



MEMORANDUM

TO: Asheville-Buncombe Air Quality Agency Board of Directors

FROM: Ashley Featherstone, Director

RE: Minutes for November 8, 2023

DATE: January 18, 2024

Enclosed, please find the Minutes for the Asheville-Buncombe Air Quality Agency Board meeting held on **Wednesday November 8, 2023**. The next meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, January 25, 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 Wednesday, November 8, 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:

None

Staff Present: *Ashley Featherstone, Director; James Raiford, Permitting Program Manager; Mike Matthews, Senior Air Quality Specialist; Betsy Brown, Air Quality Coordinator; Alex Latta, Senior Air Quality Specialist (via Zoom)*

Others Present: *Ava Ingle, UNCA McCullough Fellow; Johanna Cano, Buncombe County Communications and Public Engagement (CAPE); Patti Beaver, CIBO; Jay Haney, Advisory Committee member; Amy Broughton, County Attorney*

Mr. Storrow called the meeting of the Asheville-Buncombe Air Quality Agency Board of Directors to order on November 8, 2023, at 4:06 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. Guttman seconded the motion.

All present – yes

The motion passed 5-0.

3. Consent Agenda

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

All present – yes

The motion passed 5-0.

4. Special Presentation

A. Ava Ingle, UNCA McCullough Fellowship, Asheville-Buncombe Sustainable Microbrewery Initiative

Ms. Ingle, a senior at UNCA, was awarded a McCullough Fellowship. She gave a presentation about her undergraduate research project on discovering energy efficiency opportunities in Asheville's craft brewing industry. The brewing process consumes a lot of energy. In the brew house,

breweries burn natural gas to heat water to generate steam. Once the beer production process is complete, it must be refrigerated. Refrigeration uses a lot of electricity; the result of this high energy consumption is high greenhouse gas emissions. The goal was to discover ways that brewing can be more energy efficient and reduce the greenhouse gas emissions to the atmosphere. Ms. Ingle partnered with the Agency, her community partner; Dr. Evan Couzo, faculty advisor; and Marshall Goers, an engineer with Waste Reduction Partners.

Ms. Ingle used the EPA Energy Star program Treasure Map which is designed specifically for microbreweries to find and identify energy efficiency improvements in their facilities. The treasure map is broken into different categories based on different areas in a brewery. Most of the opportunities that were found were in the hot water and steam systems and in the refrigeration areas. Wicked Weed, Cellarest, RAD, and Highwire participated. Wicked Weed is a larger brewery and had previously worked to improve their energy efficiency. The CO2 emission reduction opportunities Ms. Ingle discovered would be the equivalent of removing 31 cars from the road a year if those opportunities were utilized. Since there are forty breweries in Asheville, there is potential for a more significant reduction. Highwire had the greatest opportunity; they could save around \$17,000 if they added insulation on the steam pipes and steam system.

The total savings discovered were 309,336 pounds of CO2 emissions reductions and cost savings of \$25,827 per year. Participation in this project indicates that Asheville's craft brewing industry prioritizes sustainability. Each brewery had sustainable efforts in place already. Implementing energy efficiency measures into Asheville's craft brewing industry will help mitigate the effects of climate change.

Dr. Couzo mentioned an earlier study by students which found that the CO2 that is released during the fermentation process was dwarfed by the fossil CO2 coming from the natural gas and electricity usage. The energy used for electric generation is from fossil emissions; this is carbon that has been buried for tens or hundreds of millions of years. The emissions of CO2 from the fermentation process are part of the global carbon cycle. This is from plants that pulled carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere to make grains and carbohydrates.

5. Unfinished Business

A. Nondiscrimination policy

It is a requirement of all EPA grantees to comply with Title VI, the Civil Rights Act. The requirements are addressed in the grant applications that the Agency is required to submit. The EPA has been taking a closer look at this in the last couple of years. We need to have a formal nondiscrimination policy. We have drafted something that is consistent with the other nondiscrimination policies that we have reviewed. In order to meet the

EPA requirements, we must have the policy in writing, it must include the contact information of a designated person to whom someone can address a civil rights complaint and be posted on our website. Board members requested that Ms. Broughton, the county attorney, review the policy before it is approved and posted.

