Asheville-Buncombe Air Quality Agency

MEMORANDUM

TO: Asheville-Buncombe Air Quality Agency Board of Directors

FROM: Ashley Featherstone, Director

RE: Minutes for July 24, 2025

DATE: September 3, 2025

Enclosed, please find the Minutes for the Asheville-Buncombe Air Quality Agency Board meeting held on **Thursday July 24, 2025 at 4:00pm**. The next meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday September 10, 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, July 24, 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	*Garry Whisnant*
Joel Storrow	
Karl Koon	
Caitlin Crossett	

Staff Present: *Ashley Featherstone, Director; James Raiford, Permitting Program Manager; Mike Matthews, Air Quality Specialist II; 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; Angelica Tyler, CAPE; Drew West, CIBO; Keith Bamberger, North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality; Hunter Toothman, Eaton; Ben Hale, Eaton; Jamie Trowbridge, Footprint Project; Ian Baillie, Land of Sky; Kora Baillie, Resident*

Joel Storrow called the meeting of the Asheville-Buncombe Air Quality Agency Board of Directors to order on July 24, 2025, at 4:01 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. Karl Koon made the motion to approve the agenda.
   B. Caitlin Crossett seconded the motion.
   C. All present – yes
   D. The motion passed 4-0

3. **Consent Agenda**
   A. Approval of minutes from May 8, 2025
      i. Karl Koon made the motion to approve the minutes.
      ii. Ned Guttman seconded the motion.
      iii. All present – yes
      iv. The motion passed 4-0
   B. Approval of minutes from June 17, 2025
      i. Caitlin Crossett made the motion to approve the minutes.
      ii. Karl Koon seconded the motion.

iii. All present – yes
iv. The motion passed 4-0

1. **Special Presentations-Clean Air Excellence Awards**
    A. Eaton Avery Creek
        i. Hunter Toothman and Ben Hale received the Award on behalf of Eaton Avery Creek.
        ii. Ashley Featherstone said that Eaton is a part of the NC Environmental Stewardship Initiative. This is not the first time the Eaton organization has received the award. This particular award is for their Avery Creek facility for an LED lighting and HVAC unit upgrade. This project was done in partnership with Trane Technologies and Duke Energy's SmartPath rebate program for sustainability projects. The projected annual reductions from this project include 420,204 kilowatt-hours, 60.11 kilowatts/year, and 125,000,000 metric tons CO2 equivalent/year.
        iii. Ben Hale said it is an honor to receive the award, and that they will be will applying again next year for the second part of their larger sustainability project at the facility. He said that he is proud to be a part of an organization that prioritizes sustainability.
    B. Footprint Project
        i. Jamie Trowbridge received the Award on behalf of Footprint Project.
        ii. Ashley Featherstone gave an overview of the organization, which is a renewable energy-focused disaster response nonprofit based out of New Orleans, LA. They aim to offset gas and diesel generator usage in areas hit hard by natural disasters. After Hurricane Helene, the Footprint Project set up a hub in Mars Hill and has distributed as much clean energy equipment across the region as possible.
        iii. Ashley Featherstone went on to give many of the examples of Footprint Project's work, including establishing a solar free-store where local residents can request individual supplies to restore solar installations that were damaged in the storm, or to help build new systems at locations that became hubs after the storm.
        iv. Jamie Trowbridge, the Operations Coordinator for Western North Carolina, thanked the Agency for the award. He said that the organization has been doing really great ongoing work for the community. They have been playing matchmaker a lot, finding equipment for places that need it. They are still offsetting generator usage, and there are still people living in RV's and other temporary housing that are running their power off of generators, and so the organization is trying to help those residents out.
        v. Ian Baillie, from the Land of Sky Regional Council, talked about his relationship with Footprint Project and emphasized Land of Sky's and Footprint Project's work toward energy resiliency in rural communities across the Western part of the state. Footprint project is helping to build infrastructure to help the area be more prepared for the next disaster.

2. **Unfinished Business:**

A. Surplus Ozone Equipment
    i. Joel Storrow said that we have talked about this surplus ozone equipment for the last several meetings. We attempted to offer it up for sale for a minimum of $1,000, which we did not get a bid for. Ashley Featherstone talked to the county, about donating the equipment. Staff is proposing to loan the equipment to UNCA.
    ii. Caitlin Crossett recused herself from the vote
    iii. Karl Koon made the motion to approve the action to loan the equipment to UNCA.
    iv. Ned Guttman seconded the motion.
    v. All present – yes
    vi. The motion passed 3-0.

