

## East Whatcom Community Council Clean Air Committee

### Meeting summary

December 12, 2018

**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; Aly Robinson, Whatcom County Health Department; Mark Schofield Opportunity Council (OppCo); Veronica Dearden, Kendall Watch Community Action Group; Viktor Vetkov, Slavic Church; Mark Sniffen, Whatcom County Fire Marshal; Julie O'Shaughnessy, Northwest Clean Air Agency (NWCAA)

**Present:** Phil Cloward, Aly Robinson, Mark Schofield, Mark Sniffen, Julie O'Shaughnessy

#### **Agenda items:**

- 1. Introductions** – The committee re-introduced themselves to community member, Carl McDaniel.
- 2. Approval of October 10, 2018 meeting summary** - Mark Schofield moved to approve the meeting notes. Mark Sniffen seconded the motion.
- 3. Open public comment** – No public comments.
- 4. Announcements**

**Julie** – Welcomed Aly Robinson as the new official representative for Whatcom County Public Health. John Wolpers appointed Aly to be his permanent replacement.

**Mark Sniffen** – Whatcom County approved their budget and one additional position for a fire marshal investigator/inspector was approved. The new employee will be a commissioned officer through the academy. It was a big ask because it included a new truck and additional support equipment and training. Very exciting. The hiring process will start in January, but it will be some time before the employee is on-board because of background checks and other hiring process logistics. The new employee will have a fire background.

**Mark Schofield** – Provided an update on woodstove change-outs. There are seven income-qualifying change-outs in process that will receive a new woodstove and a ductless heat pump. The first over-income qualifying project has an audit is scheduled for Monday. Any community member interested in the change-out program should contact Eryn Spellman at OppCo. If they are over-income, she will refer them to the Community Energy Challenge Program for a change-out.

**Phil** – Curious about how to identify community members interested in the program who have non-certified woodstoves. Is also curious about how stoves are sized and if there's a possibility of offsetting heat loss by installing a larger stove.

**Carl McDaniel** – Shared that through his involvement in the recent change-out projects that include both a woodstove and a ductless heat pump, the contractors are doing an amazing job in properly sizing the heating devices.

Carl connected with multiple community members and has walked them through the process. The evaluation process to determine the appropriate woodstove size can be challenging in that the calculation typically assumes new 2'x4' construction with prescribed insulation. Some homes (trailers) have a significant amount of heat loss, which puts a greater demand on the woodstove.

**Mark Schofield** – Clarified, for Mark Schofield, that energy audits are required for over-income qualifying projects.

**Julie** – Restated that the current grant fully covers the cost of a new wood/pellet stove and a ductless heat pump to all community members, including those who are over-income.

**Carl** – Mentioned that a deterrent of the over-income program (Community Energy Challenge) was that the homeowner had to pay prevailing wages, which made the project more expensive.

**Aly** – Asked Carl if he would post something on “Nextdoor” if he was provided with a change-out program description.

**Carl** – Has posted program information several times. Trying to get people to follow through, especially non-English speaking households, can be challenging. Carl has brought Devin, who is fluent in Spanish and Russian, with him to talk to residents about the program.

**Mark Schofield** – Thanked Carl for all of his efforts and involvement in the community.

**Phil** – Asked what the income guidelines are for qualifying households.

**Mark Schofield** – Will provide committee with income-qualifying guidelines. Regardless of income, residents can call Eryn Spellman (OppCo) and she will direct them to the appropriate program in which they qualify.

**Julie** – Informed the committee that last year approximately 30 wood heating exemption applications were received. So far this year, nine applications have been received. Julie will contact last year’s applicants to make sure they are aware that they need to re-apply annually. The reason annual submittal is necessary is so that we can determine if a perpetual cause exists so that it can be addressed, making the exemption unnecessary. The “annual” time period is July 1 through June 30.

## 5. Woodshed status update

**Phil** – Carl secured a trailer and the hauling of sheds from the school to the resource center seemed to be on track. Personal demands have delayed the hauling. Due to potential winter weather and safety concerns sheds will be delivered as soon as possible after Christmas vacation and when school is back in session.

## 6. Biomass committee update

**Phil** – Can’t work on the wood bank site that has been leased because of a zoning issue that needs to be resolved (conditional-use permit). Thinks that although there is still hope, there is some doubt that the light-industrial zoned area will be used to manufacture pellets because of how the East Whatcom Regional Resource project was viewed, in regards to increased particulate emissions. It is going to

take Whatcom County and the Port of Bellingham to keep things moving. It may be that the pellet mill will have to be relocated to Skagit County.

**Mark Sniffen** – Asked if there is any way to couple the biomass project with residential clean-green material to add to the feed stream. One reason for the question is that if Whatcom County looked at banning outdoor burning there would have to be a reasonable disposal alternative.

## **7. Air quality burn ban protocol & recent burn ban**

**Julie** – Because of the recent air quality burn ban Julie provided an overview of the tools that are used and the data that is evaluated to determine whether or not an air quality burn ban is warranted. The basic questions are: Where is the 24-hour rolling average (20 to 25 ug/m<sup>3</sup> plus)? Will the temperatures be below 40F? Will the mixing height be less than 300ft? Will the ventilation index be poor for most of the day? How long is the stagnant, cold weather going to last?

To answer the questions Axel Franzmann, NWCAA Air Monitoring Manager, utilizes the following available tools: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) temperature, wind speed and ceiling height data; University of Washington mixing height and intensity data temperature data specific to Columbia Valley; Seattle Profiler 7-hour compilation of temperature gradients and mixing (or non-mixing).

Julie also provided a PM<sub>2.5</sub> graph in ug/m<sup>3</sup> with two different parameters; hourly values and a rolling 24-hour values. The hourly data consistently shows a particulate increase overnight and a relative decrease in the morning and daylight hours. The 24-hour average values show a steady increase. Overall, the graph demonstrates that although particulate levels oscillate consistently, the overall accumulation increased.

**Phil** – Commented that the tools used to determine burn bans are not very specific to Columbia Valley and that he is still concerned that one monitor represents the entire valley's air quality.

**Mark Sniffen** – Thought that NWCAA had more than one monitor.

**Julie** – Several years ago, NWCAA rented two homes for six months during a winter heating season and operated PM<sub>2.5</sub> monitors to provide a broader perspective of air quality in the valley. Monitoring results were compared and were not significantly different. Julie will provide the committee with the comparison data.

**Julie** – Axel is still looking into the viability of using Purple Air monitoring sensors as an additional tool to evaluate the valley's air quality. If determined to be appropriate, the sensors could be located in multiple locations throughout the valley.

## **8. Air quality and complaint update**

**Julie** – Outside of the burn ban period, there was an increase in PM<sub>2.5</sub> on one day that almost reached the 35 ug/m<sup>3</sup>, 24-hour average standard. NWCAA received three wood stove complaints since last meeting – two on Flair Valley and one on Azure.

Julie and Eryn Spellman, OppCo, will conduct additional door-to-door outreach the second week of January to contact households on the focused outreach list.