Asheville-Buncombe
Air Quality Agency

Air Quality Program Transition from Interlocal to County

To: Tim Love, Assistant County Manager

CC: Joel Storrow, Air Quality Board Chair

Date: May 6, 2026

From: Ashley Featherstone, Director

Subject: Timeline

Summary Statement

This memo serves to document necessary steps and timeline for a transition of the air quality program from a multi-jurisdictional agency to the county.

Purpose

The Mission of the Asheville-Buncombe Air Quality Agency is to protect and monitor the area's air quality to safeguard the public health and the environment.

The agency was established as part of an interlocal agreement by Buncombe County and the City of Asheville pursuant to the provisions of North Carolina General Statute Sections 160A-461, 160A-464, and 143-215.112 (c)(3) for the purpose of developing and administering an air quality program in their respective jurisdictions. The agency is one of three local air pollution control programs certified by the North Carolina Environmental Management Commission to implement air quality regulations and programs.

§ 143-215.112. Local air pollution control programs

https://www.ncleg.gov/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/PDF/BySection/Chapter_143/GS_143-215.112.pdf

Reorganization

The current Air Quality Board's primary responsibility is to govern the overall operations of the Agency, including adopting updates to the rules, approval and oversight of the Agency budget, and final judgment on appealed Notices of Violation. The current Board also approves the issuance of industrial source permits.

Under Buncombe County, the Board of Commissioners would act as the governing board and have responsibility for maintaining the program to meet the requirements in the statute. Pursuant to § 143-215.112(c)(4), the current board would need to be reformed into a commission or advisory board that can hear appeals of agency actions and also advise the BOC

on rule updates, technical standards related to air quality, budget recommendations, etc. Since the current Board approves industrial source permits, that duty will need to be the responsibility of the Air Quality Director, which will be addressed in the updated rules (Chapter 1- administrative procedures where interlocal agreement is now).

Key Actions and Timeline Summary

- March 1: County Notified City-Interlocal agreement to expire July 1
- May 13: AQC EMC Program Update-request recertification, propose process with checklist provided by EMC Staff
- June 2: Air Quality Budget Approval – BOC
- June 3 (target date): Submit checklist with draft responses to DAQ & EMC for review
- June 10-15: Meet again with DAQ & EMC to discuss check list responses, any needed edits, board materials to be submitted by June 25
- June 16: Extend Interlocal past July 1 (may require BOC action)
- June 16: Reform Air Quality Governing Board to an advisory board- BOC action
- June 24: Update Current Air Quality code (Air Quality Board Special Meeting to adopt after Public Comment Period May 22-June 21, potential public hearing June 22, Pre Draft Review April 17-May 17)
- July 9: EMC Recertification Request Presented
- July 21: BOC Adopts Air Quality Code by Reference, Updates to Administrative Code in Chapter 1 (Public notice to be issued at least 30 days prior)