

Southwest Clean Air Agency

Board of Directors Minutes

April 7, 2022

The regular meeting of the Southwest Clean Air Agency Board of Directors was held in the Southwest Clean Air Agency office, Vancouver, Washington on April 7, 2022.

Those present were: Bob Hamlin, Chair, Skamania County  
Ryan Smith, Vice-Chair, Member at Large  
Dr. Alan Melnick, Director, Clark County  
Ruth Kendall, Director, City of Longview  
Ben Shumaker, Director, City of Stevenson  
Arne Mortensen, Director, Cowlitz County  
Max Vogt, Director, City of Centralia  
Kim Harless, Director, City of Vancouver  
Robert Stowe, Director, Town of Cathlamet

Excused: Lee Tischer, Director, Wahkiakum County  
Sean Swope, Director, Lewis County

Also Present: Staff: Uri Papish, Executive Director  
Traci Arnold, Office Administrator

Guests: None

Call to Order

Mr. Hamlin called the meeting to order. A quorum was confirmed to exist.

Board of Directors Minutes

Mr. Hamlin asked for consideration of the March 3, 2022 minutes. Dr. Melnick moved and Ms. Kendall seconded that the minutes for the March 3, 2022 Board meeting be approved. Motion passed.

Consent Agenda

Mr. Hamlin asked for approval of the Consent Agenda including voucher numbers 260 through 305 in the amount of \$30,251.10 which have been approved for payment by the Executive Director, February 2022 Financial Statement, February 2022 Salaries and Benefits in the amount of \$146,676.46. Mr. Smith moved and Dr. Melnick seconded approval of the Consent Agenda. Motion passed.

### Changes to Agenda

None

### Info Items & Public Comment

None

### Public Hearing

None

### Unfinished Business/New Business

Mr. Hamlin opened discussion on the decision on cost-of-living wage adjustments for Fiscal Year 2022/2023 and recognized Mr. Papish. Mr. Papish explained a decision on SWCAA's employee cost of living wage adjustments is one of the early budget decisions that must be made prior to submitting the proposed Fiscal Year 2022/2023 Budget for Board approval. The proposed Fiscal Year 2022/2023 Budget will be presented to the Board of Directors for approval at the May Board meeting. SWCAA does not utilize an automatic step pay increase system as is used by many government agencies. Instead, salaries are increased annually through a cost-of-living wage adjustment and merit pool adjustment for eligible staff.

SWCAA's Board, with some exceptions, has typically approved a cost-of-living wage adjustment equal to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for the Portland/Vancouver Region and more recently the Western Region. An attachment was provided to show the history of SWCAA salary increases. The 2021 CPI for the Western Region was 6.1 percent which is significantly higher than it has been in years past.

SWCAA's Board may want to look at the COLA and merit pool increases collectively rather than individually to determine overall employee salary adjustments and may choose to combine the agenda items.

A second attachment was provided for data comparison between total salary increases (cost of living increases plus step increases) in other jurisdictions served by SWCAA along with different options for SWCAA salary increases. This information is being provided to inform the Board's decision regarding combined COLA and merits pool increases for comparison purposes since SWCAA does not utilize a step system.

Mr. Hamlin wanted to confirm the options presented can be accommodated by the budget. Mr. Papish said the options presented are affordable in the upcoming budget year.

Dr. Melnick asked if the merit has ever been withheld from a staff member. Mr. Papish said merit has never been completely withheld from any staff member. Dr. Melnick felt the merit should not be changing from year to year. He felt the agency may want to consider moving toward a predicable amount with the merit and allow only the COLA to vary

according to the current conditions. Dr. Melnick felt the merit should be rewarded unless an employee is in a disciplinary state.

Mr. Mortensen explained from his experience in private sector that having a predicable amount given every year often discourages top performers. He felt merit was a more effective way to encourage performance. Further a flat amount being guaranteed year after year gives the impression the government has endless funding.

Ms. Harless asked about retention about the agency. Mr. Papish said the retention is pretty good however, a couple employees have left in part due to the pay. Mr. Harless agreed with Dr. Melnick that predictability is important to staff and a flat merit pool should be considered moving forward.

