Asheville-Buncombe Air Quality Agency

MEMORANDUM

TO: Asheville-Buncombe Air Quality Agency Board of Directors

FROM: Ashley Featherstone, Director

RE: Minutes for May 8, 2025

DATE: July 17, 2025

Enclosed, please find the Minutes for the Asheville-Buncombe Air Quality Agency Board meeting held on **Thursday May 8, 2025 at 4:00pm**. The next meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday June 17, 2025 at 4:00pm** in the meeting room located at the previous 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, May 9, 2025, 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:	**Members Absent:**
Ned Guttman	*Karl Koon*
Garry Whisnant	
Joel Storrow	
Caitlin Crossett	

Staff Present: *Ashley Featherstone, Director; 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: *Amy Broughton, County Attorney; Johanna Cano, CAPE; Timothy Love, Assistant County Manager; Patty Beaver, CIBO; Drew West, CIBO*

Joel Storrow called the meeting of the Asheville-Buncombe Air Quality Agency Board of Directors to order on May 8, 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. Garry Whisnant made the motion to approve the agenda.
   B. Ned Guttman seconded the motion.
   C. All present – yes
   D. The motion passed 4-0

3. **Consent Agenda**
   A. Approval of minutes from March 18, 2025
   B. Ned Guttman made the motion to approve the minutes.
   C. Garry Whisnant seconded the motion.
   D. All present – yes
   E. The motion passed 4-0

4. **Unfinished Business**
   A. FY 2025 Budget Amendment

i. Joel Storrow explained that this is the same amendment that was discussed and voted on at the March meeting. However the approval procedures were not properly followed (actual vote not taken), so the Board is voting again on it at this May meeting.
ii. Garry Whisnant made the motion to approve the budget amendment.
iii. Ned Guttman seconded the motion.
iv. All present – yes
v. The motion passed 4-0

B. Consideration of FY 2026 Budget
i. Joel Storrow and Ashley Featherstone referenced the related Excel spreadsheet in the Board packet and discussed the adjustments that had been made from what was proposed at the March meeting.
1) There were a few minor adjustments to salary and benefits, updating them using new formulas for the proper amounts for the upcoming fiscal year.
2) There was also funds for an internship that was not previously removed from the budget, so that has now been updated.
3) There was a shift in funds from the contractor category to the salary category.
4) Along with the spreadsheet, the ordinance itself has been updated to include these updated numbers.
ii. Garry Whisnant made the motion to approve the budget ordinance
iii. Ned Guttman seconded the motion
iv. All present – yes
v. The motion passed 4-0

C. Surplus Ozone Monitoring Equipment
i. Steve Ensley explained that the Agency has spare, older Ozone Monitoring equipment (two calibrators, a monitor, and a zero-calibration unit). We have new equipment, so this is surplus equipment that we can no longer use as the equipment is required to be replaced periodically. At the March Board meeting the Board had decided to offer the equipment to several colleges in the county. This includes UNCA, AB Tech, Warren Wilson, and Montreat College. Steve Ensley reported that he reached out to all of them, but the only response he got with interest was from UNCA.
ii. This donation will have to go before Buncombe County's Board of Commissioners to approve the decision, and our Board would also need to vote on it first.
iii. Caitlin Crossett recused herself from the vote, as it would be a conflict of interest.
iv. Garry Whisnant made the motion to approve the donation of the surplus monitoring equipment to UNCA
v. Ned Guttman seconded the motion
vi. All present – yes
vii. The motion passed 3-0

5. Director's Report

A. Update on move to 35 Woodfin

i. Ashley Featherstone gave an update on the Agency's move to 35 Woodfin Street. Air Quality, along with several other departments, have now moved offices to 35 Woodfin Street.
ii. The Agency was not able to move our lab to the basement or ground floor yet. When construction on the ground floor is complete, we will move the lab over to 35 Woodfin as well. The county will also have a Board meeting room on the ground floor. It is the hope that renovations will be done in July.
iii. Ashley Featherstone explained that staff are still working out some things with the new space, such as door access and where to receive mail, but it is a nice space.
iv. Joel Storrow asked if there is visitor parking at the new building. Ashley Featherstone confirmed that there is a surface parking lot for visitors across from the YMCA. There is also a parking garage behind the building, but that is paid parking.
v. Ashley Featherstone said that we did have the Agency's Advisory Committee meeting at 35 Woodfin Street in April.