3. **Director's Report:**
    A. Tropical Storm Helene Response, Recovery Update
        i. Post Helene Recovery Update Demolition and Asbestos Removal Permits
            a. Ashley Featherstone talked about the board-approved reduced fee for Helene-related asbestos/demolition permits. So far there are four projects that have gone through that qualify for the reduced permit fee.
            b. 132 demolition permits have been processed by us for FEMA, and we are waiting for signatures from FEMA. Once we get those, we have to process the permits one more time, and then we will work on getting money from FEMA for those permits.
        ii. Air Curtain Incinerators and Storm Debris Burning
            a. Ashley Featherstone said that there are still some ACIs operating in the area. There were six total that were approved to run. There are four still operating.
            b. We are coming up on the expiration of the no action assurance that the EPA granted so that facilities with ACI units did not have to have Title V permits. There are three units that would like to continue to use them: Biltmore Estate, North End Stump and Brush, and Asheville Affordable Tree Men. We have sent letters to them asking for Title V permit applications.
            c. Up until this point, we have been treating biochar units, which are essentially modified ACI units that produce a biochar biproduct, the same as ACIs. However, the EPA just issued a letter that biochar is not a solid waste, which means they would not be required to have a Title V permit like an ACI. Instead, they would just need state (or local in our case) operating permits.
            d. Ashley Featherstone also gave the update that the EPA has issued a notice that they are looking at the ACI rules to potentially consolidate them and come out with something similar to Biochar rules for ACIs. In the meantime, we will continue to pursue Title V applications from the facilities wanting to continue to use ACIs.
            e. Ned Guttman asked if we have gotten any indication from the EPA on where they are headed.

1. Ashley Featherstone said the EPA has come out with a list of things they are looking at modifying. Many of the items are rules and policies established in the last four years by the previous administration. A lot of the older rules that have been active for a long time likely won't change.

f. Ned Guttman asked if there was an estimated timeline for when Helene cleanup will be finished.
    1. Ashley Featherstone said the county is finishing up getting debris out of waterways and also finishing up the private property debris pick up program. The county is decommissioning some of the temporary debris sites in the county. At the same time, she has heard that it could take eight to ten years to process all of the debris and downed trees in forests that are threats to wildfires.

g. Joel Storrow asked if we will likely still have a Title V permit for ACI's.
    1. Ashley Featherstone and James Raiford said that there are a lot of factors that will play into that, including their emissions, but for now we are moving forward with permits.
    2. The EPA may remove Title V requirements for ACI's, but we don't know how long it will take them to remove those, or if they will even decide to remove them.
    3. James Raiford said that whether or not facilities have a Title V permit, they will still have to get a state/local permit based on their emissions.

h. Karl Koon asked about portable crushers, and if a permit for a company could be area wide rather than specific to one location.
    1. Ashley Featherstone said that they can be portable and move to different locations, but the company has to notify us 15 days prior to moving the equipment.

i. Ashley Featherstone noted that some ACI's have been having issues with operation, because their sites are so full of debris that they don't have the room to safely operate.

j. Karl Koon asked about debris piles catching on fire. How are those treated and factored in? Do they need to get a burning permit when it catches on fire?
    1. Ashley Featherstone said that we don't permit those if they catch on fire because they are not intentional or planned, but we do monitor them to see if it affects air quality at our monitoring sites.

k. Keith Bamberger said that there was a particle pollution monitor in Swannanoa, and while PM2.5 levels were elevated, it was not unsafe.

iii. Non-Regulatory-Temporary Air Monitoring and Sensors

a. Ashley Featherstone said that we still have these temporary air monitors going, and we're really glad we have them. It is more work for our staff to maintain the Purple Air monitors, but the state is helping track what goes on and the whole team is actively working on them. We are coming up on

a year now since they were initially deployed, and we are not sure if DEQ and EPA will continue to let us use them (loan was for a year).

