



**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Asheville-Buncombe Air Quality Agency Board of Directors

FROM: Ashley Featherstone, Director

RE: Minutes for July 11, 2024

DATE: September 3, 2024

Enclosed, please find the Minutes for the Asheville-Buncombe Air Quality Agency Board meeting held on **Thursday, July 11, 2024, at 4:30pm**. The next meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, September 10, 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, July 11, 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:**

*Karl Koon*

*Evan Couzo*

*Garry Whisnant*

*Ned Guttman*

**Members Absent:**

*Joel Storrow*

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

**Others Present:** *Patti Beaver, CIBO; Tim Love, Assistant County Manager; Michael Frue, County Attorney; Keith Bamberger, NCDEQ and Advisory Council Member; Kevin Lance, retired from Agency; Taira Lance, County Accountant; Autumn Lance, resident; Tyler Lance, resident; Jamie Wine, Green Built Alliance; Brad Rouse, Green Built Alliance; Angelica Tyler, CAPE; Vic Fahrner, retired from Agency; Jay Haney, Advisory Committee Member*

Mr. Koon called the meeting of the Asheville-Buncombe Air Quality Agency Board of Directors to order on July 11, 2024, at 4:31 pm. Mr. Storrow was out of town and Mr. Koon chaired the meeting.

The order of business was as follows:

**1. Public Comment Protocol Announcement**

Mr. Koon read the public comment protocol.

**2. Introduction of Assistant County Manager Tim Love**

Ms. Featherstone introduced Assistant County Manager, Tim Love, who attended the meeting. Air Quality is now under Mr. Love in County Management. Previously Air Quality had been in Sybil Tate's group. The Agency appreciated working with Ms. Tate and is looking forward to working with Mr. Love.

**3. Adjustment and Approval of Agenda**

Mr. Whisnant made a motion to accept the agenda as written. Dr. Couzo seconded the motion.

All present – yes.

The motion passed 4-0.

**4. Special Presentation**

A. Clean Air Excellence Award-Green Built Alliance, Appalachian Offsets Program

Mr. Koon acknowledged Jamie Wine and Brad Rouse. They are with the Appalachian Offsets Program of the Green Built Alliance which has been selected to receive the Clean Air Excellence Award.

Ms. Featherstone said that the Agency has been presenting this award since 2004. The purpose is to recognize organizations that are taking voluntary actions that reduce pollution and benefit our community. This year the Agency is presenting the award to Appalachian Offsets a program of the Green Built Alliance. They have been using donations to fund the installation of solar panels on non-profit facilities. They submitted their application for three different projects. These were for solar installations at Isaac Dixon Elementary School, St. Paul Missionary Church and the United Way building downtown. These projects were completed over the course of 2021 to 2023. We calculated the pollution offsets were about 365 tons of carbon dioxide or CO<sub>2</sub>, 0.1 tons of sulfur dioxide or SO<sub>2</sub> and 0.17 tons of nitrogen oxides or NO<sub>x</sub> per year. Over the 25-year life of the panels, the estimated emissions reductions were calculated at 9,000 tons of carbon dioxide, 2.6 tons of sulfur dioxide and 4.1 tons of nitrogen oxides. This is enough energy in to power 54 homes for one year. In addition to the emissions reductions, the projects also help the nonprofits to have more money to do their work in the community.

Dr. Evan Couzo, a board member, assistant professor at UNCA and head of the Advisory Council who review and recommend the Clean Air Excellence Award recipients, presented a plaque to Mr. Wine and Mr. Rouse.

Mr. Wine spoke about this program. He praised the project as it is about working together with multiple partners. It included donations from businesses and individual people who are offsetting their carbon emissions by donating to this endeavor. With those and other funds Appalachian Offsets was able to catalyze these projects forward at the United Way, Isaac Dixon, and at the church in the Burton Street community. When an organization in the community has solar panels installed on their building, their bills are reduced, and the project is able to have a ripple effect further out into the community as well. It is an exciting air quality project, but it is also an exciting way to participate in community engagement. It makes a difference right where we are instead of sending funds somewhere else. He thanked the Agency for the award and said they would get their next project on the roof as quickly as possible. He noted it is a way to all offset your carbon footprint here locally. If people are interested, they can make a contribution.

