

East Whatcom Community Council Clean Air Committee

Meeting summary

September 11, 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; Curtis Metz, Whatcom County Fire Marshal; Julie O'Shaughnessy, Northwest Clean Air Agency

Present: Phil Cloward, Aly Robinson, Mark Schofield, Curtis Metz, Julie O'Shaughnessy

Agenda items:

- 1. Introductions** – Curtis Metz, Building Services Division Manager attended the meeting for the first time as a representative of the Whatcom County Fire Marshal's office.

The following community members were present: Carl Isom-McDaniel and Rebecca Cayen

All present introduced themselves.

- 2. Approval of August 14, 2019 meeting summary** – Mark Schofield moved to approve the meeting notes. Aly Robinson seconded the motion.

- 3. Open public comment**

Carl – Suggested streamlining and simplifying the information provided to applicants that only want to participate in the change-out program. Detailed information regarding different "equipment packages" can be confusing to residents who are not interested in any other program.

Mark – Commented that the information was probably associated with an energy audit, which may have been confusing. Will communicate this concern with OppCo staff to ensure follow-up with this individual.

- 4. Announcements**

Mark – The Community Energy Challenge (CEC) is helping to host an event on September 24. The event is "Bringing Climate Action Home: An Energy and Home Improvement Fair" which will be held at the Building Performance Center at 3406 Redwood Avenue, Bellingham. Weatherization and solar contractors, Cascade Natural Gas and Puget Sound Energy will share ways to improve energy efficiency in the home.

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

Julie – NW Clean Air Agency received the grant agreement from Ecology in the amount of \$330,000 for the next biennium. Funds may 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.

We are very excited and ready to kick off the program. There are six change-out projects ready to go and potentially ten more clients in the queue.

Carl – Asked if there is still room for additional clients.

Mark & Julie – Yes, additional potential clients are welcome to apply. It may be beneficial to encourage earlier application this grant round because so much work has already been done to identify potential change-out clients.

Curtis – Asked what type of change-out has the highest priority; pellet, most efficient, propane, etc.

Julie – The grant's objective is to provide a cleaner source of heat, which will result in a reduction in particulate emissions. It is up to the individual resident to choose their new heating device. The choices include a new stove (pellet or wood) that meets 2020 emission standards, a ductless heat pump or propane.

6. Biomass/smoke reduction fall event

Chipping

Rebecca – On-line advertisement and sign-up for the chipping event are underway. Several community members have already signed up. The event will also be advertised in the Welcome Neighbor and the Peaceful Valley newsletter, via word-of-mouth and flyer distribution.

Rebecca worked with Zender, the chipping contractor, to identify the maximum number of households to sign up (60). Additional households will be put on a waiting list. So far, the application process has been manageable. The deadline for signing up is September 20, but additional households will be taken after that date if there is room.

Julie – Expressed thanks to Rebecca for all her hard work in pursuing this event and making it happen.

Phil – Mentioned that a fuel assessment might be useful. It would help to identify the volume of vegetative material in the valley and any appropriate and reasonable disposal methods.

Curtis – Shared that there is a Wildland Fire Code coming into effect in 2020 that addresses fire loading adjacent to structures. If Whatcom County adopts this code there may be a stronger impetus for the County to participate in future events that reduce fuel loading.

Biomass committee

Phil – To make a pellet mill viable, there needs to be a large-scale project with a high pellet demand. To date, a project of this size and demand has not yet been identified.

7. Outreach activities/ideas

Julie – Working with a GIS contractor on a Columbia Valley mapping project. The map will identify households with stacks and which of those households have received smoke reduction equipment such as a change-out, woodshed, and moisture meters. The mapping will include all data since the inception of the change-out program in 2011. The final project will be shared with the committee and with community members as part of the program promotion and education effort.

Rebecca – Offered to distribute change-out promotion information to residents while promoting the chipping event. Asked for any available flyers.

8. Air quality and complaint update

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