



Racial Equity Assessment Lens (REAL)

NAME OF INITIATIVE PROGRAM/PROJECT: Advisory Board & Commission Recruitment Process

Department: Clerk's Office

ORIGIN AND DESCRIPTION

The process for appointments to town advisory boards and commissions are typically completed in February-March of each year, for expiring and vacant terms, leading up to the consideration by Town Council. The Clerk's office works with staff liaisons and advisory board chairs on applications received and/or eligible member reappointments. These recruitment efforts follow the current advisory board recruitment and appointment policy. The Advisory Board Recruitment & Appointment Policy was initially adopted on 11-21-2017. Since then, several text amendments to this policy have been discussed and adopted by the Town Council on 12-1-2020 and 4-13-2021, respectively. These amendments have been within the section entitled "Composition" on page 2 of the policy, which details expanding the racial and ethnic diversity on advisory boards and commissions (full policy attached at the end of this document). As the policy currently states, consideration of advisory board appointments should not be brought forth to Town Council for consideration unless a diverse applicant pool is present. The exception to this rule is if any advisory board or commission is experiencing issues with achieving a quorum due to multiple vacancies, which prevents the board or commission from conducting business.

Processes for advisory board & commission recruitments also follow this policy. Vacancies occur throughout the year on all boards and commissions, and appointments are made by Council at various times outside of February-March as needed. The main recruitment efforts begin in late fall of each year leading up to February-March and includes creation & production of marketing materials for distribution, announcements on website/social media, "word of mouth" recruitment and recruitment assistance from the Town Council. The Clerk's office helps coordinate these recruitment materials & announcements with assistance by the Communications & Engagement Dept. The Clerk's office also notifies Town Council of any issues of diverse applicant pools for advisory boards and commissions and requests their assistance on recruitment, per the policy. As the applicants are submitted, the Clerk's office fields these to the appropriate staff liaison & chair and keeps record of the applications received. Further, the Clerk's office maintains a roster of current members and applicants, bringing forward applicants to Council for consideration following the policy.

What is the specific desired result statement –

The desire is to create a diverse and fair recruitment process and have options that appeal to all demographics with solutions to common barriers e.g., meeting schedule, childcare/transportation options, member stipends, and that there are multiple ways of advertising opportunities that range from print to digital to interpersonal to keep interest levels high and at the forefront.

BENEFITTING INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS

1. Racial and ethnically diverse communities would benefit from more representation on advisory boards. Having diverse advisory boards will be more likely to recognize, create and promote initiatives that benefit the areas underrepresented traditionally.
2. Those who can afford childcare and/or transportation could still be an advisory board member and attend meetings with little to no issue. Further, those who can afford childcare and transportation, most likely has easier access to use digital means to attend meetings & receive news on recruitment efforts. Advisory board initiatives may proceed that further benefit these groups or individuals because they have a means to attend and participate in meetings with less hardships.

BURDENED INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS

1. Potentially qualified advisory board members are not able to participate due to lack of childcare or not being able to afford childcare or transportation to attend meetings. Further, these potential members may not have adequate access to internet and could miss out on recruitment efforts, which is why it is important to promote in non-digital ways. This could leave a gap in the voice at the table of/for a particular demographic. As a result, an advisory board may create or proceed with initiatives that further isolate or alienate certain demographics or people who aren't at the table.

Type	Potential Unintended Consequence	Mitigation Strategies to Prevent Consequences and Advance Racial Equity
SOCIAL Consider native and long-term residents, rural residents, transit, trust in government, education, etc.	People of color and other demographics may not trust government's outreach. They may feel that it needs to be broader in its reach. They may feel that the outreach is targeted to one set demographic or neighborhoods of "higher significance."	There could be additional outreach measures added to community outreach and expand the forms of public relations to those other than digital platforms. Council has worked to enhance and promote diverse applicants to advisory boards by amending the advisory board recruitment & appointment policy several times and not making appointments to boards until a diverse pool is achieved (unless there is a quorum issue).
ECONOMIC Consider wages, competition, tourism, unemployment, small businesses, etc.	If stipends were to be made available for advisory board members, it would need to be in an equitable fashion across all boards and consistent (e.g., option to opt-in or out of stipend)	Stipends could be provided for Advisory Board members which could be used for childcare needs and transportation. Public transit vouchers could be given as well.
HEALTH Consider impacts on pollution, health access, existing health disparities, etc.	None identified by staff	None identified by staff
ENVIRONMENT Consider impacts on pollution, natural resources, transit, etc.	None identified by staff	None Identified by staff
OTHER Consider how a resident might interact with this measure "start to finish."	None identified by staff	None identified by staff

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Continue adhering to the Advisory Board Recruitment & Appointment Policy as written (or as amended in the future).
2. Continue to broaden outreach and recruitment of Advisory Board/Commissions outside of digital means.
3. Place recruitment emphasis on sectors of community where there are more people of color and lower income.
4. Explore stipend or pay for Advisory Board members for attending meetings, for childcare and/or transportation needs. Also consider meeting schedule. Town Council work session will be held to address various advisory board topics and more recommendations may transpire from the Council.
5. Include questions on citizen survey on advisory board participation and seek what limitations may exist.
6. The Advisory Board System is complex. We suggest looking at the system as a whole including “recruitment”, “appointment” and “service including board roles/missions and terms.” These processes are interrelated. For example, a barrier to recruitment may be that the lengths of service, about three years, which may be considered a longtime commitment to some residents.
7. We would like to see additional attachments – primarily data showing the demographic makeup of existing boards. The Town will not know about our progress to diversify boards and commissions without creating an excellent tracking system. This may require assistance from GIS or other data-professionals. It would be important to also show a geographic representation of membership residences across town. We should create a dashboard that is publicly available for review, at the forefront - perhaps on a central webpage. Can we set some goals and track progress for the next five years?
8. Can we consider an exit survey for board members?
9. Advisory boards and commissions need to consider meeting dates/times.
10. Do we have a definition of “diverse applicant pool” within the policy? We use the term frequently – but it’s not defined. Is it reflective of the town population or is there another measurement?
11. Reviewing the calendar for the appointment process, we’re wondering whether the February month for term expirations could be an issue. If the calendar was shifted so that recruitment took place at the beginning of the school year (August or September), would that be helpful to residents?
12. Regarding the note about funding for the initiative (stipends, childcare, etc.), please also include funding for recruitment/advertising. Many clubs and marketing initiatives offer bonuses for existing members who bring in new members. Could we test something like that?
13. The Citizen’s Academy is often considered a recruitment method for advisory boards. How does this play into the analysis?
14. Remove obstacles from participating.
15. Advertise board and commission vacancies using multiple platforms – radio stations – WCOM, newspapers (?), kiosks/information centers, drop off locations that community members frequent, cybrary, churches and UNC.

- 16.** Set goals to fill seats with diverse voices on every board and commission.
- 17.** Spend time in the community and share information along with other important services, etc. Information should be in different languages.
- 18.** Is it possible to have a “hotline” where people can call in to find out about vacancies and other information items?
- 19.** What is the Town of Chapel Hill doing to fill the seats with representatives that look like us?
- 20.** Can meetings be held throughout Town and not in one place all the time? In community?
- 21.** How about virtual opportunities for those that don’t have internet access?
- 22.** Consider providing childcare for members and transportation to and from meetings (pickup stops). Could be a great part-time job for someone. Rent or use a town van.
- 23.** Offer opportunities for community members to experience serving on a board or commission.
- 24.** Provide training for new members about protocol, etc.
- 25.** Be creative and welcoming to all members of the community.