Mr. Wine acknowledged Brad Rouse who helped write the proposal for this program. He is also a co-founder of the Energy Savers Network (ESN), which is going out and doing weatherization work in low-income housing. It is the same kind of idea where we are helping folks in the community raise their

own wealth, build up their own backyard by doing this hands-on work in people's homes. He invited all to join in the carbon reduction work.

B. Recognition of Kevin Lance for 30 years of service to Air Quality and the County

Ms. Featherstone spoke about Mr. Lance. Mr. Lance is one of the longest serving employees of the air quality agency that we are aware of with 30 years of service here. He has been in a variety of roles. He was the monitoring manager. We lost some staff and instead of having an enforcement manager, we consolidated monitoring and enforcement into a field services manager. Before that he was doing inspections, wrote permits and performed various other agency duties. He has been out on countless open burning complaints, talking to residents about what is legal to burn and what's not legal to burn.

Mr. Lance has definitely made an impact on local residents' air quality. One of the last projects that he did with us was moving our air quality monitoring site at the Buncombe County Board of Education from the roof to the ground, which was a lot of work. To accomplish this move, he worked with the Board of Education, the EPA, and the North Carolina Division of Air Quality. He also set up a community science shelter with donated equipment from the EPA. Dr. Couzo with UNCA has utilized this shelter with his students doing some air pollution studies here in our community, looking at the impacts in formerly redlined areas, and throughout the city and county. That has been very successful. We would like to thank Mr. Lance, not just for his service, but also for his friendship. When Ms. Featherstone became the director, he was always very supportive, always listening, and offering advice. Ms. Featherstone said that on the behalf of the board and all the staff, how much we all appreciate Mr. Lance's service and friendship. We wish him the best and miss him already.

Mr. Koon read the plaque that was presented: "Asheville- Buncombe Air Quality Agency Service Award presented to Kevin Lance and appreciation of your 30 years of dedication to improve air quality for the residents of Buncombe County and for the outstanding contributions you have made to this agency presented July 11th, 2024."

**5. Consent Agenda**

A. Approval of minutes from May 9, 2024

Dr. Guttman made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Whisnant seconded the motion.

All present – yes.

The motion passed 4-0.

B. Approval of minutes from May 29, 2024

Dr. Guttman made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Whisnant seconded the motion.

All present – yes.  
The motion passed 4-0.

**6. Unfinished Business:**

There was no unfinished business.

**7. Director's Report:**

**A. Air Quality Staffing Update**

We have posted our seventh position, which we funded in this budget year starting July 1st. It is an Air Quality Specialist position. We received 32 applications. Ms. Featherstone, Mr. Raiford and Dane Peterson, the solid waste director, make up this hiring panel. They interviewed last week. We are moving forward with four candidates; we expect to make a decision by the end of the week and make an offer. We are hoping to have a new employee on board probably around the middle of August.

Staff are very grateful to the board for funding that position because it will be extremely helpful for the Agency moving forward. We are reorganizing since Mr. Lance has retired. We are reclassifying that position from Field Services Program Manager to an Air Quality Monitoring Coordinator. We had to get that approved through HR. We changed some of the duties, so it is a different position. The Agency hopes to post that position in the next week. That post will run for a couple of weeks, and then we will be interviewing for that position. We are updating the organizational chart. When we meet again in September, we will have an update and an updated org chart.

The supervisory duties that were associated with Mr. Lance's position are moving under Mr. Raiford's position. Mr. Raiford's job title might change to Program Manager instead of Permit Program Manager. Previously, the Agency had between 8 and 11 staff. Now that we are at six and seven, we do not need two higher level managers and a director. We are trying to consolidate positions. Ms. Featherstone thanked all the staff for doing double duty with Mr. Lance gone. We are also getting some assistance from the Division of Air Quality with the QAQC of our monitoring data. There is a minimum level of monitoring staff that is required. The staff person that is operating the equipment should not also do the QAQC, so the state is assisting for now.

