



## MEMORANDUM

TO: Asheville-Buncombe Air Quality Agency Board of Directors

FROM: Ashley Featherstone, Director

RE: Minutes for May 11, 2023

DATE: July 24, 2023

Enclosed, please find the Minutes for the Asheville-Buncombe Air Quality Agency Board meeting held on **Thursday, May 11, 2023**. The next meeting of the AB Air Quality Board is scheduled for **Monday, July 31, 2023 at 4:00 pm** in the meeting room located at the Buncombe County Permit Office at 30 Valley Street, Asheville, NC 28801.

The Asheville-Buncombe Air Quality Agency Board of Directors met on Thursday, May 11, 2023, in the meeting room at the Buncombe County Permit Office located at 30 Valley Street, Asheville, N.C.

The attendance of the Board members was as follows:

**Members Present:**

*Joel Storrow*

*Karl Koon*

*Evan Couzo*

*Garry Whisnant*

*Ned Guttman*

**Members Absent:**

**Staff Present:** *Ashley Featherstone, Director; Kevin Lance, Field Services Program Manager; James Raiford, Permitting Program Manager; Mike Matthews, Senior Air Quality Specialist; Betsy Brown, Air Quality Coordinator; Alex Latta, Senior Air Quality Specialist*

**Others Present:** *Anjelica Tyler, CAPE; Patti Beaver, CIBO*

Mr. Storrow called the meeting of the Asheville-Buncombe Air Quality Agency Board of Directors to order on May 11, 2023, at 4:00 pm.

The order of business was as follows:

**I. Public Comment Protocol Announcement**

Mr. Storrow read the public comment protocol.

**II. Adjustment and Approval of Agenda**

Mr. Koon made a motion to move item C. under IV. Unfinished Business to item A under the agenda so Angelica Tyler, CAPE, could speak first. Dr. Couzo seconded the motion.

All present – yes

The motion passed 5-0.

**III. Consent Agenda:**

A. Approval of minutes from May 11, 2023

Mr. Koon made the motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Whisnant seconded the motion.

All present – yes

The motion passed 5-0.

**IV. Unfinished Business:**

A. Engage Buncombe Website for Boards

Angelica Tyler with Communications and Public Engagement (CAPE), addressed the Board with information about this site during the November board meeting. The county's goal was to move all board and commissions online by summer 2023.

IT is no longer loading our board minutes and agendas onto our website. The county is rebuilding the county website and moving to a more modern structure that will be easier to manage. Reducing the traffic on the site enables the webmaster team to focus on this transition. It is also a move towards improved public input.

The Engage site does not replace our web page but is more of a storytelling platform that is more flexible to use. Ms. Tyler can add the board documents, or she can train Air Quality staff how to load the documents. The platform is also a way to record meetings and make them more accessible to the public, based on studies the county has done on how citizens access county information. This aligns with the county's goals of equity and transparency. Citizens can subscribe to different county projects and boards in order to receive updates. The site also has the ability to create a survey or receive public feedback. It is very customizable unlike the main website which is hand coded.

All the board documents including the board packet and a recording and transcript of the meetings would be available to the public on this site. The meetings would also be streamed live; however, this is not the same as a Team's meeting. No one could "bomb" the meetings. CAPE could run the meetings, but staff could possibly take that over at some point. This site could be used to facilitate public hearings. The basic page has tabs for meetings, members and documents.

Engage Buncombe and our website would be linked one to the other. Part of the purpose is more equitable access to the board meetings and documents. There are opportunities to utilize this platform to promote programs, projects, awards and important announcements. There are various options as to how the public could interact with the board during a live meeting. This would be up to us and our public comment protocol.

Ms. Tyler pulled up the Justice Resource Advisory Council in order to show what a page might look like.

Staff are ready to start with a bare minimum page and are seeking the board's approval to do that. Board members expressed concern that this would cost more or require extra staff time. The cost is included in CAPE's budget, whose costs are covered by the county budget and partly distributed among departments through indirect cost allocations. The site will allow staff to have more control over loading board documents and other information that previously had to go through IT to post on our website. IT is overwhelmed with tickets for website changes.

Dr. Guttman made the motion to give staff the discretion to choose how to utilize the site and whether to move forward. Mr. Koon seconded the motion.

All present – yes  
The motion passed 5-0.

