

REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION

**HENDERSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

MEETING DATE: June 15, 2011

SUBJECT: League of Women Voters Presentation

PRESENTER: Judy Katz

ATTACHMENTS: Yes
1. PowerPoint Presentation

SUMMARY OF REQUEST:

Judy Katz, President of the League of Women Voters, will make a presentation to the Board regarding Advisory Committees in Henderson County,

BOARD ACTION REQUESTED:

No Board action requested. This presentation is for information only.

Suggested Motion:

No motion suggested.

Advisory Committees in Henderson County

League of Women Voters of
Henderson County
June 15, 2011



Information Resources

- North Carolina Sunshine Laws
- Freedom of Information Act
- Henderson County Code of Ethics

Democracy depends on:

- Informed, active participation at all levels of government
- Citizen's right to know
- Holding open meetings
- Making public records accessible

Focus of the study: Democracy and Transparency

- The League did not evaluate:
 - Diversity of committees regarding gender, race and ethnic origins
 - Committee members representing a variety of backgrounds and points of view
 - Purpose or operation of any specific board or committee

Study Criteria

- Committees that met monthly and had members appointed by the BOC
- Committees/boards receiving significant county dollars and staffed by county departments
- Committees that were staffed by executive directors not supervised by the county manager

Collecting information

- Surveys were conducted:
 - Members of boards and committees – 104 responses – majority of members of 16 committees responded
 - Citizens attending meetings – 14 responses
 - Board of Commission members – 5 responses received from members of the November 2010 BOC

Transparency

Seven Advisory Boards have a web presence that includes:

Access to actions (minutes, agendas)

Meeting time and location

Membership roster

Those advisory boards are:

Board of Health

DSS

Environ. Advisory Com

Historic Resources

Planning Board

Solid Waste Adv. Com

Zoning Board of Adjustments

Findings

- The BOC keeps citizens relatively well-informed on the operation of advisory boards and committees
- Advisory boards are doing significant work for local government
- Advisory board participants are enthusiastic and committed volunteers
- Although county advisory boards operate under open meetings laws, citizens do not take advantage of the opportunities to attend meetings and observe deliberations
- Application to serve is available to any citizen through the county website and county publication
- Those committees staffed by county employees are more likely to have an up to date web presence
- Those committees staffed by county employees are more likely to have minutes, meeting times and membership online, available to interested citizens

Recommendations to BOC

- Improve and standardize access to information through the BOC website
- Standardize agendas of advisory board meetings, especially to include an opportunity for public comment
- Review methods of publicizing meetings
- Review term limits and staggered terms on advisory boards

League Work Plan

- Inform citizens of the opportunities to serve local government by:
 - Encouraging our members to apply for advisory positions
 - Presenting our findings to civic and professional groups to encourage participation
 - Continue the activities of League Observer Corps