



## MEMORANDUM

TO: Asheville-Buncombe Air Quality Agency Board of Directors

FROM: Ashley Featherstone, Director

RE: Minutes for January 25, 2024

DATE: March 7, 2024

Enclosed, please find the Minutes for the Asheville-Buncombe Air Quality Agency Board meeting held on **Thursday January 25, 2024 at 4:00pm.** The next meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, March 14, 2024, at 4:00 pm** in the meeting room located at the Buncombe County Permit Office at 30 Valley Street, Asheville, NC 28801.

This meeting will be live streamed on Engage Buncombe which can be accessed at <https://engage.buncombecounty.org/s8486>. The board meeting documents will also be available on the Engage Buncombe site. The meeting will be recorded and can be viewed later.

The Asheville-Buncombe Air Quality Agency Board of Directors met on Thursday, January 25, 2024, 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*

*Ned Guttman*

**Members Absent:**

*Garry Whisnant*

**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:** *Max Taintor, Strategy and Innovation; Patti Beaver, CIBO*

Mr. Storrow called the meeting of the Asheville-Buncombe Air Quality Agency Board of Directors to order on January 25, 2024, at 4:00 pm.

The order of business was as follows:

**1. Public Comment Protocol Announcement**

Mr. Storrow read the public comment protocol.

**2. Adjustment and Approval of Agenda**

Mr. Koon made the motion to approve the agenda. Dr. Couzo seconded the motion.

All present – yes

The motion passed 4-0.

**3. Consent Agenda**

**A. Approval of special meeting (retreat) minutes from November 8, 2023**

Dr. Guttman made the motion to approve the minutes. Dr. Couzo seconded the motion.

All present – yes

The motion passed 4-0.

**B. Approval of minutes from November 8, 2023**

Dr. Guttman made the motion to approve the agenda. Dr. Couzo seconded the motion.

All present – yes

The motion passed 4-0.

**4. Unfinished Business:**

**A. Nondiscrimination policy**

The board discussed this at the last meeting and members requested that Ms. Broughton, the county attorney, review the policy before it is approved and posted. Ms. Broughton's only suggestion was that the Agency include a Spanish translation at the end of the policy. The Agency brought the policy back to the board for any further discussion and approval. It was suggested that additional language be added to the policy that states the process that would occur after they file a complaint. This would include a time frame for consideration and the method of contacting the complainant with the results.

## **5. Director's Report:**

### **A. FY25 Budget**

Ms. Featherstone and Ms. Brown presented the first draft of the FY2025 budget to the Assistant County Manager. We have another meeting next week. The budget includes the additional amounts for the 103 and 105 Grants that the Agency was awarded for the 2024 budget years. This was the first substantial increase in many years, and we anticipate that we will continue to be funded at that level, but that is up to Congress.

The draft budget includes funding for the 7<sup>th</sup> position, the Air Quality Specialist. We need some flexibility and redundancy, which is hard to achieve with 6 staff. With possible retirements an extra position gives us additional restructuring possibilities. Much will depend on who we hire and what their skills are.

The needs assessment we did for the EPA for our monitoring program included a monitoring position for a year, a vehicle and some additional equipment; however, we have yet to hear back about what this award will be (level of funding). This also would not fund a position past the first year, but hiring another staff member comes with a commitment to paying them. With retirements and restructuring, we would hope to continue to have funds for the position. Although we plan to budget for the position, that does not mean that we have to fill the position. Having the position funded would give us additional flexibility as we restructure due to staff retiring.

The 2025 budget also includes funds for a vehicle if the EPA needs funding does not cover it. This would be to replace the oldest agency vehicle. Additional funds have been added to education and public outreach for purchase of radon testing kits which would be provided free to the public during January, Radon Awareness Month and an educational display at the PM monitoring site where we have a shelter for citizen science and educational use.

With the proposed budget we are projecting the fund balance draw to be around \$180,000. This does not include a CPI increase for salaries if the County Commissioners vote to approve one for FY2025.

B. Blue Horizons Project Community Council

The Blue Horizons Project is sponsored and funded by the City of Asheville and Buncombe County governments. Duke Energy is also involved. It evolved from an energy innovation task force to help meet the 100% renewable energy plan to which the city and county are committed. The Council had an opening recently and Ms. Featherstone was asked to apply. She was accepted and is now serving on that Council. Someone from the City Council is a member. Chairman Brownie Newman was the county representative, now Commissioner Parker Sloan is serving and Chairman Newman is cycling off the commission next year. Projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions are their focus which overlaps our interests and projects like the Sustainable Brewery initiative and projects for our EPA Advance program.