B. Reduce to Rebuild Proposal-Permit Fee Modification
i. Ashley Featherstone explained that the county wanted to give relief to residential customers that experienced damages to their homes during Hurricane Helene, and that this Reduce to Rebuild proposal is in relation to that. They did look at fees in surrounding counties while considering this proposal. Some counties are still not charging fees, while other counties started charging normal fees again on January 1st, 2025.
ii. The Borad of Commissioners ultimately decided that they want to provide a 50% reduction in residential permit fees from June 1st, 2025 through December 31st, 2025.
iii. For permits falling under this 50% fee reduction, it will be verified that these residences were damaged specifically by Helene.
iv. While the Board of Commissioners approved this, Air Quality fees are determined by this Board, therefore this Board will need to vote on whether or not they also want to reduce fees alongside the other county departments.
v. Regarding the fee revenue loss estimations in the county's PowerPoint presentation, Ashley Featherstone stated that these are very conservative estimations (over estimated). This is because a lot of the houses included in these estimations are actually being charged commercial fees, rather than residential fees, because they are being torn down through FEMA and other companies as part of larger projects.
vi. Most of Air Quality's residential demolitions are $200. For residences with asbestos, the fee is approximately $480 (depends on square feet).
vii. Joel Storrow reminded the Board that it is only a 50% discount fee, and companies such as Wendy's would also not be included in the fee reduction because they are not residential.
viii. Ashley Featherstone said the fee revenue loss numbers in the packet are worst-case scenario. Also, this is actually additional revenue that we wouldn't normally be receiving, as it is specifically related to Hurricane Helene.
ix. Ned Guttman said he is concerned that in the future we will need to address how we are going to increase funding so that we don't dip into our fund balance.
x. Joel Storrow responded that the Board had a retreat a few years ago just to talk about fee adjustments, and that maybe it's time to do that again so changes to all permit fees can be considered.

xi. Joel Storrow also pointed out that the additional revenue the Agency is making from Helene-related permit fees may end up adding to the fund balance this year, because these are revenues that were not planned for and would not have been a part of the original budget.
xii. Ashley Featherstone said that we have not received our funds yet from the EPA for our recurring 105 grant award. We are hoping we will get those soon.
xiii. Joel Storrow and Ned Guttman talked about having a retreat in Fall.
    1) In the past, the Board chose a date when there was already a Board meeting, and they just met one hour earlier.
    2) By waiting until the Fall, the Board will know the impact of the fund balance.
xiv. Joel Storrow said that in the Agency's by-laws, a public notice needs to be made and open for comments (for 30 days) regarding the 50% residential Helene permit fee reduction. Then, the Board must have a special meeting in June to approve this.
xv. It was decided that this meeting would be held on Tuesday June 17th at 4:00pm.
xvi. Garry Whisnant made the motion to accept the recommendation of a fee reduction, post for public notice, and have a meeting in June.
xvii. Caitlin Crossett seconded the motion.
xviii. All present – yes
xix. The motion passed 4-0

