



MEMORANDUM

TO: Asheville-Buncombe Air Quality Agency Board of Directors

FROM: Ashley Featherstone, Director

RE: Minutes for January 23, 2025

DATE: March 11, 2025

Enclosed, please find the Minutes for the Asheville-Buncombe Air Quality Agency Board meeting held on **Thursday January 23, 2025 at 4:00pm**. The next meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, March 18, 2025, at 4:00pm** 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 23, 2025, 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:

*Ned Guttman
Garry Whisnant
Joel Storrow
Karl Koon
Caitlin Crossett*

Members Absent:

Staff Present: *Ashley Featherstone, Director; James Raiford, Permitting Program Manager; Mike Matthews, Air Quality Specialist II; Steve Ensley, Air Quality Monitoring Coordinator; Alex Latta, Air Quality Specialist II; Allison Glass, Air Quality Specialist I; Betsy Brown, Air Quality Coordinator (Retiring); Hannah Rhodes, Air Quality Coordinator (New Hire)*

Others Present: *Amy Broughton, County Attorney; Angelica Tyler, CAPE; Keith Bamberger, North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality; Arnold Lingle, North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality; Patti Beaver, CIBO; Vic Fahrner, Resident; Mackenzie Koon, Resident*

Mr. Storrow called the meeting of the Asheville-Buncombe Air Quality Agency Board of Directors to order on January 23, 2025, at 4:00 pm.

The order of business was as follows:

1. Public Comment Protocol Announcement

- a. Joel Storrow read the public comment protocol.

2. Adjustment and Approval of Agenda

- a. Karl Koon made the motion to approve the agenda.
- b. Ned Guttman seconded the motion.
- c. All present – yes
- d. The motion passed 5-0

3. Introduction of New Board Member Dr. Caitlin Crossett

- a. Dr. Caitlin Crossett works for UNCA and has a background in Climate and Climatology.

4. Special Presentation: Recognition of Betsy Brown for 12 years of service with the agency

- a. Joel Storrow and Ashley Featherstone presented Betsy Brown, the Agency’s Air Quality Coordinator who is retiring, a plaque for her 12 years of service.

5. Consent Agenda:

- a. Approval of minutes from December 2, 2024.
- b. Ned Guttman made the motion to approve the minutes.
- c. Garry Whisnant seconded the motion.
- d. All present – yes
- e. The motion passed 5-0.

6. Unfinished Business:

- a. None

7. Director's Report:

- a. Introduction of New Staff
 - i. Hannah Rhodes is the new Air Quality Coordinator, replacing Betsy Brown.
- b. Tropical Storm Helene Preparations, Response, Recovery Update
 - i. Air Curtain Incinerators (ACI's) and Open Burning of Storm Debris
 - 1. We have approved 5 Air Curtain Incinerators for use
 - a. Biltmore has 3 places that they will be operating theirs.
 - b. The one at the BC landfill is the only one up and running at this point.
 - 2. Under our rules, entities are required to ask permission to burn storm debris, and they have to be at least 500 feet from the nearest occupied dwelling.
 - a. We have also given permission to 2 sites to open burn storm debris.
 - 3. We are encouraging the use of ACI's because they emit less smoke and are more efficient (compared to open burning).
 - 4. There are several federal and state rules that apply to ACI's. Previously you needed a Title V permit to use an ACI, however there are now some exceptions.
 - 5. While ACI's are meant to be more temporary, we have been given permission by the EPA to grant extensions if needed to continue to use them for some time after the hurricane.
 - 6. The Army Corps of Engineers has estimated about 10 million cubic yards of storm debris, and so far in Buncombe County they have picked up about 700,000 cubic yards (only about 7%). Therefore, we are expecting to be needing the ACI's for longer than what their typical "temporary" status normally entails.
 - 7. The most recent ACI we've given permission to operate is at the Riverside Stump Dump
 - a. Within 1,000 feet of our regulatory monitor at the Board of Education, so we're going to be watching this one very carefully.
 - b. We have given them approval for 8 weeks and we will see how it goes.
 - 8. We have a lot of air quality monitoring sensors out in the community, so we will keep an eye on those.

9. A debris pile in Weaverville was set on fire in the middle of the night
 - a. This has been impacting the neighbors with a lot of smoke.
10. Board member Ned Guttman asked a couple questions
 - a. What is this Agency doing for those who are burning without permission?
 - i. Answer: We aren't doing a lot. When we find them, we make sure they're burning 500 feet away from any occupied dwelling, and we make sure they are only burning legal material.
 - b. Is there any new information on who set the fire in Weaverville?
 - i. Answer: No, right now it is still under investigation
 - ii. They did ask us permission to open burn what is left of the pile, and we did grant that permission so they can burn it up as efficiently as possible. However it is still a problem. We are still getting calls from the neighbors. We are working with the contractor and the fire department to see the best next course of action.
 - c. Is there an education component that we need to get involved in?
 - i. Answer: DAQ is very proactive and we are doing outreach on our website.
 - ii. Later on in this agenda we will talk about the Post-Helene Community Environment Group that is going to have a big focus on outreach.
 - iii. One of the big issues right now is lead clearing, and for that we're working with the county to try and get something on the Planning Department's application page about the 500 foot setback requirement so that developers will be more aware.
 - iv. We have put together some letters to send out in response to complaints, which is a way to get information out into neighborhoods outside of us just going out and inspecting open burning site complaints.
 - v. We want to do more outreach with open burning in the future.
11. In general, complaints are up, and even with the 500 foot setback there is still a lot of smoke that we are getting complaints about.
12. The North Carolina legislature in the Hurricane Relief Bill did allow the burning of engineered wood and storm debris until March 31st, 2025.
13. Board Member Joel Storrow asked why the burning setback was changed from 1,000 feet to 500 feet.
 - a. Answer: The General Assembly changed the distance around 2010 or so, and while our Board did not want to adopt that change, we did eventually have to because it was the law (supersedes the air quality regulations).

