

Race and Equity Pocket Questions

Title and purpose of this initiative: Advisory Board Consolidations

Department: Town Manager's Office and Town Clerk's Office

What are the racial and equity impacts?

There could be reduced representation and voice due to eliminating and consolidating some of the boards. Many of the boards, in particular the Truth Plaque Task Force contain many African American residents. By reducing the number of boards, we may also be losing institutional knowledge and expertise of our diverse residents.

Who is or will experience community burden?

The residents who will no longer be on the board will experience the burden of not serving anymore and having a reduced opportunity to contribute to the governance of Carrboro. The staff who have to manage this consolidation effort also will experience some burden related to the actual work of overseeing and implementing the change.

Who is or will experience community benefit?

Staff will experience the primary benefit as it decreases the number of boards and commissions that they will have to manage. Boards and commissions tend to meet outside of normal working hours, meaning that staff who serve as liaisons to these boards must work additional hours. At the time, the Town does not offer additional compensation to staff liaisons, meaning that these liaisons are performing more work for less pay. Town Council members will also experience a benefit in the sense that the boards and commissions are more streamlined. The Town Council values the input of residents and community input, however an overabundance of participation can at times create an "analysis paralysis". The Town Council will benefit from concise and focused recommendations of the advisory boards.

What are the root causes of inequity?

Advisory boards and committees are an avenue for residents to participate in the local government process. Historically, this process has been limited only to those who hold the power and are the majority. In North Carolina, along with most of the country, this was always White Males who were property owners. As the country evolved and enacting legislation to protect the rights of all persons, mainly the 13th-15th amendments to the U.S. Constitution, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and Voting Rights Act of 1965, the process for racial minority local government participation gradually became easier. However, these laws could not, and did not simply erase centuries of suppression and limitations on voting and participation. Advisory boards help local governments to make solid decisions that take into account the backgrounds and life experiences of diverse persons.

What might be the unintended consequences of this action or strategy?

By reducing the number of advisory boards and commissions it may reduce the amount of people who can participate in local government decision making. With fewer boards and commissions overall, there are less people on the boards. This means that fewer people will have the opportunity to participate in local government and have their voices heard. Additionally, Town Council members may not be as well informed about the decisions they are making because they are no longer receiving the feedback they are used to receiving.

How is your department planning to mitigate any burdens, inequities, and unintended consequences?

The Town Manager and Clerks' office is committed to making this process open and transparent. Even as the number of boards and commissions change, our focus on inclusivity remains constant. We will work diligently to dismantle participation barrier and ensure that with fewer groups, there are more transparent and meaningful options for residents to engage in town affairs. This item will be presented before a work session to allow for open discussion with the council members. Following this open discussion, the Council will give the staff direction. It is likely that the next steps will including discussion with the various boards and commissions about what their future looks like and how we can make the transition as easy as possible for them. Staff will ensure that all decisions are taken only after careful consideration.