C. Post Helene Recovery Update
    i. Ashley Featherstone said that Agency staff are still busy with ACI's (Air Curtain Incinerators).
        1) We are working with the No Action Assurance Letter from EPA which provides relief from the rules that require these facilities using ACI's to obtain Title V permits.
        2) Riverside Stump Dump has not been operating their ACI.
        3) Staff need to come up with some new processes regarding ACI's.
        4) There are also bio char units that are essentially ACI's that are modified to produce a product that is called bio char. Bio char looks like charcoal and soil scientists are really promoting it, as it can be used on agricultural land damaged by flooding.
        5) Bio char units are very expensive. The US Forest Service wants to use many of these to keep up with the Helene debris in the forests.
        6) We continue to promote ACI's as an alternative to open burning because there is less smoke emitted compared to open burning.
    ii. We are receiving more requests and complaints about open burning of storm debris.
    iii. James Raiford and Mike Matthews have been spending a lot of time on demolition permits for the FEMA program.
        1) Ashley Featherstone said there are around 140 of these permits that need to be entered into our system.
        2) We are currently waiting on FEMA to award contracts, and then the contractor will be responsible for the work which includes obtaining the permits.
        3) There are some issues with insurance companies that are getting worked through.
        4) Another hardship is that we are required to get wet ink signatures for these permits (a federal requirement). We have told FEMA we can bring them the physical papers to sign, but then we will have to scan them and get them into Accela.

5) James Raiford said that the Agency has processed roughly 85 permit applications so far. We've got another 25 or so coming up. Totals could approach 175 at the end of it. All of these are residential homes, but because one group is doing all of them, the federal asbestos NESHAP (National Emissions Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants) rules require that it must be done using a commercial permit.
6) James Raiford hopes our side of the process will be done by the end of June. He hopes to have all applications ready to go by the end of June.
7) Ashley Featherstone said that we are trying to get everything together on our end so that we are ready for next steps once FEMA is ready to move forward.

iv. Agency staff are participating in town-hall-type functions in the community regarding Hurricane Helene. At these functions, we talk with residents about air quality awareness, open burning, etc.
v. We are receiving more odor complaints related to asphalt plants because of all they are producing post-Helene to help the area rebuild.
vi. There is a county survey accepting project ideas for how residents would like to see the community rebuilt.
vii. Ashley Featherstone is going to a NACAA (National Association of Clean Air Agencies) conference in Texas in May to talk about Helene relief work.

D. Air Quality Awareness Week: May 5-9
   i. The Board of Commissioners issued a proclamation recognizing May 5th through 9th as Air Quality Awareness Week.
   ii. Ashley Featherstone said the Agency has done a couple social media posts about it, including one on ACI's and explaining what they are to the public.
E. Clean Air Excellence Awards-Recommendations
   i. Ned Guttman will cover these in the advisory committee update.
F. Clean Air Compliance Recognition
   i. Ashley Featherstone said that we do Clean Air Compliance Recognition every year for facilities that were in compliance for the previous year. There is a list of facilities that the Agency will be giving these to in the meeting's Board packet.
G. Monitoring Update
   i. Steve Ensley started by talking about monitoring data completeness.
      1) PM2.5 data completeness: 97%
      2) Ozone date completeness: 95%
         a) There is one hour every day that the system does not run, so the data completeness will never be 100%.
   ii. On March 28th, 2025 we had a forecast of code red for buncombe county. It did not end up being a code red day. However, outside of our regulatory monitors, our monitors in Swannanoa and Fairview did go over the standard for the day.
   iii. Steve Ensley thinks that our network and all the various monitors we have out in the field did a good job of showing what residences are experiencing close to their locations.
   iv. In regards to historical data and record keeping, Garry Whisnant asked if we notate reasons for spikes in historical data. For example, will we notate this data as being due to wildfires.

1) Steve Ensley said, yes, the state has us make notes monthly. We flag data that has been affected by smoke or any other occurrence. The state uses that information to make an "exceptional event". The EPA will then choose to exclude the data or allow it to stay. That being said, the state typically only does this if they determine we are going to exceed the annual standard.

v. Steve Ensley showed the AQI (Air Quality Index) table and noted the concentration range. He finds that helpful when he's looking at data. When you look at 24-hour average for an instrument, these are the ranges to determine the daily category.
vi. Ashley Featherstone clarified that the EBAM's in Swannanoa and Fairview did get up to code red, but that in town at the regulatory monitor it didn't get as high over the 24 hour period.
vii. Regarding the code red forecast, Steve Ensley explained that forecasters mainly rely on the regulatory data, but they do look at Purple Air sensor values to inform their decisions, which is probably the reason why they went with a red forecast for that day.
viii. Ashley noted that having extra monitors is more work for staff members Steve Ensley and Allison Glass, but they're doing a great job keeping up with it.
    1) Example: A lawn mower cut a power cord to one of the monitors this week, and Allison had to go out and replace the cord.