iv. Helene Recovery Projects
    a. Ashley Featherstone said that the Agency has a proposed project submitted to the county to purchase eight to ten Purple Air monitors and potentially also an EBAM monitor to keep the extra non-regulatory air quality monitoring going for the next few years post-Helene.
    b. The county did keep that project in the running after their initial look at potential projects. We are still waiting to hear if the project will get final approval or not.
v. Sensor Shelter Project
    a. Ashley Featherstone said that Clean Air North Carolina will be doing a study on Western North Carolina air quality post Helene, and they have asked to use our citizen science shelter as part of the project. They are going to co-locate their Purple Air monitors at our regulatory monitoring site. They will then be able to compare their data with ours. We have asked to be able to see their data before it gets published. We are waiting on schools to approve their project staff to be go onto their property.
vi. Outreach: Presentations and Town Halls
    a. Ashley Featherstone said that Agency staff have been doing outreach presentations and attending town halls for residents. We also went to a conference in Texas to present about Helene recovery and ACIs.
    b. We rejoined the residential wood smoke group, and there are two local firewood banks that got some funding from the Center for Green Heat. We have EPA's burn-wise outreach materials, so we are partnering with those types of groups to help get information out. The firewood banks are currently looking for land to store and distribute firewood.
    c. Ned Guttman asked if the City of Asheville is doing anything in response to Hurricane Helene.
        1. Ashley Featherstone said that the City is, however their recovery plan is separate from the County's plan. We're not really engaged much with the city anymore since we function more as a County department. We have interacted with them. For example, they invited us to see their biochar unit demonstration. But we have not really been coordinating efforts with them.
        2. We are members of the local emergency planning committee, as is the City and the upcoming meeting is August 2nd.

B. Air Quality Rule Amendments
    i. Ashley Featherstone said that we have a lot of rules to amend. A few years ago the state adopted a law that our air quality rules need to be readopted periodically. The state did a years long process to adopt new ones, and so we need to now change our rules to mirror the updated state rules with some changes where we have slightly different rules.

ii. The state and EPA need to review our rules prior to them being presented to the board and going to public notice.
iii. Ashley Featherstone said that we're going to try to do a large group of about 150 rules in September to present to the board. We will have summaries of changes made.
iv. Ned Guttman requested getting a copy with enough lead time so they can go through them before the meeting
v. Joel Storrow asked if it would make sense to present at the September meeting and then take it to vote in November.
vi. James Raiford added that a lot of the changes are very small, such as changing the word "and" to "a", and not every rule is getting changed. There will be rules that have substantial changes, but many of them will be grammar edits.
vii. Ashley Featherstone said that we can put the line-through strikeout version on the board portal at the same time as giving them to the state, so board members will have more time to review them.
viii. Ned Guttman asked if we could annotate the rules with comments on what was changed and why.
ix. Ashley Featherstone said we can send them to the state in August and get them up on the board portal in mid-August, so that they're available to view well in advance of the September meeting.
x. Ashley Featherstone said we hope to request to go to public notice for a batch of rules at the September board meeting.

C. Status of Federal Grants-federal fiscal years 2025 and 2026
i. Ashley Featherstone said the federal grant period for the EPA 105 grant ends September 30th. We have received an initial $100,000, but we have not received our second half of it yet. We expect to have our second half by mid-August. It is supposed to be the same amount as last year, although we won't know for sure until we receive the funds from the EPA. This funding timeline is much later than previous years.
ii. Luckily, our Agency typically waits until July to start pulling a lot of the 105 funds down, so it's not as big of an issue for us, but it is a big issue for other agencies.
iii. President Trump proposed to zero out the 105 and 103 grant funds for the next fiscal year. Those two grants typically fund about 30% of our current budget.
iv. The House of Representatives is currently marking up the initial budget and only proposed about a 2% reduction, instead of 100%. The Senate has not talked about the bill yet, but we are cautiously optimistic.
v. We don't have numbers yet for the end of year FY25, but so far it is looking like we will pull about $50,000 out of the fund balance.
vi. We have hired Betsy Brown back temporarily to train Hannah on some annual tasks, including grant tasks such as maintenance of effort calculations and reports for the grant.