- ii. Demolitions and Asbestos Removal Permits
 - 1. In November, Mike Matthews had reported doing around 100 asbestos and demolition permits, since Helene. We have now issued around 130 permits.
 - 2. Mike spoke on permitting and how these will be ongoing. Many are currently waiting on insurance companies and FEMA, so are still a lot of demolitions to do.
 - 3. The county has done about 2,100 damage assessments on properties. The city has done about 1,600-1,700 damage assessments on structures.
 - 4. Initially we were not charging fees for demolition permits, because that same Hurricane Relief bill stated that Cities and Counties could not charge building permit fees and fees related to Helene, and we are still tracking those, however that provision expired on December 31st, 2024, so the County Permits & Inspections Department and our agency both started charging fees again. Helene-related permits are still being tracked in our system, but we are back to charging fees for them.
- iii. Post Helene Community Neighborhood and Built Environment Group
 - 1. This is a group started by the county as a part of Helene recovery, and we were asked to join it. It is led by Department of Health and Human Services.
 - 2. We have co-workers from Environmental Health participating, Ms. Glass and Ms. Featherstone are on the committee, and others in the county are involved.
 - 3. It should be a good avenue for us to get out into the community and do outreach.
 - 4. Allison is working on an Environmental Justice policy for us and this pairs well with this group. Allison has also put together some one-pager flyers with information for the public on Air Quality.
 - 5. We will be looking at ways that we can collect data and track when/how the area is recovering (for example: When the ACI's are no longer being used for storm debris).
- c. New Ozone Site-AB Tech
 - i. We are working on siting a new ozone site at the AB tech campus.
 - ii. When Haywood county was removed from our MSA a year or so ago, that changed the landscape on how many ozone monitors we were required to have to meet EPA standards, and so we needed to add another one here in our area.
 - iii. The most significant consideration is the cost. We have been able to buy some new equipment from recent EPA grants, so we have new monitors and new spare monitors. We can use the spare monitors for this new site, and DAQ has offered to let us use a new building of theirs under a memorandum of agreement, so that has cut the cost significantly.
 - iv. The plans for the new site have to be put together in the network plan the state issues every year.
 - v. Steve is working with the county and AB Tech to get this fully set up.

- d. Surplus Ozone Monitoring Equipment
 - i. We have had older equipment no longer in use in our lab for quite awhile, and we are looking at either selling or donating it. Trying to get it on gov deals to see if we can sell it there. UNCA is also interested in using it. We would like to donate it, but if we can get funds for it then we need to do that. If it doesn't get purchased in a reasonable amount of time, we will likely ask permission from the board to donate it to UNCA.
 - ii. Board member Joel Storrow asked what the equipment would could sell for?
 - 1. Answer: We think it could be worth between \$1,000 and \$2,500.
- e. Website Updates
 - i. We have tried to get more updated content on our website and make it more concise – check it out! We've edited the history of the agency, we have Title V permits on there, and other updates.
 - ii. The county will be switching over to a new platform for our website soon.
 - iii. Board Member Garry Whisnant asked about the air quality forecast. We've seen a lot of yellow days recently, and people are asking him where that comes from, especially in the middle of Winter.
 - 1. Answer: Mr. Ensley said that one factor impacting this is that they dropped the standard for PM2.5. The threshold for yellow dropped, so some of the previous green days are now yellow.
 - 2. Mr. Raiford said it is possible that we will see up to an extra 60 yellow days due to this per year.
 - 3. Ms. Featherstone noted it is getting harder to meet the standard for PM2.5.
- f. Radon Awareness month, free radon kits
 - i. It is January, and we did put some money in the budget for radon test kits. We have 100 free test kits to give out to residents.
 - ii. Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the U.S.
 - iii. We have high levels of radon around here because of the granite in the soil.
 - iv. Keith Bamberger (from DAQ) participated in a webinar on radon education for the lung cancer coalition recently (Keith is on our advisory committee).
- g. Monitoring Update
 - i. Temporary Monitors: EBAMs and Purple Airs
 - 1. Steve Ensley lead this section.
 - 2. We have deployed several monitors in anticipation of monitoring the impact of storm debris burning on the area's air quality.
 - 3. The map shown during the meeting shows monitor locations.
 - a. Red dots are Purple Air monitors, and Blue dots are monitors that were loaned to us by the State.
 - b. Blue and red dots next to each other means there isn't necessarily real time data, so we have Purple Airs located there until the issue

gets figured out. Once that is resolved we will probably relocate those Purple Air monitors elsewhere in the county.

