

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Western North Carolina Regional Air Quality Agency Board of Directors

FROM: Ashley Featherstone, Director

RE: Minutes for September 14, 2020

DATE: November 2, 2020

Enclosed, please find the Minutes for the **Monday, September 14, 2020** WNCRAQA board meeting. The next meeting of the WNCRAQA Board is scheduled for **Monday, November 9, 2020 at 4:00 pm**. Due to recommendations to limit public gatherings and Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), this meeting will be conducted remotely as authorized by Session Law 2020-3 and GS §166A-19.24. The meeting will be hosted via Zoom Webinar. The public may listen to the meeting as is occurs at the following link: <https://bit.ly/3jON1hx>. Meetings will continue to be virtual until further notice.

*\*\*\*Public comment on agenda items will be taken via electronic means only. The following criteria for comment will apply: (1) any public comment must be received by 5:00 pm Sunday before the Board Meeting by sending an email to [wncair@buncombecounty.org](mailto:wncair@buncombecounty.org) or by leaving a voice message at 828-250-6777; and (2) must be no more than 350 words.\*\*\**

Comments will be read into the record, but the Board reserves the right to limit this practice to one hour. All comments received will be retained by the Agency as permanent record.

The Western North Carolina Regional Air Quality Agency Board of Directors met via Zoom Webinar and phone on Monday, September 14, 2020 as authorized by Session Law 2020-3 and GS §166A-19.24 due to COVID-19.

The attendance of the Board members was as follows:

**Members Present:**

*Britt Lovin  
Karl Koon  
Dean Kahl  
Vonna Cloninger  
Joel Storrow*

**Members Absent:**

**Staff Present:** *Ashley Featherstone, Director; Kevin Lance, Field Services Program Manager; Mike Matthews, Senior AQ Specialist; James Raiford, Senior AQ Specialist; Betsy Brown, Air Quality Supervisor*

**Others Present:** *Curt Euler, County Attorney; Michael Plemmons, CIBO Executive Director; Robert Lane, City Board Member applicant*

Mr. Lovin called the meeting of the Western North Carolina Regional Air Quality Agency Board of Directors to order on September 14, 2020 at 4:00 pm.

The order of business was as follows:

**I. Public Comment Protocol Announcement**

Mr. Lovin read the following announcement:

Due to recommendations to limit public gatherings and Corona Virus disease 2019 (COVID-19), this meeting will be conducted remotely as authorized by Session Law 2020-3 and GS §166A-19.24.

A Roll Call was conducted by Mr. Lovin:

Vonna Cloninger-present  
Karl Koon-present  
Joel Storrow-present  
Dean Kahl- present  
Britt Lovin-present  
Ashley Featherstone, Staff, Director-present, as well as staff members listed above.

All members of the Board were present.

Mr. Lovin stated if someone dropped off the connection during the meeting, that time is tracked by James Raiford (who is hosting the Zoom meeting). A note would be placed at the end of the minutes. If a vote is missed by any Board member(s), it would count if three Board members were on the call and voted.

**II. Adjustment and approval of agenda**

Mr. Koon made a motion to approve the agenda as written. Ms. Cloninger seconded the motion.

Voting was conducted by roll call:

Ms. Cloninger-yes  
Mr. Koon-yes  
Mr. Storrow-yes  
Dr. Kahl-yes  
Mr. Lovin-yes  
The motion passed 5-0.

**III. Consent Agenda:**

**A. Approval of minutes from July 13, 2020**

Mr. Koon made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Dr. Kahl seconded the motion.

Voting was conducted by roll call:

Ms. Cloninger-yes  
Mr. Koon-yes  
Mr. Storrow-yes  
Dr. Kahl-yes  
Mr. Lovin-yes  
The motion passed 5-0.

**IV. Director's Report:**

**A. COVID-19 Update**

Most of the COVID-19 (COVID) items were related to the budget. We knew that COVID would impact the gas tax revenue, but we did not know by how much. We noticed reduced gas tax revenues for the first few months. For the Buncombe County budget year, ending the end of June, we were only down \$2,000. The Agency was budgeted to bring in \$144,000, and we brought in \$142,000. We are back to about \$12,000 per month average from a low of about \$7,000. This budget year we are budgeted to bring in \$145,000 and will probably be close.