C. Radon Awareness month

January is Radon Awareness Month, which we promote every year. The county helped us with a news story this year. We promoted the free test kits available from the state. Those are all gone for this year, but the kits are not expensive. We receive a lot of phone calls about this every year. Buncombe County has some of the highest radon levels in the state due to its geology. It is recommended that in addition to one's home, well water also be tested for radon. Mapping for levels and more information can be found at <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/health-service-regulation/north-carolina-radon-program>. Radon is also an issue in caves. Radon is the leading environmental cause of lung cancer in the U.S., second only to smoking.

D. Monitoring Update

Mr. Lance said that the Agency had good data completeness for both PM2.5 and ozone in CY2023. We finished the year at 97.5% for PM2.5 and 95.6% data completeness for ozone. In December we took our ozone equipment to Raleigh to get certified, which must be done annually. We got the equipment back a couple of weeks ago. We will be hooking it up and doing our initial calibration in the middle of February, so that we will be ready for the start of ozone season on March 1<sup>st</sup>. This will be the 13<sup>th</sup> year that we have run this monitor. We received IRA grant money to purchase new ozone monitoring equipment, which we will probably start operating next year.

E. Facility Permit Modifications

<b>Facility Name</b>	<b>Type of Facility</b>	<b>Facility Classification</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Changes from Existing Permit</b>
Mission Hospital, Inc.	General Medical and Surgical Hospital	Synthetic Minor	Biltmore Avenue, Asheville	Replacement of two emergency generators, update monitoring and annual report requirements

Raytheon Technologies Corporation-Pratt & Whitney Division	Airplane Parts Manufacturer	Small	Biltmore Park West, Asheville	Name Change and update to General Permit Conditions
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Modeling was run for the Mission permit since the diesel generators had a slightly greater capacity than the ones that were being replaced. There were no permitting issues with the larger generators but the fuel oil usage limits for the boilers were adjusted to reflect the change. There was discussion concerning Mission Hospital’s synthetic minor designation; what a synthetic minor designation means; and whether or not the Agency could require that they be a Title V source. Staff explained that the mechanism in place for synthetic minors is an acceptable part of the permitting process. A limit is accepted by the facility that keeps them from being subject to Title V. If the facility exceeded the permit limits, then that would be a violation. There is a process for how this is addressed. Staff also talked about the facility’s ability to run the natural gas boilers on fuel oil. With the larger natural gas pipeline installed a few years ago, it is rare that Duke Energy calls for a curtailment of natural gas where the boilers at the facility are required to run on fuel oil. For maintenance and inspections, the boilers are run periodically on fuel oil. Fuel oil has higher emissions and that is why they need a limit to keep their emissions under Title V thresholds.

Mr. Koon made the motion to approve the Mission Hospital permit modification. Dr. Gutman seconded the motion.

Mr. Koon- Yes

Dr. Guttman – Yes

Dr. Couzo – No

Mr. Storrow- Yes

The motion passed 3-0.

Mr. Koon made the motion to approve the amended permit for Raytheon. Dr. Guttman seconded the motion.

All present – yes

The motion passed 4-0.

**6. New Business**

None

**7. Other Business**

A. Legal Counsel Report

Ms. Broughton was not present.

B. Advisory Committee Report

1. The committee did not meet in December. They are scheduled to meet February 15, 2024.

C. Meeting with Buncombe County Manager and Assistant Manager  
Mr. Storrow and Ms. Featherstone had a meeting with Avril Pinder, the County Manager, and Sybil Tate, Assistant County Manager, to review the PowerPoint presentation county staff put together. Max Taintor, with Strategy and Innovation, a county department, did extensive research on how our agency and the other two local NC air quality agencies are funded and structured within their respective counties. County management did not consider taking on the Agency as a county department in BCFY2025. Ms. Featherstone hopes to share the PowerPoint, which is in a draft form, with the rest of the board soon. It was agreed that county management and the Agency would get back together later on in the year to discuss. In the summer, county management and the Agency may introduce the idea to county commissioners to receive their input and see if there is interest.

D. Calendar

1. Next meeting March 14, 2024

E. Announcements

Ms. Featherstone attended the Clean Vehicles Coalition ceremony. They gave an award to Biltmore for their propane initiatives. Other groups were also recognized.

We are still working with the Buncombe County Schools and other partners to support their clean School Bus project. 114 electric buses have been awarded in North Carolina but unfortunately, Buncombe County did not receive any of the second-round funds. Jeremy Stowe, Transportation Director with Buncombe County Schools, is submitting an application for the third round of EPA funds. We met with Duke Energy and found that they had some additional funding the county could sign up for; Buncombe County Schools would be eligible for additional funding for two buses for a vehicle to grid project. This would cover the gap that the EPA funding does not cover which is needed for the charging infrastructure. The commissioner's subcommittee on Energy and the Environment has asked us to come back to their meeting in February with an update on the school bus funding.

8. **Public Comment**

None

9. **Adjournment**

Mr. Koon made the motion to adjourn. Dr. Couzo seconded the motion.

All present – yes

The motion passed 4-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:44 pm.