

AIR QUALITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

Draft Minutes – May 3, 2011

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

Members/alternates absent: Patricia Hogan, George Hart

Staff: Sarah Coefield, Ben Schmidt

Public:

- 1. John Garberson called the meeting to order**
- 2. Excused absences recognized:** Patricia Hogan, George Hart
- 3. Agenda approved**
- 4. Minutes:** Approved with four typo corrections.
- 5. Public comment on non-agenda items:** n/a

6. Article Presentation:

Mark Loeffelbein presented an abstract from the article “Engine operating load influences diesel exhaust composition and cardiopulmonary and immune responses” from the April 2011 Environmental Health Perspectives. The abstract points out that there are more than particle emissions coming out of diesel engines and different engine loads lead to different health effects, even if the particulate emissions are the same. An idling engine still affects heart rates quite a bit. Jan Hoem asked about which engine rate puts out more emissions. Mark said more vapors (unspent hydrocarbons, fuel vapors that were not fully combusted) are emitted when the engine isn’t running at full, but more black carbon is released at higher emission rates.

Katie Lane will present next month.

7. UM biomass boiler permit application – Ben Schmidt

Ben Schmidt, air quality specialist with the Missoula City-County Health Department, gave an overview of the University of Montana’s air quality permit application for a biomass boiler. He outlined the Health Department’s role when determining whether or not to issue a permit. The Department looks to see if the application demonstrates the project can meet all local, state and federal rules (such as emission standards) and whether or not the source would lead to a violation of ambient air quality standards. Ben said the Department is reviewing the permit application. After the department makes a preliminary determination (40 days after receiving the completed application on April 22nd), there is a 15 day public comment period. After those 15 days, a final decision must be made. Ben reminded the Council that public comments need to stay within the arena of whether or not rules are being met and procedures are being followed. The Council also discussed the administrative review and hearing process.

Following the procedure discussion, the group discussed whether or not greenhouse gases come into play with the permit (they don’t), and the source of weather data the university used for

modeling their emissions and impacts on ambient air.

Beth Berlin mentioned the “D” air quality grade Missoula recently received from the American Lung Association and said her concern is how this facility will impact Missoula’s air quality by continuing to add pollutants into the system. Ben agreed that any time you add a new emission source to the valley, it means more pollution and the health department is very aware that Missoula is in a mountain valley and has inversions. He pointed out that if Missoula really wanted to limit pollution, that would mean a focus on getting really clean heating technologies into people’s homes, limiting vehicles and preventing industry from moving in.

Sue Spanke asked if Missoula County can decide it doesn’t like wood boilers, much like it did with woodstoves. Ben said that because the county has its own air pollution program, it can make those decisions with smaller sources. Large sources, such as Roseberg, are regulated by the state. Regardless, any decision along those lines would only affect future projects.

The group also discussed the university’s strategy to avoid violating the National Ambient Air Quality Standards in Missoula. Ben said the university will be required to have an emergency episode avoidance plan for when Missoula has air alerts and warnings. He also mentioned the 100ft stack the university plans to build for the boiler, which will help move emissions up and out of the air people breathe. Ben explained that even though the boiler will have more emissions than the natural gas boilers, as long as they meet BACT (best available control technology) and won’t violate the ambient air standards, they will likely get a permit. He said BACT is different for a biomass boiler than for a natural gas boiler.

Bert Chessin asked if there will be monitoring requirements for the boiler, and Ben said that, as part of the permit, the university would have to do emission stack testing soon after starting operation. Jan Hoem expressed nervousness that the boiler will have greater emissions than advertised, but Ben said that the university will be held to the emissions they say they can meet in their permit application. If they violate those emission rates, they will get a Notice of Violation and possibly fines.

The group spent some time discussing nitrogen oxides (NOx), and the pollution controls the boiler will use to reduce NOx emissions. The group also spent a considerable amount of time discussing MEPA (the Montana Environmental Policy Act) and the Environmental Assessment the university is conducting as required by MEPA. The public can make broader comments on the EA than on the air quality permit application. Beth Berlin asked how the Council could engage the Air Pollution Control Board to look into the EA and weigh in on it. Garon Smith, the Air Board Chair, said the Council can submit testimony detailing their air quality concerns. Still, he reminded the Council that even the Department of Environmental Quality doesn’t have the authority to make rulings on the MEPA process, and the Board gets its authority through them. That doesn’t mean the Board can’t weigh in, but it can’t write a rule citing MEPA as an authority for changing the permit. Tom Javins told the Council that the intent of the MEPA process is to inform the boiler design and address the concerns of the public. The Environmental Assessment is scheduled to come out at about the same time as the permit, and will be available for public comment. He said the university has released a document addressing the comments they’ve already received at open houses.

Additional topics of discussion included modeling methodologies, wood moisture content, an Idaho boiler, smog and greenhouse gas rules.

Ian Lange, Tom Javins, Jim Habeck and Derek Goldman were the public in attendance, and all contributed to the conversation.

8. Staff report:

Sarah Coefield gave the staff report. The Health Department is proceeding with setting up an online system for outdoor burn permits. Sarah also looked into the smoking vehicle hotline, as requested by the Council, and learned that the hotline has been underutilized in recent years, and the Health Department no longer has access to the license plate database. Also, vehicles are a very small part of our overall pollution problems. Sarah and Ben will head to Seeley Lake this month to present results from the PM2.5 saturation study. Also, Sarah attended Air Pollution Control Board meeting to follow up on the Council's recommendation that the Health Department revise the pavement regulations to allow permeable paving. The Board voted to have staff proceed with pavement revisions, so Sarah and Ben will be working on that. Sarah also let the Council know that she will be working with Ben to revise the Missoula air quality history document to bring it up to date (it hasn't been revised since 1999). She said she will provide them for member notebooks once it is complete. Sarah also mentioned Missoula's "D" air quality grade from the American Lung Association, which is up from an "F" in previous years.

9. Public comment: n/a

10. Announcements:

The Council's letter to Mike Albans regarding a wood-fired pizza oven is ready to go in the mail with John Garberson's signature.

John asked the Council to welcome its newest member, Guy Hanson, and also express their thanks to Ben for his presentation at the meeting.

Beth Berlin said she thinks that at some point the Council could talk about opportunities to use Missoula's air quality grade in the ALA State of the Air to share with the public ways to keep the air clean. She said she is thinking about writing an opinion piece to talk about what was in that report.

The next AQAC meeting is June 7.

11. Adjourn