

MINUTES FOR AQC MEETING

Thursday, April 4th, 2019, 2pm
ACRD Board Room

Present: John McNabb (ACRD electoral director)
Dave Jarrett (Community at large)
Gary Swann (Agricultural Community member)
Earle Plain (Ministry of Environment) left at 3:35
Ashley Popovich (Catalyst Paper)
Stephanie Bruvall (Island Health)
Patty Edwards (MLA's Office)
Anna Lewis (Chair)
Peter Mazey (FNHA)2:10

Via Phone: Jade Yehia (IH) joined at 3:08

Guest: Mike Owens (Port Alberni fire chief)

Regrets: Larry Cross (Catalyst)
Judy Carlson (Community at large)
Ron Corbeil (City of Port Alberni)

Meeting called to order at 2:03

1. WELCOME

Acknowledgement of the traditional territories.
Roundtable of introductions.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Earle added review of pamphlet that the Breathe Clean Air Comox just developed.
John McNabb moved to adopt agenda with addition. Stephanie Bruvall seconded. All in favor.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Feb. 28th, 2019

Patty Edwards moved to adopt minutes as presented. John McNabb seconded. All in favor.

3. UPDATES

• Woodstove Exchange

Anna

-To date: 2 woodstove to woodstove exchanges; Anna received 4 inquiries re. heat pump options this past month.

-Connected with Jenny Brunn (ACRD Manager of Operations) regarding including WSE information in the Beaver Creek water bill. Anna wrote a one-page document outlining WSE program and air quality in Port Alberni and this will go out with the water bill the end of the week. Also connected with the Cherry Creek Waterworks District and can add this to the July mailout, Anna will contact in June.

-Anna will investigate neighbourhood mail option via the post office. This could be a viable option to reach households in Beaufort and Sproat Lake region. There is currently \$1200 remaining in the advertising budget.

Earle spoke to revisiting the Port Alberni Woodstove bylaw as it could be used to promote WSE for compliance reason. Earle was going to follow-up with Tim Pley on a possible legal review.

- **Community Web Cam**

Earle

- After examining the pictures available from various sites, the top of the communications tower at City Hall provides the best vantage point from an Air Quality Assessment perspective.
- The pictures will be stored on the camera itself and they will be overwritten as space runs out (no routine offsite storage). The only access to pictures will occur when there is something of interest happening in the airshed (e.g. air quality complaints; elevated readings at the air quality monitoring site, etc.) so data usage will be very low.
- Province is working on agreement in principle with City.

- **Breath Clean Air Comox brochure**

Earle

- This brochure is an educational piece around the impacts of woodsmoke in the Comox Valley. Very effective although very anti woodstoves.
- Breath Clean Air is doing lots of advocacy work in their region and some new initiatives from this include that in Comox no woodstoves are allowed to be installed in new buildings and in Courtenay through a VIHA grant they have more funds for woodstove replacement in identified additional hotspot areas.

Anna: Will explore with Jennell (Breathe Clean Air Comox Valley) the possibility of utilizing format of pamphlet and tailoring to being Port Alberni specific.

Mike: This brochure looks at natural gas as the optimal alternative; while last month during presentation natural gas was presented as evil and the wood boiler was a better alternative. It is interesting to note the different views based on lens through which you are viewing. I.e. greenhouse gas vs. particulate matter.

- **Community Presentation on Air Quality and Public Health**

Anna

- Approximately 40-45 people in attendance.
- Van was in the parking lot prior to the event from 6-6:30 and there was a steady stream of people checking it out.
- Dr. Hasselback started off the presentation with an overview of air quality over time and the linkages to public health. He also tied in specifics to Port Alberni.
- Dr. Krogh spoke to the VIU project and some of the initial findings. Lots of excitement and appreciation by audience members at the possibilities the mobile van offers.
- Anna spoke to the AQC, goals and objectives, current initiatives, the development of the airshed management strategy, airshed emissions inventory and the identified priorities moving forward.

