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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, October 8, 2020, via video conference.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Skagit County	Mary Hudson Ron Wesen
Island County	Bob Severns Janet St. Clair
Whatcom County	Todd Donovan
Member-At-Large	Terry Nyman

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Brian Heinrich

ALSO PRESENT:

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

CALL TO ORDER

Board of Directors Chairman Bob Severns called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

APPROVAL OF PRIOR BOARD MEETING MINUTES

On motion by Mary Hudson, seconded by Janet St. Clair, the minutes for the Sept. 10, 2020, meeting were approved 6-0.

PRESENTATION

Wildfire smoke event September 2020 – Mark Buford

Agency Executive Director Mark Buford gave a summary report for the wildfire smoke that inundated Washington state during September 2020.

The smoke that affected our area came from wildfires burning in California and Oregon. The plume of smoke came in from the coast and hovered over our area for approximately 10 days. At one point, every monitor in the state registered air pollution levels greater than the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for particulate matter.

One improvement over the last wildfire smoke event was that the State's Air Quality Monitoring network website was able to handle the large volume of user traffic it experienced during this most recent event.

Agency Communications Program Manager Seth Preston was also able to implement some of his recent training in social media to conduct outreach and gain feedback and input from Beekeeper about how to improve the Agency's communications.

The Agency is working on adding an additional stream of the data that we collect from our air monitors. Currently, we stream data to the State and then they send it back to NWCAA for publication on the NWCAA website. We are looking into having that data sent directly from the monitors to our Mount Vernon office and also continuing to stream it from the monitors to the State. This change would eliminate the time lag that results from the State returning the NWCAA data. Having a more direct route for our information will also allow NWCAA to be more responsive to problems that arise from a disabled monitor.

The State uses a different standard for displaying the color scheme (green for good, yellow for moderate, etc) for air pollution than what is used on nationally. For the same numeric measurement of air pollution, the federal system (AQI) may display yellow while the State system (WAQA) will show it as orange. Having two different indices is by far the number one cause of confusion among the public about air monitoring data and continues to undermine the credibility of the data.

The State itself displays the information inconsistently – displaying the AQI colors on one map and the WAQA colors on another map – driven from the same underlying data. Weather apps on cellphones use the AQI colors, personal air quality sensors use a variety of systems, but are generally AQI based. Neighboring States use the AQI (including California). Some local agencies in Washington, such as the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency in Seattle use the AQI. The EPA, Forest Service, and National Parks all use AQI.

The NWCAA, Southwest Clean Air Agency, and Olympic Regional Clean Air Agency have historically displayed the WAQA color scheme which is arguably more protective than the AQI in that it will change colors (from yellow to orange, for example) at lower pollution levels. In practice, it may not be more protective if it results in confusion and disregard.

In an effort to reduce confusion, the Western Washington local clean air agencies are all considering changing to the AQI system. The conundrum is how to maintain the more protective characteristics of the WAQA to the greatest extent possible. One solution that Buford favors is adopting the AQI, but changing the guidance associated with the colors, and he has made this suggestion to Ecology. The State Department of Health and Ecology will have to get together to review the current guidance and consider moving the State to

adopt the AQI, so that we can reduce the confusion and improve the public’s understanding of air quality.

ACTION ITEMS

Resolution 587 – Adopting the amended Strategic Plan – Mark Buford

Buford presented Resolution 587 to the Board for approval. This resolution formally adopts the newly updated Strategic Plan for NWCAA.

St. Clair made a motion, seconded by Todd Donovan, to approve Resolution 587. The Board approved the resolution 6-0.

Bills and claims

Board members discussed the bills and claims reports for September 2020. Donovan made a motion to approve the September (\$339,114.84) 2020 bills and claims. Ron Wesen seconded the motion, and the Board approved the bills and claims 6-0.

STAFF REPORTS

Director’s report – Mark Buford

Buford reported to the Board on the following matters:

- The Agency has started the search process to fill the Instrument Technician position that was approved in the Fiscal Year 2021 budget. Agency staff hope to have the new person start as early as December.
- The Joint Board / Advisory Council meeting scheduled to occur in November is being postponed. Agency staff will review the COVID pandemic in the spring of 2021 to see if it is safe to schedule it at a later date in 2021. A separate Advisory Council meeting has been added to the third week in November, and during that meeting they will begin a review NWCAA’s current penalty policy.
- The appeals case with Super Duper has been denied further review at the Washington State Supreme Court and NWCAA has therefore prevailed.

New source review and air operating permit update – Agata McIntyre

NWCAA Engineering Manager Agata McIntyre reported on the September 2020 construction permit (new source review) activity.

The Agency received eight applications for a construction permit and issued one construction permit.

One of the applications received was for Aspen Power Catamarans, an existing boat builder in Burlington. They are putting in a new spray booth.

At the Board’s request, McIntyre also reviewed some of the other permit applications that the Agency received and the changes proposed by the applicants.

Enforcement update – Toby Mahar

NWCAA Compliance Manager Toby Mahar reported that NWCAA issued four notices of violation in September. Two were related to illegal outdoor burning during a burn ban.

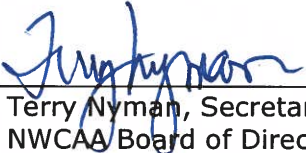
For the month of September, odor and outdoor burning complaints were up a bit, and the Agency received several complaints on Sept. 29, 2020, related to an incident that occurred at the Shell Puget Sound Refinery. A vapor cloud impacted people from the Swinomish Reservation to Camano Island. The refinery hasn’t reported the details as to what happened, but the Agency is expecting a full report at a later date.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to consider, the meeting adjourned at 2:36 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 October 8, 2020, in Mount Vernon, Washington.

ATTEST: 
Terry Nyman, Secretary
NWCAA Board of Directors


Bob Severns, Chair
NWCAA Board of Directors

DATED: November 12, 2020