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BOARD MEETING MINUTES

The meeting of the Board of Directors of the Northwest Clean Air Agency was held at 1:30 p.m. Thursday, December 12, 2019, at 1600 S. 2nd St., Mount Vernon, Washington.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Skagit County	Mary Hudson Ron Wesen
Island County	Blaine Oborn for Bob Severns Janet St. Clair
Whatcom County	Satpal Sidhu
Member-At-Large	Terry Nyman

ABSENT: Brian Heinrich

ALSO PRESENT:

NWCAA staff members	Mark Buford, Matt Holmquist, Alicia Huschka, Toby Mahar, Agata McIntyre, Seth Preston, and Laurie Caskey-Schreiber
Legal counsel	Svend Brandt-Erichsen

CALL TO ORDER

Board of Directors Chair Ron Wesen called the meeting to order at 1:32 p.m.

APPROVAL OF PRIOR BOARD MEETING MINUTES

On motion by Mary Hudson, seconded by Satpal Sidhu, the minutes for the November 14, 2019, meeting were approved 5-0. (Janet St. Clair arrived shortly after the vote.)

PRESENTATION

Dairy Digesters – Matt Holmquist

NWCAA Registered Source Program Manager Matt Holmquist presented an overview of dairy digester compliance and concerns. Presently, six digesters operate in the Agency's jurisdiction. Five are located in Whatcom County and one is in Skagit County. The digesters process manure, and most of them accept off-site waste. They produce biogas (containing methane) that can be burned in engines to produce electricity for the renewables market.

Characteristics of biogas production:

- Biogas contains 55-70% methane, 30-45% carbon dioxide (CO₂), and hydrogen sulfide (H₂S).
- Power engines up to 1000+ horsepower linked to generators up to 750 kW.
- Average power generated is around 527kw, which is enough to power 400+ homes.
- The systems are producing more gas than the engines can combust, resulting in significant flaring of excess biogas.
- The larger digesters are among the agency's largest non-Title V facilities, emitting 21-28 tons per year of VOC, NO_x, PM, and SO₂.

NWCAA has identified the following compliance concerns:

- High H₂S concentrations in biogas (thousands of ppm) are a safety concern as well as result in high SO₂ emissions post-combustion.
- The sources have struggled with completing timely engine testing.
- Most of the installed flare systems were found to have periods when biogas was not being combusted during power outages and equipment failures.
- Original permit applications failed to disclose the amount of excess biogas routed to the flares and the resulting emissions.
- 5 out of the 6 digesters have experienced roof or lid failures.
- NWCAA has found equipment leaks at the facilities that result in release of uncontrolled biogas.

The agency is working with the operators and owners of the digesters to resolve these issues. Updates will be provided to the Board.

NEW BUSINESS

Reappointment of Advisory Council members – Mark Buford

NWCAA Executive Director Mark Buford identified two Advisory Council members whose terms were expiring in December of 2019. Both, Bill Black and Mary Hess expressed their interest in serving another four-year term, starting in 2020 and ending in December of 2023.

Sidhu moved to reappoint Black and Hess to the Advisory Council, Hudson seconded the motion and the Board approved the motion to reappoint 6-0.

ACTION ITEMS

Bills and claims

Board members discussed the bills and claims reports for November 2019. Hudson made a motion to approve the November 2019 (\$351,101.70) bills and claims. Janet St. Clair seconded the motion, and the Board approved the bills and claims 6-0.

STAFF REPORTS

Director's Report – Mark Buford

NWCAA hires new legal counsel.

Buford introduced Svend Brandt-Erichsen as the agency general legal counsel. Brandt-Erichsen is a partner in the Nossaman law firm. Brandt-Erichsen has worked with NWCAA for the past 10 years on selected issues and has demonstrated an excellent level of service.

Buford thanked the law firm of Carmichael Clark, which since 1992 had provided many years of legal service to the Agency.

Departing Board member.

Buford thanked exiting Board member Satpal Sidhu for his service to the Agency. Sidhu had also served on the Agency's Advisory Council, and Buford looks forward to collaborating with him in his new role as the Whatcom County Executive.

Strategic Plan and miscellaneous updates.

- The Advisory Council along with the small sub-group (Buford, Carl Weimer, Sandy Paris, John Wolpers, Toby Mahar, and Alicia Huschka) will be meeting in January to continue the work of updating the Strategic Plan. Buford thanked Board and Advisory Council members for their input at the November work session.
- Agency staff are working with the Skagit County Fire Marshal's office reviewing the outdoor burning program. It was recently announced that local fire districts will not be responding to outdoor burning complaints. Agency staff value this partnership; all options to strengthen the program will be considered.
- Based on the results of the latest National Air Toxic Assessment, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is taking steps to address emission of ethylene oxide from large facilities. Ethylene oxide is used to sterilize medical equipment and devices. There are no large sterilization or production facilities in NWCAA's jurisdiction, and most of the region's medical facilities have discontinued use of ethylene oxide entirely.
- The Board is set to meet 10 times in the year 2020, with no meetings held in January and July. Board members will reorganize roles during the February meeting.

New source review and air operating permit update – Agata McIntyre

NWCAA Engineering Manager Agata McIntyre reported that for the month of December the Agency received five construction permit applications.

McIntyre noted that one of our existing registered sources, Slivastar Forest Products, which operates a plant in Bellingham, is now opening up a new lumber-manufacturing plant in Ferndale. They plan to install three new lumber-drying kilns with a capacity of 31 million board feet per year.

Enforcement update – Toby Mahar

NWCAA Compliance Manager Toby Mahar noted that the Agency issued two violations to registered sources as listed on the monthly activity report. One violation addressed an emissions event that occurred on Feb. 5, 2019 at Chemtrade, when frozen equipment caused emissions from the Sulfur Recovery Unit stack to exceed three SO₂ emissions limits, resulting in approximately 300 pounds of excess SO₂ emissions.

During the November reporting period, Mahar reported that five penalties were issued. One of those was to Oceanus Plastics. The facility is shutting down at the end of 2019 resulting in that penalty being set aside.


ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to consider, the meeting adjourned at 2:33 p.m.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify this is a true and correct copy of the minutes of the meeting of the NWCAA Board of Directors held on December 12, 2019, in Mount Vernon, Washington.

ATTEST:



Terry Nyman, Secretary
NWCAA Board of Directors



Ron Wesen, Chair
NWCAA Board of Directors

DATED: February 13, 2020