



Community Participation Report

First Quarter FY2012



Lessons Learned

- The Town of Chapel Hill has a long history of civic engagement as evidenced by citizen involvement in Town advisory bodies.
- The Town's advisory bodies have nearly reached gender parity, but work still needs to be done to increase the participation of ethnic minorities.
- Board chairs would benefit from training on how to set agendas and run effective meetings.
- Staff Liaisons would benefit from additional and continuous training so that they are better able to meet the responsibilities and expectations of their role.
- The charge of both individual advisory bodies and the advisory body system needs to be clearly articulated so that the members are clearer about their role and understand Council's expectation and interest.
- The roles of advisory body members should be clarified and articulated so that members better understand the limits of their role as well as Council's expectation and interest.



Recruitment

Two main recruitment challenges are ensuring that there are no membership vacancies and that the diverse communities of the Town are adequately represented through advisory body membership.

Membership

As of Monday, October 31, 2011 the majority of the Town's 19 standing advisory bodies have full membership. Those that do not are listed in the table below.

In order to understand these numbers better, it is important to look at the factors contributing to this situation. For example, both the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board and Human Services Advisory Committee recently had appointment items before Council, but in both cases fewer appointments were made than requested which left vacancies despite having enough applicants to fill the posts.

Efforts will begin shortly to undertake targeted recruitment for the Board of Adjustment and the Public Housing Program Advisory Board as the number of applications on file for these boards is low and would not meet the boards' current membership needs. Advertising efforts will include the Town website, Chapel Hill News, Public Housing newsletter, Chapel Hill eNews and UNC departmental and center listserves.

In October, Council changed the membership requirements of the Chapel Hill Public Arts Commission and appointments are now scheduled for November 9, 2011. There are enough applicants to fill all vacant positions so it is hoped that this board will soon have a full membership for the first time in years.

Advisory Body	Number of Vacancies
Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board	1
Board of Adjustment	6
Chapel Hill Public Arts Commission	5
Human Services Advisory Committee	1
Public Housing Program Advisory Board	4
Sustainability Committee	1

Ethnicity	Percentage of Membership	Percentage of Chapel Hill*
African American	8%	9.7%
Asian/Pacific	3%	11.9%
Caucasian	76%	72.8%
Hispanic	2%	6.4%
Multi-Ethnic	2%	2.7%
Prefer Not to Say	10%	

Diversity

The Town maintains demographic information regarding the gender and ethnicity of all advisory body members currently serving. At this time, 51% of advisory body members are male and 49% are female which demonstrates that there is nearly gender parity.

However, the statistics on the ethnic diversity of the Town's advisory bodies illustrates that there is still work to be done in order for membership to more accurately reflect the demographics of the Chapel Hill community. In order to address this, the Town will review its recruitment strategy to identify initiatives which may increase ethnic minority participation.

*Chapel Hill Data Book 2011



Training & Support

Since January 2011, a number of training opportunities have been offered to both staff and advisory body members with the aim of improving their knowledge base and abilities. Trainings have included sessions on the Open Meetings Law, Ethics, Public Records, and Meeting Procedures.

The response of advisory body members to the training has been overwhelmingly positive. One hundred percent of those who attended the Fall Training Session for Advisory Board Members on September 17th either "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that they would use what they learned and that it would aid them in fulfilling their role as advisory body members. When asked to rate the training, 68% said that it was excellent and 32% said that it was good.

Many of those who participated gave concrete examples of changes they would make to how they undertake their advisory role including: being more aware of their role as a trustee of the community, better adherence to the Open Meetings Law, requesting that their board look at the list of responsibilities at their next meeting, as well as improved confidence and understanding of role.



Process and System Improvements

In August 2011, staff conducted a review of the application, nomination and appointment process for Town advisory bodies and identified eight key issues that if addressed could improve the process for all stakeholders. In November, this report will be presented to the Council Committee which is working on reforming the advisory body system for their review and feedback.

Work has also been undertaken to standardize the minutes for Town advisory bodies. In September 2011 Staff Liaisons were given instruction on use of a new form and set of guidelines with the aim of moving to action minutes with focus on motions and votes. A meeting is being planned for December to continue staff training on action minutes and writing agendas.

Staff has also created a role description for Staff Liaisons which should help to standardize the support provided by staff to the Town's advisory bodies. Staff Liaisons received training on their new role description in September.



Looking Ahead

The following are priority areas for the Second Quarter of 2012:

- Attain full membership on 80% of Town's advisory bodies
- Work to improve the ethnic diversity of advisory body members
- Organize training for advisory body chairs and staff liaisons in setting agendas, minutes and running effective meetings
- Continue to articulate the charge of advisory bodies so that the members are more clear about their role and understand Council's expectation and interest
- Work to improve the application and appointment procedures so that they are clearer to the public and staff