BUNCOMBE COUNTY
AIR QUALITY

MEMORANDUM

TO: Buncombe County Air Quality Advisory Council

FROM: Ashley Featherstone, Air Quality Division Manager

RE: Minutes for August 6, 2026

DATE: September 15, 2026

Enclosed, please find the Minutes for the Buncombe County Air Quality Advisory Council meeting held on **Thursday August 6, 2026 at 4:00pm** The next meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday September 22, 2026 at 3:30pm** in the board meeting room located at 35 Woodfin Street, Asheville, NC 28801.

This meeting will be live streamed on Engage Buncombe which can be accessed at https://engage.buncombecounty.org/s8486. The council meeting documents will also be available on the Engage Buncombe site. The meeting will be recorded and can be viewed later.

The Buncombe County Air Quality Advisory Council met on Thursday, August 6, 2026, in the board meeting room located at 35 Woodfin Street, Asheville, NC 28801.

The attendance of the Board members was as follows:

Members Present:	**Members Absent:**
Ned Guttman	*Garry Whisnant*
Joel Storrow	
Caitlin Cook	
Jim Neely	

Staff Present: *Ashley Featherstone, Air Quality Division Manager; James Raiford, Permitting Program Manager; Steve Ensley, Air Quality Monitoring Coordinator; Alex Latta, Air Quality Specialist II; Allison Glass, Air Quality Specialist I; Hannah Rhodes, Air Quality Coordinator*

Others Present: *Suzanne Avett, Senior Attorney; Jason Rogers, Permits & Inspections Director; Johanna Cano, CAPE; Jason Hyatt, Library Director; Keith Bamberger, North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality; Tess Parker, North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality; Lucas Isreal, ArtSpace Charter; Meg Novak, ArtSpace Charter; Misty Brooks, Fairview Elementary*

Joel Storrow called the meeting of the Buncombe County Air Quality Advisory Committee to order on August 6, 2026, at 4:00 pm.

The order of business was as follows:

1. **Election of Chair to Preside Over Meeting**
   A. Joel Storrow opened the floor to elect a temporary Chair to preside over the meeting until the Council considers the new by-laws and elects a permanent Chair and Vice Chair.
   B. Caitlin Cook made the motion to elect Joel Storrow.
   C. Ned Guttman seconded the motion.
   D. All present – yes
   E. The motion passed 4-0

2. **Public Comment Protocol Announcement**
   A. Joel Storrow read the public comment protocol.

3. **Introduction of New Council Member Jim Neely**
   A. Joel Storrow introduced Jim Neely. He served on the Advisory Committee for the Asheville-Buncombe Air Quality Agency for 3-4 years, so he is familiar with a lot of our procedures.
   B. Jim Neely said that he moved to this area five and a half years ago from Cambridge, Massachusetts. He worked in public service there for 37 years, which included 10 years with the State Legislature and 27 years with the Department of Environmental Protection in the Division

of Air Quality. He developed the first auto-emissions inspection program for Massachusetts, which was actually the first in the country, in 1983.

4. Adjustment and Approval of Agenda

A. Ned Guttman made the motion to approve the agenda.
B. Caitlin Cook seconded the motion.
C. All present – yes
D. The motion passed 4-0

5. Consent Agenda

A. Approval of minutes from the last meeting of the Asheville-Buncombe Air Quality Agency, which was on June 24, 2026.
B. Ned Guttman made the motion to approve the minutes.
C. Catilin Cook seconded the motion.
D. All present – yes
E. The motion passed 4-0

6. Special Presentations- In Appreciation for Participation in Project and Committee

A. WNC Post Helene Particulate Monitoring Project Participants

i. Joel Storrow, Ashley Featherstone, and Keith Bamberger from North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality Division of Air Quality (DAQ) presented certificates to partners in the post-Helene monitoring project. Ashely Featherstone thanked everyone for being at the event. She said that the organization wanted to recognize all the participants in this project. Both the State Air Program and the Local Air Program were concerned about potential debris burning after Hurricane Helene, and the effects on Air Quality. They got together with the EPA to bring in some non-regulatory particulate matter sensors, and needed areas around the county to place them. These were the organizations that stepped up for that. Ms. Featherstone went on to explain more about the program itself and how the data could be used to benefit the community. Keith Bamberger spoke on Air Quality monitoring in the area, going into its history and how data such as this was used for the Daily Air Quality Forecast.

1) ArtSpace Charter School
    a) Certificate was presented to Lucas Isreal and Meg Novak.
2) Barnardsville Fire Station 15
3) Broad River Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department
4) Edneyville Fire and Rescue
5) Fairview Elementary School
    a) Certificate was presented to Misty Brooks.
6) Fairview Public Library
    a) Certificate was presented to Jason Hyatt.
7) Hi-Wire Brewing Biltmore Village
8) Leicester Public Library
    a) Certificate was presented to Jason Hyatt.
9) Skyland/South Buncombe Library

a) Certificate was presented to Jason Hyatt.