In general people seemed engaged, interested and interactive. Good broad section of community; and some of the issues that were addressed by audience members were: people whose kids with asthmatic conditions living beside neighbours burning in the backyard and degradation of health; concern around marijuana grow-ops burning waste from operations; diesel trucks idling in Walmart parking lot using free Wi-Fi; odours from the mill, etc.

- **Status of ACRD bylaw development**

John

-Staff will have report and bylaws developed for the board's consideration at April 24th meeting. The report will detail options the Regional District has to regulate burning. Options for the Board to consider include:

- a) **Limit open backyard burning** according to standards such as time of year, combustibility of the material, maintenance of a fire break, etc. This regulation would supplement the provincial *Wildfire Act* requirements for monitoring the venting index and fire control measures. The bylaw could be restricted to more densely populated areas of the Alberni Valley. There would need to be an active bylaw enforcement component to implementing this regulation with the possibility of looking at ticketing for non-compliance.
- b) **Prohibition of open backyard burning.** A complete ban of backyard burning could be implemented matching the regulations of the City of Port Alberni. This would also require a resourced bylaw enforcement component to be effective. There may be difficulty in enacting a prohibition on land within the Agricultural Land Reserve.
- c) **Solid-fuel burning appliance emission bylaw.** A minimum standard could be set for the installation of wood stoves. New stoves would meet the new standards and existing stoves would have a grace period before requiring replacement, similar to the City of Port Alberni bylaw. The Regional District currently provides WETT certified inspections as a cost service. This program would likely need to be expanded to enforce the requirements of the bylaw.
- d) **Burn Smart education campaign.** Expand on community education program to inform citizens on how and when to burn safely.

Planning staff will be recommending a public input process prior to enacting any new burning regulations. Open houses should be held with information on the various regulatory options and information on the impact on air quality provided by Island Health and the province.

Anna has informed the staff that there is \$1000 available through the Plan H grant that could potentially be utilized to offset the open house/associated staff cost, etc.

- **Follow up on agenda items from last meeting**

Anna

- a) **SD70 trustee to be invited to sit on AQC**

-Anna connected with the school board with regards to initiating invitation. The AQC could request a spot on the May public meeting agenda and make a 10-minute

presentation during their meeting, and as part of the presentation, say how this is apropos to public education and then ask for a trustee rep on the AQC.
-Anna will send request to present at May meeting.

b) Kelly Gilday: clean air shelters and update on Community Wildfire Prevention Plan

-Kelly is interested in talking further to Earle and Anna regarding shelters. He also thought there might be potential funding to do some work and would further investigate.
-Jade sent a link to a BC Centre for Disease Control report from 2014 [Evidence Review: home and community clean air shelters to protect public health during wildfire smoke events](#) This provides a good overview of portable HEPA filtration systems as well as electrostatic precipitators and that if utilized correctly can reduce adverse impacts of smoke.
-Community Wildfire Prevention Plan contract has been awarded to Blackwell and Associates and assessment process has been started and can expect to see the initial draft in September of 2019.

c) Coastal Wildfire Centre: requested an analysis of past 2 years of forest fires and any advice/proactive tools for communities to use

-Received a response from Shawn McKay the full-time wildfire technician at the Port Alberni fire base. A summary of what he said is:
-Currently no specific analysis regarding past two years of fires and/or how communities can be more proactive
-The intent of Coastal Wildfire Centre Prevention department is to be proactive. Our Prevention department has aligned with FireSmart Canada and has adopted the “7 FireSmart Disciplines”. See FireSmart website which outlines the 7 disciplines and has additional resources as well. www.FireSmartBC.ca
-Challenge is getting the message out to those who need to hear it.
-Work with the local fire departments to coordinate several projects/events to reach out to the community. One example is May 4th the Sproat Lake FD is hosting a FireSmart open house where we’re hoping to showcase some fuel management around the Sproat Lake Community Hall as a demonstration forest. Another example is that the Alberni FD sets up a booth at the fall fair, and that gets a lot of traffic and interest. 2 Years ago, we did a demonstration forest at McLean’s Mill with signage. We’ve also been putting up small “walk up” style prevention signs for ATVs, target shooting, and campfires that have responsible messaging on them at all the main access points to the back country.

