



Asheville-Buncombe

# Air Quality Agency

Asheville-Buncombe Air Quality Agency Advisory Committee

SUBJECT: August 15, 2024, Meeting

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The Advisory Committee for the Asheville-Buncombe Air Quality Agency (AB Air Quality) met on August 15, 2024, at 4:00 PM via Microsoft Teams.

Members Present:

*Evan Couzo, Chair*

*Jim Neely*

*Jay Haney*

Members Absent:

*Ichaya Dhungel*

*Keith Bamberger*

*Ned Guttman*

*Kevin Tipton*

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

Others Present: *None*

Members and staff met in person at the board meeting room of 30 Valley Street at 3:30pm for conversation and snacks. The meeting began at 4:05pm.

1. Review and Approval of Agenda

A copy of the draft April minutes and draft agenda was emailed to members.

There were no additions or changes to the agenda.

2. Review and Approve April Minutes

A copy of the draft April minutes had been emailed to members.

There was a question about whether there was a quorum of committee members. It was noted that it is an advisory council and whereas, the committee might make recommendations, it did not make policy.

The minutes were accepted with no changes by committee members present.

There was a brief discussion about Ava Ingle's presentation about the brewery project at an EPA Advance virtual meeting. The presentation was well received.

3. Review and Discuss New Board Member Orientation/Board Member Advertisement Document  
New board member orientation –

A draft of this orientation was included in the email invitation. Links helpful to board members were included. Ms. Featherstone noted that this document could be modified by removing the welcome greeting and the SharePoint link (only accessible to Board members and staff) to provide more information for potential board members.

#### 4. UNCA Project Updates

##### a. Purple Air and Raspberry Pi Sensor Project Updates

Dr. Couzo reported that the Raspberry Pi Sensor project is complete. The students went to Washington and presented their findings at an EPA conference this summer.

Dr. Couzo will be compiling all the information and writing up in a manuscript for publishing. These units were placed at different Asheville City schools and followed historically redlined areas.

Most of the Purple Airs were deployed this spring and that study is ongoing. The university gave the grant money for their purchase, and the sensors are university property. These units have a high bias which is corrected on the AirNow site. The greater distribution of units gives extra data to the Agency in case of a serious event like a wildfire or some localized issue. These units do have a usable lifespan of a few years, but the sensors can be replaced for \$40 to \$50. When Dr. Couzo leaves he will transfer "ownership" to an incoming Atmospheric Science professor as these units are linked to an email account. Dr. Couzo will give this professor the Agency's contact information. There is one unit on university property. UNCA is not storing the data from all the sensors deployed as it costs money; however, the data from the monitor on campus is being archived. AirNow does keep historical data. The study is interested, not only in particulate matter levels, but also in temperature such as the heat island affect as well.

#### 5. Agency Updates

##### a. Board Vacancy Advertised

Dr. Couzo is leaving the Asheville area at the end of the year. We notified the city that we would need a new city appointee. We would like to have another UNCA faculty member as that has been beneficial to both the students and the agency.

##### b. Asheville Beer Week Function on May 21 (recap and next steps)

There was also a recap of the May brewery event which included the award of Sustainable Microbrewery Project participation certificates to microbreweries that worked with Ms. Ingle on the Energy Star program. There was a round table discussion with Ms. Ingle, the participating breweries and Marshall Goers, an engineer who works with Waste Reduction Partners. Mica Crouse with Big Mountain Impact was instrumental in making this event very successful. She has expressed interest in continuing this event during future Asheville Beer Weeks if her schedule allows.

We wanted to continue that project and Air Quality has hired a summer student intern. 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 have hired Miguel Garrido, a UNCA student. We hope to have him speak at the next Advisory Committee meeting.

The most difficult part of this project is to get small breweries to commit as there is time and effort required on their part. Summer is also a busy time for many breweries.

Mention was made of New Belgium Brewery's plan to combust the methane created by the wastewater treatment process in their boilers. Currently, these emissions are burned off by a flare. The heat content is not the same and adjustments must be made, and the air quality permit modified.

The Clean Air Excellence award was presented to the Green Built Alliance for their Appalachian Offset Program at the July 11 Air Quality Board meeting. To promote this award, we send out letters to our 70 permitted facilities and encourage them to nominate themselves for energy reductions at their facilities. We send out a press release to local media and our email contacts as well as post on our social media in February each year.

c. Air Quality Awareness Week May 6-10 (Proclamation Issued)

The County Commissioners issued a proclamation at a commissioners meeting. We also ran a news story on our website with information about Air Quality Awareness Week which is the first week of May each year.

d. Staff updates, retirements, reorganization, new hires, ACM

Kevin Lance has retired from the Agency and is now working for the state. With his and other retirements anticipated the Agency is reorganizing. His position, Field Services Program Manager, has been reclassified as Monitoring Coordinator and the salary grade was adjusted since supervisory duties were transferred to the other program manager. Steve Ensley, a state employee with years of air quality monitoring experience, has accepted that position. He will retire from the state and start with us in September. He is also trained to run monitors at wildfires. He deploys for 2 weeks at a time to run a monitor at critical locations.

We filled our 7<sup>th</sup> position with another former state employee, Allison Glass, who started with the Agency the end of July. We received one time grant funds under the Inflation Reduction Act. Those funds will support 50% of that position's salary and benefits for two years. There will be other retirements, and a position could be left unfilled, should there be issues with funds to support this staff position in the future.

e. Grants for equipment

The Agency has received grant money which has allowed us to purchase ozone and particulate monitoring equipment, ozone monitoring equipment, a nasal ranger, and a Ford F150 Lightning to replace our 18-year-old diesel truck.

The Nasal Ranger can quantify the intensity of an odor in a less subjective way than by the previous method of calibrating one's nose with n-butanol standards. The state DAQ staff member who taught the former method is retiring. The state decided to take some

of the available grant money to purchase Nasal Rangers for their staff. We chose to follow suit.

6. Next meeting schedule: October 17, December 19

Ms. Featherstone noted that the latest MSA designation removed Haywood County from our area. That could mean that the state or our agency would need to set up an additional ozone site, possibly in Buncombe County.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:12 pm.