B. Consideration of FY 2024 Budget

We have more details and have updated the budget documents since the March board meeting. Changes include increases in the 105 and 103 grant budgets. We had anticipated a larger increase for the Section 105 grant for federal fiscal year 2023. The EPA did notify us of the anticipated award amounts, so we adjusted the budget from \$217,000 to \$223,000. We will pull those funds down as part of the 2024 Buncombe County budget year. The Section 103 grant increased slightly from \$60,000 to about \$63,000. We anticipate receiving another one-time Section 103 grant of \$46,000 through the Inflation Reduction Act- Clean Air Act grant. Expense increases under equipment of \$44,000 and \$2,000 under contract services reflect the expenditures we submitted for those funds. The \$63,000 and \$46,000 make up the \$109,000 in the 103-budget line.

There is a \$65,000 increase in the salary and benefits budget for BCFY 2024. The proposed CPI increase is over 7% for all staff. This will be voted on by the County Commissioners in June. We also requested that the budget include funds to cover the allowed annual leave sale for each staff member. Most staff do sell a week. If someone does not sell a week, then we will have some extra funds in that account.

The current projection of the pull down of the fund balance for the current BCFY 2023 is somewhere between \$50,000 and \$60,000. There are a lot of invoices out and the final numbers depend on the funds coming in and going out.

In the budget ordinance we have grouped the salaries and benefits in with the services and supplies. If the board votes to approve the budget in that way, staff will have greater flexibility to move funds between those expense categories during the budget year. This might prevent us from having to call a special meeting of the board to move funds within the budget as we did in 2022. This is how most of the county's budgets are adopted.

This budget includes a CPI increase for the Title V fees which was effective January 1st based on the changes we wrote into our fees when they were updated in September 2021. The board has the discretion to raise the Title V tonnage fee with the budget process. Staff recommend increasing the tonnage fee from the current rate of \$53 per ton to \$59 per ton which is rounding up to the nearest dollar the minimum fee recommended by the EPA.

We are budgeted to take \$109, 972 out of the fund balance in 2024.

We may want to schedule a special meeting in the fall to discuss the financial viability of the Agency going forward. The fund balance is still strong. The City and the County have been approached with the possibility of Air Quality requesting funds in the future.

Funding has been static, and staff have received regular cost of living increases. The workload has increased but we have fewer staff. There was discussion around raising the fees again and why raising the fees too much could be detrimental to the Agency. Asking the county and the city for funds was also discussed.

Forsyth County Air Quality is strongly funded by their county in order to keep permit fees in line with the state's permit fees. Mecklenburg County Air Quality could potentially be asking their county for funds for the first time soon.

Mr. Koon made the motion to approve the budget. Dr. Guttman seconded the motion.

All present – yes

The motion passed 5-0.

C. 2023 Budget Amendment

Staff recommends moving \$17,000 from extra funds budgeted to indirect to cover sold annual leave in excess of salary and benefits previously budgeted.

Dr. Guttman made the motion to approve the budget amendment. Mr. Whisnant seconded the motion.

All present – yes

The motion passed 5-0.

**V. Director's Report:**

A. Air quality and climate grants update.

Under the Clean Air Act grants we are eligible for \$46,000 which we will use for equipment-related purposes. Mr. Lance will cover this under the monitoring update.

In our last meeting, the Climate Pollution Reduction, CPR, grant was discussed. Those funds are going to large Metropolitan Statistical Areas, MSAs, in North Carolina, Charlotte and Raleigh. We are not eligible for that, but we are eligible for implementation grants down the road. The state has designated the Department of Environmental Quality to be the lead. They are going to have meetings with us, the other two local air agencies and other municipal representatives to receive stakeholder input on what kind of projects we might like to propose.

With other Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding coming out next year, North Carolina has established a Green Bank. Buncombe County is particularly interested in that program. They had a presentation from the head of the Green Bank here recently. The Green Bank would like to do a pilot program with Buncombe County and be set up to loan out funds. That is like a loan loss reserve program. It would be for a certain technology, for instance, the new high efficiency heat pumps. \$100,000 has been requested from Buncombe County government for this fiscal year to do a pilot project. If they already have a project up and running, they will be in a better position to apply for those funds. The funding comes out in FY24 or in the year 2024.

#### B. Monitoring Update

Year to date data completeness for ozone is 95.1%. For PM2.5, data completeness is 94.7%. We have had 10 yellow days for ozone, 3 yellow days for PM2.5 and the rest of the days have been green days. We had a minor air quality event across the state in April. There were about 5 consecutive days from April 19<sup>th</sup> through the 23<sup>rd</sup> where somewhere in the state the forecast was either orange or above. This was primarily due to numerous fires, prescribed burns and agricultural burns.

On April the 5th, the EPA conducted an NPAP audit on our Bent Creek Ozone Monitor. On April 26, the State Division of Air Quality did their own audit at Bent Creek. Both audits went well.

