

Find out what GJ City Council Candidates have to say about local air quality on Page Two.

What does biochar have to do with air quality?

Over the past several years the subject of using biochar as an alternative to agricultural burning has come up. Field and tree limb

burning in the Grand Valley seems to be a time-honored practice, and there-in lies the challenge. According to the American Lung Association there are now over 19,000 adults and children in Mesa County with asthma and other respiratory diseases. Not only does the resulting smoke from open outdoor burning affect these people most, it also discourages tourism and outdoor recreation. As the Grand Valley grows, the lingering smoke every spring and fall will continue to be a literal black cloud over our valley, causing growing concern. At the same time, our agricultural heritage plays a major role in our economic and cultural heritage. CCA believes we can have clean air alongside agriculture. Hence the need for open burning alternatives and our curiosity about biochar.

When we were given the opportunity to apply for some funding, we did. The resulting grant from the *Western Colorado Community Foundation/Dave and Mary Wood Fund* provided just the boost we needed to jump-start a small pilot project.

After our research team provided us with the confidence to begin, a plan emerged: soon we will begin to plant vegetables in a few gardens across the valley. Each garden will have 4 sections: the first using a 10% biochar/compost mix, the second with a 20% mix, the third using compost only, and the fourth using existing soil as a control. Volunteers will measure and report water usage and other observations, and soil samples are being tested at Ward Laboratories in Nebraska this month. Then in the fall, after vegetables have matured, the questions we hope we can begin to answer are:

- Did biochar/compost gardens result in faster growth, larger vegetables?
- Was there a difference in weed growth or soil water retention?
- What might be the benefits for agricultural use?

The ultimate hope would be to begin to find a market for biochar products in the Grand Valley. Might there eventually be an opportunity for farmers



to use their own vegetative waste to make biochar and re-use it? What are the safest and most cost-effective ways to produce biochar locally?

Will biochar use provide an opportunity for carbon sequestration payments in the future? Will this also provide an

alternative to seasonal agricultural burning in the Grand Valley?

Interested in helping us work to answer these questions? You are invited to volunteer! Contact Karen at citizensforcleanairgj@gmail.com

See our website for more information on biochar: citizensforcleanair.org

Next page: Grand Junction City Council Candidates

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Volunteers are needed to help care for our biochar gardens.

Any amount of time you might like to spend would be appreciated. And volunteers get to keep the produce!

Contact Karen at
citizensforcleanairgj@gmail.com
or 970-242-1054.





CCA: What suggestions do you have for how we can remind people that clean air is a shared value, and that everyone should care about protecting the air we breathe, regardless of political affiliations? How could we put these suggestions into action?

We sent a questionnaire to all 8 candidates competing in the Grand Junction City Council election. Four did not respond.

We have highlighted replies from the 4 who did in this newsletter. Complete responses will be posted on our website soon.

Randall Reitz—At Large Candidate:

I'm a proponent of crowd-sourcing air quality assessment through cheap and effective air quality monitors that stream data directly to the internet. There are now hundreds of these monitors around Grand Junction and residents can easily assess how we're doing at any time. This is an example of democratization of information and marshalling information to assist families and leaders in making decisions. Each time our city descends into dangerous air quality, this shared knowledge ripples through the community, raising awareness of the risks of poor air quality and the benefits of improving air quality.*

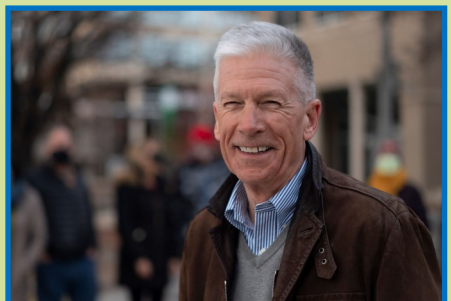


Western Coloradans have traditionally been very skeptical of climate change. This worldview is reflected in the ambivalence of current city leaders to enact climate policies or clean energy in city buildings. I will start by advocating for clean energy focus at the city level so the city will role model good climate stewardship.

** Editor's note: There are over 40 PurpleAir monitors, including indoor units, in the Grand Valley, along with dozens in the surrounding areas.*

CCA: What should the City of Grand Junction do to protect our air quality and prevent Front Range levels of pollution on the Western Slope?

Rick Taggart—Dist. A: *The City should continue to expand the harvesting and utilization of methane gas, a bi-product of the Presigo wastewater treatment plant. As new vehicles are needed in the City's fleet these should be powered by this renewable gas.*



The City passed an ordinance banning burning within the City. This ordinance should be reviewed again to strengthen the restrictions as needed.

Council has just approved a new comprehensive plan and before this updated growth impact fees. Both measures encourage intelligent growth within the core of our city where infrastructure is already in place. Growth

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City Council Candidate Questionnaire—continued

(Rick Taggart continued) in the core of the city enables citizens to utilize mass transit, walk or ride in our downtown corridor as opposed to utilizing automobiles on a continual basis.

New roads and reconstructed streets should always be planned for multi-modal use, again to encourage mass transit, walking or riding whenever possible.

More recharging stations are needed for electric car use within the City.

The City needs to continue to work with the County and your organization (Citizens for Clean Air) to explore cost efficient methods (as you are doing already) to reduce agricultural burns.

The City needs to continue to contract and expand when available its subscriptions in solar farms for City buildings.

While difficult to do, the relationships with the Canal Companies are critical if we are ever to utilize canal trails for commuting to work by walking or riding.



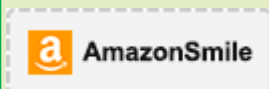
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Dennis Simpson—Dist. D: *In my view, the most important thing we can do is to regularly communicate with citizens about the risks associated with foul air and the benefits of doing things like improving the recycling program, improving ability to travel by public transportation and bicycles, and promoting e-mobility.*

The City should consider providing limited financial assistance to the experts in our community who have ideas for how to go beyond the items listed above. I read the Biochar power-point presented at the recent meeting of Citizens for Clean Air and found the concept interesting.

CCA: How do you think having clean air in the Grand Valley goes together with economic growth?

Abe Herman—Dist. E: *I believe in a form of economic growth that takes the long view. Rather than short-term incentives to attract and retain businesses, I think real long-term economic development is simply creating a city that's so great it attracts businesses and their employees to the area just because it's a great place to live. No one wants to live in a polluted, smog-infested metropolis if they can avoid it. When you see what an inversion looks like in Denver or Salt Lake City, it makes the pollution and air quality problems quite apparent; nobody wants to be breathing in that dark gray layer. So, from a long-term perspective, maintaining our air quality is good for business and our economy, because it's part of the great quality of life we have here that will attract businesses for the long term.*



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