

**East Whatcom Community Council Clean Air Committee**  
**Meeting summary**  
**May 8, 2019**

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

**Agenda items:**

1. **Introductions** – No introductions were necessary. All present have previously met. The following community members were present: Carl Isom-McDaniel and Rebecca Cayen.
2. **Approval of April 10, 2019 meeting summary** – Mark Schofield to approve the meeting notes. Mark Sniffen seconded the motion.
3. **Open public comment** – No public comments.
4. **Announcements**

Several committee members need to leave by 5:30 p.m., so the meeting will end by that time.

**Mark Sniffen** – Provided an update on the status of the Fire Marshal's office hiring efforts. The position of Fire Marshal, Fire Investigator was offered to a very qualified individual coming out of Skagit 911 Fire Dispatch. The name will be shared once the hiring agreement is signed. The hiring will bring the department back up to a staff of three.

**Phil** – On May 18, the Wildfire Risk Reduction Workshop for Small Forest Landowners will be held at the East Whatcom Regional Resource Center. The Washington Department of Natural Resources, the Whatcom Conservation District, and the Washington Farm Forestry Association are sponsors of the workshop. Anyone interested should attend. Phil asked if NWCAA would table at the event. Julie stated that NWCAA would attend.

**Mark Schofield** – Shared that the approved state Capital Budget included \$5 million for the Community Energy Efficiency Program (CEEP), which funds the Community Energy Challenge administered by WSU. This will provide funds to allow the program to continue for moderate income households.

5. **Wood stove replacement update**

**Mark Schofield** – The goal of the program is to change out 25 old qualifying wood stoves for a cleaner source of heat – a new wood/pellet stove and a ductless heat pump, potentially at no cost with no income qualification. The current grant cycle ends June 30 so identifying potential clients within the next few weeks is critical because there is still funding available.

To date, 13 change-out projects have been completed. Eight additional change-outs are in progress and two more that have assessments scheduled look to be qualified. That brings the total up to 23, but we are still looking for more so spread the word.

The mailing sent to all Columbia Valley residents prompted 15 calls to Eryn Spellman, inquiring about the program.

For residents who do not have an existing wood burning device and are not eligible for the woodstove change-out program, PSE recently announced great rebates specifically for mobile homes with electric resistant heat (e.g., baseboard, electric force-air furnace, cadet heaters). The rebate applies to a ductless heat pump in the amount of \$2,400 and if moderate income, the CEC can also offer a \$2,000 rebate.

## **6. Woodshed status update**

**Phil** – All woodsheds have been delivered. Thanks to all the volunteers who helped make that happen including the Men’s Group, Carl Isom-McDaniel, Richard Whitson and Phil Cloward.

Phil suggested sending a letter of thanks to the Men’s Group, which was instrumental in delivering the sheds.

**Julie** – A letter of thanks was sent a year or so ago, but another one will be happily sent.

## **7. Fire hazard reduction/chipping event**

**Rebecca** – The Whatcom County Conservation District promotional flyer is complete and posted in strategic locations including NextDoor. Mount Baker Community Coalition is also distributing flyers along with their newsletter.

Event volunteer responsibilities are being coordinated. Peaceful Valley youth will be pre-collecting material from residents who are elderly or disabled and cannot haul the material themselves. Traffic management is the primary safety concern.

Insurance for the event has been secured through the Whatcom County Conservation District.

Dumpsters to haul chips will not be necessary. Individual community members, a local church and Peaceful Valley have use for any chips.

**Carl** – Will collect and haul material from residents who need assistance.

**Julie** – Is still waiting for the signed waiver from Zender Tree Service. Will check on the status of the waiver with Gabe and update Rebecca Cayen on any communication.

**Mark Sniffen** – Mentioned the chipping event to his Director regarding potential funding. He said that the Executive’s office would need to be contacted to determine if any funds are available. The chipping alternative could also reduce smoke and be an optimal way to utilize resources.

**Rebecca** – The goal is to continue to hold a chipping event every spring and fall and to organize the events so that residents can place their vegetation in front of their yard for pickup, eliminating the need to haul.

The Whatcom County Conservation District secured a grant from Whatcom County to pay for part of this event.

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

**Julie** – NWCAA received zero complaints since the last meeting. However, conversations with several community members indicate an impact from outdoor burning. Residents were encouraged to call and file a complaint with NWCAA or the Fire Marshal's office so that situations are documented and can be followed up on. There were no exceedance of the health based 24-hour PM2.5 standard.

**Carl** – Stated that there may have been zero complaints registered, but that residents do not call because there is no effective follow-up. Residents tell the fire department to stay off their property, which means the burning continues. Filing a complaint also creates bad neighborly relationships, which discourages future calls. There are not enough enforcement resources to address illegal burning and discourage future burning.

**Julie** – Acknowledged that the situation is challenging because of a lack of resources, but that it is important that a paper trail be established so that repeat offenders or recalcitrant burners' history is documented. This information plays an important role during any resulting formal enforcement action.

**Mark Sniffen** – Fire Marshal's enforcement action may include civil enforcement action, placing a lien on the property or jail time.

## **9. Outreach update**

**Julie** – The recent mailer promoting change-outs and explaining Stage I and Stage II burn bans is now available in Russian and Spanish. They have been distributed to key locations and will be shared during tabling events.

Attended a meeting at Washington State Department of Ecology with other local air agencies to discuss the upcoming wood smoke reduction grant for 2019-2021. Challenges and successes of this grant round were discussed as well as ways to improve the next grant round. There is \$2.5 million available statewide for 2019-2021. Any current funding remaining will be added to that amount. Funding will be awarded through a competitive application process. One of Ecology's main goals is to expedite the application, review and award process to ensure seamless funding. Finally, it was clarified that only free-standing fireplaces are considered an eligible device; masonry fireplaces with no inserts are not.