10) Upper Hominy Fire and Rescue

B. Former Air Quality Advisory Committee Members

i. Joel Storrow recognized and presented certificates to former members of the Air Quality Advisory Committee. Ashley Featherstone explained that when the Asheville-Buncombe Air Quality Agency was reorganized, that meant we no longer had an Advisory Committee. The Committee was originally formed over 25 years ago, and the organization wanted to thank them for their support and participation. The Committee has worked on many different projects over the years. They created the Clean Air Excellence Awards and facilitated them every year, they were a great sounding board for all of the different policies, they were involved with the low cost Air Quality sensor program with the community science station, and more. Members recognized are listed below. Not all were in attendance. Staff will follow up with Jay Haney, Kevin Tipton and Ichaya Dhungel and get their certificates to them.

1) Keith Bamberger
2) Caitlin Cook
3) Ichaya Dhungel
4) Ned Guttman
5) Jay Haney
6) Jim Neely
7) Kevin Tipton

7. New Business

A. Consideration and Adoption of Bylaws for the Air Quality Advisory Council

i. Joel Storrow wanted to recognize Ashley Featherstone and Suzanne Avett for all of their hard work in the transition, including drafting the documents to establish the Council.

ii. Joel Storrow entertained a motion to approve the draft bylaws so that they could serve as the Council's guiding principles going forward.

1) Ned Guttman made the motion.
2) Jim Neely seconded the motion.
3) All present – yes
4) The motion passed 4-0

iii. Joel Storrow opened the floor for discussion.

iv. Ned Guttman asked if the bylaws could address how to give advice to Buncombe County's Board of Commissioners on air quality program matters.

v. Suzanne Avett said that she could, however she did note that she had intentionally left the language on that a bit vague to give the Council opportunities for different options.

vi. Suzanne Avett asked what mechanism the Council would like to use. Ned Guttman responded that he wasn't sure. Suzanne Avett said that right now, with the way the bylaws are written, the Council members could go to a Board of Commissioners meeting, they could draft a memo, they could officially get on the agenda and have the Chair or a spokesperson speak at a meeting, etc. There are multiple opportunities. Ned Guttman asked if, rather than making it a definitive part of the bylaws, options could be listed. Ashley Feathersone gave the example

of the rule updates that are supposed to happen annually. She said that the Board of Commissioners will need to vote on those, and so the plan is to bring the rule updates to the Advisory Council first and also have a public hearing, which would be hosted at an Advisory Council meeting. Then, this Council will send a memo to the Board of Commissioners recommending to adopt certain updates that will go in the request for board action. Ned Guttman said that he would just like to see something in the bylaws addressing that point, even if general.

vii. Suzanne Avett asked Ned Guttman if he was okay with leaving the bylaws as-is for now, and then work through the process with the Board of Commissioners as to what that may look like. Then the Council can come back with a motion to amend the bylaws in the future. Ned Guttman said that he was fine with adopting what we have, but would want an amendment in the future regarding this.

viii. Joel Storrow asked if the Council would give an annual report to the Board of Commissioners. Suzzanne Avett responded that there are aspects of other boards where there is a requirement to provide a report. For example, the Health and Human Services board has a sub-group that is required statutorily to give yearly updates. Joel Storrow and Ned Guttman said that something along those lines could be something to think about as a way to interface with the Board of Commissioners.

ix. Caitlin Cook asked if the current language allows the Council to advise the Board of Commissioners in any way. Suzanne said yes it does. For example, the Council could have that as an agenda item and then vote as to how they wanted that to occur. As many opportunities that the Council would like are available to them at this time, given the current language.

x. Jim Neely pointed out that on the second page, “Board” was mentioned, and he thought it should be Council. Suzanne Avett thanked Jim Neely for pointing that one out and said she would change it.

xi. Joel Storrow invited a motion to amend the term “Board” to “Council” in the bylaws.
    1) Ned Guttman made the motion.
    2) Jim Neely seconded the motion.
    3) All present – yes
    4) The motion passed 4-0

B. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

i. Joel Storrow said that the Council needed to elect a permanent Chair and Vice Chair for the Council.
    1) Caitlin Cook nominated Garry Whisnant for Chair.
    2) Ned Guttman seconded the motion.
    3) All present – yes
    4) The motion passed 4-0

ii. Joel Storrow moved on to the election of Vice Chair.
    1) Caitlin Cook nominated Ned Guttman for Vice Chair.
    2) Jim Neely seconded the motion.
    3) All present – yes
    4) The motion passed 4-0

iii. Joel Storrow said that, as Vice Chair, Ned Guttman should lead the rest of the meeting.

