



Boards & Commissions, Continued

**Town Council Meeting
November 20, 2024**

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Recommended Council Action

- Consider enacting an ordinance (O-#) to repeal sections of the Town code establishing certain advisory boards and commissions.
- Consider adopting resolution (R-#) to disband an advisory board created by resolution.

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Advisory Boards

- Community Policing Advisory Committee*
- Cultural Arts Commission
- Environmental Stewardship Advisory Board
- Housing Advisory Board
- Human Services Advisory Board
- Library Advisory Board
- Parks, Greenways, and Recreation Commission
- Stormwater Management Utility Advisory Board
- Transportation and Connectivity Advisory Board

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Shared Interests

- Meaningful, diverse public input and equitable community engagement
- Good stewardship of staff and community resources
- Clear, common understanding of roles and responsibilities

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What We've Done

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**In the last
14 months,
we have...**

- ✓ Surveyed Staff Liaisons
- ✓ Met with Staff Liaisons
- ✓ Surveyed Board Members
- ✓ Met with Boards
- ✓ Applied an equity lens
- ✓ Talked to peer municipalities
- ✓ Presented to Council 4 times

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What We've Learned

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- Boards were created before we committed to and invested in equitable engagement.
- We have implemented policies and procedures aimed at increasing board diversity.
- Those policies and procedures have not significantly increased board diversity.

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- Advisory boards are meant to advise Council, but their scope often creeps into advising staff.
- We spend an estimated \$120,000+ annually on staffing support for Boards & Commissions.
- Many Boards were created to advance a priority that is now being staffed and funded by the Town.

- Peers are assessing their boards and commissions with stewardship, access, and equity in mind.
- They are finding many of the same issues, challenges, and inequities we have found.
- Like us, they have found that rebalancing power structures is never easy.

Where We've Landed

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At the last work session, we heard interest in two options...

- Reduce number of boards and commissions, apply standards & equity processes
- Disband 9 advisory boards and rely on staff-led equitable engagement and, on an as needed basis, issue-oriented task forces and working groups

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Based on our shared interests and our equitable engagement framework, we propose disbanding nine advisory boards and relying on staff-led equitable engagement and, on an as-needed basis, issue-oriented task forces and working groups.

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- Three boards are attached to singular Town departments/services.
- Four boards were created to address priorities that we have since staffed and funded.
- Two boards are attached to funding programs.

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**Boards attached
to singular Town
departments and
services**

- Community Policing
Advisory Committee* (2011)
- Chapel Hill Public Library
Advisory Board (1980)
- Parks, Greenways, and
Recreation Commission
(1977)

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Issues and Challenges

- Not all departments have a board
- Creates an imbalance for both capacity and advocacy
- Scope creep is common and can create tension between staff/board
- Can create perception that staff answers to board, rather than Town Manager

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Community Policing Advisory Committee (2011)

- Make recommendations to the Town Manager and Chief of Police with regard to organizational matters and procedures
- Serve as a liaison to enhance community and police relations
- Participate in annual review of the Police Department's Citizen Academy
- Receive, review, and consult on the quarterly professional standards report
- Consult and advise on the Police Department's strategic plan
- Provide an annual report to Council on a Council requested topic

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Chapel Hill Public Library Advisory Board (1980)

Advise the council, town manager, and library director concerning all matters relating to the operation of a public library system for the town, taking into consideration the needs and attitudes of library users and staff.

- Advise the council, town manager, and library director as to the use and daily operation of library services and facilities, especially requests for specific materials to be added to or removed from the collection.
- Work cooperatively with the Friends of the Library and the Library Foundation in support of the library.

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- Make recommendations to the council concerning the construction and improvement of buildings and other structures for the library system.
- Advise the council, town manager, and library director concerning the annual budget of the library system, including the library's schedule of fines and fees regarding overdue and lost materials and borrowing privileges and associated fees for those outside the Chapel Hill service area.
- Advise the town manager concerning the appointment of the library director.

Parks, Greenways and Recreation Commission (1977)

- Recommend to the council a charge and membership for the parks, greenways and recreation commission that reflects the community's interests as outlined in Chapel Hill 2020.
- Advise the council, town manager and manager's staff concerning all matters relating to the operation of a system of public recreation for the Town of Chapel Hill.
- Advise on establishing and maintaining a system of organized and supervised recreational activity for the town within the budgetary levels authorized by the council.
- Recommend to the council land to be set apart for use as parks, playgrounds, recreation centers, water areas, or other recreational areas and structures.
- Recommend the use of appropriate lands or buildings owned or leased to the town.

