

Asheville-Buncombe Air Quality Agency Advisory Committee

SUBJECT: October 19, 2023 Meeting

The Advisory Committee for the Asheville-Buncombe Air Quality Agency (AB Air Quality) met on October 19, 2023, at 4:02 PM via Microsoft Teams.

Members Present:

*Evan Couzo, Chair
Keith Bamberger*

Members Absent:

*Ned Guttman
Kevin Tipton
Jay Haney
Jim Neely
Ichaya Dhungel*

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

1. Review and Approve Agenda

There is not a quorum, but Ms. Featherstone wanted to meet to review the Community Science Sensor Shelter Usage Policy and Application. She was interested in getting the information finalized and posted on our website to let residents know about the shelter. The name of the site has been changed from Citizens Shelter to the Community Science Station.

2. Review and approve August Minutes

Members present had no comments on the minutes.

3. Community Science Shelter

a. Review Usage Policy and Application (Version 2 per Committee's Edits Last Meeting)

Ms. Featherstone went over the previously discussed edits to the application. The document uses the name Community Science Station.

Under Data Reporting and Follow-up:

- After 1. The following sentence was embedded to be clear to anyone who uses the shelter, but not to advertise the availability of the data. "The agency's copy of the data could potentially be subject to a public information request."
- After 2. The form requests notice within "30" days of the study's conclusion, but this was changed to "60" which is the time frame listed on the second page under the agreements. The wording changed the wording from "encouraged" to "requested" that the Agency be notified prior to the publication. The time period of 10 days was removed per prior discussion.
- Footnote 1 was added upon committee members' suggestions- "Time frame can be extended upon request. Conclusions and views expressed in studies are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the

Asheville-Buncombe Air Quality Agency.” The second sentence was taken from similar disclaimers used by the EPA for papers submitted to them.

It was noted that if someone submitted their data to the Agency it would be subject to a public records request. The Agency only has confidentiality provisions in the rules for proprietary information. If anyone has real concerns about the possible request for their data, we could discuss with legal. The agency would not publish the data or make it known we had the data. The request would have to be specific for what they were requesting, such as a specific data set. Agencies are only required to release what we have available. The station is meant to be a learning tool and data supplied to the Agency could be expected to be used by the Agency. If someone is concerned about the possible release of their data before their study is complete, they can discuss it with the Agency.

The State Division of Air Quality, DAQ, has had someone request all that DAQ had on file for Blue Ridge Paper. DAQ said the person was welcome to come to DAQ's office and copy files to paper (for a fee) or scan to external thumb drive. Some documents are difficult to copy as they are large, folded paper. DAQ did not have to create that for them. Now DAQ has their records online as a public resource. If someone gives us data, it would not be published to a public facing website. Currently we do not have a digital file management system. At some point, we will; but we would not put this data on our website. This is not the type of data we normally collect so it is outside our usual purview. It is not the same as emissions data from a permitted facility which the public might request.

- b. Discuss Publicity/Outreach and Possible Signage Project with STEM High School
Ms. Featherstone has talked with Stacey Wood, our Buncombe County Community Engagement-CAPE contact, concerning getting this information out to colleges, high schools, teachers and the public now that we have the approved policy and the process for access at the site. We want to post it on our website. CAPE asked, who is our audience? We could do a project with Nesbitt Discover Academy, the STEM school at the Board of Education monitoring site. There could be signage that this is an air quality monitoring site. We could reach out to the Nesbitt school through Mr. Joseph Hough, the Assistant Superintendent Buncombe County Schools, to see about partnering with them on a science project. That could be part of the story when we push the information out to schools, colleges and the public. Targeted email outreach to colleges and universities in the area would be good. Dr. Couzo said CAPE could interview his students about their project at the shelter. Mr. Bamberger thought we should reach out to Brian McCarey, Coordinator for Buncombe County Schools; Dr. Couzo's students could do a presentation to the science teachers at the high schools. If there was a way to give the teachers professional credit, or CPU, for doing a workshop based on the shelter, that would help to make it worthwhile for the teachers. First, we will reach out to Mr. Hough. We can then ask CAPE to work on a story.

4. UNCA Project Updates

- a. Purple Air Sensor Project Updates

The students are starting to analyze the sensor data collected while operating on the roof on campus. The next step is finding monitoring sites. Dr. Couzo is still trying to contact the Asheville Housing Authority about locating the sensors at public housing communities. If not there they will seek to get a good spatial distribution across the city, perhaps homeowners hosting a monitor at their house. They plan to locate the monitors in the community no later than January.

There are different tracking tools for determining traditionally redlined or disadvantaged communities. There is EPA's EJ screen and the Climate Justice 40 screening maps for the communities which show census data and income level. Buncombe County has their own mapping tool. The PurpleAirs also measure temperature and humidity in addition to the PM, so provide a measure of heat stress.

County or City parks are other locations that might be an alternative for locating the sensors. Some are close to public housing. Many parks have or plan to have wi-fi access which is needed for collecting the PurpleAir data. We could do a community survey if we want to engage with the public. This is the purpose of the Engage Buncombe website. We could target areas of interest and ask if someone is interested in hosting an air pollution monitor at their house and if so, give Dr. Couzo's contact information. This would require wireless access to wi-fi and some sort of outdoor power outlet. We would still need to confirm that the monitors are situated according to EPA monitoring criteria to determine which sites are most appropriate.