We were able to move, reinstall and calibrate our PM2.5 monitors at the new site at the Board of Education. Last week we received the citizen air sensor shelter, and we plan to have it installed next week. We need to work on a protocol and coordinate with the Board of Education about before we start letting people access and utilize the citizen's sensor shelter. We have to get permission from the Board of Education for citizens to come on their property and have to work with them to find an acceptable path. There will be an application process where one will have to apply if they want to use our site to install a sensor and use our Wi-Fi. There is a STEM high school on the property. A picture of the site was shown. There will be two locks. One to the section a citizen might have access to, and another that only Air Quality staff could access.

With the funds we hope to receive from the Inflation Reduction Act CAA Grant we will be purchasing an additional ozone monitor and an additional ozone calibrator. With the previous American Rescue Plan (ARP) Grant we purchased the same equipment, so this should complete our transition to the new ozone equipment. Before we can start utilizing that equipment the SOP's must be in place. The equipment is not working with the software yet. By mid-ozone season next year, those should be in place. Before these grants became available the Agency was concerned because we knew we

would be responsible for purchasing new monitoring equipment. Our current ozone equipment is probably 12 to 15 years old.

We are also going to purchase two Alicats, mass flow meters, which are calibration devices. We hope this will save us money. The current calibration equipment we use has to be sent off annually to get recertified. It is very expensive to get those recertified every year. Hopefully the State Division of Air Quality in Raleigh will be able to certify the new ones at no cost.

We are also purchasing a Nasal Ranger. It is a field olfactory meter which measures and quantifies odor strength in the ambient air. There is some training required. The device is held up to your nose. This should be a helpful tool. Currently vials of chemicals are used to try and calibrate your nose when you go out on an odor complaint. We are following the state which is in the process of purchasing some of these Nasal Rangers to replace the old methods.

To expedite the installation of the new PM10 monitor, we are going to spend about \$2000.00 for a consultant. He will install the equipment, get the software working, and provide some training on how to operate it.

The EPA contacted us a couple of weeks ago concerning a TSA, technical systems audit. This is an audit over the whole ambient monitoring program. The EPA is required by the CFR to conduct these every three years for every air quality agency. Our three years is not up until next year, but the EPA was planning to conduct a TSA for the state's air program this year and they wanted to include us in that since we are a part of that program. This will take place the first week of August in Raleigh. We think our part can be handled virtually, though there is a high likelihood that some of the EPA staff might come here and visit some of our sites.

C. Summer Internships and Other Student Projects – update

Dr. Couzo has been bringing the Agency some student projects.

One of his students, Ava Ingle, has applied for the McCullough Fellowship, a fellowship with UNCA. This project is one we are interested in doing as part of the EPA Advance Program. It involves an Energy Star Treasure Hunts at microbreweries.

The Energy Star program has special energy checklists for different types of industry, such as supermarkets, hotels, general industries and microbreweries. The program helps a business identify ways to save energy. The name of her program is Asheville Buncombe Sustainable Brewing Initiative. Ms. Ingle was one of six students chosen to do one of these environment or sustainability projects. She will get paid to work on this project. We will be the community partner and Dr. Couzo will be her advisor. Rather than being a basic energy audit where you provide the data

and somebody comes out and gives you a report, it is intended to be interactive. Included on the audit would be members of our staff, Ms. Ingle, Dr. Couzo and Waste Reduction Partners staff including Terry Albrecht. We have our first meeting with Ms. Ingle next week. We will be meeting with her every couple of weeks. She plans to come up with a customized program using the Energy Star material that the agency might like to promote every year with microbreweries as part of our Advance Program.

Dr Couzo had another student that wanted to do a project for us on environment, equity, and environmental justice. We need a more formal written policy concerning environmental justice and equity. She did not receive funding for hers, so that project is not moving forward at the moment.

We met a Warren Wilson student, who reached out to us after contacting the city. The City Sustainability Coordinator suggested she reach out to us. She worked on a project with PurpleAir sensors in different areas. She also included some asthma data from the census. We introduced her to Dr. Couzo since her project is similar to some of his projects.

D. Clean Air Compliance Awards

We send out certificates of appreciation every year to all the permitted facilities that are in compliance for the previous year. Of the 70 permitted facilities, there are 39 for 2022 that were recognized as Clean Air Compliance facilities. They are listed on page 16. This pertains to every aspect of their permit: they paid their fee and sent in their reports on time, and we have not had any validated resident complaints on the facility. We have received a lot of positive feedback on this. Sometimes we go out and we see the facility has their certificate framed in their lobby.

E. NASA Presentation

Ms. Featherstone was contacted by NASA's applied sciences group which has a team that does research on air quality. They decided to have their meeting in Asheville this year, their first meeting since the pandemic. They always reach out to the local city or county and try to get somebody to come talk about local air quality. Ms. Featherstone contacted Dr. Couzo since this was relevant to his work. Ms. Featherstone and Dr. Couzo did a presentation together. Mr. Storrow and Keith Bamberger, with the state Division of Air Quality, also attended.