4. Mr. Ensley showed a map with the data from the monitors. There are a few small spikes, but for the most part it is pretty low.
- ii. Year end update (ozone, pm2.5)
 1. The completeness for our Ozone data was 95%
 - a. Our design value was 60 parts per billion for the 2022 through 2024 time period
 2. The completeness for our BAM PM 2.5 monitor was 95.62%.
 - a. Our design value (2022-2024) was 6.1 micrograms per cubic meter.
 - b. The last quarter of data has not been validated yet, but Mr. Ensley does not expect that number to change.
- iii. Additional Monitoring Update regarding the proposed monitor at AB Tech
 1. We should be able to install the equipment in late summer and be able to operate when the Ozone season starts on March 1st, 2026.
 2. The one cost we will incur for the site is that the building will require a concrete pad due to it being heavier than other previous, similar buildings.
 3. We've been working with several County departments as well as AB Tech to get this project plan complete. It is all going very well.
 4. We are going to be using our spare set of monitors, so at some point we'll want to purchase an additional spare set as we will be operating two sites, but our current spares can be at this site without backups for now.
 - a. We will probably want to purchase this within the next 3 or 4 years.
 5. Mr. Ensley showed a picture of the building
 6. Board member Joel Storrow asked where on AB Tech's campus the monitor would go
 - a. Answer: It will be next to the maintenance building.
 7. Both this Monitor and the Toxics monitor will go in the same new building, which is designed specifically for environmental monitoring
- iv. Going back to the Buncombe County Purple Air graphs that were shown earlier during the monitoring update, Ms. Featherstone pointed out that the high is around 45 micrograms per cubic meter.
 1. Mr. Ensley said that these are hourly values, and that if it was based on 24 hour values, the numbers would be much lower.
 2. The 24 hour standard is 35 (micrograms per cubic meter).
 3. We can also relocate one of our monitors to a different location if we ever need to monitor a specific location in the future.

h. Facility Permit Renewals

Facility Name	Type of Facility	Facility Classification	Location	Changes from Existing Permit
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Harwood Home for Funerals, Inc.	Crematory	Small	208 West State Street, Black Mountain	Update General Conditions
Mission Hosital-980 Hendersonville Rd.	Data Management Center/Office	Small	980 Hendersonville Road, Asheville	Update General Conditions
Tutco, Inc.	Manufacturer of custom electric heaters	Small	30 Legend Drive, Arden	Update General Conditions and Insignificant Activity List

- i. All three of these facilities are assigned to Mr. Latta, who spoke on them.
- ii. Harwood Home for Funerals
 - 1. There are no equipment changes. It's just an update to the general conditions.
 - 2. Garry Whisnatt made the motion to approve.
 - 3. Karl Koon seconded the motion.
 - 4. A comment was made to ask if they should be approved all at one time or separately, and it was decided to consider them separately since they started them that way.
 - 5. All present – yes
 - 6. The motion passed 5-0.
- iii. Mission Hospital
 - 1. They have two emergency generators on site that maintain the data center in case of emergency.
 - 2. During Hurricane Helene they were very active in keeping things going and keeping data flowing through the hospital system.
 - 3. Ned Guttman made the motion to approve.
 - 4. Gary Whisnant seconded the motion.
 - 5. All present – yes.
 - 6. The motion passed 5-0.
- iv. Tutco, Inc.
 - 1. The only change they are adding is one insignificant process, and there are not emissions related to it, just heat.
 - 2. Karl Koon made the motion to approve.
 - 3. Ned Guttman seconded the motion.
 - 4. All present – yes
 - 5. The motion passed 5-0.

8. New Business:

- a. Advisory Committee Leadership
 - i. We have an opening for the chair of that group
 - ii. Ned Guttman has volunteered to lead the committee going forward, and Caitlin Crossett has agreed to be a part of the committee as well.

9. Other Business

- a. Legal Counsel Report
 - i. Nothing to report.
- b. Advisory Committee Report
 - i. Committee did not meet in December
 - 1. We have not met since Hurricane Helene, so we'll probably try to start back up in February or April (months board does not meet).
- c. Calendar
 - i. Next meeting is scheduled for March 13, 2025.
 - ii. Meeting was moved to Tuesday, March 18th, 2025 at 4pm due to scheduling conflicts.
 - iii. The next meeting will be in the current building (30 Valley St)
- d. Announcements
 - i. Mr. Storrow welcomed Caitlin Crossett to the board.

10. Public Comment

- a. None

11. Adjournment

- a. Karl Koon made the motion to adjourn.
- b. Gary Whisnant seconded the motion.
- c. All present – yes.
- d. The motion passed 5-0.
- e. The meeting was adjourned at 4:55pm.