

## East Whatcom Community Council Clean Air Committee

### Meeting summary

August 14, 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; Whatcom County Fire Marshal; Julie O'Shaughnessy, Northwest Clean Air Agency

**Present:** Phil Cloward, Aly Robinson, Mark Schofield, 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 June 12, 2019 meeting summary** – Mark Schofield moved to approve the meeting notes with the amendments noted by Aly (remove duplication of Aly's name above and add "made" to the last sentence in item 5, first paragraph). Aly Robinson seconded the motion.
- 3. Open public comment** – No public comments.
- 4. Announcements**

**Julie** - Informed the committee that Mark Sniffen's last day as Whatcom County Fire Marshal was yesterday. Sniffen took a job with the City of Mount Vernon in the Building Department and Code Enforcement office. He sends his thanks and acknowledgement to this committee for the strong commitment and good work to help improve air quality in the Columbia Valley community.

The two new Whatcom County Inspectors are expected to attend this meeting.

Julie hopes that there will continued representation from the Whatcom County Fire Marshal's office as their involvement in this committee is very important.

#### **5. Wood stove replacement grant (FY17-19) update**

**Julie** – NW Clean Air Agency received notification of a \$330,000 grant award from Ecology for the next biennium. Funds will be used to fully pay for change-outs of old qualifying wood stoves with a new wood/pellet stove plus a ductless heat pump, regardless of income. Funds may also be used to retrofit seventeen specific households, who received a wood stove with NW Clean Air Agency funds, with a ductless heat pump (2017-2018). Julie will work with OppCo to finalize the Professional Services Agreement between NWCAA and OppCo and to expedite the signing process.

**Carl** – Shared that several community members have contacted him about the change-out program and the lack of contact/follow-through by program staff. He provided specific examples (3) of who was impacted and how they were affected (no contact after initially being told they were eligible; asking for unnecessary financial information and documentation).

**Julie** – From Carl's comments, understands that there are two challenges. The first is the gap in funding which resulted in a pause in the progression of the change-out project. The second is asking for financial information that is unnecessary.

An unanticipated interruption in Ecology grant funding, is the cause for the first challenge. OppCo & NW Clean Air Agency staff can address this by contacting qualifying clients to inform them of the funding gap and that the program will resume as soon as agreements are signed.

The second concern regarding asking for client's financial information when it may not be necessary will be addressed cooperatively with OppCo staff.

**Mark Schofield** – Will coordinate amongst OppCo staff to ensure that no one is falling through the cracks and that all program staff are consistent in messaging, especially regarding income information.

## 6. Outreach update/ideas for next biennium

### CHIPPING - all

**Julie** – Grant funds cannot be used to fund chipping events even though chipping reduces materials that may be illegally burned and result in a negative impact on air quality. Grant funds may only be used to fund "device" change outs and their associated administration and program promotion costs. A change in legislation is necessary to fund chipping via grant funds.

NW Clean Air Agency, however, does support the concept of chipping to reduce potential residential burning which may result in poor air quality of fire danger situations.

**Phil** – Expressed that there is a need for legislation that allows the burning of material during exceptional periods (storms & floods).

**Rebecca** – Asked about the frequency in which NW Clean Air Agency will support/pay for chipping events. Lessons learned from the last event help to tailor future events. Hiring a mobile chipping unit for two days, to chip material at households who have pre-registered, will greatly reduce volunteer hours and provide an accurate cost estimate.

**Carl** – Shared that recently a large amount of residential material (vegetation) was dumped on Limestone Road. This material also poses an extreme fire safety hazard.

**Phil** – Suggested contacting the County to take care of the material since the material is located on the public right-of-way.

Complimented Rebecca on the success of the previous chipping event. Asked if Zender will have enough chip trucks available to make sure that chipping is not interrupted because there is no place to put the chips.

**Carl, Rebecca, Phil** – Discussed the possibility of securing FEMA grants in the future to help address storm debris. Grants could potentially be pursued and awarded through a local entity.

**Rebecca & Julie** – Discussed the possibility of holding a fall chipping event. Rebecca has much of the information ready to go (bid & advertisement). Julie said that NW Clean Air Agency would support two days of chipping at \$1,300/each. Rebecca will work on updating the event promotion information that was originally developed by the Conservation District.

**Aly** – Suggested editing the one-page summary of the spring chipping event, to promote the fall event as a way to advertise. The promotion could be included in the community newsletter, "Hello Neighbor," that is soon to go out.

**Rebecca, Mark Schoefield, Carl, Phil** – Discussed the timing of the event and concluded that chipping will occur during the weekday, on the week of October 30. Participants will need to sign up with Rebecca. Neighbors needing assistance to stage their material will be helped by volunteers between October 16–27<sup>th</sup>.

### **Outreach Ideas - all**

**Julie** – Asked the group for any outreach ideas, new or old, for the FY19-21 grant cycle.

**Phil** – Said it may be beneficial to look at other grants and how to fund ancillary-type projects associated with the valley's needs. For example, biomass and fuel reduction/management and fire prevention. Phil will reach out to people he knows regarding fuel management.

**Carl** – Shared that representatives from Susan Delbene's office are available to help constituents seek out potential grant funding.

Asked if NW Clean Air Agency has sponsored a monthly community meal. Approximately 80-150 people attend the community meals. Sponsorship of a meal gets your name out there and shows a willingness to support the community.

**Aly** – Clarified that the intent of a community meal is not to solicit or promote a particular program or product. Community meals are meant to be a place for community members to gather and share space. Sponsors are allowed to bring one flyer.

**Julie** – Asked about the number of volunteers needed and the typical cost of a meal.

**Aly** – Twelve volunteers is standard and the cost is approximately \$350-400. Rebecca Boonstra is the contact for Community Meals.

**Carl** – Suggested tabling at the Fall Fair and heavily promoting moisture meters.

## **7. Reader board**

**Phil** – Told the Facilities Committee that he would bring the subject to this committee. Asked if NW Clean Air Agency would be willing to participate financially to get a reader road in front of the EWRRC. A reader board in this location would have a higher profile and be seen by more residents and could contain real-time air quality information. Power is already at the road.

**Rebecca** – Thinks this is a great idea, but suggested that it be high enough to deter vandalism.

**Julie** – Before making any commitment, NW Clean Air Agency needs to determine its needs and objectives as they relate to displaying real-time air quality data, or not. Realistically, that will not occur before next fall.

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

**Julie** – Since our last meeting, there were no wood stove complaints and no air quality exceedances.