6. Director's Report

A. FY 23 End of Year Budget Update

The Board packet included budget comparisons from Buncombe County fiscal years 2021, 2022 and 2023. In 2021 \$119,645 was added to the fund balance; that year staffing was down to only 5, which is not adequate to operate the Agency. In 2022 we pulled down \$692, basically breaking even. In 2023 \$8,037 was added back to the fund balance. Further adjustments could be made to the 2023 numbers by Finance. A more detail discussion took place during the budget retreat earlier.

B. ITGC Request Submitted to County

Any IT projects of more than \$10,000 are required to go through this process. Projects are reviewed and go through certain procedures. It is a long-term planning process on the part of the county. When we submitted one last year, the county noted that we were not a county department but an independent agency, and they tabled our request. This year we submitted again to follow proper procedure for projects this size, but we had to specify that we intend to pay for this out of our fund balance. We are not asking the county for any funding for the project. We noted that we would spread the cost out over time. We had another meeting and are working on phase one, during which we put plans in writing so that they can be submitted for approval. We can consider different options going forward.

C. EPA State Review Framework Audit

This is part of our compliance monitoring agreement with EPA; they do a very detailed, thorough audit of our Title V and synthetic minor facility records every five years or so. These are the federally enforceable permits. We have enforcement agreements about how we implement the rules. We enter compliance data into a national database of record; this is accessible by the public who can see where the facilities are, if they are in compliance, and if there have been compliance issues. We report stack test results and reviews, violations, and the results of compliance inspections. We have just completed one of these audits, which take a significant amount of staff time.

All in all, we did a good job, but there is always room for improvement. We have about 18 facilities that this covers. Staff is currently working on the response to EPA's comments.

D. Monitoring Update

James Raiford gave the monitoring update. There was concern over the last week about fires. Mr. Raiford noted the EPA Fire and Smoke Map is a great resource and tool that can be used during times when we have fires in the area. We have one PM monitoring site across the river here at the Board of Education. The next closest PM monitor the state runs is Bryson City. If there is a fire between us and Bryson City, you probably will not see the effect of the fire on the PM levels. For instance, our PM monitor never got below a middle code yellow over the last few days. The AQI yellow being marginally unsafe.

If you were close to a fire, the air quality would have been a lot worse. On this map there are squares that represent PurpleAir air quality sensors. Those are often located at homes. The EPA has worked with PurpleAir to take the data on these and to apply an EPA derived factor to try to normalize that data from these much less expensive sensors so that sensor data is closer to the gold standard EPA data that is collected by state and local air agencies. The EPA wants to use sensor data for this very particular purpose, tracking local air quality conditions near fires.

A good project would be to get more PurpleAirs out in Buncombe County as part of this fire and smoke network. Mr. Raiford showed a monitor near Franklin that had been code red and code purple during recent fire events. This is unhealthy air and would be good information for people near the fire to have. This is just a great tool to use.

Ozone season ended on Halloween. The standard for ozone is 70 parts per billion (ppb) in terms of a 3-year average of the annual fourth-highest daily maximum. Our fourth highest maximum value this year was 63 ppb. Our projected design value (3-year average) for next year will be 61 ppb. That is well below 70. We are in compliance with the national ambient air quality standards. Our current design value is 58, but in 2020 we had really good air quality due to the pandemic and that low year will drop off of our average next year and the value will increase to reflect more normal conditions. For ozone, our annual data is complete. We had 99.3% data completeness for the entire year.

For PM monitoring, data completeness was at 97.2%. So far our annual average is 6.8 (micrograms per cubic meter). This is well below the current 12.0 standard. This standard is going to drop, to 10, 9 or even 8 is possible. But 10 or 9 micrograms per cubic meter is probably the most likely number to which the standard will drop. We are in good shape with complying with that standard.

