Asheville-Buncombe Air Quality Agency

# MEMORANDUM

TO: Asheville-Buncombe Air Quality Agency Board of Directors

FROM: Ashley Featherstone, Director

RE: Minutes for September 10, 2025

DATE: November 13, 2025

Enclosed, please find the Minutes for the Asheville-Buncombe Air Quality Agency Board meeting held on **Wednesday September 10, 2025 at 4:00pm**. The next meeting is scheduled for **Thursday November 20, 2025 at 4:00pm** in the meeting room located at the previous Buncombe County Permit Office at 30 Valley Street, Asheville, NC 28801.

**A reception will be held at 3:00 pm to recognize Mike Matthews, who is retiring on November 28, for his 30+ years of service to the agency and the county. The recognition will occur at 4:00 pm at the beginning of the Board Meeting. All Board Members, Advisory Committee Members, and others are welcome to attend the reception.**

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, September 10, 2025, in the meeting room at the former Buncombe County Permit Office located at 30 Valley Street, Asheville, N.C.

The attendance of the Board members was as follows:

| **Members Present:** | **Members Absent:** |
|---|---|
| *Ned Guttman* | |
| *Garry Whisnant* | |
| *Joel Storrow* | |
| *Karl Koon* | |
| *Caitlin Crossett* | |

**Staff Present:** *Ashley Featherstone, Director; Mike Matthews, Air Quality Specialist II; Steve Ensley, Air Quality Monitoring Coordinator; Allison Glass, Air Quality Specialist I; James Raiford (Virtual), Permitting Program Manager; Hannah Rhodes (Virtual), Air Quality Coordinator*

**Others Present:** *Amy Broughton, County Attorney; Johanna Cano, CAPE; Timothy Love, Assistant County Manager*

Joel Storrow called the meeting of the Asheville-Buncombe Air Quality Agency Board of Directors to order on September 10, 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. Ned Guttman made the motion to approve the agenda.
   B. Karl Koon seconded the motion.
   C. All present – yes
   D. The motion passed 5-0

3. **Consent Agenda**
   A. Approval of minutes from July 24, 2025
   B. Garry Whisnant made the motion to approve the minutes.
   C. Caitlin Crossett seconded the motion.
   D. All present – yes
   E. The motion passed 5-0

4. **Unfinished Business**
   A. None

**5. Director's Report**

A. Tropical Storm Helene Response, Recovery Update

i. Post Helene Recovery Update Demolition and Asbestos Removal Permits

1) Ashley Featherstone said that we have issued approximately 30 Helene Recovery related demolition permits. They are in Buncombe County and the Town of Black Mountain, and five more came in yesterday. Mike Matthews and James Raiford are working on those.
2) Garry Whisnant asked if the Agency is being paid by FEMA for those permits.
3) Ashley Featherstone said that Buncombe County is paying for the ones in the County, and then they are getting reimbursed by FEMA.
4) James Raiford said that all of these permit fees should ultimately be reimbursed by FEMA.
5) Ashley Featherstone said that we likely won't have as many of these permits as we had originally thought we would. Some people may be dropping out of the program, potentially to get work done themselves, they may not want to wait on FEMA, or other reasons.
6) Karl Koon asked if someone doing the work themselves will have to get permits for themselves. Mike Matthews confirmed that yes, that is the case.
7) Ashley Featherstone said that there are two programs that FEMA is involved in. One is the buy-out program (hazard mitigation grant program) and the other is the private property debris removal program.

ii. Air Curtain Incinerators

1) Ashley Featherstone said that originally the EPA had issued a no-action assurance letter that was in place up until the end of September to cover the ACIs in operation without permits.
2) There are three currently in operation that would like to keep their ACI's long term: Asheville Affordable Tree Men, North End Stump and Brush, and the Biltmore Estate. They will need to file for a permit for further use. Biltmore is planning to apply for a permit, and we are following up with the other two facilities to request applications from them.
3) The EPA has issued some rule amendments to allow larger ACI's to operate to process storm debris, and the Agency can now grant unlimited extensions as long as they are following the rules and are only burning storm debris. These three facilities would like to keep the ACI's long term, beyond burning Helene storm debris. Therefore, while we can extend their temporary permit to burn storm debris, we need to receive a permit application from them for the long-term if they intend to burn other material.
4) Ashley Featherstone said that the fee for an ACI is 10% of the regular Title V fee. That means that we would likely get $1,200 for the application, and then maybe another $1,000 each year for the annual permit fee.

