



September 12, 2022

Dear YRCAA Board of Directors:

On August 24, 2022, Friends of Toppenish Creek sent Chairman Devaney a letter of concern regarding proper notification to the public about a special meeting on July 14, 2022. The stated purpose of the meeting was introducing two finalists for the position of Air Pollution Control Officer (APCO)/Executive Director (ED) for the Yakima Regional Clean Air Agency (YRCAA). This was the YRCAA board's only concession to FOTC's repeated requests for input from the Lower Yakima Valley (LYV) on the selection process. As we stated in our August letter, the only apparent announcement of the meeting was by email and only six of the email recipients live in the LYV.

The YRCAA Board of Directors met last Thursday, Sept. 8, 2022. Our letter was not in the meeting packet, but Interim Director Dr. Hasan Tahat addressed it in his director's report. He stated that he only learned of our concern from Chairman Devaney that morning. To clarify – We sent the letter to all the board members and to APCO@yrcaa.org. Dr. Tahat stated that, as interim director, he has used his own YRCAA email for the past year and no one has monitored the APCO email. How could we know this?

Dr. Tahat stated that the YRCAA does not routinely notify the media about YRCAA board meetings and special meetings. He acknowledged a violation of YRCAA Administrative Code Part A, Section 2.7, and his suggested solution was to change the YRCAA Administrative Code so that the agency is not required to inform the media about special meetings.

It seems that such a revision of the YRCAA Administrative Code would further insulate the agency from the public and make it even more difficult for citizens to participate in Yakima County Air policy. Remember that recent legislation, the HEAL ACT and the Climate Commitment Act, require increased public engagement, not decreased.

From a legal standpoint is this a sufficient response when an agency violates its own code – to simply speculate about changing the section of the code involved? The three YRCAA members who attended the Sept. 8 meeting did not ask this question, even though the agency's attorney was present and available.

I want to share one more piece of information regarding the APCO/ED selection. When Yakima County Human Resources began advertising this position on Craig's List, FOTC had

serious concerns about how well the announcement would reach highly qualified people. We sent the announcement to agencies and groups up and down the Pacific coast.

Last week I had occasion to talk with a man who applied for the position because of our outreach. This man is a Navy veteran with years of experience in public engagement, who currently works for a large Washington State environmental group. He submitted an application per instructions and Yakima County Human Resources did not respond, not even once.

Sincerely,

Jean Mendoza