

## East Whatcom Community Council Clean Air Committee

### Meeting summary

June 12, 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, Jerry DeBruin, Mark Schofield, 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, Richard Whitson and Rebecca Cayen.
- 2. Approval of May 8, 2019 meeting summary** – Mark Sniffen proposed an edit to the last sentence of the meeting notes (add the word "eligible"). With that change, Mark Schofield to approve the meeting notes. Jerry DeBruin seconded the motion.
- 3. Open public comment** – No public comments.
- 4. Announcements**

Julie proposed not holding a Clean Air Committee meeting in July. The committee was polled and agreed. The next meeting will be on August 14.

**Mark Sniffen** – Hired a new fire inspector/investigator so now are fully staffed at three employees.

### **5. Wood stove replacement update**

**Mark Schofield** – The current woodstove replacement grant is wrapping up and will conclude on June 30. Julie submitted a proposal for the next grant round (FFY2019-2021) for \$365,000. No award notifications have been made to date.

Currently working to conclude all projects by the end of June that are in various stages of progress. The CEC and low-income side are seeking bids, but work orders will not be issued until funding is confirmed. Twelve projects should be completed by the end of June.

Mark also shared feedback with the committee from participants of the program. Feedback included compliments on the contractor(s), praise for the efficiency of the ductless heat pump for both heating and cooling purposes, and appreciation for the program and the opportunity to create a comfortable home environment that would not have been possible without it.

## 6. Fire hazard/smoke reduction (chipping) event

**Rebecca** – The event was a huge success. The amount of material received exceeded the anticipated two days of chipping. NW Clean Air authorized and will pay for another two days of chipping to handle the remaining material.

There was positive feedback from community participants on all aspects of the event. Many community members would like to see chipping events continue on a regular basis. However, the event was incredibly labor intensive for the volunteers so looking at ways to reduce labor demands is beneficial. Perhaps having residents place materials at the end of their driveway so the chipping truck could drive through the neighborhood is a better option. Rebecca believes that word-of-mouth could very well double participation at any future events. All leftover chips will be delivered to the Kendall Chapel.

Curious if there are any other potential funding sources other than the Whatcom County Conservation District. For this event, the Conservation District covered the costs of event advertisement and refreshments.

**Julie** – Sees the benefit in involving Whatcom County to participate and cover costs. The small monetary investment would offset the time and salary costs associated with outdoor burning complaint response.

**Mark Sniffen** – Commented that he will report to his supervisor on the success of the event, but that there are no guarantees. Sees the benefit to air quality and wildlife interface and potential fire hazard avoidance. A summary quantifying the amount of material chipped would be helpful. This event may provide an example of viable alternatives to **residential** burning in other parts of the county, which could eventually lead to a ban of **residential** burning (not silvicultural or agricultural burning).

**Jerry** – Suggested that if Sniffen supports this event in a public setting that it should occur jointly with NW Clean Air Agency to emphasize the positive impact in both smoke reduction and fire prevention.

**Aly** – Offered to help put together a one-page summary that highlights the event's accomplishments.

**Rebecca** – Expects to receive a final summary from Zender on the volume of material chipped. Also sees that regular chipping events may change the culture around burning because an alternative is available.

**All** – Committee members discussed "lessons learned" and aspects of potential future chipping events. This included; frequency (spring and/or fall), coordination of signup/pickup, potential hauling of material to gravel pit to prevent storage issues, emphasis that event is for residents only (not commercial clearing), accurate estimation of demand to determine cost, possible voucher system, assistance for the elderly and disabled, multiple loads from same property, possible fee charge, and future funding sources.

**Rebecca** – Would like to investigate and pursue the possibility of holding a comprehensive community cleanup that involves multiple agencies that will help establish a new 'baseline'.

## 7. Outreach update

**Julie** – Other than the chipping event, nothing to add.

## **8. 2019-2021 wood smoke reduction grant application update**

**Julie** – Highlighted several new aspects of the new grant application. In previous grant cycles pre 1995 stoves qualified for the program. Now pre 2000 stoves will qualify. The application included a proposal to augment any of the 17 households who received a new wood stove during 2017-2019, with a ductless heat pump. The seventeen change-outs were solely funded by NW Clean Air Agency during a disruption in grant funding. Finally, complete cost coverage regardless of income, for a new wood or pellet stove and a ductless heat pump is proposed to continue.

Since the inception of the program, only eleven households have participated in the rebate program that requires residents to pay approximately \$2,000. In the past five years, only two households have participated in the program this way.

**Phil** – Commented that there is still some hesitation to go to a pellet stove because of the stack revisions and repairs that are necessary to change from a wood to a pellet stove.

**Julie & Mark S** – Said that this issue was investigated and resolved last year. A new, smaller dimension pipe can be inserted into the existing wood stovepipe, eliminating the need to reconfigure the exhaust stack. A permit is necessary, but dropping a pipe into the existing pipe is a reasonable approach.

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

**Julie** – No complaints received since last meeting and air quality has been good.