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- Recommend upon the needs of appropriate additional lands and structures for the recreational activities of the town.
- Advise the council, town manager and manager's staff as to controls and operation of recreational facilities which are owned or controlled by the town.
- Recommend to the council, town manager and manager's staff regulatory control, rules and measures for use of town-owned or controlled recreational facilities.
- Advise the council as to the amount of all fees, rentals and charges for park and recreation services.
- Review the budget for the parks and recreation department and make comments and recommendations to the council with respect thereto.

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- Advise the planning board on all matters pertaining to recreational planning for the community.
- Make recommendations to and assist the town manager in preparing a five-year program for the parks and recreation department covering both operating and capital plans for the department.
- Develop and propose for council consideration a master greenways plan, including a proposed timetable for development and listing of potential greenway properties and extensions.
- Work with neighborhoods to develop specifications for appropriate design, use, and maintenance and security of greenways.
- Promote awareness of the greenways program among town residents. For example, publish maps and trail guides for use of greenways.

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- Advise council regarding the status of needs of the greenway system annually during consideration of the capital improvements program and annual operating budget. Recommend property to be acquired and trails to be constructed.
- Work with community groups to encourage the development and maintenance of greenway trails.
- Work with regional organizations and greenway commissions to coordinate regional greenway plans, encouraging linking of greenway systems when beneficial to Chapel Hill citizens.
- Recommend and promote alternative funding sources for acquisition and maintenance of greenways.

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**Boards attached to
priorities that we've
since staffed and
resourced**

- Environmental Stewardship Advisory Board (2013)
- Housing Advisory Board (2013)
- Transportation and Connectivity Advisory Board (2013)
- Stormwater Management Utility Advisory Board (2003)

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Issues and Challenges

- Professional, paid staff vs. volunteer, free advice
- Opens door to influence of political/personal views
- Scope creep is common and can create tension between board/staff
- Can create perception that staff answers to board, rather than Town Manager

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Environmental Stewardship Advisory Board (2013)

Assist the Chapel Hill Town Council in strengthening environmentally responsible practices that protect, promote and nurture our community and the natural world through advice and program support.

- Make recommendations to council regarding environmental issues in development plans and town policies.
- Make recommendations to council on environmental impact of development proposals.
- Assist in developing plans for future parks and greenways corridors.
- Advocate for managing environmental resources in a way that reflects the community's values.

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- Acknowledge, review and mitigate effects of climate change by recommending incentives for:
 - Maintaining and acknowledging the natural terrain.
 - Maintaining and encouraging native plant and wildlife species.
 - Environmentally responsible building practices.
 - Improving bicycle and pedestrian environment.
 - Improving water quality.
 - Consideration for the visual aesthetics as it pertains to the natural environment.
 - Shade/tree canopy.
- Maintain and improve current environmental protections.
- Identify Chapel Hill resources for further protection (i.e. natural heritage areas).
- Support the town's efforts to: a. Improve efficiency within town facilities. b. Reduce waste. c. Reduce town's carbon footprint.
- Act as a proactive vehicle for community feedback on environmental issues (i.e. surveys, crowd sourcing, social media, public forums, newspaper articles).

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Housing Advisory Board (2013)

Assist the Chapel Hill Town Council in promoting and developing a full spectrum of housing opportunities that meet the needs of the Chapel Hill community.

- Advocate for the community's interest in creating a range of rental and ownership housing options in development plans and town policies.
- Make recommendations to the council regarding the community's housing interests such as public housing, affordable housing, and student housing in development applications and implementation of town policies.
- Monitor and provide recommendations for timely implementation of the Affordable Housing Strategy and other housing policies as appropriate.

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- Provide input on guidelines and priorities for use of affordable housing funds for consistency with the council and the community's needs by making recommendations on performance measures.
- Assist the council in identifying opportunities to address unmet housing needs including opportunities for public-private collaboration and multi-jurisdictional collaborations.
- Assist the council in developing housing guidelines and priorities that create rental housing opportunities that serve unmet housing needs.
- Act as a proactive vehicle for community feedback on housing issues (i.e. surveys, crowd sourcing, social media, public forums, newspaper articles).

