

Racial Equity Pocket Questions

Land Use Ordinance Amendments - Advisory Boards and Commissions Attendance

What are the racial impacts? These amendments apply to five of the Town's advisory boards and commissions, specifically the Planning Board, the Board of Adjustment, the Appearance Commission, the Environmental Advisory Board, and the Northern Transition Area Advisory Committee. The changes look to be consistent with the Town's Rules of Procedure and make uniform attendance and removal provisions for all advisory boards and commissions. The recruitment and appointment guidelines approved by the Town Council outlines the Town's interests and commitment that advisory board and commissions include representatives of all the Carrboro community in terms of race and ethnicity. The amendments require that members be removed via communication from the Town Clerk after missing three consecutive meetings or missing more than 30 percent of all meetings in a calendar year. Sparse or unpredictable attendance can make it difficult for advisory boards and commissions to meet and complete needed business, can require added time and other resources for rescheduled meetings, and can delay needed and requested reviews of items referred to boards and commissions.

Who is or will experience burden? Advisory board members who are removed and are not able to take part in this aspect of Town governance and community. Advisory boards and commissions who do not receive the added perspectives from those who are removed for not meeting attendance requirements. Advisory board meetings happen almost entirely on weeknights. While these meeting times are predictable, attending meetings can be a significant challenge to community members who work in industries with shift work where schedules overlap or conflict with the advisory board meeting times. Further, those who may experience burden with meeting attendance are those who rely on transportation systems that have limited service, ride sharing with varying times, and who may be depended upon by family members for support and care including unpredictable conditions, with needs that may arise with short notice. When faced with choices between demands of work, family and caregiving, community members may have a greater challenge taking part, despite great interest and commitment in doing so.

Who is or will experience benefit?

- Community members for whom space/seats on advisory boards and commissions become available because members who miss meetings are removed, due to not meeting the attendance policy, gives others opportunities to serve.
- Community members who do not have any of the burdens listed above and are able to fully participate in advisory board & commission meetings will benefit because they will be less likely to be absent, and their voices will always be heard, which would be the driving force for recommendations that are recommended to the governing board. As a result, the benefited members create further isolation to those members of the community who may have more burdens (e.g. fewer transportation/childcare options, jobs that are not the typical 9am-5pm requiring less desirable hours) and may not be as easily able to have an adequate seat at the table to voice their opinions and thoughts.

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What are the root causes of inequity?

- Economic disparities from historic racism, including education, job opportunities, lending policies, among others can contribute to disproportionate representation in shift or similar work schedules, which can lead to disparities between white and BIPOC residents and other community members in taking part in advisory boards and commissions.
- Advisory board and commission members contribute inordinate amounts of time to advance community values. Historically, these are unpaid roles, with compensation consisting of great thanks and appreciation, and an annual dinner. Unintended consequences can include making community members feel like the system is rigid and does not support consideration of their circumstances as living, breathing people who are trying to help make the Town the best it can be. The amendments could have a particularly chilling effect on those community members who have felt unwelcome or rejected in decision-making, due to historic inequities and associated racist aspects of structures and institutions. In the interest of seeking uniformity of process and without addressing other conditions that affect attendance, the changes may miss their desired results and may diminish community participation.