BUNCOMBE COUNTY
AIR QUALITY

MEMORANDUM

TO: Buncombe County Air Quality Advisory Council

FROM: Ashley Featherstone, Air Quality Division Manager

RE: Minutes for September 22, 2026

DATE: November 17, 2026

Enclosed, please find the Minutes for the Buncombe County Air Quality Advisory Council meeting held on **Tuesday September 22, 2026 at 3:30pm** The next meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday November 24, 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 Tuesday, September 22, 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	*Joel Storrow*
Garry Whisnant	
Caitlin Cook	
Jim Neely	

Staff Present: *Ashley Featherstone, Air Quality Division Manager; James Raiford, Permitting Program Manager; Alex Latta, Air Quality Specialist II*

Others Present: *Suzanne Avett, Senior Attorney; Jason Rogers, Permits & Inspections Director*

Garry Whisnant called the meeting of the Buncombe County Air Quality Advisory Committee to order on September 22, 2026, at 3:30 pm.

The order of business was as follows:

1. **Public Comment Protocol Announcement**
   A. Garry Whisnant read the public comment protocol.

2. **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

3. **Consent Agenda**
   A. Approval of minutes from August 6, 2026
      i. Ned Guttman made the motion to approve the minutes.
      ii. Jim Neely seconded the motion.
      iii. All present – yes
      iv. The motion passed 4-0

4. **Unfinished Business**
   A. Approved Bylaws with Final Edits discussed at last meeting
      i. No vote needed. Edits made that were requested.

5. **Manager's Report**

A. Clean Air Act Section 128 Conflict of Interest Policy and Certification Statement
   i. Required by EPA for boards that review permits and conduct enforcement activities and is required annually
      1) Jim Neely made a motion to approve.
      2) Caitlin Cook seconded the motion.
      3) All vote yes
      4) Passed 4-0
B. Transition Updates
   i. Budget and Grants
      1) Working with County Budget staff on a new budget format
      2) County Commissioners approved a budget for BCAQ for 2027 but part of the plan is to put EPA 105 grant in separate budget that runs parallel to the federal year and matches up with the grant's schedule (Oct – Sept).
      3) Additionally, Section 103 grant runs April – March so we are following County's grant management process for Section 103 funds, which is a new process for BCAQ.
      4) The way the County would like to handle BCAQ budgeting and grants is, ideally, prior to 10/1, BCAQ would get on County Commissioner's agenda to get grant budget finalized. Current funding is approved through June 2027.
      5) BCAQ has explained to County Grants that since our grants are recurring and non-competitive, we don't always have an award amount before the County's budget year starts.
      6) Expecting same levels of funding but currently without 1 grant as we transition to BCAQ.
      7) Jim Neely asked if there were issues with overlapping the budget with state and federal budget periods. Ashley Featherstone explained current issues with budget reconciliations but hopes going forward the process will be smoother.
      8) Heard back from EPA last week about grants and they are still working on them. No award amount yet.
   ii. Policy updates – Non-discrimination Policy and Appeals Policy
      1) Internal policy review to align the old policies with the County's policies.
      2) Keeping ABAQA non-discrimination policy for EPA specific grant language and requirements
      3) Retiring appeals process policy since we now have the appeals process included in Chapter 1 of our updated Code.
   iii. Final Adopted Rules to be submitted to NC for inclusion in State Implementation Plan
      1) Once we submit rules, state reviews them for consistency with state rules and then the state sends them on to the EPA for final approval.
      2) In process of gathering documents to submit to state and meeting with state and EPA to determine what they expect to see for the name change.
   iv. New Board Member Orientation Document
      1) Updated old document with description of role of the council out of Chapter 1.
      2) Garry Whisnant notes it needs updating due to mentions of old Agency name and other outdated references.

3) James Raiford noted there was a possibility that the wrong document may have been attached to the board packet.
4) Ashley Featherstone commented we would review the document and come back next meeting with an updated version.

v. News stories and website updates
1) News story for the new name for the program, the transition, and the reorganization of the program was discussed.
2) Still working with CAPE and website folks to get all website updates in place so that the story can be published to coincide.
3) News article for Air Quality recognition ceremony.
a) Ashley Featherstone mentioned Steve Ensley and Allison Glass have been delivering some of the certificates to recipients that couldn't attend.
b) Ashley Featherstone needs to follow up with advisory committee members that couldn't attend to get them their certificates.

