

Process for Submitting and Reporting on Petition/Resolution/Proclamation Requests by Members of the Chapel Hill Town Council

Any Council Member can bring an idea or topic to the Council for consideration. There are different ways for a Council Member to do this, depending on the type of outcome or action they are seeking.

- Submit a **Council Petition** to formally request that the Council or the Manager consider taking an action such as adopting a policy, amending an ordinance, allocating resources (including significant staff time and/or funds), or changing a practice. (A Council Petition has similarities to a Community Member Petition, though it is subject to a distinct process as outlined in this document.)
- Draft a **Resolution or Proclamation** for the Council to consider adopting a formal statement about an issue of local, regional, national, or international importance.

The following steps will ensure that Council requests are handled in a timely and transparent manner.

Please note that a majority of Council members (5 or more) working on a petition or other request could constitute a public meeting, even if done electronically. Council members should consult with the Town Attorney if they have any questions about how to properly collaborate outside of a scheduled meeting.

Council Petition Process

How a Council Member can submit a petition

First, the Council member should secure the support of at least two additional Council members to bring forth the petition.

Second, the petitioner(s) should write out a simple summary of the request they are making or the idea they want explored, which includes the problem they wish to solve or interest they wish to address.

For example,

“In order to improve wayfinding in our area, I petition the Council to formally support painting all the roads that lead to Oz yellow and to send the resolution to our regional and state transportation partners for their consideration.” OR

“To ensure the safety of our community, I petition the Council to discuss and consider banning exotic pets, such as lions, tigers, bears, and flying monkeys, within the city limits.”

The Council members bringing forth the petition may also request a response within a specific time frame or by a date certain. This request, along with the reason for indicating a date certain, should be included in the petition.

The petitioners should share the petition with the Mayor and Manager in advance of the meeting in which they mean to bring it forth (ideally at least a week before) to allow time for clarifying questions or requests. While the Mayor and Manager serve as advisors regarding Council petitions, petitioners can bring a petition forward at a business or public hearing meeting of their choosing.

The petition and any supporting information will be shared with the full Council in the Council packet so that everyone has an opportunity to review the final document and ask questions in advance.

During the Council meeting

1. The Mayor will announce the petition and ask the petitioners to provide a brief explanation to Council and the public.
2. The Mayor will ask for a motion to receive and refer the petition.
3. If the Council petitioners have requested a response within a certain time frame or by a date certain, then that request must also be voted on and supported by a majority of the Council.
4. If the motion is seconded, the Council will then vote. If the motion passes, the petition will be referred to the Mayor and Manager for follow-up. One of the petitioning Council members will volunteer to act as the petition's sponsor and serve as a point of contact for the Mayor and Manager.

After the Council vote

Once the petition has been received and referred, the Mayor, the Manager, and the petition sponsor will discuss what additional information is needed for the Council to make an informed decision on how to proceed and to propose a process and timeline that align with the petitioners' interests. This information might include:

- a. A legal determination on whether the idea is allowed under current local, state, or federal laws.
- b. Guidance on how the request relates to current Town policies and practices.
- c. Estimates on financial resources or time needed to fully explore the idea. If the time required differs from the petition's requested timeline, an explanation for this difference should be provided.
- d. Impact and relevance to ongoing projects and initiatives.

At this point, the petition will be assigned to one or more groups for follow-up. This may include Town departments, a Council working group, a Town Advisory Board, or others with specific expertise.

The Manager's Office will regularly monitor progress on the status of the petition.

How the Council is updated on petition status

1. The Manager's Office will notify Council that the petition has been reviewed and provide information on which group has been assigned to follow up on the petition, ideally within two weeks of its submission. Petitions that have been submitted with a majority of the Council requesting a particular response time or date certain will be handled as requested when possible. Additional information may be provided at that time, if available.
2. Once work has begun, the Manager's Office will update the petition sponsor periodically on progress being made and reach out to them and the Mayor should questions arise.
3. The Manager's Office will maintain an updated Council Petition Status database that is accessible online.
4. The Council will receive written updates in its Council packet, via a "Status of Council Petitions" report or other informational item.
5. The Mayor, Manager, and petition sponsor will work together to determine the best way to bring analysis and any recommendations back to the Council for discussion and further guidance at various points throughout the process.

When is a petition process complete?

Some petition requests are straightforward, and their "completion" can be measured and agreed upon: for example, requests for certain data analysis or a request to provide information about how other municipalities are dealing with an issue of interest. In these instances, the petitions will be "closed out" and removed from Council updates once the information has been provided to the Council and made available to the public.

Other petition requests are more nuanced; for example, they may be asking the Town to change a scope of work on an existing project; or to make long-term changes to an approach or policy or the application of existing criteria, or to incorporate new ideas into current work methodologies. In these instances, "completion" may only be demonstrated long after the request.

In these instances, other methods are currently being researched to assure that the Council receives updates on the request and has assurances that the petition remains active and is being handled consistent with Council interests. Further information on the tracking process is forthcoming.

[Resolution/Proclamation Process](#)

How a Council Member can request a resolution or proclamation

This process should be used for time-sensitive proclamations, including those supporting upcoming observations such as Black History Month or honoring members of the community.

Additionally, the process should be used for resolution requests that comment on events with broader implications at a state, national, or international level, or for requests that involve joining with other governmental entities to amplify a message on behalf of Town residents.

1. Notify the Mayor about your request with as much advance notice as possible. Advance notice allows the Mayor to determine if other input is needed prior to proceeding, or if the request is better handled in an alternative manner, such as a petition or a Mayor's Salute.
2. The Mayor may refer this request to a subgroup of the Council to draft a resolution for consideration. This task group should consider the original intent of the request as well as the broader interests of the full Council when developing the draft.
3. A draft is provided to the Mayor (either by the original requester or the work group), who will share it with the rest of Council in advance of the Council meeting.
4. The Mayor will identify an appropriate meeting for the resolution or proclamation to come forward and will notify the Town Manager and Town Clerk.

Proclamations and resolutions will be brought up at the start of the Council meeting, prior to the Public Comment/Petition period. Proclamations will be read at that time. Resolutions will be presented and explained by a Council Member or the Mayor. Council will then vote on whether to adopt the resolution.