

MASON COUNTY CLEAN WATER DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes for March 14th, 2024 (via Zoom)

03/14/2024 – CTO 1:03 pm by Ian Tracy

Welcome & Introductions: Roll Call

Members: Erica Marbet - SIT, Glenn Landram – Citizen, Nick Schneider – MCD, Art Whitson – Citizen,

Other Agencies/ Public: Barbara Ann Smolko– South Sound Shellfish Recovery Project Coordinator, Molly Paige – WSDOE, Seth Book – Citizen, Alena Reynolds – Citizen, Constance Ibsen – Citizen representing LHCWC, Rebecca Cohen – Taylor Shellfish, Kenny Oberg – City of Shelton, Trevor Swanson – WSDOH, Erin Ewald – Taylor Shellfish, Teri King – Citizen, Lea Shields – WSDOH

County Staff: Ian Tracy MCEH, Vladimir Nekrutenko MCEH, JJ Stepan MCEH, Cheryl Craig MCPH

Review Agenda: No changes, approved.

Review & Approval of Meeting Minutes: Constance wants to note for minutes that she should be mentioned under “other” and since we are mentioning establishing ordinance, if they could add “Constance Ibsen – Citizen representing LHCWC” (Lower Hood Canal Watershed Coalition).

Vlad recommended a motion to revise with the Constance addition and accept minutes.

Erica motioned to accept the minutes, seconded by Nick. Approved.

Public Comments: None

Program Overview:

- JJ updated the group on his ambient monitoring progress. In the last 3 months, everything has come back clean. He has updated results on the ambient monitoring [web map](#).
- Vlad shared permit information. We have had a total of 89 permits since the start of this year. Out of those 89, brand new systems are 69, tank-only is 19, and total repairs done is 11.
- Vlad updated on the deficiency mailings, all 1,200 have been sent out. The next step is for Rhonda, our O/M EH specialist to send out letters to all residents on septic that haven't had their septic serviced in the past 3+ years. Ian clarified that it's for conventional pressure or open bottom sand filter, around 6,000 systems. The idea is to do maintenance mailings for all system types, in addition to our septic blitz in summertime. On our mailing, we have received 293 responses and out of those responses, 204 have been corrected. Erin asked about mailing follow-up for those who don't respond, and Vlad said there is no further mailing after that, and this is where the visit of parcels and door-knocking comes in, outreach to encourage septic maintenance. He is hoping if Andrea, code enforcement, gets more room as she works through her case load, maybe she will be able to go through ORME reports to follow up on some more serious/immediate deficiencies that need addressed.
- Vlad went over septic rebates, since our last meeting, we did have a little money left and at this point all of that has been used. We are hoping to receive more funds for the program some time in July of this year.

- Teri asked, how are we doing with 22-23 outstanding permits? How do we keep track of the ones who have not gone in or been repaired, etc? Repairs are only allowed 1 year says Ian, everything else is a new system. Occasionally, we will have a repair that needs to exceed 1 year and they can get one 1-year extension for that, but that's usually a very particular need. How many rebates were you able to give, and what did they do, where did they go? Asked Teri. Vlad said I know that typically we try not to advertise rebates unless we are running into situations with a homeowner in complete failure and in a low income situation, Ian do you have anything to add? Ian said, the way rebates have always worked in Mason County is there's 2 categories of applicants. One category is frequent fliers, and every year they cycle through properties and get free maintenance, and then there's the rest which are direct outreach from our staff where we find the failure and say here's an application for the rebates. This is primarily through Andrea, Vlad, JJ and occasionally the septic provider informs on this in outreach. Vlad said, by the end of 2023 we had given 28 rebates and after that we only had 8 left, so between January 1st and now, the ConCon renews January 1st and that's when we typically get our septic rebate money. Is there a way to put into that rebate so people aren't just getting maintained for free, says Seth, like prioritizing for shorelines or properties not in RME, or no septic pumping records, etc? Ian said that project was very disappointing for him, even bumping rebates up to 500 didn't work, and only 12 went out. Water quality surveys on property I think scared people away, DOH wanted us to prioritize low-income applicants, and we have done that with our selective outreach we do, but we can't say "you own 4 properties and we see these every other year so no", we can't discriminate, or do that at least with the tools that we do have.
- Vlad opened the topic of closure response plans. The first time JJ and I were working on these plans, we were fortunate to work closely with DOH. Like Ian mentioned, we are now past the deadline, though nowhere says we cannot make additions or any kind of adjustments to documents incase things change over time. If you do have suggestions/comments, it's not too late for those to be added to the document as well. If anyone needs to do a real in depth dive, I do think it needs to be put on the agenda for another meeting, Ian added. Teri asked, when will you present the plans to the BOCC and MCBOH for approval? Probably to the Board of Health at the next meeting on the 26th, not sure for BoCC says Ian. I try to present to BoH first, and then can present that to BoCC as a matter of record. I was wondering if they are going to do a hearing? asked Teri. I don't think they did a hearing for Johns Cove says Ian. How different is this plan from Lilliwaup? asked Teri. It might be something to look at because if we are going back to these bays and doing a downgrade, we might have to keep looking back at management. We want to make sure we are using data to make really good informed decisions.
- Teri said, I would love to add in the next agenda, when does the board meet about what we do? We could do one for BOH and one for BOCC but I think making sure everyone understands the work happening and the resources going into it is important. Erica said, I'm unsure when the last time I or anyone briefed the council, back to what Teri just said though, I think it'd be good going to BOCC for a briefing especially before Shutty leaves to describe the contrast between before this committee was created and after.
- Erica asked, What are JJ's and Vlad's thoughts about the causes of elevated bacteria in these closure areas? I'll speak on Lilliwaup says Vlad, whenever it comes to Lilliwaup, since 2022 we only had one high hit for Lilliwaup Creek and it was September 2023. With that being said, we are highly suspicious that there are other factors or nonpoint sources