F. UNCA Field Trip

Staff hosted some of Dr. Couzo's students at the ozone site to see how the monitor was operated. The Agency supplied pizza, salad and drinks. Fifteen students, Dr. Couzo, Dr. Dee Edgers from UNCA, and staff came out to the ozone site. It was a lot of fun and educational.

G. Facility Permit Renewals



Facility Name	Type of Facility	Facility Classification	Location	Changes from Existing Permit
APAC-Atlantic, Inc. - Enka Asphalt Plant	Asphalt Manufacturing Facility	Synthetic Minor	Smoky Park Hwy Enka	Update general conditions. Adding clarifying language to testing requirement.

Mr. Koon made the motion to approve the permit renewal. Mr. Whisnant seconded the motion.

All present – yes

The motion passed 5-0.

**VI. New Business:**

- A. None

**VII. Other Business:**

- A. Legal Counsel Report  
No attorney present.

- B. Advisory Committee Report

- 1. February Minutes

The February minutes are in the board packet.

Dr. Couzo gave an update on the two projects he is working on.

One is the EPA grant. With these funds they are building low-cost sensors out of Raspberry Pi. He has a meeting next week with someone from Asheville City Schools. They are going to talk about placing the monitors on their campuses next fall and spring. They are going to do two short term monitoring or deployment campaigns.

The other project has already started and is the one funded by UNCA. He has 15 PurpleAir sensors on the roof of his building on campus. They are in the calibration phase. Starting in the fall he hopes to place a PurpleAir sensor in every public housing community in the City of Asheville. He has not yet heard back from the city housing authority. He has also reached out to Nicole McNeill from Asheville Greenworks. He is still trying to make that connection, but there is still time to do that. The advisory committee can help come up with alternative site locations if that falls through.

- 2. Clean Air Excellence Awards

We received two submissions. One was from Dynamite Roasting Company. The Advisory Committee agreed to recommend to the board that Dynamite Roasting receive the award provided they supply the Agency with some additional information so that reductions to their energy usage and/or emissions could be quantified. The facility has an extensive solar panel array on their roof, utilizes an electric van for deliveries and has an afterburner on their coffee roaster. They did supply the Agency with more information.

The other facility to submit was Buncombe County Permits and Inspections. They did not submit a lot of information. Several things they were doing were hard to quantify, and some of the changes did not start until this year. The advisory committee suggested that they apply next year when they have more data. Some of the changes they are implementing included virtual inspections, digital permits and replacing gas vehicles with electric vehicles.

Dr Couzo made the motion to award the Clean Air Excellence Award to Dynamite Roasting Company. Mr. Whisnant seconded the motion.

All present – yes

The motion passed 5-0.

#### C. Calendar

##### 1. Future meeting schedule for 2023:

The next board meeting is July 13. The September board meeting was scheduled for September 14, but there were conflicts with board members and Air Quality staff.

Mr. Whisnant made a motion to move the September board meeting from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 28<sup>th</sup> of September. Dr. Couzo seconded the motion.

All present – yes

The motion passed 5-0.

The November 9th board meeting date will remain as scheduled.

#### D. Announcements

Ms. Featherstone said the EPA has had some big announcements. One concerns new, cleaner car standards for different pollutants, including greenhouse gases. Another announcement was just made about greenhouse gas emissions, a new standard for the power plants that is replacing the previous two power plant rules that were thrown out by the court. The EPA is proposing a standard to reduce greenhouse gases from existing and new power plants that will impact our power plant here because they have two of the larger gas combustion turbines. EPA is taking public comment on it now. The state will have two years to issue rules once the federal rules are final. We will be following along with that. One of the interesting things about our plant here is it looks like they are expecting 30% cofiring with hydrogen by 2032 or so, which they say is technologically feasible. There are emissions trading and different compliance options in the proposal.

Mr. Storrow mentioned that his company was working with the town of Canton. The Evergreen Packaging paper mill is shutting down in another couple of weeks. The air quality will improve quite a bit over in Haywood County. They have challenges with their wastewater side as the town has all

their domestic wastewater treated in the industrial plant. They may transition to a different wastewater treatment plant for the town in the future. Since Duke installed scrubbers and definitely since they switched from coal to gas, Evergreen has been the largest source of air pollution in Western North Carolina. We should see a very significant improvement in air quality.

**VIII. Public Comment**

None

**IX. Adjournment**

Mr. Whisnant made the motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Koon seconded the motion.

All present – yes

The motion passed 5-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:29pm