

East Whatcom Community Council Clean Air Committee
Meeting summary
December 13, 2017

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, Jerry DeBruin, Mark Schofield, Mark Sniffen, Julie O'Shaughnessy

Agenda items:

1. Introductions

No introductions were necessary, only committee members present.

2. Approval of November 8, 2017 meeting summary

Motion:

- Mark Schofield moved to approve meeting notes with the change to the bottom of page 2 ("responsively" changed to "responsibly").
- Mark Sniffen seconded the motion.

3. Open public comment – no public comment.

4. Announcements

Jerry – Complimented NW Clean Air Agency Director, Mark Buford, on the excellent presentation he gave to the Whatcom County Natural Resources Committee on air quality improvement efforts in Columbia Valley.

Phil – Received multiple phone calls from local residents concerning the burn ban that was recently called. Residents did not agree that air quality was as bad as indicated. Phil believes that the monitor is located in the wrong place and that a different location would provide a more "balanced" perspective of the valley. Residents also pointed out that air quality was poor in other areas such as Maple Falls and The Glen at Maple Falls.

Mark Schofield – Commented on the importance of emphasizing the health effects caused by poor air quality to highlight a core reason for our efforts. Good air quality is a commodity all should share.

5. Wood shed status update

Phil – Is working with Jason at Mt. Baker High School to confirm the type of shingles necessary to complete the wood sheds. Once confirmed, Phil will send Julie an email so the materials can be purchased and delivered after winter break (January, 2018).

Jerry – Has a trailer that can be used to deliver the remaining sheds.

6. Biomass committee update

Boiler project

Phil – Received an email from John Martin stating that he and Jim Jensen, WSU, would like to set up a meeting with NW Clean Air Agency and the Clean Air Committee to talk about the boiler project. Additional interested persons who would attend are Mike McFarland and Chris Parks.

Julie – Asked who will be initiating this meeting. Julie suggested that Jim Jensen reach out to Agata McIntyre, NW Clean Air Agency Lead Engineer.

Phil – Regardless of the meeting with NW Clean Air Agency, they still want to meet with the Clean Air Committee, perhaps in February.

Co-op

The Coop has a grant from the Port of Bellingham and there is another grant pending. The Department of Commerce has an income qualifying program where they will loan up to \$50,000 with 0% for 10 years.

7. Recent burn ban

Julie – Shared snap shots of air quality readings and provided an overview of the process NWCAA used to call the burn ban, the actions staff took once the ban was called, what resulted from the inspectors' observations and where NWCAA will go from here.

Interestingly, this is the first situation since the inception of monitoring in Columbia Valley that calling a Stage 2 burn ban was warranted. A strong cold front and stagnant meteorological conditions caused air quality to decline quickly.

On Wednesday (Dec 6) an air advisory was called; on Thursday (Dec 7) air quality declined further warranting an escalation to a Stage 1 burn ban; on Friday (Dec 8) continued degrading air quality warranted calling a Stage 2 burn ban; and, on Saturday, NWCAA inspectors observed chimney smoke levels in Columbia Valley.

Four NWCAA staff members observed emissions from approximately 85 stacks and took instantaneous opacity readings of each. Residents who had an opacity of <40% will receive a letter informing them of the Stage 2 burn ban and that burning is only allowed with an exemption and provided information on how to apply for an exemption. Residents at or above 40% will receive a chimney smoke warning. **No violations will be issued.**

Sandwich boards providing varies air quality messages were not ready and would have been helpful in getting the word out. Seth Preston is currently working with a vendor to develop and print the various air quality messages (advisory, Stage 1, Stage 2, ban cancelled) for the 8 boards that will be placed at most CV entrances.

NWCAA staff will continue to re-evaluate the burn ban scenario and be open to changes which will improve the implementation and follow-up.

Phil – Asked if letters will be sent to people burning propane since hydrocarbon combustion also produces emissions.

Julie – Letters will not be sent to residents burning propane. Particulate matter emissions from solid fuel burning (wood) devices remains the current focus.

Phil – Passed along conversations with residents who were reluctant to call NWCAA because they felt they would be targeted.

Julie – Assured Phil that would not be the case.

8. NWCAA air quality burn ban communication strategy

Seth will provide update next meeting upon his return.