iii. Complaints: Damaged Facilities and Storm Debris Burning

1) Ashley Featherstone said that the Agency has received multiple dust complaints regarding the Silverline facility's plastic debris chipping.
    a) The dirt/Helene debris that is on the plastic appears to be what is causing the dust.

b) The facility has stopped the operation for now.
c) We determined that this chipping operation needs to be added to their permit. Therefore, the facility cannot perform this operation without a permit modification.
d) Prior to Silverline going through the permit modification process, we have agreed to let them run the operation for a couple days so that Agency staff can observe it to see if they are able to operate it in compliance.
e) As Agency staff check on the operation during these couple days of operation, we would check for compliance with a 20% opacity standard. With the 20% opacity standard, we should be able to see 80% of the background behind the dust or visible emissions. We also look to make sure dust is not leaving the property.
f) Ned Guttman asked with the short staff that we have, how are we able to do all of these inspections and get our regular operations completed?
g) Ashley Featherstone responded that it is challenging, but we are trying to work with facilities and prioritize the items that we need to get done.
h) Ashley Featherstone said that we may have a special meeting to consider this permit so it does not have to wait until November for approval.
i) Ned Guttman asked if it is appropriate from the legal standpoint.
j) Amy Broughton responded that yes it is appropriate, so far.
k) Joel Storrow asked when we would know if we need to issue this permit and have a special meeting.
l) Ashley Featherstone answered that we do not have a time frame. We talked with the facility last week and they are now talking with their management.

2) We have received many odor complaints about Biltmore Oil.
3) We have received several different complaints about Storm Debris burning.
4) We are also receiving complaints about a mulch site in Barnardsville that has caught on fire. The fire department is working on putting the fire out. CAPE has put an alert about it on the Agency's website.
   a) Garry Whisnant asked about what we do about mulch fires.
   b) Ashley Featherstone answered that if it is spontaneous combustion, there is really not anything we can do. It is similar to if a neighbor's house is on fire and creates excess emissions. We're not going to cite your neighbor because it was an accident.
   c) This site in Barndardsville does have permission from Solid Waste to store mulch. Solid Waste has now said that they are not allowed to bring any more mulch to the site because of the fire hazard.
   d) If we found the mulch fire was set deliberately, that is something the Agency could issue a violation for.
5) With complaints, we are receiving so many of them that we are having to come up with new systems to track them by the week to ensure we are responding to all of them (rather than daily).

iv. Non-Regulatory-Temporary Air Monitoring and Sensors

1) Ashley Featherstone said that additional non-regulatory air monitors and sensors are in the draft of the County's Helene response plan.

v. Helene Recovery Projects and Preparedness
   1) Ashley Featherstone and Allison Glass attended a wildfire summit. They two also participated in a department operation center exercise about a heat wave and Canadian wildfire smoke scenario. They worked alongside other County departments to participate in the training.

vi. Outreach: Presentations and Town Halls
   1) Ashley Featherstone reported that Agency staff attended one of the County's last Town Halls and we have done nine presentations to various groups about our Helene response.
   2) Joel Storrow asked if we had more presentations to come.
   3) Ashley Featherstone responded that it is winding down.
   4) We may have a virtual presentation at the next board meeting from the North Carolina Division of Air Quality's monitoring team, who has been working on the WNC Post-Helene monitoring project with us.

