

APPROVED

Orange County BOCC Elections Advisory Group

Meeting Summary

Thursday, May 27, 2021 at 7:00 PM

Virtual Meeting

Members Present: Kathy Arab, Dr. Nathan Boucher, Dr. Jennifer Bremer, Jaazaniah Catterall, Brian Crawford, Susana Dancy, Dr. Lisa Hazirjian, Martha Jenkins, Dr. Krishna Mondal, Patrick Mulkey, Alicia Reid, Jenn Sykes, Dr. Jonathan Weiler

Members Absent: Rex Williams

Facilitator: Jay Bryan, Retired District Court Judge

Staff Present: John Roberts, Orange County Attorney, Greg Wilder from the County Manager's Office, Brian Carson from the Planning & Inspections Department, and Todd McGee, Orange County Community Relations Director

Others Present: None

1. Welcome and Introductions

Group Co-Chair Lisa Hazirjian welcomed everyone to the Virtual meeting and expressed appreciation for members' willingness to serve on the BOCC Elections Advisory Group (BEAG). Group Co-Chair Hazirjian also thanked the members of the Public Input Subcommittee for their work.

Group Co-Chair Hazirjian requested a roll call of the members present and asked Mr. Wilder to announce the names of Group members for roll call purposes. Mr. Wilder noted that Group Member Nicholas Batman had stepped down from his membership on the Group, and that Group Member Rex Williams had indicated he could not attend the meeting due to a conflict. Mr. Wilder then read the names of Group members, with members present responding accordingly.

2. Approval of April 22, 2021 Meeting Summary

Group Co-Chair Hazirjian requested a motion to approve the April 22, 2021 Meeting Summary as written and distributed with the agenda package. Group Co-Chair Patrick Mulkey motioned to approve the meeting summary, and Group Member Jenn Sykes seconded the motion. Group Co-Chair Hazirjian asked Mr. Wilder to call the names of

Group members for voting purposes. Group members voted by roll call on the motion, and the meeting summary was approved unanimously.

3. Receipt of Report/Recommendations from Public Input Subcommittee

- DRAFT Subcommittee SurveyMonkey
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/XZHDP57>

Judge Jay Bryan thanked staff for its work preparing for the meeting and also joined with Co-Chair Hazirjian in appreciation to the Subcommittee members. He asked members of the Subcommittee to share information on their work and the proposed SurveyMonkey that had been shared as part of the agenda materials.

Group Member and Subcommittee Member Sykes initiated discussion on the Subcommittee's efforts and, with assistance from Mr. McGee, began a question by question review of the draft SurveyMonkey.

Group members suggested language changes on several draft questions related to determining the geographical location of respondents and respondents feeling connecting to County Commissioners and their voice/their community's voice being heard by County Commissioners. Mr. McGee incorporated those proposed revisions as discussion continued.

Group Co-Chair Hazirjian suggested that the Subcommittee complete an overview of the entire SurveyMonkey, detailing the entire set of draft questions first, and then the full Group discuss the questions and consider additional revisions.

Group Member and Subcommittee Member Sykes, with assistance from Mr. McGee, continued with the question by question summary of the draft SurveyMonkey.

4. Discuss and Finalize Plans Regarding Public Input

- Discuss Survey Content, Propose Any Revisions, and Vote on Final Version
- Discuss & Approve Plans to Generate Survey Responses
- Discuss & Vote on Additional Methods of Gathering Public Input (e.g., Holding a Public Hearing, Inviting Written and/or Recorded Public Input, etc.)

Judge Bryan moved the Group forward to discussion on the draft SurveyMonkey questions. Group members suggested various language changes on several draft questions as the discussion proceeded, including questions related to respondents' potential interest in single-member districts, multi-member districts, at large seats, and a combination of these election methods. Mr. McGee incorporated those proposed revisions. Various questions were added, re-worded or replaced, and some questions were deleted.

Group Co-Chair Hazirjian noted that the Board of Commissioners had extended the Group's Report/Recommendations deadline from July 31, 2021 to August 15, 2021.

Group Co-Chair Hazirjian also referenced an email that Mr. Wilder had received from a resident earlier in the day indicating a desire to speak to the Group at the meeting about the draft SurveyMonkey. Based on Group Co-Chair Hazirjian's request, Mr. Wilder shared the email on the Zoom remote meeting. Mr. Wilder had consulted with both Co-Chairs and had responded to the resident, encouraging the submittal of written comments. The resident's email voiced disappointment with the lack of the opportunity to speak directly to the Group. Group Co-Chair Hazirjian noted that the email also referenced the lack of content related to potential non-partisan election for the Board of Commissioners and the lack of any questions related to "ranked choice" voting. It was noted that both options would require action by the North Carolina General Assembly to be available for consideration since neither was authorized in the State law, and that pursuing action through the General Assembly may not be workable.