Other COVID related budget items include the Director's salary. The County deployed Ms. Featherstone to work at the EOC for about a month. That time was coded to COVID. This was about \$5,000 of Ms. Featherstone's salary, which is being paid out of the County's General Fund and credited back to Air Quality. The County is receiving funds to cover COVID related expenditures. In addition, the County is also reimbursing us a few hundred dollars used for the purchase of COVID related personal protective equipment, such as hand sanitizer and gloves. Additionally Air Quality went in with HHS Operations to put an Aiphone in the building we share with them, so that we can let people in and keep our distance. This intercom system is used in buildings with locked doors. It allows staff to talk to a visitor outside and unlock the door from a distance. This reduces exposure and adds additional security. We do not know if the Aiphone will be covered as a COVID expense.

The Buncombe County budget year wrapped up at the end of June. Although there are still adjustments being made, it appears that we will not have to pull any funds from our fund balance for last year. This is largely due to not being fully staffed and having extra revenues.

Mike Matthews and Ashley Featherstone worked the Isolation and Quarantine (I&Q) Unit for the County. They were required to sign up for at least one shift for August, September and October. They both worked at the hotel in August.

Beginning in September the County entered into contract with an outside company to handle this, and staff are no longer required to work the I&Q unit.

We have made our inspection plans. That has been one of the most difficult issues; how to stay safe and go out on complaints and inspections during COVID while maintaining social distancing and wearing face coverings. We have State and EPA guidance to follow. Kevin Lance and Mike Matthews are inspecting the gas stations as we do each year. There are about 160 of those. Typically, we go into the station to let them know we are there. This year, the Agency sent letters letting the facilities know staff was coming around within a certain time frame, and that staff are trying to avoid going inside buildings due to COVID. Staff may call from the parking lot upon arrival at the facility. Staff is continuing to perform facility inspections. We are contacting the facilities ahead of time to find out if there are any COVID related requirements; and letting them know that Agency staff members are wearing face coverings, doing daily symptom attestation and not coming to work if that individual has COVID symptoms. Staff is doing individual planning, specific to each facility. This might include pictures of the inside of the plant and virtual meetings to discuss permit requirements and issues. We try to do the gas station inspections once a year before Thanksgiving or before cold weather. We are not required to inspect them every year, but most of the inspection is done outside. Staff is not riding in the same car together. We are taking two cars. If staff have to ride in the same vehicle, they must wear face protection and ride with the windows down.

**B. Staff Position Update**

The County is under a soft hiring freeze. We had to get special permission to post the Permitting Program Manager position. That is the position Ms. Featherstone vacated upon becoming Director. The Agency waited until July to post. Everything is taking longer to get through HR. The position was posted internally and we received two applications. We did two interviews and wrapped up that process. We are in the process of getting approval from the County to make an offer. We are hoping to wrap that up this week.

**C. Air Quality Monitoring Update**

Kevin Lance said that in a little more than month, ozone season ends. Since the last Board meeting, data completeness is at about 93% for ozone and 98% for particulate matter. Year to date, we are at 93.7% completeness for ozone and 96.1% completeness for particulate matter. We are participating in discussions with the State as to when and what ozone equipment will be used to replace their ozone network. That discussion will go on for quite a while. We will keep the Board posted. We have had a good year as far as air quality, partly due to a lot of rain. James Raiford noted that ozone levels have been relatively low this year. There has been talk about the effects of COVID, but he also noted that Duke is no longer burning coal. This would cause a significant reduction in NOx, which would affect our ozone levels.

**D. SO<sub>2</sub> Attainment Status Designation**

Mr. Lance said that the EPA originally designated three counties unclassifiable for SO<sub>2</sub>. Buncombe was one of those. Duke was running the SO<sub>2</sub> monitor and had just received permission to shut it down at the time of our last Board meeting. We have three years of data; the three years ended in January. The EPA has proposed to designate Buncombe as attainment for SO<sub>2</sub>. This is for the 2010 standard, and designations were delayed because there were no monitors in the area. This came

into play with all the comments the Agency received on a previous Duke permit. The proposed attainment designation is now out for public comment. The EPA plans to finalize it at the end of the year.

