

AIR QUALITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

Draft Minutes – December 7, 2010

Members/alternates present: John Garberson, Jan Hoem, Patricia Hogan, Sue Spanke, Katie Lane, George Hart, Bill Flannery

Members/alternates absent: Mark Loeffelbein, Tova Sardot

Staff: Sarah Coefield

Public: Saskia Jacobsen, Guy Hanson

- 1. John Garberson called the meeting to order**
- 2. Excused absences recognized:** Mark Loeffelbein and Tova Sardot were absent.
- 3. Agenda approved with one correction.**
- 4. Minutes:** October minutes approved with two corrections.
- 5. Public comment on non-agenda items:** n/a

6. Article Presentation

Jan Hoem presented two articles about biomass boilers. The first article, “Massachusetts Medical Society Adopts Policy Opposing Biomass Power Plants,” discusses how the society decided to oppose biomass power plants in Massachusetts on the grounds that the boilers pose a risk to public health by increasing air pollution. The second article, “(Bio)Mass Confusion” published by the Wall Street Journal, outlines the state of biomass power plants in the U.S. today. The two main roadblocks biomass power plants face are environmental regulations and woody biomass sourcing and transportation, which have both become cost prohibitive.

The group discussed natural gas prices, which have recently dropped and impacted the popularity of biomass as a power source. Natural gas burns more cleanly than woody biomass, which the group highlighted as a good thing. The conversation then segued to a discussion about the University of Montana’s proposed biomass boiler. The group voiced concerns that the boiler would be a relocation of pollution into Missoula’s airshed, which cannot take on more pollution without exceeding the National Ambient Air Quality Standard. The group was also concerned about whether there will be opportunities for public comment on the boiler. John Garberson informed the group that on Dec. 8, the university was holding an open house about the boiler, which would be the first opportunity for public comment. The news was well-received by the council.

George Hart will present next month.

7. Revision of pavement regulations: Sarah Coefield gave a presentation about potential revisions to Chapter 8 (Fugitive Emissions) in the county’s air regulations. The Air Board has requested the AQAC revisit the regulations to consider incorporating options that would help with stormwater infiltration. Pavement is important for keeping down particulate pollution in the county, but impervious surfaces play a large role in stormwater pollution. The air regulations define

“pavement” as 2 inches of asphalt or 4 inches of cement concrete. This definition is prohibitive of some pervious pavement technologies that may be effective at keeping down dust while also allowing stormwater infiltration. In addition, the Air Board specifically requested that the council revisit the number of days vegetated parking lots may be used and where they may be considered appropriate.

The council decided to continue gathering information before forming a subcommittee to tackle the issue. George Hart and Katie Lane will work together before the next meeting to do more research on types of pavement. The council will brainstorm the issue some more at the next meeting and Sarah Coefield and Katie Lane will find some experts to bring in to the discussion.

8. AQAC membership vacancies and applications. The application deadline was extended to January 11, and members were reminded to reapply if their terms are up in 2010.

9. Woodstove education brainstorming/Env. Health website evaluation

Due to time constraints, the group focused on evaluating the Environmental Health Division’s website rather than continuing to brainstorm about woodstove education. The group focused on the Woodstove and Fireplace Home Page. Suggestions included simplifying the language, adding a health section and a FAQ and linking to the Air Stagnation Zone map. The group also recommended incorporating pictures that illustrate basic concepts such as emissions and burning cleanly.

10. Staff report: Sarah Coefield gave the staff update. Recent poor air quality events in the Potomac and Seeley valleys were associated with outdoor burning after normal burning hours and illegal burns. The staff is planning to take steps to limit after-hours fall burning in the future. Sarah also gave an update on the Seeley Lake woodstove open house, which was held on Oct. 30. The open house highlighted methods for burning cleanly and provided information about air quality. Hundreds of people came to the open house and the atmosphere was generally pleasant and engaged.

In addition, the department is in the very preliminary stages of proposing an impact zone around Seeley Lake. The impact zone will help prevent outdoor burning from impacting the community. Finally, the prescribed wild land burning season is closed until March 1, 2011. It is wintertime burning season and there is only one permitted burner in the county. The group was encouraged to report any plumes of smoke that are not obviously from the permitted burner.

11. Public comment: N/A

12. Announcements, other business: The group was encouraged to attend the biomass boiler open house at the University of Montana. The open house was at 10am, 2pm and 7pm on Dec. 8 at the University Center on campus.

13. Adjourn