

East Whatcom Community Council Clean Air Committee

Meeting summary

October 14, 2020 (via video conference)

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); Curtis Metz, Gabe Nelson, Jacob Johnson - Whatcom County Fire Marshal; Viktor Vetkov - Slavic Church; Julie O'Shaughnessy - Northwest Clean Air Agency

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

Agenda items:

- 1. Introductions** – No introductions necessary. All present know each other. Rebecca Cayan and Carl McDaniel, community members, were present.
- 2. Approval of August 12, 2020 meeting summary** – Mark moved to approve the meeting notes. Curtis seconded the motion.
- 3. Open public comment** – None
- 4. Announcements** – None
- 5. Wood stove replacement update**

Mark – All wood stove replacement projects started before the pandemic have been completed. Currently have a waiting list of people who are interested in the change-out program and are working with Julie to prioritize clients. The additional funding NWCAA recently received from Ecology will allow for approximately three more change-outs. Low-income households and households with excess emissions currently have priority.

6. OppCo's work status with clients

Mark – Since mid-March, OppCo ceased all work in homes. Have been able to perform energy audits on vacant homes, but no change-out program work in Columbia Valley because homes are occupied.

Since early summer staff has prepared to return to in-home work, following statewide metric protocol. The key metric is the level of community spread. Acknowledging that work needs to be done and that community spread may continue, efforts to establish new protocol are underway by re-adjusting thresholds similar to what schools use in order to get back to work.

OppCo is getting close to resuming in-home energy audits and in-home activities associated with the change-out program. Solid COVID safety protocols have been developed and will be implemented by OppCo staff, including appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), during the duration of the home visit.

Once OppCo is able to get back into homes, change-out work on the program will resume.

Curtis – Requested Mark to share their COVID safety protocols with him.

Julie – Asked whom, from OppCo, will be working with the wood bank, if it comes to fruition, to establish vendor protocol and distribution.

Mark – It will be someone from the Energy Assistance program.

7. Biomass committee – no update, Phil unable to attend

8. NWCAA outreach

Julie – “Call-to-action” sign development is still in process, but going much slower than anticipated. The focus is firewood – how to split, stack, cover and store – as it relates to saving time and money. The air quality gauge sign is also being redesigned so that it communicates air quality levels, but looks less like the fire-safety, Smokey the Bear signs.

Our objective is to develop “seasonal message” signs that are ready for placement that encourage appropriate call-to-action.

9. Air quality and complaint update

Julie – Wildfire smoke in September heavily impacted air quality. There were eight days that exceed the 24-hour average, 35ug/m³ PM_{2.5} health-based standard between September 11 and September 18. The highest 24-hour average value was 98 ug/m³ on September 14.

Mark – Checked the state air quality-monitoring website during that time and noted that Columbia Valley fared better than some other areas in our state.

Julie – One complaint was received on August 21 at the 6200 block of Shamrock regarding outdoor burning. No woodstove or stack emissions complaints were filed since our last meeting.

Curtis – During that wildfire-smoke period, received 8-10 phone calls from residents asking if they could use their woodstoves for heat. He informed callers that woodstoves should only be used if it is their last source of heat.