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Transportation and Connectivity Advisory Board (2013)

Assist the Chapel Hill Town Council in creating an inclusive connected community by recommending, advocating and planning for comprehensive, safe, effective and sustainable multi-modal transportation and connectivity.

- Advocate for community's values and transportation and connectivity interests to be represented in development plans and town policies.
- Make recommendations to council regarding transportation and connectivity issues in development plans and town policies.
- Make recommendations to council on spending related to transportation and connectivity.
- Make recommendations to town staff regarding transportation issues and successes.

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- Provide feedback to town staff on EZ Rider user experience, issues and service changes.
- Advocate for transportation and connectivity that works towards creating an inclusive connected community.
- Assist in developing plans for increased connectivity (including greenways corridors, sidewalks, bike lanes and roads).
- Assist in identifying connectivity gaps, safety issues, environmental concerns and other issues related to transportation.
- Assist in catalyzing innovative solutions and identifying outliers for good.
- Appoint a representative to attend Chapel Hill Transit Partners' meeting and report back.
- Act as a proactive vehicle for community feedback (i.e. surveys, crowd sourcing, social media, public forums, newspaper articles).

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Stormwater Management Utility Advisory Board (2004)

- Provide recommendations regarding the identification and implementation of new stormwater management program activities.
- Review and provide recommendations on the stormwater management program master plan.
- Provide recommendations concerning gaps or inconsistencies in town stormwater management services, facilities, programs, policies, and regulations and recommend improvement alternatives.
- Provide recommendations for priorities and scheduling of watershed master planning and development of drainage basin plans.

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- Assist town staff in working with stakeholder groups to implement program objectives and activities.
- Assist town staff with public education and outreach activities that promote the town's stormwater management program.
- Assist town staff in meeting the mission and achieving the identified goals and objectives of the town's stormwater management program.
- Provide recommendations for internal program evaluation and reporting mechanisms and assist town staff in periodically reporting to the town council on program effectiveness.

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Boards attached to funding programs

- Human Services
Advisory Board (1982)
- Cultural Arts
Commission (2008)

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Issues and Challenges

- Funding decisions should be made in an objective manner
- Staff are best suited to understand relevant data, evaluation criteria, and performance-based metrics related to funding decisions
- Board members may be more easily swayed by personal opinion or affiliation

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Human Services Advisory Board (1982)

- Assess and update the human service needs of Chapel Hill and alert the council to changes in these needs.
- Identify needs and service gaps and seek ways to fill the gaps.
- Help to develop an effective relationship with Orange County social programs and the human services advisory commission.
- Work with private agencies to coordinate delivery of human services.
- Advise the council on the need for and scope of advocacy services.

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- Help assure that Chapel Hill citizens are provided with all county and state services to which they are entitled.
- Conduct periodic community forums to discuss human service issues with town citizens.
- Advise the council with respect to human service funding needs at the beginning of the budget cycle.
- Recommend to council which, if any, needs should be met by town funding of private agencies.
- Devise a recommended system of performance contracting with private human service agencies for service.

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Cultural Arts Commission (2008)

- Promote the appreciation of the cultural arts by the citizens of Chapel Hill.
- Develop and propose programs to enhance and enliven the town community through cultural arts.
- Advise the council regarding art-related issues, including management and administration of the town's Percent for Art Ordinance.
- Recommend programming for the cultural arts for inclusion in the town's operating budget on an annual basis.
- Review and monitor the operation of the town's cultural arts program and the work of the cultural arts administrator and staff.
- Perform such other tasks and carry out such other programs and projects for the enhancement of the cultural arts in the town as the town council may so request and authorize.

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**What will happen if we
disband all nine
advisory boards?**

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- **Staff will provide up-to-date, professional subject matter expertise.** And if additional expertise is needed, staff have multiple ways to attain it.
- **Staff will lead equitable engagement around key issues and projects.** And we have built in ways to report that to Council throughout the agenda process.

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- **Residents will continue to have numerous ways to receive information about their local government.** And we are in the midst of improving some of our key communication channels.
- **Residents will continue to have numerous opportunities to provide their perspectives to Council.** And current Board members can continue to use all of these formal and informal channels.

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- **Council will continue to have numerous opportunities to receive formal public comment and informal public input.** And staff will report on results of equitable engagement.
- **Council can create time-limited, issue-oriented work groups and task forces.** And staff can assist with equity-based membership appointments and practices.

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