affecting the marine sampling station on #186 and partially, in Tahuya JJ spoke of a heat dome that occurred a few years back and may have affected data points. Birds in Lilliwaup area may have an effect on other species as well, so since October last year we take pictures each time to try and keep a count of how many birds are out there hanging out, etc. JJ said, we take a sample of Lilliwaup creek and Tahuya river and Caldervin creek, we take the same sample days as WSDOH, at Lilliwaup at high tide taking that sample there tend to be over 100 birds in the tidal estuary upstream of the bridge where highway 101 goes over the mouth of the creek, we have started documenting that now too. The elevation is either birds or shoreline and not a septic issue, it is believed. No deficiencies or failures are in that area that we are aware of, there are not many houses period, so it really comes down to if we can document the amount of birds – it's hundreds, sometimes plural, of birds in that estuary JJ said. As far as Tahuya, #217 the failing station has been clean, it seems whatever was causing sporadic hits has gone away. It is entirely possible maybe a septic was fixed, but that heat-dome event that took place showed that the day before WSDOH went out and sampled it was between 100-110 degrees out, the following day they got an insanely high hit. If you take that day away it is a lot different. If DOH continues getting a clean hit the next several sample events it won't be failing anymore, and there is no detectable pollution source coming from the river and no notice of any failures/deficiencies on the shoreline, it seems it will drop back off, or is poised for upgrade in the not so distant future.

- The group moved on to by-laws for the MCCWD. LHCWC (Lower Hood Canal Watershed Coalition) has submitted a version of the bylaws with their edits and suggested changes, says Ian. Constance suggests going through the document as a group section by section. Constance said, we think it's important to have establishment of district, and establishment of the committee, and as we were talking about all this stuff we decided that we liked the acronym CWAC (Clean Water Advisory Committee)– could put C-WAC. JJ mentioned continuity of CWD (Clean Water District), or MCCWD, so CWDAC (Clean Water District Advisory Committee). I want acronym to reflect what it actually is, Trevor said, for CWDAC. Clean Water District Advisory Committee was agreed on. Constance wanted clarification that it is an annual fee for Clean Water. Ian said must make one statement clear, this document is not setting policy for MCEH, it's truly so when this board is operating, they know how to operate and function and in what manner and fashion, how long meetings are going to be, how frequent, etc. Teri said I think we will need a glossary of terms so that as we work, we are all using the same definitions. Ian made a recommendation to remove BOH from this document, as including them will duplicate work in having to brief the same thing to 2 different boards constantly. Teri sees the importance of BOH involvement, and Ian explained that he briefs them on everything that happens, but it is quite redundant to have this document approved by BOH and it may be better off to be approved by just BOCC. The group had no further details to change.

Public Comment: None

Adjourned: Motion to adjourn made by Teri King, seconded by Nick Schneider. Meeting adjourned.

Next Meeting: June 13th, 2024