



BOARD OF HEALTH

The Thurston County Board of Health has responsibility and authority for public health in both incorporated and unincorporated areas of the County.

Minutes for December 16, 2014 Special Meeting

1) 3:34 p.m. Call Meeting to Order

In Attendance: Cathy Wolfe, Chair; Sandra Romero, Vice Chair; Karen Valenzuela, Commissioner; Art Starry, Public Health & Social Services Department Environmental Health Division Director and La Bonita Bowmar, Clerk of the Board of Health

Chair Wolfe called the meeting to order.

2) Opportunity for the Public to Address the Board of Health -none

3) Department Item

Description: Scatter Creek Septic System Management Project Recommendations

Chair Wolfe opened the special Board of Health meeting being held for the purposes of discussing the Scatter Creek Septic System Management Project Recommendations. She then introduced Art Starry the Environmental Health Division Director of the Public Health and Social Services (PHSS) Department. Mr. Starry explained this is a request to consider a resolution to accept the recommendations of the Scatter Creek Citizen Advisory Committee. He gave a background of the project which was developed to evaluate risk posed by septic systems to the aquifer a shallow, unconfined, and extremely vulnerable ground water supply that runs from Tenino, to Grand Mound and then to Rochester. He explained the importance of protecting the Scatter Creek aquifer as it serves more than 1,000 public water systems and single-family wells and is the sole source of drinking water for more than 18,000 residents in the areas.

Mr. Starry stated two years ago the Thurston County Board of Health appointed a citizen advisory committee to work with staff to help guide community discussion, evaluate septic system and septic system management impacts, and to assist in the development of a ground water protection strategy. The committee's goal was to develop a strategy to assure the Scatter Creek aquifer is safe to drink, now and in the future. Over the past two years the eleven member committee held 23 meetings. Mr. Starry acknowledged and expressed appreciation to the following committee members as follows: Sandra Adix, Tom Budsberg, Karen Deal, Amanda Niece, Lowell Deguise, Marlene Hampton, Chanele Holbrook-Shaw, Roger Max, D. Bruce Morgan, Maureen Pretell and Gene Weaver. He stated the committee working together with technical and policy experts in water quality, public health, computer modeling and land use developed the following conclusions.

Conclusions:

- The aquifer is vulnerable to contamination from septic systems and land use activities;
- Elevated nitrogen levels in the aquifer have decreased over time and seem to be trending lower, and the ground water model predicts that average nitrate concentrations in the most vulnerable part of the study area will be less than half the maximum contaminant level of 10 mg/l;
- Current aquifer conditions and worst case model results do not warrant taking regulatory action at this time;
- Monitoring water quality trends, the accuracy of the ground water modelling, water quality deeper in the aquifer, the extent and duration of spikes in water contaminants, chemicals of emerging concern, and the presence of pathogens such as viruses should occur so action may be taken when needed;
- Zoning, land use and health regulations generally have protected the aquifer from nitrates and many other contaminants, however, health and land use regulations can be strengthened to help assure the optimal placement of new septic systems and wells to minimize the potential for contaminating drinking water supplies;
- With proper information, education, and incentives, area residents can and will be good stewards and take action protect the aquifer

Mr. Starry noted the developed recommendations which cover septic systems, well siting, land use, zoning, ground water monitoring, data management, and education/outreach and funding priority were unanimously endorsed by the committee members. He then gave special recognition to two key project staff - Nadine Romero, Hydro geologist and Jane Mountjoy-Venning, project coordinator.

Mr. Starry stated following direction from a November 6, 2014 briefing to the Board by PHSS, staff prepared a resolution that accepts the advisory committee recommendations for Board consideration and directs PHSS to work with county departments and agencies to implement recommendations as time and resources allow.

Chair Wolfe questioned, and Mr. Starry clarified, PHSS would complete the monitoring work but the committee has requested and agreed to reconvene periodically to monitor the work.

Commissioner Valenzuela acknowledged Nadine Romero for her great work and expertise on this project.

Chair Wolfe asked for public comment on the Scatter Creek Septic System Management Project Recommendations. Comments were received as follows:

Gene Weaver commented on references to the aquifer being “contaminated”; also commented he had hoped the recommendations would include a reference to the scope of the work that has already been done and accomplished to date on this project. Mr. Starry address noted a final project report is being developed and will include more detail of the past completed work. He also stated the resolution does include a conclusion - “zoning, land use and health regulations generally have protected the aquifer from nitrates and many other contaminants” which although it does not go into detail it was meant to acknowledge the previous work.

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Commissioner Valenzuela requested information on Nadine Romero's study conclusion regarding full build out under current zoning. Mr. Starry explained and described the outcome of two scenarios of maximum development in the most vulnerable areas.

Chanele Holbrook-Shaw addressed the Board acknowledging Nadine Romero outstanding work and urged the Board to continue to use the model she developed.

Chair Wolfe closed the public comments. She expressed her appreciation to the advisory committee and thanked them for their recommendations.

Vice Chair Romero moved to adopt the resolution accepting the recommendations of the Scatter Creek Citizen Advisory Committee and directing the Public Health and Social Services Department to develop implementation of the Advisory Committee's recommendations through its own actions or coordination with other county departments and other agencies as time and resources allow. Commissioner Valenzuela seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Commissioner Valenzuela then thanked the Advisory Committee and expressed her appreciation of their time and efforts. Vice Chair Romero also expressed her appreciation.


4) Adjournment – meeting was adjourned

BOARD OF HEALTH
Thurston County, Washington


CATHY WOLFE, Chair


SANDRA ROMERO, Vice Chair

ATTEST:


La Bonita Bowmar, Clerk of the Board

Date: February 10, 2015

KAREN VALENZUELA, Commissioner

Thurston Community Television (TCTV)

The Board of Health meetings are aired on TCTV each week on Sundays at 3:30 p.m., Mondays at 8:00 p.m., Tuesdays at 12:30 p.m., Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m., and Fridays at 6:30 a.m. and at 5:00 p.m.