D. Credit Card Fees

i. Ashley Featherstone said the county has decided to start charging customers credit card fees. The fee goes directly to the vendor. That will add some money back into our Agency budget.
ii. Amy Broughton explained that we won't collect fees on in-person debit card transactions, only for credit cards on in-person transactions. Online is different.
iii. Mike Matthews said that he hadn't had any issues with or comments on it yet.
iv. Amy Broughton asked if our website has a notice of the fees on it, and Mike Matthews said yes, the website does have that notice.

E. Monitoring Update
i. Steve Ensley touched on the temporary air monitors. We did lose one since the last meeting, and we sent it back to the state. We got a spare monitor to replace it, and for now are using it as a spare. We are still using the EBAMs. They are older instruments so they are very temperamental.
ii. Steve Ensley talked about monitoring data completeness so far this year.
a. BAM PM2.5 data completeness: 98%
b. PM2.5 T640 data completeness: 98%
c. Bent Creek Ozone data completeness: 94%
iii. Overall, Steve Ensley said that things have been running well.
iv. Ned Guttman asked what the summer has been like for PM2.5. He said it looks like the air quality has degraded as you can't see the mountains in certain areas.
a. Steve Ensley said he doesn't have any visibility data, but that humidity can affect visibility. Actually, we haven't had too many code yellow days, and the values of index that make those days yellow have barely been yellow, so the air quality is doing pretty well.

F. Facility Permit Renewals

Facility Name	**Type of Facility**	**Facility Classification**	**Location**	**Changes from Existing Permit**
Aprotech Powertrain, LLC	Automotive Components Manufacturer	Small	Adams Hill Road, Asheville	Update insignificant activity list, general conditions
Buncombe County Detention Center	Correctional Facility	Small	Valley Street, Asheville	Update insignificant activity list, general conditions
Mill Tek Toll Grinders	Mineral Product Grinding Facility	Small	Spiral Road, Arden	Update insignificant activity list, general conditions

G. New Facility Permits

Facility Name	**Type of Facility**	**Facility Classification**	**Location**	**Proposed Equipment**

Smith-Rowe, LLC	Portable Concrete, Stone, and Recycled Asphalt Pavement Crusher	Small	Various sites with local zoning authority approval	Crusher, screen, conveyor belts, generator

A. The board considered all three permit renewals as well as the new facility permit for one approval.
B. Karl Koon made the motion to renew the permits for all three permit renewals (Aproech Powertrain, LLC, Buncombe County Detention Center, and Mill Tek Toll Grinders), and to approve the new facility permit (Smith-Rowe, LLC)
C. Caitlin Crossett seconded the motion
D. Joel Storrow opened it up for questions
    A. Ned Guttman asked for details on the new facility, Smith-Rowe, LLC
    B. James Raiford said this is the 5th or 6th company we've permitted to perform this action. There is recycled asphalt that needs to be ground up. APAC often hires different, new companies each time for this. It is a temporary job for 2-3 weeks, and it happens every few years. Since it is a temporary job, they don't always keep their permit active. Emissions on these are typically pretty low. We have not had any complaints about these, especially at the APAC plants. They can have dust issues if they're not run properly, but we haven't had any issues at APAC.
    C. Joel Storrow asked what the cost of the permit is. James Raiford said it was around $700 a year, but it depends on their equipment. The permit fee is per year and the permit will be up for renewal in 8 years.
E. All present – yes
F. The motion passed 4-0

1. **New Business:**
    A. None

2. **Other Business:**
    A. Legal Counsel Report
        i. Amy Broughton stated that there was nothing to report, besides what was said earlier about credit card fees.
    B. Calendar
        i. The next meeting is Wednesday September 10, 2025, at 4pm at 30 Valley Street, unless announced otherwise.
        ii. A Board Retreat will be held on Wednesday, September 10, 2025, at 3pm at 30 Valley Street, unless announced otherwise.
    C. Announcements
        i. Ned Guttman said that the advisory committee is still in limbo. Ashley Featherstone said that if the Agency is able to purchase air quality monitors as one of the county's Hurricane Helene recovery projects, the committee could help weigh in on that. The committee could also potentially help us out with reviewing and updating the rules.

ii. Joel Storrow thanked Ashley Featherstone and Agency staff for the Clean Air Excellence Awards.

4. Public Comment

A. None

5. Adjournment

A. Karl Koon 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 5:08 pm