



Asheville-Buncombe

Air Quality Agency

Asheville-Buncombe Air Quality Agency Advisory Committee

SUBJECT: June 15, 2023 Meeting

The Advisory Committee for the Asheville-Buncombe Air Quality Agency (AB Air Quality) met on June 15, 2023, at 4:02 PM via Microsoft Teams.

Members Present:

Evan Couzo, Chair

Ned Guttman

Jay Haney

Jim Neely

Ichaya Dhungel

Members Absent:

Keith Bamberger

Kevin Tipton

Staff Present: *Ashley Featherstone, Director; Kevin Lance, Field Services Program Manager; Betsy Brown, Air Quality Coordinator*

1. Review and Approval of Agenda
2. Review February and April Minutes
Dr. Guttman made a motion to approve the February minutes. Dr. Couzo seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
Dr. Guttman made a motion to approve the April minutes. Mr. Neely seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
3. Clean Air Excellence Awards-Updates: County Permits and Inspections and Dynamite Coffee Roasting Company. Review additional information submitted by Dynamite and agency emissions estimates.
At the April meeting the Advisory Committee voted to recommend to the Board to give the CAE award to Dynamite Roasting Company on the condition that they supply additional information sufficient to calculate the estimated annual emissions reductions from the project. The company did provide that information. Dynamite sent the total energy use of the facility for the year and the amount of energy produced. They have a 7-kW solar panel system on their coffee shop and a 52-kW system at the production facility. They generate about 15 times the energy that they consume. They replaced a gasoline powered delivery van which got about 25 miles per gallon with an electric van. The Ford electric van gets about 140 miles per charge which covers their route but was not as much range as they had hoped for. Ms. Featherstone calculated that they had a net production of 67,807 kWh and a 67.807 MWh of energy per year offset. She took the offsets and then used AVERT an online calculation tool developed by the EPA. The tool calculated total emissions reduction for the facility which she shared in an email to the committee. Due to time constraints her work has not been reviewed.

It was suggested we could provide the number of homes the reduction in 67 megawatts could power for a year. Household electric bills are typically in kilowatt hours.

The goal is to show the community what people and businesses are doing. We hope that other businesses will see this and realize they can do it too. We can have the Buncombe County CAPE team visit Dynamite Roasting and do a press release and video. We plan to give the award at the July Air Quality Agency board meeting which is scheduled for July 13 at 4 pm and have a reception at 3:30 pm prior to the meeting. Committee members are welcome to attend. Mr. Haney visited the facility and got a tour.

Ms. Featherstone said she would draft a press release and have the committee look at it before it is sent out.

For the Buncombe County Permits & Inspections department, we hope to get more information concerning number and type of vehicles, what was replaced, and the mileage to consider for the CAE award for the current year.

4. Buncombe County Fire Code Ordinance Update

The proposed code has been reviewed by county management and legal. They are waiting to get on the Board of Commissioners meeting agenda after the County budget is approved this month. There is a lot of interest. Mr. Bamberger shared the proposed fire code ordinance with his coworkers at the State Division of Air Quality. They were very interested in the parts which require fires be attended and to be able to require someone to put out a fire. Those are two concerning issues for fire departments and air quality staff on burning complaints.

5. UNCA Project Updates

a. PurpleAir Sensor Project Updates

Dr. Couzo has had 15 PurpleAirs on the roof of a campus building since March or April. They have been running continuously. They were running during the episode from the Canadian wildfire smoke. He is looking forward to seeing how they perform under high PM loadings and how the results compare to the Agency's monitor. They will need to analyze the data and make sure that they are within EPA 's tolerances. The next step is deploying them around the city. He is still trying to make the contacts at the city to make that happen. They have until fall when school starts to make those connections.

The other low-cost sensor project funded by the EPA starts in August. He and his students are going to place the sensors at the Asheville City Schools. He met with someone with the schools in May. They hope to go out later this month to each of the school campuses and figure out where the sensors will be located. He expects to have measuring campaigns for about 2 weeks during September and October time frames, and then again, hopefully, in February. This will get measurements for the end of summer, beginning of fall and then winter.

b. McCullough Fellowship-Energy Star Treasure Hunts at Breweries with AB Air Quality

Ava Ingle, a UNCA student who was awarded a McCullough Fellowship, plans to use the EPA energy star checklist to help breweries identify energy conservation strategies. She is meeting with Highland Brewery and High Wire next week. Wicked Weed has also expressed interest.

Anna Patterson with the School of Government has a similar initiative in the eastern part of the state and would like to compare notes.

6. Agency Updates (all brief)

a. Agency PM site and citizen sensor shelter update

The Agency particulate monitoring equipment is all on the ground and operating. We have not started using the new PM10 monitor. With grant funds we plan to hire a consultant to train monitoring staff and set up the monitor. We are hoping for the second week of July. The monitor will show up on AirNow when it is up and running. It is a real time monitor. We have a continuous monitor and a Federal Reference Method (FRM) monitor. The FRM data is not immediately available.

