

AIR QUALITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

Minutes – March 1, 2011

Members/alternates present: George Hart, Garon Smith, Jan Hoem, Beth Berlin, Tova Sardot, Bert Chessin, Katie Lane, Mark Loeffelbein, John Garberson, Sue Spanke

Members/alternates absent: Katie Lane, Bill Flanery, Patricia Hogan

Staff: Sarah Coefield

Public:

- 1. John Garberson called the meeting to order**
- 2. Excused absences recognized:** Katie Lane and Bill Flanery were absent.
- 3. Agenda:** approved after rearranging the order to move the topic “Communicating technical information to the public” to the end of the meeting.
- 4. Minutes:** February minutes approved as written.
- 5. Public comment on non-agenda items:** n/a

6. Article Presentation

Tova Sardot presented two articles about black carbon. Black carbon is carbon in the form of smoke, soot or particulate matter that results from the incomplete combustion of fossil fuels, biofuel or biomass. Tova said that with all the attention on carbon dioxide, she wanted a refresher on black carbon, which also plays a significant role in climate change. The first article, “UN report urges action on ‘black carbon,’ smog,” addresses the UN’s recent call to curb black carbon. According to the report, doing so by 2030 would take 0.5 degrees Celsius off the expected 1.0 C rise in global warming by mid-century. The second article, “Woody Debris Disposal by Fire,” is an informational publication released by www.reduceblackcarbon.com. It provides technical information about the formation of black carbon and black carbon’s role in climate change. Black carbon only stays in the atmosphere for a relatively short amount of time, but while suspended, the carbon particles absorb sunrays and release infrared rays as heat. When they do fall back to ground, they accelerate the melting of snow, ice and glaciers by absorbing heat from the sun and transferring it to the ice or snow surface. In addition to briefly commenting on sources of black carbon, the group discussed the visceral nature of the term “soot,” and its potential for stirring public interest in black carbon.

Beth Berlin presented an article about climate change’s potential impact on human health. The article, “Medical Groups Warn of Climate Change’s Potential Impact on Health,” was published in U.S. News on February 24th. A group of health experts warned of impending dangers to human health if climate change isn’t slowed. According to the experts, threats to public health include increased asthma attacks, heat waves, complications with chronic diseases, increased insect-borne illnesses, and extended allergy and asthma seasons. The group discussed the Clean Air Act’s role in benefiting public health, and the threat posed to the CAA and EPA by budget cuts and legislators’ desires to prevent the EPA from regulating greenhouse gases. Jan Hoem said it is important for people to get in touch with their legislators and keep track of current legislation.

Jan Hoem will present next month.

7. Staff comments on pavement regulations

Ben Schmidt presented the Air Division's comments on the Council's recommended revisions for Chapter 8 (Fugitive Particulate) of the Air Pollution Control Program Regulations. The Air Division believes the Council's ideas can be incorporated into the regulations, but it will likely take more than a month to draft revised regulations because the division will need to define where permeable paving can be installed. Ben said the staff will have to think about the gray areas – apartment complexes, low volume streets, etc., which may be candidates for permeable paving. He pointed out that when writing regulations, the division avoids leaving anything up to individual discretion, so some of the language suggested by the Council will have to be modified or left out of the regulations.

Garon Smith recommended that the Council forward the regulation recommendations to the Air Pollution Control Board with a note that the Air Division is working on incorporating the recommendations into the air regulations. Jan Hoem made a motion that a cover letter be attached to the pavement subcommittee's recommendations. George Hart seconded the motion and the motion passed. John Garberson will write the cover letter.

8. Pizza subcommittee report.

At the February AQAC meeting, Mike Albans petitioned the Council to consider his request for a change to the solid fuel burning device regulations in the County's Air Pollution Control Program. Mr. Albans wants to open a restaurant that would use a wood-fired oven to make certified Neapolitan pizza in the Air Stagnation Zone. The current regulations do not permit wood-fired ovens. The Council formed a subcommittee at that meeting to look into his request. However, prior to the subcommittee's first meeting, George Hart, one of the committee members, found information about a gas-fired pizza oven that has recently been approved for cooking certified Neapolitan pizzas. George passed the information along to Mr. Albans, who said he would take it into consideration. Mr. Albans later said he would be interested in having both a wood-fired and a gas-fired oven for his restaurant, and he said he would use the gas oven during periods of poor air quality. Due to his continued interest in a wood-fired pizza oven, the subcommittee decided to meet, but only George could attend the meeting. Beth Berlin passed along her thoughts in an e-mail, which detailed her concerns about the lack of particulate emissions data for wood-fired pizza ovens. George met with Ben Schmidt at the health department, where they discussed George's interest in seeing new businesses come into Missoula and the health department's reservations about opening the regulations to allow wood burning in the Air Stagnation Zone.

George relayed the developments to the Council, and urged the Council to make a decision that evening. George advocated for opening the regulations to allow wood-burning pizza ovens, saying that despite the lack of emissions data, the Council had to ask if they want the kind of pizza and jobs Mr. Albans' restaurant would bring, or if they wanted to continue the path of eliminating sources of pollution. Beth Berlin said the Council needed to base its decision on science and act responsibly, and the Council's responsibility was to look toward air quality. Ben Schmidt said his concern was that even if wood-burning ovens didn't impact overall ambient air quality, they could have neighborhood effects. In addition, other restaurants have found workarounds to keep in business without violating the air rules. Sue Spanke said that a person asking to burn wood should come with data to support their arguments, but Mr. Albans mostly presented that the pizza is good and he really wants to make it. The group discussed grandfathered wood-burning pizza ovens in

the county, the steps involved in implementing a rule change and Mr. Albans' options if the Council voted against recommending a rule change. Garon Smith said Mr. Albans could still approach the Air Pollution Control Board if the Council voted against recommending the rule change. After some more discussion about particulate emissions data and cooking, the Council members agreed that they were not inclined to recommend revisions of the solid-fuel burning device regulations to accommodate wood-burning pizza ovens. George Hart made a motion to draft a letter to Mr. Albans explaining that the Council won't recommend a rule change at this time and to encourage him to pursue the gas-oven alternative or bring the Council emissions data for an oven that meets the County's emissions standards. Jan Hoem seconded the motion and the motion passed. George Hart will draft the letter.

9. Communicating technical information to the public.

At the February AQAC meeting, Garon Smith challenged the Council to come up with creative ways to present air quality information to the public via the Health Department's website. He provided a Wired magazine article, "Blood Simple," as inspiration. The Council members did not bring ideas to the March meeting, but did do some brainstorming during the meeting. Some of the ideas mentioned included incorporating animation into the website and providing real-time air quality data. Other ideas included adding a Missoula Air Quality FAQ and more health-related information. After the brainstorming, Garon Smith shared some examples of how he uses illustrations to convey scientific information to his students. John Garberson asked the Council to do their homework and bring suggestions for information that could be added to the website and how it could be presented it to the April AQAC meeting.

10. Staff report:

Sarah Coefield reported that outdoor burning season opened on March 1st, and burn permits have been modified with language to discourage evening burning. The extended-hours provision was initially intended for large burns that could not be completed by the 4 p.m. time limit. In that spirit, the provision may now only be granted to burns that are started by 10 a.m. This should cut down on the number of burns that are lit in the late afternoon or evening. The staff is also working on revising the pavement regulations to incorporate the Council's suggestions. In addition, the Seeley Lake Impact Zone for outdoor burning (Impact Zone SL) is now in effect.

11. Announcements

The AQAC membership application process was reopened in order to advertise for a physician alternate member. The application deadline is March 18, 2011.

14. Adjourn