

May 7, 2025

Dear YRCAA Board of Directors,

At the last YRCAA board meeting I asked for a waiver of YRCAA rules that would allow the public to fully participate in discussions of the YRCAA budget for 2025-26. I have not heard from you, which I consider an affront to citizens who spend the time, energy, and money to participate in open government. In fact, I see that for the first time the YRCAA will not convene a work session to analyze the proposed budget. In my opinion this signifies a failure of the board to do your job.

With the opportunity for an open discussion off the table, I offer this alternative way of gathering necessary information regarding the proposed budget. Here are questions that I hope the board will ask tomorrow when you discuss the budget during your regular meeting. In my opinion, the budget should not be approved without answers.

- Given that the YRCAA cannot realistically perform all the actions authorized in RCW 70A.15.2040, what are the agencies priorities for the upcoming year and how are these priorities supported by the proposed budget?
- How is work time allocated for each of the YRCAA staff positions. For example:
 - o How much time is allocated for the Planning and Permitting Supervisor to spend on staff supervision and training, review of permits, long term planning, meeting with permitted entities and the public, air monitoring data analysis, air quality modeling, interagency coordination, preparing for litigation, SIP planning, SEPA reviews, grant writing, and keeping up to date on air science?
 - o How much time is allocated for Air Quality Specialists to spend on maintaining air monitors, inspecting permitted sources of air pollution, responding to citizen complaints, educating and informing the public, preparing for litigation, gathering air quality data, enterprise operations, translation from English to Spanish, and keeping up to date on air science?
 - o How much time is allocated for the Executive Director/Air Pollution Control Officer to spend working the front office, responding to public records requests, analyzing air monitoring data, communicating with members of the YRCAA board of directors, interagency coordination, supervising and training staff, planning short term and long term goals, budget development and accountability, education and outreach, website maintenance, grant administration, grant writing, and preparing for litigation?

- Have there been missed opportunities for grant funding due to lack of staff time to write grants? Would it be fruitful to employ a part-time grant writer?
- Does the proposed budget support staff time to work with WA State agencies on implementation of the Climate Commitment Act that includes millions of dollars in funding for communities? There are three overburdened communities in Yakima County.
- Education and Outreach have been seriously neglected over the past year. Is there adequate funding to ensure improved Education and Outreach during the next fiscal year? How much funding? Which staff are responsible for Education and Outreach?
- The YRCAA has \$1.6 million in reserves. Who can authorize use of these monies? Is there any opportunity for public input when there are withdrawals from reserves?
- During the May 2024 budget discussions, the YRCAA estimated \$1,133,396 in reserves. Now we see an estimate of \$1,609,066 in reserves. What happened to cause a nearly half million variance?
- There is an ongoing civil rights complaint against the YRCAA. How much staff time is devoted to addressing these concerns and how much time do you anticipate spending during the upcoming fiscal year? Which staff members are involved? Are there monies in the proposed budget to pay for translation services?
- There has been a whistle blower complaint against the YRCAA. The whistle blower states that the YRCAA failed to issue a notice of violation when the DTG Landfill failed to obtain an air quality operating permit in 2009 and thereafter. This has resulted in disposal of toxic chemicals at the site and now an investigation by WA Ecology under the Model Toxics Control Act. Neighbors have sued the YRCAA for failure to properly implement the State Environmental Policy Act regarding permitting at the DTG site. How much time and effort has the YRCAA devoted to analysis of this costly problem and consideration of ways to prevent a recurrence? How are such actions supported in the proposed budget?

Thank you for reading. I hope you will ask these questions tomorrow.

Best wishes.

Jean Mendoza