

AQAC MINUTES
December 4, 2018

Members/alternates present: Don Anderson, Dave Atkins, Bert Chessin, Chic Fitts, John Ottman, Beth Berlin, Jan Hoem, Tom Roberts

Members/alternates absent: Ronni Flannery, Guy Hanson, Sue Spanke, Kathy Tonnessen, James Stephens, Rachel Burmeister

Staff: Sarah Coefield

Public: none

1. **Bert Chessin called the meeting to order**
2. **Excused absences recognized** – Kathy Tonnessen and Rachel Burmeister were excused
3. **Agenda amended to include an item for scheduling the January AQAC meeting and approved.**
4. **October minutes approved with typo corrections.**
5. **Public comment on non-agenda items.**
None

6. Article Presentation

Jan Hoem presented “Prescription for Change: Physicians, the climate, and human health” by Benjamin Rachlin (Orion, Summer 2018). The article discusses the relative lack of physician participation in climate change messaging and how underprepared physicians are for the type of wilderness medicine that will be called for in the face of climate-induced natural disasters.

Tom Roberts said it’s interesting that physicians don’t really recognized climate change as an issue. He said you’ll be happy to hear a group of healthcare workers and physicians from around Montana just met to discuss this topic.

Jan said that is good news.

Tom said it’s a way of getting concerned physicians together to speak about climate change and health concerns. He said the issue is so overwhelming, it’s hard to think we can do anything.

Dave Atkins said there was bipartisan legislation introduced in the House this session to address climate change. He said it will need to be re-introduced in 2019. Ninety members (half democrat, half republican) are coming together to address climate change. He encouraged the group to check it out. Dave said it’s cap and dividend legislation. It has positive economic aspects and the numbers they’re showing could reduce emissions significantly.

Dave said he’s been longing for the new national climate change report and the new IPCC report. He said for too long the discussion has been about environmental effects, when in reality, the economic

and social effects are just as significant and mean more to more people.

Dave said that at a conference this spring he heard from an architect that if the world's housing was built out of wood instead of steel or concrete, it would lead to a 2-degree temperature reduction.

Don Anderson said that's not taking into account the energy needed to transport wood.

Dave said deforestation is a driving climate change force. He said incentivizing wood use can cause more sustainable forest management.

Dave encouraged the group to, instead of getting depressed, get engaged and join the process. He said we can solve this. We need to drive the political will, and political will is driven by people, not politicians.

Bert Chessin said that as reports come out and people get information, people understand this is serious. He said the window to change is closing, but the will and the pressure to do something is increasing.

Jan said the number one thing we have to do is stop burning coal. She said Northwestern Energy wants to keep operating Colstrip #4 until 2040. She said the PSC will be looking at that soon.

Bert said he thinks the economics are really going to be what drives things.

The group discussed solar power.

7. Overview of Missoula County wildfire preparedness/adaptation efforts – Max Rebholz, Wildfire Preparedness Coordinator

Max Rebholz spoke with the group about the many ongoing efforts in Missoula County to prepare for future wildfire seasons. He discussed the Missoula County Wildfire Protection Plan the led the Cohesive Strategy Working Group (CSWG). The CSWG has three pillars: to promote and create resilient landscapes, to promote and create fire-adapted communities and to implement effective fire response.

The county has applied for a substantial post-fire hazard mitigation grant that, if awarded, will be used for hazard reduction projects on properties in Missoula County. The question, Max said, will be what to do with all the chips and slash the grant will generate. One of the conditions of the grant prohibits burning slash created during hazard mitigation work.

The group discussed the biomass that would be generated by the grant and concerns about how it can be most sustainably disposed of.

Dave Atkins said a company has made an air curtain burner that produces biochar. Biochar is a marketable product and carbon is locked in the char instead of released into the atmosphere. He said there are very interesting technologies out there.

Don Anderson said composting chips makes methane, but you can capture it and use it for energy. He said it would take a lot of money and infrastructure.

Beth Berlin asked if there is a hope to get folks educated enough that they stop building in the WUI.

Max said there's a push to adopt a WUI code, but almost all of the county is in the WUI, so it might not be feasible.

Dave said that in the last four years there have been multiple examples of people thinking they weren't in the WUI and then their properties burned when fire passed through the area.

Dave said we've got a fuse right down the Rattlesnake Valley. He said it's the wind and shower of embers that drive the fires. People don't think they're at risk and have junipers growing next to their houses. He said we have a lot to do with existing as well as new development.

Beth said it's going to be politically hard, but we all pay for it when something burns.

John Ottman said you'd think insurance companies would say they won't insure a house in these places.

Dave said instead of not building, we should say build with specific materials and landscaping. He said we've got huge amounts of residential buildings already in place in the WUI. We should say you can build there, but it has to be a survivable house.

John asked if any of the grant money would be available to help residents do hazard mitigation work.

Max said there are cost shares out there with some agencies.

Jan Hoem asked if the cost shares can be used in the city. Max said he didn't know.

Dave said he doesn't think there is a city/county differentiation.

Jan said that for previous mitigation grant work, it was the fire department that serviced you that determined if you got a grant. Places serviced by City Fire were not involved in cost sharing last year.

Max said the county doesn't know how much material they'll be pulling off the land, so it's hard to say how much biomass there will be to deal with.

John said his company is just finishing up a \$33 million BLM grant in Helena. He said the project generated hog fuel that went to a combined heat and power plant in Idaho. He said there are ways to get rid of hog fuel.

Jan said Bend, Oregon has been very successful doing these types of projects and would share their information with the Office of Emergency Management.

8. Review AQAC charge, forward recommended changes to the Air Board

Kathy Tonnessen and Shannon Therriault (Environmental Health Director), both proposed edits to the charge, which Sarah Coefield presented to the group.

Dave Atkins said the proposed changes address what the group had talked about previously and he was good with them.

Tom Roberts made a motion to forward the proposed changes to the Air Board and recommend the Board adopt the changes. Chic Fitts seconded the motion and it passed by a voice vote.

9. Staff report

Sarah Coefield gave the staff report. She said outdoor burning is closed until March. This year the county issued 4,418 burn permits and burners activated their permits 12,121 times. She said she is on some of the wildfire groups and committees Max spoke about, and she's been attending those meetings. She said she's in preliminary discussions with a local representative to the state legislature (Tom Winter) about a wildfire smoke preparedness bill for the upcoming session. She said the Air Program may have to increase several of their fees for industry and burners to make up for the funding cuts DEQ passed down in the latest contract (DEQ cut the state funds the Air Program receives by about 40%.) She said EPA may bring a wildfire smoke and public health pilot project to Missoula County.

10. Public comment

None

11. Select AQAC representative for the next Air Board meeting update

Bert Chessin will attend the Air Board meeting.

12. Set January AQAC meeting

The January AQAC meeting will be moved from January 1st to January 3rd.

13. Announcements, other business

None

14. Adjourn