

## Task Force Recommendation

The Election Method Task Force, led by two skilled facilitators, was asked to evaluate the current election process and number of commissioners for the Chatham County Board of Commissioners and to make a recommendation to change or not change the process and/or expand the Board of Commissioners. The Task Force reviewed historical data related to the Chatham County Election process dating back to the 1970's, consulted with a representative from the UNC School of Government, held public input sessions in person and online, reviewed legal requirements for county election processes, analyzed the election processes of other counties, and had robust and thoughtful discussions regarding the options available. Based on all of the information presented and reviewed, the Task Force makes the following recommendations:

1. **The Task Force unanimously agreed that there was no clear need to increase the size of the board.** Through reviewing data of other counties and information about our own county, we found no correlations that supported increasing our size. Public comment also reflected that the community felt the size of the BOC was adequate.
2. **The Task Force unanimously agreed that Chatham County needs district representation.** Maintaining district representation through a residency requirement was crucial to the majority of Chatham County citizens, regardless of their other opinions on changes to the current election method. Adding an "at-large position" to the current structure would not fulfill this need and was unanimously voted against.
3. **The Task Force voted 5-4 to recommend that Chatham County maintains its current process of electing the board of commissioners at large with a residency district requirement.**

The Task Force makes these recommendations with an astute awareness of the concerns of Chatham County citizens regarding adequate, equal, and fair representation for all. These concerns were an ever-present factor throughout the evaluation process. We consistently experienced a dynamic tension as to which method would most fully achieve fair and adequate representation for all individuals in Chatham County, and this was also reflected in the input from the public, both during this process as well as in the past during similar discussions. It is evident that the path to ensure equity and fairness in all segments of our population is not clear at this point. The overriding conversation that continued to arise amongst the task force was how to balance the need for equal representation of People of Color and equal representation for people in rural and less populated areas of the county.

Changing the election method may or may not ensure fair and adequate representation, but it is very evident that Chatham County citizens want to know that their voices matter. The Task Force believes that it is imperative that the Board of Commissioners understand these concerns from its constituents and actively, and intentionally, work to address them. The Task Force encourages the Board to evaluate its current opportunities for citizen input and consider potential options for increasing that involvement so that these voices are heard and valued. If a referendum is put before the citizens, it should be between the residency district/at-large voting and residency district/pure district voting to allow citizens to determine which option provides the greatest opportunity for fair representation.