H. Facility Permit Renewals

Facility Name	Type of Facility	Facility Classification	Location	Changes from Existing Permit
Red Clay Industries, Inc.	Portable Concrete, Stone, and Recycled Asphalt Pavement Crusher	Small	Three APAC Atlantic sites and various other sites with local zoning authority approval	Update General Conditions

i. Ashley Featherstone said that there are portable crushers at this facility. They often go long periods without operating them in the county, but they have asked to keep their permit active. Permits must be renewed every 8 years.
ii. Ned Guttman made the motion to approve the permit.
iii. Garry Whisnant seconded the motion.
iv. All present – yes
v. The motion passed 4-0

I. Facility Permit Modifications

Facility Name	Type of Facility	Facility Classification	Location	Changes from Existing Permit

B.V. Hedrick Gravel & Sand – North Buncombe Quarry	Stone Crushing & Processing Facility	Synthetic Minor	100 Goldview Road, Weaverville	Addition of a concrete batch plant to existing permit. Changing facility classification from Small to Synthetic Minor.

i. James Raiford explained that Southern Concrete has had a concrete batch plant in the area for many years. That land was not owned by them, and was being used for something else, and so they had to move the plant. B.V. Hedrick owns Southern Concrete (it is the parent plant), which is why the permit modification is under B.V. Hedrick.
ii. James Raiford said that the new location is located next to the Quarry, and some of the material at the quarry is being used at the concrete batch plant, making this an ideal location for Hedrick.
iii. Since B.V. Hedrick owns Southern Concrete, Agency staff determined that, rather than updating Southern Concrete's permit, we would update the B.V. Hedrick permit so they are all under B.V. Hedrick's existing quarry permit.
iv. Joel Storrow asked about the reclassification of the facility from small to synthetic minor.
    1) James Raiford explained that there was a lot of thought put into the classification of the facility.
    2) A big part of the decision was the potential to emit.
        a) Previously, the potential to emit before was below 100 tons (about 92 tons). This number is assuming that the facility runs every hour of the year, which very few companies actually do.
        b) When you add a concrete batch plant, that's another 20 tons of potential to emit (again, that is running every hour of the year).
        c) When you combine those two numbers, it is above 100 tons, and that is the Title V threshold.
        d) Because of this, we have put a limit in the permit that limits the batch plant's emissions of cubic yards so that they will stay below 100 tons (potential emissions).
    3) There was also a toxics assessment that was conducted.
        a) The toxics assessment that needed to be done was due to the facility's arsenic emissions. If they produced more than 109 thousand cubic yards, they would exceed the Toxics Permitting Emissions Rule. This is a safety limit that the state sets, and if they exceed this limit then air quality modeling is needed. If they stay below that limit, we can assume that they will stay below the safe level for emissions.
        b) A lot of facilities will take a toxics limit because of this rule, and then they can avoid spending money on air quality monitoring (which is a more in depth analysis).
        c) Out of an abundance of caution, and with the general public in mind, Air Quality staff did do some air quality modeling because one of the adjacent plants (asphalt plant) did model for arsenic. While this was not required, staff wanted to be proactive.
        d) After doing modeling, it was determined that the concrete plant emissions didn't affect the model. It is a very large piece of land and the two plants are separated from each other, which is why that was the case.

v. Joel Storrow entertained a motion to approve the permit.
vi. Garry Whisnant made the motion to approve the permit.
vii. Ned Guttman seconded the motion.
viii. All present – yes
ix. The motion passed 4-0

