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## **BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

The Board of Directors of the Northwest Clean Air Agency met at 1:30 p.m. Thursday, December 10, 2020, via video conference.

### **MEMBERS PRESENT:**

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

### **ALSO PRESENT:**

NWCAA staff members	Evan Bing, 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 Todd Donovan, seconded by Mary Hudson, the minutes for the Nov. 12, 2020, meeting were approved 6-0 (*Janet St. Clair arrived shortly after the vote*).

## **PRESENTATION**

### **Winter Air Quality Hazards – Evan Bing**

NWCAA Atmospheric Measurement Manager Evan Bing gave a presentation on air quality hazards in the Pacific Northwest. (*Full presentation attached.*)

- Typically, the Pacific Northwest experiences the highest PM2.5 concentrations during wildfire smoke season.
- Fall, Winter, and Spring also present meteorological conditions that can be hazardous to air quality. Most of these situations are related to high-pressure systems, or atmospheric ridges.
- High-pressure systems are associated with sinking air, which is bad for cloud formation. Clouds absorb and re-radiate longwave radiation emitted from the Earth. Warmer air discourages usage of woodstove to heat homes.
- Without cloudy skies overnight, more terrestrial radiation emitted from Earth's surface is lost to space and surface temperature quickly drops. There can be a residual layer of warmth in the upper atmosphere due to heating from the previous day, which also contributes to inversion formation.
- Maple Falls (Columbia Valley) has poor air quality related to inversions, where PM2.5 levels increase rapidly during the evening hours, when people are using their woodstoves. Low-lying terrain are especially vulnerable to inversions. Colder temperatures encourage greater usage of stoves to heat homes and stay comfortable.
- Winds tend to be very low or completely calm during high atmospheric pressure regimes since winds blow from high to low pressure.
- Local topographic features, such as hills or valleys, can inhibit horizontal air movement.
- It's important to recognize the meteorological factors themselves are not the direct culprits implicated in winter air quality episodes; human activity produces the pollution that degrades the air quality.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

NWCAA Executive Director Mark Buford put forward the Advisory Council members, whose terms expire at the end of December 2020. Both Steve Crockett and Polly Dubbel have agreed to serve another four years. The third member whose term is also set to expire, Jeremy Martens, has resigned from the Board, so that spot will be a future vacancy to fill in 2021. Buford expressed gratitude for Martens' contributions and for the continued service of Dubbel and Crockett.

Board member Donovan made a motion to renew the four-year (Jan. 2021- Dec. 2024) terms of Crockett and Dubbel, and Brian Heinrich seconded the motion. The Board voted 7-0 to renew their terms.

## **ACTION ITEMS**

### **Bills and claims**

Board members discussed the bills and claims reports for November 2020. Heinrich made a motion to approve the November (\$332,949.91) 2020 bills and claims. Hudson seconded the motion, and the Board approved the bills and claims 7-0.

## **STAFF REPORTS**

### **Director's report – Mark Buford**

Buford reported to the Board on the following matters:

- The ALCOA Intalco non-attainment area is waiting on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to issue a final decision, which is expected by the end of December 2020. After the area is designated, Ecology and NWCAA will begin working on a plan to get the area back into attainment (compliance) with the NAAQS.
- In 2021, NWCAA will be working on leveraging the newly updated Strategic Plan.
  - Focus on Ambient Air Monitoring program – two new staff members (Evan Bing and Christopher McGarry) – will be working on improvements including improving data visualization.
  - Identifying and engaging communities disproportionately affected by air quality.
  - Update the penalty policies.

Buford and staff will work with the Advisory Council before bringing any of these to the Board for consideration.

- During the first week in December (2020), the air quality in the Columbia Valley area was unusually poor. A Stage II air quality burn ban was called. On Friday, Dec. 4, 2020, four staff identified 70 homes using their woodstoves during this ban. Some of these homes have probably filed for heating exemptions. However, staff would like to gather more information via outreach to determine how best to address the other users.

The long-term goal is to identify woodstove smoke reduction measures that work in this community.

### **New source review and air operating permit update – Agata McIntyre**

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

The Agency didn't receive any applications for construction permits, but staff did issue five construction permits.

McIntyre reported on one of the projects that was recently permitted. Socco Forest Products is expanding their operation in Sumas. This company dries lumber then manufactures lumber products from it. They are installing new lumber saws, a planer, dust collection bins, and a new baghouse to capture dust. This permit will allow Socco to increase production by up to 4 million board feet per month. Dust created from this expansion will be controlled by the new baghouse.

**Enforcement update – Toby Mahar**

NWCAA Compliance Manager Toby Mahar reported that NWCAA issued 13 notices of violation in November. Most of these violations pertained to failure to pay their 2020 registration fees or report their 2019 emissions. Most of these cases have since been resolved.

Mahar also noted that the Agency issued seven penalties in the month of November, including a large penalty (\$100,468) to FPE Renewables LCC, which operates an anaerobic digester. As a result of their operating problems, excess H2S emissions exceeded permissible limits. The Agency is currently negotiating a resolution for this problem.

Another fairly large penalty (\$26,000) was issued to the Shell Puget Sound Refinery for having excess VOC emissions.


The complaints for November were within the normal range.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to consider, the meeting adjourned at 2:37 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 10, 2020, in Mount Vernon, Washington.

ATTEST:   
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Terry Nyman, Secretary  
NWCAA Board of Directors

  
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Bob Severns, Chair  
NWCAA Board of Directors

DATED: February 11, 2021