**B. Asheville-Buncombe Sustainable Microbrewery Project Update**

Last year we partnered with UNCA in the Sustainable Microbrewery Project and the work was done by a UNCA student. We want to continue that project and Air Quality included the cost of a summer student intern in our budget. The county has a new program for student interns where we pay a set amount, \$15 an hour for a summer. This is about 20 hours a week for 12 weeks. We posted that internship and had several applicants. We had an abbreviated hiring process, instead of doing actual interviews since it is an

internship, we were able to provide interview questions that applicants answered as part their application. We have hired a part-time student intern, Miguel Garrido, a UNCA student. He has a lot of experience in the brewery industry. He currently works at New Belgium Brewery and has worked in a few other breweries. He participated in the project last year and arranged for us to tour New Belgium. He is familiar with the project and is very enthusiastic about it. The hardest part of this particular internship that we learned last year was finding breweries that were willing to participate, because it is a time commitment to have to gather a year's worth of energy usage data and participate in the walk throughs. Currently, Mr. Garrido has been sending out correspondences to contacts from a list from the Brewers Alliance, including breweries that attended the function that we had back in May. We have been meeting with him, and Dr. Couzo is advising him as well. Hopefully by next meeting we will be able to report that we have some breweries on board.

C. Buncombe County Strategic Planning and Agency/Department Business Plans

Buncombe County is working on their Strategic Plan for 2030. At the same time, all of the departments including ours are updating our business plans. We will have an update in subsequent meetings. We will be looking at staffing, retirement reorganization and other projects. Focus will include digitizing our files. We went through this process three or four years ago. We shared that with the board at the time. It is departmental level planning focused on our goals for the next couple of years. The intent is for us to also look at the county's overall plan to make sure that the Agency is consistent with the county plan. The county has goals towards energy and environment that fit well with our agency with goals of reducing pollution with community projects and the other work that we do. Ms. Featherstone is working on this plan with Ms. Brown who is the Business Plan Manager for Air Quality.

D. Monitoring Update

Mr. Raiford gave the monitoring update. Data completeness for PM is at 96% and 95% data completeness for ozone. Ozone has been pretty good this year. Our three-year average is 58 parts per billion, the standard is 70 parts per billion. We are doing really well but there is a lot of summer left.

Currently our annual average PM2.5 level is 5.4 micrograms per cubic meter, the new standard is 9 micrograms per cubic meter. We are still well below the standard there. That data is averaged over three years (to compare to the standard). It is still early in the season. PM is a little less variable than ozone in that regard.

Mr. Raiford is running the monitors solo right now, but he is training Mr. Latta. This can be slow going as some of the checks are only every two weeks, and it is hands on with the actual equipment. We hope that our new hires will

have some monitoring experience. Even if they do not, we anticipate having at least three staff that can be cross trained on monitoring. Currently we have reached out to the state for the required two levels of QAQC. Mr. Raiford and Mr. Lance were able to act as that QAQC team for each other (before Mr. Lance retired).

A question was posed about the severity of the current pollen season. Our agency does not have a monitor to measure pollen. A local allergy center might have data. Keith Bamberger, with the state Division of Air Quality, said that Mecklenburg County has a pollen monitor, and that is where the Weather Channel gets their reading. The state has a pollen monitor, but it is downtown Raleigh.

E. Facility Permit Modifications

Facility Name	Type of Facility	Facility Classification	Location	Changes from Existing Permit
Low and Bonar	Non-woven / Geosynthetic Fibers Manufacturing Facility	Title V	Sand Hill Road, Enka	Name and Ownership Change

A question was posed concerning “insignificant” activities for a Title V facility. Mr. Raiford noted that Title V permits list certain emission sources that are not required to be included in the permit. This could include something like an underground storage tank. These are items that can be modified or added without modifying the permit.

Mr. Whisnant made a motion to approve the permit amendment. Dr. Guttman seconded the motion.

All present – yes.

The motion passed 4-0.

8. **New Business:**

None

9. **Other Business:**

A. Legal Counsel Report

No legal report. Ms. Amy Broughton was not able to attend the meeting. Mr. Michael Frue, the senior legal counsel for Buncombe County and former long time board counsel, notified the Board and Air Quality staff that he was retiring in September. The Board wished him well and thanked him for his service to the Agency.

B. Advisory Committee Report

1. No June meeting

Several committee members were traveling in June and the committee decided to skip the June meeting. The August meeting will be held in person August 15. Mr. Koon thanked the committee for the review and recommendation of the Clean Air Excellence award.

C. Calendar

1. Next meeting is September 12, 2024

D. Announcements

Ms. Featherstone notified the City of Asheville that Dr. Couzo is moving out of Asheville by the end of the year. The city has posted the upcoming vacancy on their board page and is taking applications.

**10. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**11. Adjournment**

Dr. Guttman made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Whisnant seconded the motion.

All present – yes.

The motion passed 4-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:03pm.