Mr. Shumaker asked where staff is on the pay scale and if there are people at the top of the pay scale. Mr. Papish said there is no one at the top of the pay scale. The last person at the top of the pay scale retired last year. The average tenure at SWCAA is approximately 16 years. One staff member has been with the agency thirty-three years and is not at the top of the scale because the merit pool percentage has been quite small for several years, averaging about one percent. A salary survey was conducted a few years ago and the survey resulted in a change to the salary schedule but not where staff were within the ranges.

Ms. Kendall supported a more robust merit system verse a guaranteed increase.

Mr. Mortensen reminded the board that the COLA is based on ever changing costs of goods which may or may not ever be even with labor costs. He again expressed support for a robust merit system to encourage the best performance from employees.

Dr. Melnick expressed that merit should be based on retention, recruitment and staying competitive in the market. The COLA would hopefully keep pace with the cost of goods so that wages don't decrease due to increased prices.

Ms. Harless again supported a flat merit. She felt a changing merit amount creates a system of inequities for staff.

Mr. Smith expressed concern about maintaining a higher cola to ensure retention among staff. He said the volatile labor market suggests people are moving around seeking better pay and are able to find it. He felt the merit was important but given the current climate a higher COLA seems appropriate.

Mr. Hamlin asked for a motion. Mr. Shumaker made a motion for a 3% merit pool and a 6.1% COLA effective July 1, 2022. Mr. Smith seconded the motion. Dr. Melnick, Mr. Vogt, and Ms. Harless voted in favor. Mr. Mortenson and Ms. Kendall voted against the motion. Motion passed.

Dr. Melnick asked Mr. Papish to add the merit change discussion to a Board Meeting in the future. Mr. Papish said he would bring this to the board at a future meeting. He said the merit pool was the same for six years and it was too low to stay competitive.

Mr. Hamlin opened discussion on tentatively setting a merit pool for Fiscal Year 2023/2024 and recognized Mr. Papish. Mr. Papish explained the decisions is whether to tentatively approve and announce funding of merit salary increases for fiscal year 2023/2024. SWCAA's longstanding practice has been to use a merit system for salary increases along with CPI adjustments instead of using a step system for raises. SWCAA's policy is to announce the potential Merit Pool amount to staff in advance of the award.

Mr. Hamlin asked for a motion to tentatively approve a merit pool for salary increases to be allocated to staff based on annual performance evaluations in 2023. The funds are to be awarded at the end of next fiscal year (i.e., July 1, 2023) and this decision will be reviewed by the Board prior to adoption of the 2023/2024 budget.

Mr. Smith made a motion to tentatively approve a 3.0% merit pool for salary increases to be allocated to staff for Fiscal Year 2023/2024. Mr. Shumaker seconded the motion. Mr. Mortensen voted against the motion. Motion passed.

#### Executive Session

Mr. Hamlin opened discussion on the performance evaluation of the Executive Director. Mr. Smith asked for the Board to go into Executive Session for the purpose of performing the Executive Director's performance evaluation. He said the Executive Session will be utilized for discussion related to the performance evaluation in accordance with RCW 42.30.10(1)(g). Any salary adjustment or other decision will be made during the open public meeting following the Executive Session. He requested Mr. Papish and the general public to leave during the Executive Session which he estimated would begin at 3:58 and last for 10 minutes.

Mr. Hamlin reconvened the general meeting at 4:13 and requested an extension of 10 minutes.

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Mr. Hamlin reconvened the general meeting at 4:33.

Mr. Hamlin opened the discussion for Board member comments.

Dr. Melnick moved to approve the same increase for the Executive Director as staff, with a 3.0% merit and 6.1% COLA to be effective July 1, 2022. Additionally moving forward, the Board is requesting a method to gather feedback from staff on the Executive Director position. Ms. Kendall seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Mr. Papish expressed his appreciation to the Board.

## Control Officer Report

Mr. Papish summarized the information provided in the Control Officer Report and offered to answer any questions.