Anna: Perhaps should follow up with getting some of their material that we can include on the website and as takeaways at events. Cross promotion could be good.

4. Requests for Letters

• **Request for Letter regarding medical marijuana facility**

Patty

-Background: There is a request for medical marijuana production facility on a narrow 17-acre lot zoned ALR directly across from a healing centre. Residents are concerned around potential air pollution from the proposed facility. The proposed building is 30,000 square feet which would have 175 employees, 8-hour shifts, 24 hours/day.
-A request has been made to the AQC to write a letter stating that there is currently not enough information regarding the possible risks associated with the facility related to air

quality, specifically the odor, particulate matter, and Port Alberni's unique geographical features that may affect the efficacy of standard odor reducing measures.

Discussion:

-Tilray is sited in an industrial area for past 10 years and had no complaints. Industrial site. Tilray had initial issues for containment but this is mandated by Health Canada and changes were made.

-building is purpose driven and there is a 2 million dollar ventilation system in proposal.

-Canadian model is much more stringent than the US.

-See more of an issue with the licensed medicated growers as there is very little opportunity for local government to respond at all.

-Dr. Hasselback has written a position paper which Stephanie will forward.

-Jade can send appropriate information regarding public health.

It was decided that the AQC would not write a letter but would gather appropriate information and forward.

- **Request for letter of support re. Community Energy Project**

Anna

-At the last AQC meeting Stephen Salter made a specific request: Could the AQC potentially support the Community District Energy project through a letter of support? Would the AQC consider passing a resolution that was conditional on the technology (ESP manufacturers committed to emissions meeting target specifications)?

Discussion:

-The climate impacts of natural gas are higher due to greenhouse gases being emitted and wood is lower due to the fact that it is considered a renewable resource. Wood emits more particulate matter. Pros and cons of both.

-Net benefit of more buildings utilizing one system.

-Diversion of wood from open burning is another benefit

-Assumption that they will be able to utilize material from landfill is premature with a new organics diversion program being developed.

-What is the breakdown comparing wood and natural gas fuels of chemical systems? I.e. overall emissions of benzene.

It was decided that this be tabled until the next meeting for further discussion. Jade will be meeting with Stephen and will be able to provide the AQC for further information.

- 5. **Air Emissions Inventory (draft)**

Earle

-The draft was received, and Earle, Dave and Anna provided comment/input. At this point only a couple more comments need to be integrated into report and then document will be finalized. Once received, Anna will send out to AQC.

-The inventory confirms the assumptions that existed around particulate matter sources in Port Alberni, with open burning being the largest contributor of particulate matter. Space heating using wood stoves is another area for improvement.

-Earle will present on the Air Emissions Inventory at the next AQC meeting.

6. Community Health Fair

Anna

-Invited to attend the “**Community Wellness Extravaganza – *Taking the Steps to Wellness***” and it is scheduled for Thursday, May 2 from 5:00 – 7:00 pm at the AV Multiplex.

-The goal is to bring service providers, organizations and businesses together to improve the quality of our residents. They will be showcasing a vast variety of exhibitors that will include wellness information that will benefit infants to seniors and will incorporate all aspects of a healthy lifestyle including physical, emotional, nutritional, mental and social well-being.

- Anna sent in application and will be personning a table on air quality and impacts on health. Members of AQC are invited to assist.

7. Airshed Management Strategy

Anna

-Anna spoke to her envisioned timeline for creation of document and acknowledged that questions around action items were somewhat premature; not having the finalized version of the Air Emissions Inventory completed. She will begin to draft document for discussion for an upcoming meeting.

8. Next Meeting and presentation

-May 2nd, 2pm, ACRD boardroom

Meeting adjourned 4:02