – Estimated 8-10 employees.

6. Residential wood sheds; construction & delivery update

Phil – Deliveries were planned for this weekend, but due safety issues caused by weather conditions (snow and ice) deliveries will be delayed until further notice.

Requested that the trailer rental be renewed for another month.

Julie – Will contact Westside Building Supply and extend trailer rental for an additional month.

Modified the wood shed recipient list. Brian D'Andrea has been removed and Robert Chethom has been moved to the bottom of the list. Chethom has been unreachable via phone (disconnected) and email after multiple attempts to contact.

Mark – Asked how many more sheds are left to delivery.

Phil – Twenty six applicants are left to receive wood sheds. Currently, there are 11 wood sheds staged at the resource center and 6-7 sheds at Mt. Baker High School.

Julie – Received two additional applications that are in back-up position in case any of the 26 change their mind.

7. NWCAA burn ban communication strategy

Julie – Shared NWCAA's newest burn ban communication poster, "Are burn bans in your future?" The publication is being posted at locations throughout the community and will be shared at public meetings. Multiple copies were distributed at the Community Connections meeting earlier today.

The intent of the poster is to let people know that, in addition to issuing warnings or violations for heavy smoke, NWCAA will be calling burn bans next year and that resources are still available to help people burn cleanly and stay warm.