B. Status of Federal Grants-federal fiscal years 2025 and 2026
   i. The Federal Fiscal Year 2025 ends September 30th. We have yet to receive the full amount we had thought we were going to get for the year. We have 88% of our funding and are waiting to hear from the EPA. Other air programs in our region have similarly only received a percentage of their award.
   ii. For Federal Fiscal Year 2026, Ashley Featherstone said that Congress has not passed a budget for the year, and there is talk of a possible government shut down due to that. The President proposed cutting all funding, but both the house and senate have drafts with level funding for air agencies. If there was a cut, it wouldn't impact us until July 2026.
   iii. Joel Storrow said that this is one of the main reasons we did not have a retreat today. If we have more transparency in funding by November, we can have a retreat in November.
   iv. Ashley Featherstone said that she has been working with Tim Love and other County staff to see what implications might be if we don't receive the funding we are expecting.

C. Air Quality Rule Amendments
   i. Ashley Featherstone said that Allison Glass has done a great job with editing the rules.
   ii. Ashley Featherstone has submitted Group 1 to the State to review, and she is currently working on reviewing Group 2. We did put Group 1 on the board website so that board members can review the proposed changes. Many of those amendments are just grammatical.
   iii. Originally, Ashely Featherstone stated that she was planning on doing them in batches to present to the board and go to public notice. However, Joel Storrow and Ashley Featherstone have since decided it would be better to have everything reviewed by the State first, then present them on a higher level to the board and put special focus in the presentation on the rules the board does have some ability to make some choices on. This will also save us funds, as we would then only have to do one public notice in Citizen Times.
   iv. Staff are hoping to get all 6 groups of rule updates on the website over the next month.

v. Ned Guttman commented that he looked at Group 1 and was wondering what differentiated Group 1 from the other groups, as well as why certain changes were made. He would like to see something more succinct telling us what we are required to adopt vs what we have a choice to adopt.
vi. Ashley Featherstone responded that, as far as the difference in groups, the NC General Assembly passed a law that all of agencies have to review their rules every few years. They put the rules in these groups based on what is vs. is not required, which ones are getting very minor changes vs. substitutive changes, etc.
vii. Ashley Featherstone also said that the memo for each group should summarize these different requests that Ned Guttman is looking to know more about. While Group 1 was mostly grammatical changes, future group memos will include when our rules differ from the State's and what choices we may have. Also, those rules will get a more in depth presentation during the future board meeting so that the Board can fully understand them.
viii. Ned Guttman asked for there to be a comment in the memo of when a rule differs from the State's rule. Ashely Featherstone said that she is doing those for all of the groups, but if there are not differences from ours to the State's, there will not be an extra comment about it in the memo.
ix. Ashley Featherstone said board members are welcome to call her anytime to answer questions and talk about the rules. We are hoping we will have everything onto the board SharePoint site by the November meeting.

D. Celebration of 10 years Clean Air in NC
i. Ashley Featherstone was able to attend the state's event to celebrate 10 years of clean air in North Carolina. The state has been in attainment with all national ambient air quality standards for this time period. She showed photos from the celebration.

E. Monitoring Update
i. Steve Ensley said the Agency moved its lab to the ground floor of 35 Woodfin Street. He showed photos of the new lab.
ii. Steve Ensley said that we've had several equipment failures recently, but luckily we had spares to put out in the field so we would not lose data, and we are working on getting repairs done.
iii. We have plenty of storage for our equipment now in the new lab.
iv. The Agency is still on track to have the AB Tech site ready to receive the monitoring shelter from DAQ in December 2025.
v. The EPA held a meeting regarding Purple Air sensors. The state is interested in ending their participation in the project around the year mark from the time of Hurricane Helene. We had a meeting with EPA to see about our Agency taking over the Purple Air Sensor loan. The EPA was amenable to that, and we think they will loan the equipment to us going forward.
vi. Steve Ensley went over monitoring data completeness.
1) PM2.5 data completeness: 97%
2) Ozone data completeness: 93%

3) We have another month and a half of the ozone season, and hopefully next year the new monitors will be running at AB Tech.

vii. Joel Storrow asked if we could get a tour of the lab when the board meeting is at the 35 Woodfin board meeting room.

1) Ashley Featherstone said yes, and that the AV equipment should be installed in October, so we are hoping to have the next board meeting in November at 35 Woodfin.