C. Air Curtain Incinerator permitting and compliance update
i. James Raiford updated everyone on the current protocol. General Title V permits are issued for ACI's based on a 2019 EPA rule.
ii. The State has updated their Title V general permit since 2019, but we have not yet updated ours to match the State's. We needed to update our rules before we could update the General Title V permit and now that we have, we need to update our general Title V permit.
iii. EPA may remove the requirements for ACI to have general Title V permits. EPA has a proposed rule under consideration to remove Title V permitting requirements from ACI's which is going through review.
iv. We will be sending a new General TV permit to public comment and EPA soon.
v. Some compliance issues with the ACIs but we are working with the facilities to try to make sure they meet all requirements.
vi. EPA has issued a no action assurance for ACI's operating without a permit for the purpose of burning storm debris which expires at the end of September, 2026. All ACI's in Buncombe County are currently permitted. State of North Carolina is in the process of asking the EPA to issue a new no action assurance but as all of ours have permits, it doesn't really apply to us since ours are burning other debris in addition to storm debris.
vii. ACI's will still need state or local small or synthetic minor permits if EPA removes rule requirement for general Title V permits.

D. Monitoring Program Update
i. James Raiford discussed the EPA Technical Systems Audit Steve Ensley had been working on. This audit occurs every 3 years. He also discussed the new monitoring building is nearing completion thanks to Steve Ensley and Allison Glass working on getting things set up. We are expected to start collecting data during October.
ii. Garry Whisnant asked if the site would be Ozone only and James explained it would be Ozone to start and Toxics monitoring will be added once the State restarts their Toxics monitoring program. James Raiford went over monitoring data completeness. Ozone standard is 70 ppm. You use the average of the 4th highest measured value over 3 years to determine your annual ozone value. For 2026, Ozone season, that value is 61 ppm for our station at Bent Creek. The

projected design value for next year is 59 ppm for Ozone. This data is preliminary and has not been certified.

iii. We are usually always below the 24-hr PM standard. Annual $PM_{2.5}$ is where we get closer to the limit of 9 ug/m^3. Our 2026 3-year average design value is 6.3 ug/m^3. The annual average for 2026 is currently at 7.3 ug/m^3 as of September 2026.
   1) PM2.5 data completeness: 98.9%
   2) Ozone data completeness: 94.3%

E. Facility New Permits, Renewals, and Modifications Issued Since Last Meeting (August 6)- None
   i. James Raiford mentioned that there are no permits that have been issued since the last Council meeting.
   ii. Ned Guttman asked if our Air Quality is so good why do we see so many yellow days now. James Raiford explained how the shift with the PM standard from 12 ug/m^3 down to 9 ug/m^3 has resulted in more forecasted yellow days but James Raiford noted that most of those forecasted yellow days ended up being green based on the data.
   iii. Jim Neely asked what the reason was for the higher PM. Ashley Featherstone and James Raiford explained the various sources of PM around the county contributing to our overall PM value, such as wildfires and debris burning, motor vehicles and other mobile sources, power plants, and other large stationary sources in addition to residential home heating to name a few.
   iv. Ashley Featherstone mentioned that the EPA noticed the citizen science shelter at the monitoring site during the audit and took an interest in the types of studies being done there. Caitlin Cook explained that her student, Ben, who is working on a study at the citizens science shelter, is going to get the purple air at the monitoring site in the next couple weeks and plans to work with BCAQ on analyzing the data by comparing the Purple Air data to the regulatory monitor. Ben also plans to do the same with the ozone data he plans to collect once he fixes the ozone sensor and gets it up and running.

6. New Business:

A. none

7. Other Business:

A. Legal Counsel Report
   i. Suzanne Avett reported that the 960 North Fork case would return to court on October 5, 2026. She explained that the property had both air quality and solid waste violations and that an order issued in 2026 authorized the County to clean up the property and directed the property owner to stop violating County ordinances. Despite that order, violations remained ongoing. The October 5 hearing would address a motion for contempt based on continued noncompliance with prior court orders. A previous court date had resulted in a monetary fine and an order prohibiting further violations of County ordinances. She noted that if the property owner faced jail time after being held in contempt, proceedings could be delayed to allow the homeowner to retain legal counsel or receive a court-appointed attorney.
   ii. Ned Guttman asked a question about whether the homeowner would continue violating County ordinances while the case was pending, Suzanne Avett explained that other

individuals on the property, rather than the homeowner, might be responsible, which complicates the matter.

B. Calendar
   i. Next meeting November 24, 2026

8. Public Comment

A. None

9. Adjournment

A. Garry Whisnant asked for a motion to adjourn if there was no other business
B. Ned Guttman made the motion to adjourn the meeting.
C. Jim Neely seconded the motion.
D. All present – yes
E. The motion passed 4-0
F. The meeting was adjourned at 4:09pm