

May 10, 2025

Dear WA Attorney General's Ombuds,

On April 1 of this year, I wrote to you with a request for guidance. I have not received a response. This message is an addition to my April request.

The Yakima Regional Clean Air Agency (YRCAA) operates with a budget of around \$1.5 million. This agency is responsible for implementation of the federal and state Clean Air Acts (CAAs) in Yakima County.

Historically, the YRCAA holds a study session in May of each year to analyze a proposed budget for the next fiscal year that is prepared by YRCAA staff. The fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30 of each year. The budget must be approved by June 30.

This year, for the first time, the study session was incorporated into the monthly YRCAA May board meeting. The study session consumed eight minutes of the twenty minute board meeting. It was not publicized. Three board members and one alternate were present.

One board member asked questions regarding 1. The impact of federal and state budgets on the YRCAA budget, 2. Grants for wood smoke education, and 3. Budgeting for wages and salaries. He requested removal of a COLA for wages and salaries. The YRCAA Executive Director agreed to do this, although there was no motion or vote by the board.

One board member spoke in support of the first board member's comments and requests. Another said "Good" once and "OK" once. The alternate did not participate in the discussion.

This was the totality of the study session. A transcription is available.

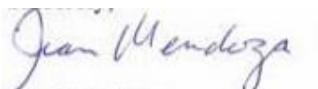
I believe it is a violation of the public meetings act for the board to vote on a topic as important as a \$1.5 million budget without robust discussion, especially since I submitted questions in writing ahead of the meeting. (The public is only given three minutes to comment and is not allowed to ask questions during public comments.)

The comments/questions I sent prior to the meeting were:

- I asked the board to waive restrictions on public comments and allow the public to actively participate in the discussion.
- In years past the YRCAA budget broke down staff assignments and allocation of monies so readers could anticipate YRCAA activities for the upcoming year. This is missing from the 2025-26 budget.

- There are no clues as to how many resources the YRCAA plans to devote to grant writing, data analysis, planning, outreach and education, translation, or many other important agency functions.
- Why are there large variances in expenditure from year to year for fine particulate monitoring, and for wood stove education?
- The difference between projected and actual reserves at the end of FY 2024-25 is over \$475,000. Why?
- If dairies were treated like other sources there would be twenty six Title V sources listed for Yakima County, not three.
- 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? Work for inspections, data gathering, data analysis, responding to complaints, permit writing, planning, grant writing, interagency communication, public education and outreach, etc.
- 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 provides 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?
- How much time and effort has the YRCAA devoted to analysis of a recent whistleblower complaint and consideration of ways to prevent a recurrence?
- How much time and effort is budgeted for ongoing litigation related to a citizen complaint?
- How much time and effort is budgeted to address a civil rights complaint against the agency?
- How much time and effort is budgeted to correct agency deficiencies identified by the WA State Auditor and the Environmental Protection Agency during inspections?

Sincerely,



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