**E. Business Plan**

Ms. Featherstone said we reported on this at the last Board meeting. The County has required each department to have their own Business Plan in place by the end of the year. We are working on ours. Part of this is going over our Mission Statement. These plans include tiers and goals and are required by the County to align with the County's Strategic Plan. This is a five-year plan approved by the County Commissioners at the beginning of the year. This is the first time the County has done a comprehensive plan that included every department. We were included in a previous plan, the Sustainability Plan, but this is more comprehensive. We have talked about the Mission Statement. The last time it was revised, the Board voted on it. That was in 2005. Staff drafted three revised mission statements for the Board's consideration. The Agency got the Advisory Council back together. This is a small group now consisting of Dr. Kahl, Keith Bamberger, Ned Guttman and Ms. Featherstone. They met to consider the Clean Air Excellence Award. They reviewed the draft mission statement updates that staff is proposing for consideration. We are currently working on overarching goals that align with the County goals like operational excellence, continuous improvement, good customer service, and tying in with the County community goal of reducing greenhouse gases (GHG). We can work jointly with other departments to write grants and make other recommendations. Staff will be in focus groups in October, and we may have an update in November. Mainly we wanted the Board to be aware of the Mission Statement review since they approve it by vote. We are all working on this together, including the support of Performance Management in workgroups and as needed.

**F. Ford Escape Hybrid 2008 and 2012 Ford Escape**

Ms. Featherstone gave an update on the 2008 Ford Escape Hybrid. The repairs were estimated at \$3500 to \$4000 and the vehicle was not worth more than that. The Agency has the 2012 Ford Escape on long-term loan from the County. We have been in discussion about compensation to the County for that vehicle. One suggestion was that Air Quality pay the difference in the value between the two vehicles. Several figures have been thrown out, roughly \$4000 to \$5000. This could come up as part of our next budget cycle. The vehicle is in our possession, and we appreciate the County providing that vehicle. Air Quality is paying for all the expenses for the 2012 vehicle. Budget, Finance, and General Services have been involved with the discussion. General Services seems satisfied with the arrangement as long as we are paying the maintenance on it. We feel that paying \$5,000 is better than purchasing a new vehicle. Air Quality is its own cost unit, and when issues like this come up, the County is not sure how to deal with us. We are not allowed to own property, so if we buy equipment or a vehicle, that item belongs to the County. We have the Escape that Mr. Matthews drives and Mr. Lance uses the truck; they are on call after hours. They respond to complaints and do a lot of driving. The rest of us use our own vehicles; we are reimbursed for mileage. Ms. Featherstone participates in the County vehicle evaluation committee to look at overall vehicle needs. The County is looking at different options, like a motor pool, if staff use a vehicle infrequently.

**G. Clean Air Excellence Awards**

Ms. Featherstone said the Advisory Council met. This included Dr. Kahl, Ned Guttman and Keith Bamberger. The Council minutes are included in the Board

packet. In the past, the Council decided who of the applicants should receive the award. They decided to recommend that Eaton Electrical receive the CAE Award. The facility replaced their roof and replaced two of their HVAC units with more efficient units. This reduced their GHG emissions. Eaton did include GHG calculations. GHG reduction is associated with reductions of other criteria pollutants. It does not appear that the Board has voted on this award in the past, but the Board could if they wanted to. Due to COVID-19 concerns, there is the question of how to go about presenting the award. In the past, the Board presented a plaque at the beginning of a Board meeting and had a reception prior to the meeting. Another possibility is to present the award or announce it at the Air Quality Update Press Briefing. This event receives media coverage. It was previously known as the Ozone Kickoff. The Air Quality Update was postponed from last spring. The Agency did get permission from the Board at the last meeting to advertise for more members of the Advisory Council. Mr. Lovin suggested staff reach out to Eaton in this unique situation, and see what type presentation would feel comfortable for them. If we do not do the CAE presentation at the Air Quality Update, we could at least mention the award during our part of the program. The County could do a news article and publicize it that way. We can get a plaque as usual, and invite Eaton representatives to the next virtual board meeting. Mr. Lovin said that he would be willing to go with Ms. Featherstone, and with another Board member to present the plaque to them at their company. Social distancing would be practiced and all would wear face coverings.