**International Technology Company Reports COVID-19 Lockdowns Resulted in Improved Air Quality in 84 Percent of Countries Worldwide (March 16, 2021)** – IQAir released the 2020 World Air Quality Report, providing an analysis of PM2.5 data reported by ground-level air monitoring stations located in 106 countries around the world and aggregated through the company's air quality information platform. The purpose of the report, says IQAir, is "to highlight a wide variety of air quality challenges as well as underscore the threat of human-caused air pollution. Raising air pollution awareness empowers people to take action to improve air quality and reduce their personal exposure." Based on the data presented, IQAir highlights the impact of COVID-related lockdowns and behavioral changes on global PM2.5 levels, including that in 2020, 84 percent of all monitored countries observed improvements in air quality "largely due to global measures to slow the spread of COVID-19." Examples included Paris, which experienced a 17- percent decrease in PM2.5 from 2019 levels. IQAir also reports that, overall, average particulate levels in the U.S. increased by 6.7 percent in 2020, notwithstanding measures to limit the spread of COVID; record-breaking wildfires in the West "caused U.S. cities to comprise 77 of the world's 100 most polluted cities in September 2020 (by monthly PM2.5 average). For further information: <https://www.iqair.com/us/world-air-quality-report>

**\$1.9 Trillion American Rescue Plan Act Passes; Includes Funding for Clean Air Agencies (March 10, 2021)** – Congress has passed the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (H.R. 1319) which was signed into law by President Joseph Biden. The \$1.9 trillion appropriates Fiscal Year 2021 funding to address both the pandemic and its economic ramifications. Among other areas of the Act that provide funding to state and local governments and to special districts, Section 6002 of the Act includes provisions that directly affect the funding of state and local clean air agencies in the current federal, including appropriating \$100 million to EPA "to address health outcome disparities from pollution and the COVID-19 pandemic". This appropriation includes \$50 million to be used "for grants and activities authorized under subsections (a) through (c) of section 103 of the Clean Air Act... and grants and activities authorized under section 105 of such Act". No more than 5% of that funding can be used for administrative purposes by EPA. It also includes an additional \$50 million "that shall be for grants, contracts, and other agency activities that identify and address disproportionate environmental or public health harms and risks in minority populations or low-income populations" under several authorities including CERCLA, the Safe Drinking Water Act, and "section 103(b) of the Clean Air Act". No more than 2% of that funding can be used for administrative purposes. For further information: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/1319>

**Researchers Conclude PM2.5 from Wildfire Smoke May Be More Harmful than PM2.5 from Other Sources (March 5, 2021)** – Nature Communications published a study in which researchers at the University of California San Diego found that wildfire particulate matter may be more toxic than equal doses of ambient PM2.5 and noted that air quality standards do not assume any difference in the toxicity of PM2.5 across different emission sources. Using 14 years of hospital admissions data (focused on Southern California), and a sequence of statistical approaches and exposure definitions, the researchers isolated PM2.5 specific to wildfires finding

“increases in respiratory hospitalizations ranging from 1.3 to up to 10% with a 10  $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$  increase in wildfire-specific PM<sub>2.5</sub>, compared 0.67 to 1.3% associated with non-wildfire PM<sub>2.5</sub>.” The researchers state, “Our conclusions point to the need for air quality policies to consider the variability in PM<sub>2.5</sub> impacts on human health according to the sources of emissions.” For further information: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-021-21708-0>

**Twelve States Sue Biden Administration Over Greenhouse Gas “Social Cost” Calculation (March 8, 2021)** – A coalition of twelve states led by Missouri filed a lawsuit in federal court seeking to bar the Biden Administration from calculating a “social cost” of greenhouse gases for use in regulatory decision-making. “Assigning such values is a quintessentially legislative action that falls within Congress’s exclusive authority,” the states assert. They argue in their complaint that Section 5 of President Biden’s Executive Order 13990, which establishes a working group charged with publishing estimates of the monetized damages associated with incremental increases in greenhouse gas emissions, is unconstitutional because it violates separation of powers principles. The plaintiffs ask the court to declare that the executive order violates Article I, Section 1 of the Constitution as well as the Administrative Procedure Act, and to declare any values determined by the working group to be “arbitrary, capricious, unreasonable, and contrary to law.” They also ask for injunctive relief barring the Biden Administration and the working group from implementing the executive order. “Setting the ‘social cost’ of greenhouse gases is an inherently speculative, policy-laden, and indeterminate task, which involves attempting to predict such unknowable contingencies as future human migrations, international conflicts, and global catastrophes for hundreds of years into the future,” the plaintiffs assert. The lawsuit was filed in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri. In addition to Missouri, the plaintiff states include Arkansas, Arizona, Indiana, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee and Utah. For further information: [http://www.4cleanair.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Missouri v Biden-EDMo Complaint 3-8-21.pdf](http://www.4cleanair.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Missouri%20v%20Biden-EDMo%20Complaint%203-8-21.pdf)