E. Facility Permit Renewals

Facility Name	Type of Facility	Facility Classification	Location	Changes from Existing Permit
Asheville Mortuary Services, LLC	Crematory	Small	702 Riverside Drive, Asheville	Update general conditions.

There was discussion about the issues that the facility was having with their incinerator. The facility is having problems with getting the manufacturer to make the necessary repairs.

Dr. Guttman made a motion to approve the permit renewal.

Mr. Koon seconded the motion.

All present – yes

The motion passed 5-0.

7. New Business

None

8. Other Business

A. Legal Counsel Report

Amy Broughton noted that at the last meeting we briefly touched upon efforts to collect on civil penalties and enforce violations. The county does not have a specific plan for that yet. We are looking at how to handle situations with violators that also have violations with other county departments as well as air quality violations. The County is looking at a more holistic approach to dealing with these situations. There are some challenges to a lot of these. For example, for some of these offenses, we are having trouble deciding who would be cited because sometimes there is a transient population involved. We are looking at a resolution that has less to do with collecting on the violations and more to do with stopping the behavior. The County continues to work on that.

B. Advisory Committee Report

1. October 19, 2023 Minutes

We did not have a quorum at the last meeting. We talked about the community shelter. We changed some language around how the Agency will collect data from people that are putting their low-cost air quality sensors in the shelter. There is an opportunity with students at Nesbitt High School to create an informational sign for the shelter.

We had an update on Ms. Ingle's project presented earlier.

Dr. Couzo built low-cost sensors out of a Raspberry Pi platform. Those were deployed with his students last Friday. There is one at every Asheville City School campus. They will be collecting measurements continuously until the end of the month when Dr. Couzo and his

students will collect the data. They also co-located one at the sensor shelter near the Agency monitors, so they will know if these sensors are reliably reporting PM 2.5.

There is also a PurpleAir project, and they are still looking for host sites for these. Dr. Couzo's students are starting to analyze the data from the summer so they can identify the PurpleAirs that we trust and will deploy them across the city or the county.

Ms. Featherstone reported that Buncombe County Schools applied for Clean School Bus funds to replace five older diesel school buses with five electric school buses. She has not heard the results. EPA will make an announcement between November and January. Ms. Featherstone gave an update to the Commissioner's Energy and the Environment subcommittee. They were very interested in the electric school buses. We are trying to get another meeting set up with the schools. Duke Energy, Clean Vehicles Coalition, and Buncombe County Sustainability are supporting that effort.

The EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Grant -Implementation Grants will be available now into next year. We worked on projects with Sustainability for a heating upgrade program. An electrification project is something that the Buncombe County Sustainability Department is working on. Our idea for funding is to replace older combustion source heaters in lower income homes with new, more efficient heating. We have always wanted to do a wood stove change out program. We worked with Sustainability and submitted a proposal to the Department of Environmental Quality to consider for their Climate Pollution Action Plan, CPA, so that we would be eligible to apply for funding if that type of project is covered. The State Energy Office is definitely interested in electrification projects to help lower income households.

The Advisory Committee is not meeting in December but will meet again in February.

C. Calendar

1. 2024 Board Meeting Schedule

Mr. Koon made a motion to approve a 2024 board meeting schedule - the board would meet the second Thursday of every other month at 4 pm with the exception of January. That meeting would be Thursday, January 25, 2024. Mr. Whisnant seconded the motion.

All present – yes

The motion passed 5-0.

2. Next meeting January 25, 2024 at 4 pm.

D. Announcements

October was Children's Health Month, so the Agency did a news story which is posted on our website. The Asheville Holiday parade is coming up on November 18th and the Clean Vehicle Coalition will have an entry again if anyone wants to participate. There will be a Ford Lightning, other electric vehicles and a propane trolley. Ms. Featherstone encouraged everyone to come and join the fun and ride the trolley.

9. Public Comment

None

10. Adjournment

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

All present – yes

The motion passed 5-0.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 pm.