**H. Facility Permit Modifications**

<b>Facility Name</b>	<b>Type of Facility</b>	<b>Facility Classification</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Changes from Existing Permit</b>
Jacob Holm Industries	Non-woven fiber manufacturing facility	Synthetic Minor	Sand Hill Road, Enka	Add an additional production line and include existing emissions points in the permit

Mr. Storrow made a motion to approve the permit modification for Jacob Holm. The motion was seconded by Ms. Cloninger  
 Voting was conducted by roll call:

- Ms. Cloninger-approve
  - Mr. Koon-approve
  - Mr. Storrow-approve
  - Dr. Kahl-approve
  - Mr. Lovin-approve
- The motion passed 5-0.

**V. New Business:**

**A. Mission Statement**

Ms. Featherstone said that staff would like to remove the wording “preserving the quality of life and economic vitality of the area” from the Mission Statement. Our old Mission Statement had additional language that said that we would implement our rules with that in mind, and we definitely agree with that; however, we have received many comments about that part of the statement whenever there is a controversial permit. For instance, “a concrete batch plant down the street from my house hurts my quality of life and property value.” Staff liked option number one the best and the Council liked option 3 the best (please see memo in board packet).

Air Quality was coached by Performance Management and the County that the Mission Statement should “fit on a t-shirt.” Mr. Lovin wanted to wait and think about the three options Agency staff submitted as a possible Mission Statement. The other Board members concurred. For our Business Plan we can use one for now and change it later based on what the Board decides. A vote on the Mission Statement will be added to the November Agenda.

**B. Legal Counsel Report**

Mr. Euler had nothing to report.

**VI. Other Business:**

**A. Advisory Council Report – Dean Kahl**

Ms. Featherstone said that we really appreciate Dr. Kahl being the Board liaison to the Advisory Council for all these years. The Agency received some feedback from the Council concerning meeting frequency and projects. Possible projects for the Council could influence whom we would reach out to as potential members. The next step would be to post something on the website. Ms. Featherstone said we could reach out to the Fire Marshall’s office, the Sustainability Department, and representatives from our permitted facilities. We are going to be looking at fee updates and having facility input is important. Mr. Storrow noted that the City of Asheville also has a Sustainability Department, and that this could be a collaboration between the City, the County and our Advisory Council. That could spark new ideas. Currently the City and County Sustainability Departments do work together on projects. We could reach out to Jeremiah LeRoy, with the County, and get his thoughts about reaching out to the City and who to contact. Mr. Koon commented that a Board member rotating off the Board would be a good applicant for that Council. Ms. Featherstone noted that the Council has guidelines, which state that a Board member needs to be involved with the Council. Dr. Kahl is moving out of the County before the next Board meeting. Mr. Lovin thanked Dr. Kahl for his participation on the Council. Ms. Featherstone pointed out that Dr. Kahl was on the Advisory Council in 1970.

**B. Calendar**

The next scheduled meeting is November 9, 2020. Mr. Lovin said the Board would follow the County and State guidelines in place at that time. Mr. Raiford will keep us informed.

**C. Announcements**

Mr. Lovin said that Dr. Kahl plans to leave the Board before the next Board meeting. Dr. Kahl was a City appointee. There was an applicant for the board submitted to the City; however, the City reopened for more applicants and now there are four applicants. The City asked Mr. Lovin and Ms. Featherstone for comments by end of the day September 15. The City Committee meets ahead of Council, on Friday September 18. They will consider the applicants and then recommend a Board appointee to the City Council. The City Council will vote on the appointee on September 22. The applicants will be posted on the City Council website with the agenda. Ms. Featherstone said the Agenda could be posted tomorrow, September 15 if it is posted a week ahead as ours is.

Dr. Kahl was our vice chair so the Board will need to recommend and vote for a vice chair at the next Board meeting, November 9, 2020. That item will be put on the Agenda.

Mr. Lovin thanked Mr. Raiford for the great job putting together the meeting for the Board.

**VII. Public Comment**

No public comment was received. Therefore, there was nothing to read into the minutes.

**VIII. Adjournment**

Mr. Koon made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Storrow seconded the motion. Voting was conducted by roll call:

Ms. Cloninger-yes

Mr. Koon-yes

Mr. Storrow-yes

Mr. Lovin-yes

Dr. Kahl-yes

The motion passed 5-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:53 pm.