



Chatham County, NC

Legislation Text

File #: 17-2334, Version: 1

Vote on a request to approve Formation and Organization of Human Relations Task Force
ACTION REQUESTED: Vote to Approve Formation of Organizational Human Relations Task Force

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND:

In February 2017, the Board of Commissioners reviewed an early report on options to create a new Human Relations Commission or Committee. At that time, the commissioners felt that it was important to hear from diverse voices in the community.

During March-May, 2017, the Director of Community Relations sponsored four focus groups that included community groups, county agencies, African Americans, Hispanic/Latino residents, school system and youth organizations.

The feedback from these 57 people indicated that that the county needed to rethink the type of group needed to effectively promote better understanding and mutual respect among residents of varying backgrounds and identities, include race, ethnic origin, gender identification, income level, age, education and geographic location.

DISCUSSION & ANALYSIS:

Several common themes emerged from the focus groups:

- Transportation challenges
- Self-segregation in schools
- Barriers to parental involvement with their kids
- Barriers to diverse voices on major issues facing the county
- Limited services access in western Chatham
- Not enough for youth activities outside schools
- Limited affordable and safe housing
- Poor access to broadband for school and work

They identified the following as vital to actually leveraging change: faith community, nonprofits, K-12 schools, community college, law enforcement, nonprofits, county human services agencies, business community, elected officials, youth and seniors. They also noted that a very diverse group of people would need to lead this effort.

The focus group members generally agreed that elected officials and Chatham County have a key role, but more as catalysts/conveners and funding support. Instead, **community ownership** emerged as vital to making true systemic change over time and survive changes in political leadership.

Other recommendations for success:

- Clearly defined mission

- Need better data from our diverse communities
- Team-building and goal-setting to identify clear priorities without trying to do too much
- Focus on positives, such as helping young people find a path for the future and providing resources for those with specific problems
- A place for people to be listened to/supported
- Meets around the county, not just Pittsboro

To ensure inclusiveness, we will need to work with groups like Hispanic Liaison and Communities in Schools to help develop new leaders and prepare them to participate in programs like this. We also need to enlist EW faces, not always the same ones who participate already. Young people seemed to be a priority for all groups.

Based on these findings, we are recommending that the county move toward a community-based initiative loosely based on the model used by the Chatham Health Alliance would seem to be a better model to accomplish long-term change. In this model, the Board of Commissioners and the county serve as catalysts and may provide funding, but do not use a traditional county committee structure.

The advantages of a community-based entity:

- More likely to foster community ownership and solutions to real problems
- Startup costs could be attractive to several foundations due to unique approach
- More likely to foster other related partnerships
- Not as dependent on the county (or any other local government) to survive
- Different groups and individuals with varied interests can engage in specific subcommittees or projects where they best fit, but not necessarily all
- Meetings can be more welcoming than a formal county board or committee

The disadvantages are of this option are:

- More time needed to organize and get started
- Some expertise in community organizing needed to guide the group
- Priorities may not always be exactly what the BOC would pick on their own
- Could require more county funding down the road to sustain it

NEXT STEPS:

Authorize the County Manager's Office to convene a temporary task force with these assignments.

› **PHASE ONE**

- Agree on what to call the new community-based partnership and develop a clear mission statement
- Make contacts with towns, school system, key nonprofits, churches, etc. to identify interest & support
- Develop a proposed Steering Committee structure and appointment processes
- Identify initial resource needs
- Present report to the County Manager & BOC for approval

› **PHASE TWO**

- Help recruit Steering Committee members in partnership with the county, towns, schools, etc.

Recommended Task Force Membership:

The Board of Commissioners would each have one appointment to be made in October. The other task force members would be recruited by the County Manager's Office through contact with the specified groups:

- Towns of Siler City, Pittsboro and Goldston: 1 seat each
 - School system: 1 seat
 - Hispanic Liaison: 2 seats
 - NCAAP (east & west): 1 seat per entity
 - Sheriff's Office: 1 seat
 - Council on Aging: 1 seat
 - Health Director: 1 seat
 - Youth-Related Nonprofits: 2 seats (i.e. Communities in Schools, Boys & Girls Club Siler City)
 - Church representatives: 2-3 seats
- Options: Orange/Chatham Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, West Chatham Ministerial Association, Hispanic/Latino church leader

We will work with the school system and the nonprofits to engage young people in the development process. It will be critical to come up with a partnership model that will allow young people to be at the table.

Recommended Timeline:

- October 16, 2017: BOC appointments
- October 31, 2017: Finalize other appointments and secure outside consultant
- November: First meeting of task force
- Early 2018: Identify & pursue grant resources for startup phases
- April 2018: Report to Board of Commissioners on formation of a community-based human relations partnership
- May 2018: Begin implementation and funding/staffing needs to support the initiative
- July 2018: Task force disbands after steering committee is formed

We have identified a couple of people who might be good candidates as consultants to help the task force and provide more extensive help to the eventual Steering Committee.

Budgetary Impact: Could involve limited expenses in FY 2017-18 for a few hours of consultant work and likely more extensive consultant expenses in FY 2018-19.

Recommendation:

Vote to approve the recommended formation of a Human Relations Organizational Task Force as outlined above and be prepared to make your appointments in October.