Dr. Couzo expects to be ready to locate the monitors by after Thanksgiving. He is mostly interested in sites inside the city; however, if we can make an environmental justice argument for placing at a county site, that works too. There are rural communities with needs just as there are urban communities.

b. McCullough Fellowship-Energy Star Treasure Hunts at Breweries with AB Air Quality Update on project and Recognition from agency

Dr. Couzo just met with Ava Ingle. She is finishing her project and writing her paper. She will be ready to give a 10-minute presentation at the November board meeting. All the breweries that she has been working with are willing to be publicly recognized. Ms. Ingle thinks she has found some good energy efficiency opportunities at some of the breweries. She has been working with Waste Reduction Partners.

Ms. Featherstone has also talked to CAPE about Ms. Ingle and her project. We can send out a press release and recognize the breweries with their permission. Ms. Wood says CAPE can help the Agency with the design of the recognition. We have presented framed certificates in the past. We could possibly invite brewery representatives come to the board meeting in November or January.

c. Raspberry Pi

The 14 sensors have been in the community shelter since September. Dr. Couzo is meeting Mr. Lance on Monday (October 23, 2023) to collect them. Then he and his

students will do an initial analysis on the sensors. Each of the sensors will go to an Asheville City school campus for a month. Then they will collect the sensors and repeat the process in February.

5. Agency Update

a. Potential County Environmental Awards Program

Several departments offer awards. This includes Air Quality and Agriculture and Land Resources. Land and Ag has an awards service every year with a dinner. They invite all the people who have put their land into conservation easements. We have our awards function. Sybil Tate, Assistant County Manager, suggested doing something bigger for more exposure. We would have maybe 20 people with our Board and Advisory Committee, staff and the awardees. Land and Ag might have 100. Solid Waste and Sustainability might have 10 or 20 each. It might be \$2,000 just to rent the space. Then there would be the food expense. Land and Ag have applied for a grant which could be used toward this function, possibly \$5,000 to be used toward that cost. We typically spend only \$300 or \$400 at the most on the awards program every year. We are buying plaques and having some refreshments. If we had something like this, it might be in April. Mr. Bamberger says April has a full schedule with Earth Day festivities and other environmental programs. This would be an evening event. We would need to have approval from our Air Quality Board.

Air Quality could invite Dynamite Roasting, who received our Clean Air Excellence Award this year, as well as the breweries that participated in the Energy Star Treasure Hunt for Microbreweries.

b. Update on EPA Grants

i. Electric School Buses

Buncombe County did apply for 5 battery-electric school buses through the current EPA grant. The announcements are supposed to be made between November and February. There is also a rebate program out with the EPA. We are not sure if Buncombe County is applying, will follow up.

ii. NC Climate Pollution Reduction Grant Program Stakeholder Engagement

The NC State Energy Office, SEO, kicked off their outreach with a webinar today which Ms. Brown attended. The SEO and NCDQA are handling the NC Climate Pollution Reduction Plan under this grant program (Climate Pollution Reduction Grant under the Inflation Reduction Act). Areas like ours are reaching out to the SEO and NCDQA with projects we would like to have included in and funded by the plan. Jamie Wine from Blue Horizon did attend and reached out to Mr. Bamberger saying they would like to be involved. Mr. Bamberger said a brainstorming session with Jeremiah LeRoy, Buncombe County Sustainability, and other groups as they had had a year or so ago might be helpful.

Ms. Brown noted that her impression from the Webinar was that projects with the collaboration of several groups that projected larger and lasting emissions reduction, were being encouraged and might be considered more favorably.

1. Buncombe County Home Heating Upgrade Program

Ms. Featherstone said we had submitted our Buncombe County Home Heating Upgrade Program to Mike Abraczinskas to pass on to the Team at the NCDQA working on the plan. This contains program scope and budget and is part of an electrification project, but we have not quantified emissions reductions. Mr. Abraczinskas said they would get back to us if they had any additional questions. Not only do they want projects that result in substantial emissions reductions, but also something that is reproducible.

Ms. Featherstone has also reached out to Mr. Dick Hoffman, who used to own the Firehouse Casual Living Store, and is on the board of the National Hearth, Patio and BBQ Association. He helped us years ago when we wanted to do a wood stove change out campaign, but there was no funding for it.

One portion of the CPRG plan is home energy upgrades and weatherization which fits in nicely with the Agency's submitted plan and with Blue Horizon's projects.

Blue Horizon is looking for some new board members. Mr. Bamberger said several members are rotating off the Community Council, which is an advisory council to the Blue Horizon Project and the Green Building Council. If anyone is interested in applying, let him know or go to the Blue Horizon's website. Ms. Featherstone might apply. Seeking representation from Asheville Habitat was suggested.

6. Next meeting scheduled for December 21-reschedule

There was a brief discussion about possibly skipping or at least rescheduling the December meeting. December is a busy month for most people. If the Nesbitt school is interested in the monitoring site project or we have other projects come up, we might want to meet. Otherwise, we might not have much up for discussion. Dr. Couzo said he would be unavailable the week of December 11th, early December, the week of the 4th would be better for him. It was decided to wait and see if we want to meet in December.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:01pm.