8. Manager's Report

A. Transition Update

i. EMC Certification

1) Ashley Featherstone said that her and Suzanne Avett went to the EMC meeting in Raleigh on July 8th. They received conditional certification pending the adoption of the Buncombe County Air Quality Code, which the Board of Commissioners adopted on July 21st.

ii. Buncombe County Air Quality Code Adopted

1) Ashley Featherstone reported that the Board of Commissioners adopted the code on July 21st.

iii. July 24 First Official Day of Buncombe County Air Quality (BCAQ)

1) July 24th was the first official day of Buncombe County Air Quality. That was after the 30-day notice to the City of Asheville for termination of the interlocal agreement.

iv. EPA Grant Update-Novation Process

1) As a part of the organization's grants with the EPA, some changes are having to be made. There are two unique identifier numbers that you use when you receive federal funds, and the Asheville-Buncombe Air Quality Agency had one of its own numbers that has to be switched to Buncombe County's number. With this, staff are having to go through a "novation" process. Novation happens when an organization reorganizes, and the EPA had to close out the organization's grants for this. Staff had to turn in financial and performance reports with three days' notice. The organization has now applied for a new 103 and 105 grant, and any funds left on the old grants will be transferred over, although staff do not know how long the process will take. The EPA told staff that we could continue to charge expenses toward these grants, even though we are technically without grants right now. Staff are working more closely with the County's grants team now and having meetings with them, and they will be the authorized representative over the grant while Ashley Featherstone will continue to be the technical project manager, and Hannah Rhodes will continue to be the administrative contact.

v. New Member Orientation Document

1) Ashley Featherstone said that her and Suzanne Avett had talked about wanting to have a document similar to the New Board Member Orientation Document that existed for the prior Board. They thought they would take the previous document and update it for the new Advisory Council. That new document has not been drafted yet.

B. Proposed Changes to Office of Management and Budget's proposed rule "Regulation for Federal Financial Assistance" (2 CFR Part 200 and related provisions)

i. Ashley Featherstone first talked about the Clear Air Act, as it also dealt with the transition, and then she returned to this topic.

ii. Ashley Featherstone said that the Council had talked about these proposed changes to the Office of Management and Budget's proposed rule regulation for federal financial assistance the last time they met. Staff did see some comment letters from our State Environmental Associations and our National Air Quality Association. There were tens of thousands of comments submitted on this proposal, and we do have some questions about how the proposed changes could potentially impact the organization. But at this time, we don't have anything beyond these comments. We will wait and see what the federal administration passes as a final rule, seeing as this was just a proposal.

C. Clean Air Act Section 128 requirements for BCAQ
   i. Staff have drafted a policy and have disclosure forms for Ashley Featherstone and Council members to sign. It is a requirement of anyone that has any authority over permitting and enforcement programs under the Clean Air Act to sign an annual statement and disclose any potential conflicts of interest, specifically if they have any interest in businesses that could be regulated under Air Quality rules.
   ii. Ashley Featherstone said that she has drafted the documents to be signed, and Suzanne Avett is reviewing them. They should be ready for the Council members to sign them at the next board meeting. It does use the same language as the State's document.

D. Monitoring Update
   i. Steve Ensley did not go over monitoring data completeness as there had been no changes since the last report.
   ii. Steve Ensley said we have an update about the AB Tech monitoring site. They are hopefully going to pour the concrete pad tomorrow. The building is set to be delivered on the 19th. We will see how quickly we will get the equipment in it running. We would like to get data for this year.
   iii. There is an update on the Particular Matter standard that was updated by EPA and subject to litigation.
      1) On June 26th, the U.S. court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit upheld the 2024 Biden PM2.5 national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS) in a unanimous ruling in *Commonwealth of Kentucky, et al. v. EPA*.
      2) Then on July 17th the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California rejected agency efforts to delay implementing the standards, ruling in litigation brought by Democratic states and environmentalists to set a February 6, 2027, deadline to designate areas of the county in nonattainment with the PM2.5 limit.
      3) What is next Is that officials indicated that they may ask the D.C. Circuit for *en banc* rehearing of the *Kentucky* decision, or appeal the case to the Supreme Court.
      4) The Agency could ask the high court for an emergency injunction to block implementation of the Biden NAAQS, pending the court's consideration of a potential petition for *certiorari*.
      5) The EPA could opt to file an emergency petition for an injunction directly in the Supreme Court, in which case such set deadlines do not apply.
      6) The EPA could choose to request that the district court stay its deadline, or appeal the district court decision to the 9th Circuit.
      7) Another, much slower option would be for the EPA to conduct a regular statutory review of the PM NAAQS, for both PM2.5 and the larger PM10, which is now overdue under the Clean Air Act's (CAA) five-year cycle.
   iv. Caitlin Cook said that a UNCA student has been hard at work on the equipment they have on loan from BCAQ. She hopes to give another update on it at the next meeting.
   v. Ashley Featherstone recognized Jason Rogers for helping us get the process moving on the Ozone Monitoring site.

