

July 16, Coffee with the Mayor

Meeting Topic: Regional Air Quality Council

Speaker: Sara O'Keefe, RAQC

Mrs. O'Keefe gave a short presentation prepared by the RAQC. The presentation provided information about different types of air pollution including ground-level ozone pollution.

Mrs. O'Keefe identified ground level ozone as the primary concern of the RAQC, and the biggest threat to health and wellness in the greater metro area.

She pointed out that because of Denver's topography, ozone levels spike during hot summer months on days when there is little or no air mass movement.

She talked briefly about the fact that the region was still in compliance with federal regulations, set by the EPA, but risked exceeding the limits on calm, sunny days.

After the presentation, the floor was opened for questions from residents.

The first question asked referenced an almanac entry that noted several days last year when the ozone levels around the metro area exceeded the prescribed limit.

Mrs. O'Keefe answered that according to EPA regulations, there is a difference between occasionally exceeding the standard, and violating the standard. The difference lies in the way levels are calculated—averages are taken from several monitors around the metro area over a 24-hour period. The average level must be over the limit for there to be a violation. By that EPA-set standard, the metro area had not had any violations in several years.

Another resident voiced concerns about the RAQC pushing ethanol as an alternative fuel source. He said he had seen preliminary studies that showed a multi-level impacts that had not been considered including: farmers producing more corn (a crop that requires more water than others) in order to sell it to ethanol refineries, lower energy yield per gallon than gasoline, and increased prices for other types of produce since farms were dedicating more land to growing corn for ethanol fuels.

The next resident to speak asked if population growth had been taken into account when DRCOG projected air pollution levels for the next several years.

The Mayor responded that the projections do include expected growth. She pointed out that DRCOG had formulated a plan to in-build and increase population density in the urban areas while trying to limit urban sprawl.

The Mayor asked about consequences for non-compliance with ground level ozone

pollution standards.

Mrs. O’Keefe replied that non-compliance would require the metro area to formulate a costly new plan to get back into compliance as well as put more restrictions on federal funds used for transportation projects etc. Some federal funding, it would eliminate completely.

At this point, Mrs. O’Keefe ended the question/answer session for RAQC, and the Mayor opened the floor to general questions.

A resident asked for an update on the “trash can” ordinance.

Another resident responded that the ordinance had passed, and that as of Aug. 1st, no trash in trash bags only would be picked up on residential routes.

The Mayor added that there were also screening measures—that a trash can should be hidden from public view behind a fence etc.

She also said that prohibiting trash in trash bags was a step toward going to a fully automated system—which would be some time in 2008 or 2009.

A resident asked about the progress of the Croke Reservoir and Huron St. improvements.

The Mayor said she was unsure of the exact timetable for the construction, but that from Croke to 104th Ave. would be the first phase of the improvements and would be started sometime late this year.

At this point, several comments were made on taxes, raising taxes, and the prospect of new taxes for possible Recreation Center construction. All of the comments were negative.

In response, the Mayor talked briefly about the healthy fund balance the City had, and how the City could have done a better job at using some of those funds to keep up with infrastructure maintenance such as street repairs and pipeline maintenance.

The meeting ended.