F. Facility Permit Renewals

| Facility Name | Type of Facility | Facility Classification | Location | Changes from Existing Permit |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| BorgWarner Emissions, Thermal & Turbo Systems | Automotive Components Manufacturing Facility | Title V | Brevard Road, Asheville | Modified permit for AEC-1 and AEC-4, diesel-fired internal combustion engine test cells to test natural gas fired combustion engines. Facility name change. Updated general conditions, permitted sources, and insignificant activity list. |

i. Ashley Featherstone said that this is a Title V permit and it is up for renewal every 5 years. We did make some changes to the equipment list. Other than that, we are updating some general conditions, and updating the activity list.

ii. Ned Guttman asked if the facility had been 100% compliance over the last several years.

iii. Ashley Featherstone said that yes, they had been in compliance and it has already been through the public comment period.

iv. Garry Whisnant asked how these types of facilities demonstrate compliance.

v. Ashley Featherstone said they are subject to the visible emissions rule. Power Plants have to do annual tests, but for a lot of the facilities such as these, we just use emissions factors to estimate emissions.

vi. James Raiford said that the facility doesn't submit anything additional for emissions factors. They submit their fuel usage, and they do have a fuel oil limit. But there is not any physical testing. There are permit conditions that they have to follow.

vii. Ned Guttman made a motion to approve the above permit renewal.

viii. Garry Whisnant seconded the motion.

ix. All present – yes

x. The motion passed 5-0

A. Facility Permit Modifications

| Facility Name | Type of Facility | Facility Classification | Location | Changes from Existing Permit |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| RTX Corporation, Pratt and Whitney | Airplane Parts Manufacturer | Small | Biltmore Park West, Asheville | Updated air toxics review, including modeling parameters and a new toxics limit. |

i. Ashley Featherstone said that Pratt and Whitney have asked for a permit modification to adjust their current permit. She and James Raiford went on to explain that the permit modification was required because emissions of a toxic air pollutant were higher than originally projected in the permit application for the facility due to a change in a product formulation or use of a different product from what was proposed in the application. An air pollution dispersion modeling analysis was conducted with the updated figure and the facility took a limit on the amount of the raw material that they would use in a 24 hour period to comply with the standard.
ii. Ned Guttman asked, if a facility is changing their product or formulation, do our rules require a permit modification? No, a permit modification is not required for a change to a product formulation or a change in product used. Since we are going to modify our rules soon, he wanted to know if the board should consider adding something to the rules specifying when a permit modification is appropriate.
iii. Ashley Featherstone said in this case it is not really possible. With our Agency's structure, we would have to get both the City of Asheville and Buncombe County to agree, and then we would have to go to the state to present it and have the state Environmental Management Commission approve it, which would require us to show why our area should have different requirements from the rest of the state. That being said, Ashley Featherstone said that she doesn't think it's been a big problem and doesn't come up very often.
iv. Joel Storrow asked if this was something that Pratt and Whitney brought to our attention, or if it was something that staff found.
v. Ashley Featherstone said that it is something that the facility asked us about, but that the permit actually requires facilities to tell Agency staff of changes such as these. Also, facilities are required to submit emissions data to the Agency annually, and from these submittals staff should be able to catch any changes in emissions.
vi. Karl Koon made a motion to approve the above permit modification.
vii. Ned Guttman seconded the motion.
viii. All present – yes
ix. The motion passed 5-0

**2. New Business**

A. None

**3. Other Business**

A. Legal Counsel Report
   i. None
B. Advisory Committee Report
   i. Committee has not met since last board meeting.
C. Calendar
   i. Next meeting November 20, 2025
   ii. Board Retreat, if we have one, would also be November 20th at 3:00pm
D. Announcements

**4. Public Comment**

A. None

**5. Adjournment**

A. Garry Whisnant made the motion to adjourn the meeting.
B. Karl Koon seconded the motion.
C. All present – yes
D. The motion passed 5-0
E. The meeting was adjourned at 5:01pm