The citizen shelter is on site and set up. It is a lot bigger than we thought it would be. We have reached out to the school system to see how they feel about people using it and any security considerations. Mr. Hough, Assistant Superintendent, is over security at the schools and has asked Ms. Featherstone to get back with him with more information by email. She has sent the email and has not heard back. She has also called to follow up. Mr. Hough was told that Mecklenburg County has a citizen sensor at a school. If someone wants to use the citizen shelter, they have to fill out an application with the agency and with the school. If necessary, a background check could be run by the school. We would provide them a combination to the combination lock; they can come on the property to place their sensor for a specified period of time after which time access is removed by changing the code on the lock. If Buncombe County Schools does not want to do this, the Air Quality Agency could meet them on site to grant access (rather than providing a combination to a lock). Once we know what procedure the school will be comfortable with, we will draft a plan for the committee to review. We are considering requiring anyone who uses the shelter to provide the Agency with their data. If questions come up or there are issues with the data, we would want to know what the data is, when it was collected, what the purpose was, and under what circumstances it was collected. According to the Public Information Act, if someone requests the information through that process, we have to disclose any data we generate. There is a STEM school at the BC Board of Education where the citizen shelter and Agency particulate matter monitors are located. There might be an opportunity to have an educational display like Mecklenburg has set up at their citizen shelter.

The Agency plans to revisit the records retention schedule as part of our plan to digitize our paper records. Although monitoring data is not the same thing, it is somewhat related. Once we have a written plan approved by the state, then we will get quotes from contractors to scan the records. We estimate that could cost \$50,000 to \$60,000. The rest of the county went through this about 10 years ago. It was mentioned that perhaps it could be a summer project for a student which would be much cheaper.

- b. **Mobile Source Grants Update: School buses**
Buncombe County schools applied for some electric school buses last year and they did not get selected because the focus was more on lower income counties, and Buncombe County is not considered as such. They have continued to stay engaged and have reached out to our Clean Cities program, Sara with Land of Sky. We had meetings set up with Duke Energy about the infrastructure needs for the electric school buses. The former Duke contact left, and there is a new person in that role, and we are hoping to make some progress there. We are not sure whether the grant or the rebate that will be available later this year will be a better fit for Buncombe County schools.
- c. **Climate Pollution Reduction (CPR) Grants Update – Clean Heat Proposal**
North Carolina did apply for one of these grants. The State Air Director asked Ms. Featherstone to put together a one-page presentation for a project that she is interested in so that they can consider it when they are working on the plan that is due next year. We would like to set up a partnership with either a weatherization or home repair program. There are funded agencies going out to low-income households to weatherize and do home repairs that would be good partners. If they see an older wood stove, they could either replace it with a newer, cleaner, more efficient wood stove or a mini-split or a heat pump. We might need to provide some wood stove inspection requirements and other options including education to make wood stoves burn cleaner. EPA's wood stove program is being expanded for electrification and other clean heat technology, so stoves could either be replaced with newer cleaner stoves or cleaner technology like a heat pump or mini-split heat pump.
- d. **Green Bank Update (Green House Gas Reduction Fund of the IRA)**
The County was asked for \$100,000 for a pilot program. North Carolina has started a Green Bank. They need funds to establish a loan program for clean technology and they are interested in the new more efficient heat pumps. There will be \$27 billion available in Green Bank funds in 2024. This fund would be a loan loss revenue fund where the green bank would lend the money to lower- and middle-income people to get these high efficiency heat pumps.
- e. **Recent Smoke Event from wildfires in Canada**
Mr. Lance noted that Buncombe County had a 3- or 4-day period impacted by smoke from wildfires in Canada. We had several days forecasted to be orange days: however, our PM levels never reached orange levels. It was worse to the east of us and at some of the higher elevations. The wildfires in Canada are going to be burning all summer and we could have issues again. The County Manager's office asked if the County needed to start passing out N95 masks to residents. The EPA does have guidance. The North Carolina DAQ has a new wildfire and smoke page. The EPA has a document about wildfires and smoke for public health that includes a section on N95 masks. We may need to start talking to our local health department staff to get their input.

If you see or smell smoke where you are, it may be code orange, and you should act accordingly regardless of the forecast for the general area.

- f. Agency has new Engage Buncombe website for Board Meetings. Board meetings will be streamed live, and the recordings made available starting with the July Board meeting. Each Board has its own site. The public can see all the meeting materials and access at their convenience. This increases transparency and is a way to encourage and support public engagement. It also relieves some stress on IT. There are many demands for updates to departmental websites, and they are backlogged. Staff will be able to upload our own documents. Currently it is very basic, but we will have the opportunity to share documents with the public. Air Quality will still have its website and the Board SharePoint site. We could post the updated fire code ordinance and do more open burning outreach with the Fire Marshal as well as promote projects.

Ideas for future meetings included having Ava Ingle speak about the Microbrewery Energy Treasure hunt. We could have Keith Bamberger present a history of air pollution in the area that he did at the Black Mountain Library.

The next meeting is in person, August 17 at 4 at the East Asheville Library. Come a little early, 3:30 pm, we will have a meet and greet with snacks. We will start the meeting at 4 and finish up by 5pm. We have the room reserved from 3 to 5pm. Mr. Haney asked about a virtual meeting option. We believe that there are remote capabilities at that location. We will have Mr. Raiford there and will plan to do that.

Links:

<https://airquality.climate.ncsu.edu/>

<https://airquality.climate.ncsu.edu/air/> (can select satellite-Detected Features – Fires and Smoke)

<https://www.airnow.gov/?city=Asheville&state=NC&country=USA>

<https://fire.airnow.gov/>