E. Facility Permit Renewals Issued in July

Facility Name	Type of Facility	Facility Classification	Location	Changes from Existing Permit
A Simple Cremation	Crematory	Small	Sand Hill Road, Candler	Changed permit references to Buncombe County Air Quality (BCAQ). Updated responsible official.
Carolina Ready Mix & Builders Supply, Inc	Ready-mix Concrete Facility	Small	Old U.S. Highway 70, Swannanoa	Changed permit references to BCAQ. Updated general conditions and responsible official.
D.H. Griffin Wrecking Co, Inc.	Portable Concrete and Stone Crusher	Small	Various sites with local zoning authority approval	Changed permit references to BCAQ. Updated general conditions and responsible official.
Eaton Corporation – Avery Creek Facility	Electrical Distribution Facility	Small	Vista Boulevard, Arden	Changed permit references to BCAQ. Updated general conditions and responsible official.
Mission Hospital, Inc	General Medical and Surgical Hospital	Synthetic Minor	Biltmore Avenue, Asheville	Changed permit references to BCAQ. Updated permitted equipment list and exempted activities list since the St. Joe's campus has been removed. Updated facility name and responsible official.
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center	General Medical and Surgical Hospital	Synthetic Minor	Tunnel Road, Asheville	Changed permit references to BCAQ. Updated equipment references and added performance test reporting requirements in specific conditions

Western Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory	Veterinary Testing Laboratory	Small	Airport Road, Arden	Changed permit references to BCAQ. Updated general conditions.

i. Ashley Featherstone said that we issued seven permit renewals at the end of July, when they were set to expire.
ii. Ashley Featherstone said that staff have put the permit renewals into a report to the Council to keep members in the loop and let them know what kind of permits are being issued. That way, anyone that is interested can also see it on the agenda in case they have questions, which she is glad to answer.
iii. Ashley Featherstone noted that staff have a couple permits in house at this time, but getting these seven renewals out was a big push. It was a busy month for staff.
iv. Ned Guttman commented that he appreciated the organization updating Council members what staff are working on.
v. Caitlin Cook asked if people were happier with the new process and the fact that they don't have to wait for the Board to approve things? Ashley Featherstone answered that it is a little too early to say. Statutorily, Small and Synthetic Minor permits are required to be issued in 90 days, and we were getting them out pretty well in 60 days, because we were revolving around the board's schedule to meet every other month. With that, she doesn't think that Board approval was really holding things up. However, when we do get a permit that comes in in-between Council meetings, that probably will be more convenient. It's a little early to say at this point, but it will likely help with some flexibility.

9. New Business:

A. None, was gone over above.

10. Other Business:

A. Legal Counsel Report
   i. Suzanne Avett said that the main part of her report would be the Council's by-laws, which were just approved, and the Conflict of Interest document signatures, which she needs to review and then get to Council members for their signatures.
   ii. Ned Guttman asked if the document would be something Council members could sign digitally. Suzanne Avett answered that yes, those could be sent out digitally.
   iii. Ashley Featherstone asked if the signatures needed to be wet ink, or if an electronic signature in a PDF would be sufficient. Suzanne said that the best option would probably be to sign the document with wet ink, and then scan and email it back. If Council members had issues with that, they could let her know and she can help coordinate. There are ways in which electronic signatures are accepted and the County may have some tools available to them to make sure that works.
   iv. Ashley Featherstone said that members can also come by the office to sign, or staff could be sent out to make it more convenient to get the signatures.
B. Calendar
   i. The Council discussed the best days and times for the next two meetings.

ii. The next meeting will be Tuesday September 22, 2026 at 3:30pm.
iii. The meeting after that will be Tuesday November 24, 2026 at 3:30pm.
iv. Joel Storrow made a motion to accept those two meeting days/times.
v. Caitlin Cook seconded the motion.
vi. All present – yes
vii. The motion passed 4-0

C. Announcements
   i. Hannah Rhodes will be starting maternity leave at the beginning of September, or sooner.

11. Public Comment

A. None

12. Adjournment

A. Joel Storrow made the motion to adjourn the meeting.
B. Jim Neely seconded the motion.
C. All present – yes
D. The motion passed 4-0
E. The meeting was adjourned at 4:46pm