**Researchers Conclude Exposure of Elderly Population to Air Pollution at Lower Levels Poses Significant Health Risks (February 22, 2021)** – After studying 63 million enrollees in Medicare, researchers concluded that “on an additive scale, air pollution components pose a risk to human health, particularly 6 among the very elderly population in the United States. The increase in the probability of hospital admissions with cardiovascular and respiratory outcomes seems to be most pronounced at lower exposure concentrations for all pollutants. Given that more than half of the U.S. population is exposed to such levels, this issue should be of great concern to clinicians and policymakers alike.” The researchers, all associated with Harvard’s T.H. Chan School of Public Health, studied – among the U.S. Medicare population – the relationship between long-term exposure to fine particulate matter, oxides of nitrogen and tropospheric ozone, and hospital admissions for four cardiovascular and respiratory consequences (specifically, heart attack, ischemic stroke, atrial fibrillation and flutter and pneumonia). They used a “doubly robust” method for their statistical analysis, including both inverse probability weighting and adjustment of the outcome model to account for “confounding” (interference by a third variable). In addition, the researchers examined this relationship at lower pollutant concentrations, consistent with typical levels of exposure in the U.S. and among subgroups that are potentially susceptible. Long-term exposure to all three pollutants, especially at lower levels, was found to be associated with an increase in all of the medical outcomes studied. For further information:

Board Policy Discussion Issues

None.

Issues for Next Meeting

- A. Public Hearing.
  - 1. As Necessary.
- B. New Business/Unfinished Business.
  - 1. Fee Restructuring
  - 2. Budget
  - 3. Geographic Distribution of Air Pollution Presentation
  - 4. Merit Pool Structuring
- C. Board Policy Discussion Issues.
  - 1. As Necessary.
- D. Meeting Date and Location.
  - 1. May 5, 2022 at 3:00 p.m. Southwest Clean Air Agency, 11815 NE 99th Street, Vancouver, Washington.

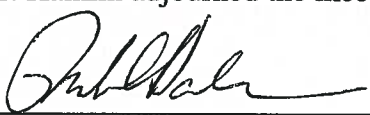
The next Board of Directors meeting will be held on May 5, 2022 at 3:00 p.m., Southwest Clean Air Agency, Vancouver, Washington.

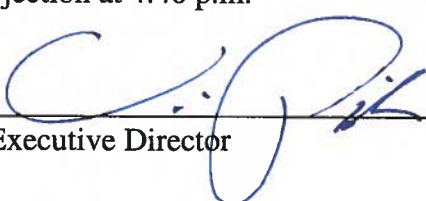
Board Meeting Attendance:

| JURISDICTION     | J<br>2022 | F<br>2021 | M<br>2021 | A<br>2021 | M<br>2021 | J<br>2021 | J<br>2021 | A<br>2021 | S<br>2021 | O<br>2021 | N<br>2021 | D<br>2021 |
|------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Clark County     | +         | +         | +         | +         | +         | +         | C         | +         | +         | +         | +         | C         |
| Cowlitz County   | +         | +         | +         | +         | +         | +         | C         | +         | +         | 0         | 0         | C         |
| Lewis County     | 0         | +         | +         | +         | 0         | +         | C         | +         | +         | 0         | +         | C         |
| Skamania County  | +         | +         | +         | 0         | +         | +         | C         | +         | +         | A         | +         | C         |
| Wahkiakum County | +         | 0         | +         | +         | +         | +         | C         | 0         | 0         | +         | +         | C         |
| Cathlamet        | +         | +         | +         | +         | +         | +         | C         | +         | +         | +         | +         | C         |
| Centralia        | +         | +         | 0         | +         | +         | 0         | C         | 0         | +         | +         | 0         | C         |
| Longview         | +         | +         | +         | +         | +         | +         | C         | +         | +         | +         | +         | C         |
| Stevenson        | +         | +         | +         | +         | A         | +         | C         | A         | 0         | 0         | +         | C         |
| Vancouver        | +         | +         | +         | 0         | +         | +         | C         | +         | 0         | 0         | +         | C         |
| Member-At-Large  | 0         | +         | +         | +         | +         | +         | C         | 0         | +         | +         | +         | C         |

+ = regular member present; 0 = unrepresented; A = alternate present; C = cancelled meeting

Mr. Hamlin adjourned the meeting without objection at 4:40 p.m.

  
Chair

  
Executive Director