6. New Business

A. Consideration of Title V CPI Adjustment

i. Ashley Featherstone said that, every year, we are able to change Title V fees according to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) Adjustment from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Once a year the EPA issues a memo with increased minimum fee rates and the corresponding percentage we are able to increase our Title V fees by. Based on this memo, our Agency is proposing to increase tonnage fees from $62 per ton to $64 per ton.
ii. This increase in fees will result in an additional $5,718 in revenue.
iii. Ashley Featherstone and agency staff recommended that the Board approve the fee change.
iv. Ashley Featherstone noted that, while not included in this adjustment, the Board could consider adding a CPI adjustment for other non-Title-V-facility fees in the future.
v. Ashley Featherstone clarified that this increase is already included in the budget.
vi. Joel Storrow entertained a motion to approve the Title V CPI Adjustment.
vii. Ned Guttman made the motion to approve the Title V CPI Adjustment.
viii. Garry Whisnant seconded the motion.
ix. All present – yes
x. The motion passed 4-0

7. Other Business

A. Legal Counsel Report

i. Amy Broughton asked the Board about bi-law adjustments that they wanted made.
1) Example: Should the option for zoom meetings be added for either regular meetings and/or special meetings. That way the Board could have the special meeting, such as the one needed in June, via zoom if ever needed.
2) Amy Broughton also said there are some minor tweaks that need to be made, mostly things that deal with new technology.
a) Example: Our bi-laws currently state that we have to mail our Board packets out, but now we post them online and send them via email.
3) Joel Storrow said we could adjust the bi-laws all at once.
4) It was decided that Joel Storrow, Amy Broughton, and Ashley Featherstone should meet to get a draft of bi-law changes.
5) Joel Storrow suggested the edits be prepared by the September Board meeting.

B. Advisory Committee Report

i. The committee last met on April 29th, 2025 at 35 Woodfin Street. Ned Guttman gave the committee report.
ii. Ned Guttman said that the committee mainly talked about clean air excellence awards. There were two applications. One from Eaton and another from the Footprint Project.

1) Eaton has received this award in the past for another facility, but they have a different facility that this application is for. Their focus is on environmental stewardship. We did ask them for more data, which they have just given to us.
2) The Footprint Project was a project set up for Helene relief. The organization has done a lot of work in sustainable clean-up efforts, so it prevents things that cause air pollution. Keith Bamberger, who is on the committee, has worked a lot with them and spoke very highly to them.
3) The committee recommended that both companies get an award, with Ashley Featherstone determining the appropriate category of award for them based on the scope of project and provided data.

iii. Ned Guttman said Caitlin Crossett gave a presentation on UNCA's sensors. UNCA's EPA grant was turned down, but the current sensors are still operating.
iv. After the Advisory Committee meeting, Ashley Featherstone provided a tour of the 35 Woodfin Street building.
v. For the Clean Air Excellence Awards, Ashley Featherstone said that in previous years, the Advisory Committee made recommendations on the clean air excellence award, and then the Board voted on them. With this, the Board decided to do it the same way this year.
vi. Joel Storrow entertained a motion to approve the awarding of the two Clean Air Excellence Awards suggested by the Advisory Committee.
vii. Ned Guttman made the motion to approve the awards.
viii. Garry Whisnant seconded the motion.
ix. All present – yes
x. The motion passed 4-0

C. Calendar
   i. The next Board meeting was originally scheduled for July 10th, 2025. However, the Board decided to meet on June 17th at 4:00pm to discuss the Reduce to Rebuild residential fee reductions proposal. With this, they also decided to move the regular July Board meeting to July 24th at 4:00pm.
D. Announcements
   i. None

8. Public Comment

A. None

9. Adjournment

A. Garry Whisnant made the motion to adjourn the meeting.
B. Ned Guttman seconded the motion.
C. All present – yes
D. The motion passed 4-0
E. The meeting was adjourned at 5:10pm