

Advisory Council Minutes

June 26, 2025

Members Present:

Ron Edgar, Chemistry
John Dietzman, Environmental
Doug Bleeker, Fire Protection (Zoom)

Staff Present:

April Westby, Executive Director
Lisa Woodard, Communications/Outreach
Manager

The meeting was called to order at 8 a.m.

1. Introductions

2. Approval of the May 22, 2025, Minutes:

- a. Not enough members for a quorum. Tabled until next meeting.

3. Advisory Council Vacancy

- a. Elena Wolf has left Kaiser Aluminum, so we will need to replace her on the Advisory Council. We will be putting a notice on the website. In December we have three more members of the Advisory Council whose terms are expiring.

4. Executive Directors Report

- a. The Agency has been invited to participate in a newly formed group, The Spokane County Wildfire Mitigation Coalition. This group is comprised of representatives from DNR, local fire districts, Emergency Management, Spokane Conservation District, local municipalities, and the Health District. Their goal is to proactively and strategically work together to mitigate the risk of wildfires.
- b. SRCAA participated in the North Spokane Corridor Interagency Consultation, comprised of DOT, Department of Ecology, FHWA, and EPA, to discuss changes to the North Spokane Corridor project and the potential impacts on the air quality analysis, since this project is inside the former PM10 and CO non-attainment area. The partner agencies got together and reviewed the analysis and agreed that the CO and PM10 Hot Spot analysis that was already done was sufficient to demonstrate that the project is not expected to result in any kind of NAAQS exceedance. No further analysis is needed to continue the project.
- c. Digital surveys are now live. We are also collecting information from the calls that come into our office. We are trying to understand the most common questions that people have.
- d. We have reinstated Performance and Development Plans. PDPs will resume for all employees starting July 1, 2025. We are trying a new PDP format that we hope will be more useful to managers and staff.
- e. Mike McKay, our Monitoring Technician of 26 years, will be retiring at the end of July. With the current budget issues, we will not be hiring a replacement. We

will be utilizing our current staff to take over the responsibilities. Russ Neumiller will spend 40 percent of his time on Monitoring and 60 percent on Compliance and Inspection work. Margee Chambers will assist some of the monthly data analysis and office work. Mark Rowe will continue in his current role and fill in some of the gaps left by Mike. With Russ moving to Monitoring, we are down to 3.6 inspectors from 6. Five inspectors would probably be considered fully staffed. We put an entry level I Inspector into our budget, but are waiting for the July 10, 2025, Board meeting for the Board to approve filling the position. Russ is currently at Met One training in Oregon. Two of our monitors have been in the lab waiting for installation and could be used as hands on training.

5. FY 26 Budget Updates

- a. The budget was approved during the June 5, 2025, Board Meeting. Spokane County is facing a large deficit this fiscal year and has requested their Local Assessment to be reduced by at least 7 percent. That caused all of the other jurisdictions to also be reduced based on the current calculations. Overall, the Local Assessments had a reduction of \$92,000.
- b. The COLA increase for staff this year will be 2%.
- c. All our fee-based programs are at cost recovery except Notice of Construction. The NOC program varies based on the number of applications that we receive. At the end of the year, if there is any money left in that account, money gets put back into the General Fund.
- d. We still do not know about the potential cuts to our Federal Grants. We have been told that it is a possibility that the number may be zero. We are still waiting for the Federal budget to be approved. The 103 and 105 Core grants are likely to be eliminated as categorical grants under this budget. We have already budgeted a 50% reduction, but if those grants go to zero it would be another \$75,000 that will need to be made up somewhere.
- e. We do have a balanced budget. \$75,000 was pulled from our Ozone Reserve account. We also pulled from the Building Sale account and the Project Reserve account. Budget was approved by the Board.
- f. We are hosting the Washington Air Managers' meeting next week and Federal and State funding will be a big topic of discussion.

6. Wildfire Smoke Education, Outreach, and Partnerships

- a. Lisa Woodard gave a presentation on Smoke Ready Week and Smoke Ready Spokane. It outlines efforts by SRCAA and partners to prepare the public for wildfire smoke impacts. Smoke Ready Week, held June 9-13, 2025, included a regional social media campaign with messages about the contents of wildfire smoke, how it affects health, where to find air quality information, and how to protect yourself. Media coverage included interviews, articles, and a Facebook Live session, with participation from local organizations like city departments, fire agencies, and health organizations, as well as state and federal agencies. The campaign reached thousands across social platforms, with SRCAA and SRHD tracking significant engagement. The presentation also highlights the EPA-funded

Smoke Ready Spokane initiative, a partnership with SRHD and Gonzaga. With a budget of \$205,000 over two wildfire seasons, the program focuses on reaching vulnerable groups, specifically people who are pregnant and those with chronic health conditions. The project included research, community engagement, focus groups, and the development of bilingual materials and a website. Community messengers were recruited to share information throughout the summer. Practical guidance, such as setting up a Cleaner Air Room and using DIY air filters, is promoted. The campaign will be evaluated and refined between wildfire seasons, with a final report to be completed by the end of 2026.

7. Air Operating Permit Program Update

- a. Due to time constraints, we will be pushing this item to the next meeting.

8. Open Discussion

- a. John had questions about who to call for someone burning during burn restriction days.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 a.m.

The next Advisory Council Meeting is scheduled for July 24, 2025.

Advisory Council Member

April Westby, Executive Director