Group Co-Chair Hazirjian suggested that the press release announcing the survey should give definite context for the survey.

Group Member Brian Crawford suggested that the Group add an item to all future agendas for the Group to receive public written comments on any topics related to the Group's work and discussions.

Group members continued discussion on various wording changes for several draft questions, including the addition of an open-ended question at the end of the survey.

County Attorney John Roberts shared, just for Group members' reference, that a recent Supreme Court decision had resulted in the mix of multi-member and single-member districts being determined to be unconstitutional at the State level, and that the result could conceivably also become true at some point at the local level.

With discussion and revision of the draft questions concluding, Group Co-Chair Hazirjian requested that Mr. McGee scroll through all the questions one-by-one to allow Group members one final review and any additional refinements. Mr. McGee proceeded through all the questions and Group members made a few minor modifications.

Group Member Susana Dancy motioned to approve the updated SurveyMonkey document. Group Member Crawford seconded the motion.

Upon further consideration, Group Member Dancy provided an amended motion to approve the updated SurveyMonkey document with the addition of language "Unincorporated southern portion of the county" to the geographical location question and the addition of an open-ended question at the end requesting any other comments. Group Member Crawford seconded the amended motion. Group Co-Chair Hazirjian asked Mr. Wilder to call the names of Group members for voting purposes. Group members voted by roll call on the motion, and the motion was approved unanimously.

Group Co-Chair Hazirjian directed the Group to the comments earlier by Group Member Crawford regarding adding an item to all future agendas for the Group to receive public written comments on any topics related to the Group's work and discussions. She asked if the Group wanted to consider any action on that proposal. Group Member Crawford motioned to add an item to all future agendas for the Group to receive public written comments on any topics related to the Group's work and discussions. Group Member Jaz Catterall seconded the motion. Group Co-Chair Hazirjian asked Mr. Wilder to call the names of Group members for voting purposes. Group members voted by roll call on the motion, and the motion was approved unanimously.

Judge Bryan asked if the Group wanted to consider any specific plans regarding distribution of the SurveyMonkey. He noted the time and that the meeting was scheduled to adjourn in 5 minutes, and asked for the Group to extend the meeting. Based on discussion, Judge Bryan stated that the meeting would be extended.

Group Member Sykes commented that Mr. McGee had shared a list of planned distribution options during the Subcommittee's meeting. Group Member Sykes and Mr. McGee then shared a list of expected distribution options including town public information officers, social media, local radio stations, County email distribution lists, local groups, the County's weekly newsletter, the County's 2020 Census partners, the Orange County Government website front page, and the *News of Orange*. It was also noted that Group members could share it with the various organizations and groups they were affiliated with.

Mr. McGee indicated that the SurveyMonkey would be limited to one response per IP address to limit duplicate submittals. It was also noted that the survey could be available during the first week in June, would be available for a period of two weeks, which would allow the results to be available for the Group's June meeting, and that the Co-Chairs would provide final review prior to publication.

Group Co-Chair Hazirjian referenced any other public input opportunities, including any Group interest in scheduling a public hearing to receive public input. It was noted that the Board of Commissioners would have an open public process and that the Group could receive written comments.

Group Co-Chair Hazirjian asked Group members if there was any need to consider additional action related to the Group accepting written, audio and video comments from the public. It was noted that the press release developed by the Co-Chairs and staff announcing the SurveyMonkey should include language soliciting written, audio, and video comments from the public and include a mailing address for submittals through the US Postal Service.

Group members discussed and left the options open for future consideration. Group Member Crawford volunteered to assist the Co-Chairs in drafting information for a potential public hearing that would potentially occur sometime after the June Group meeting, likely for the public to provide input on the Group's draft recommendations.

5. Identify Remaining Tasks to be Completed by Group

- What Decision Points/Questions Need to be Answered Before a Report on Group Recommendations is Drafted?

This item was addressed in conjunction with Item 6 below.

6. Set a Timeline for Completing These Tasks

- Does the Group Need Any Additional Meeting(s)?

Group Co-Chair Hazirjian, with the assistance of Group Member Catterall, shared a Jamboard document in the Zoom remote meeting outlining the remaining timeline and activities for Group discussion and decisions. Group Co-Chair Hazirjian reminded Group members of the extension to August 15, 2021 for the Group's Report/Recommendations.

Group Members discussed the schedule, the drafting of the report by Judge Bryan, Report review by the Co-Chairs and the full Group, and the opportunity to solicit public feedback on an executive summary before refining and finalizing the Report. It was noted that the Report could include recommendations to the Board of Commissioners on soliciting public opinion on the Report and any other potential considerations in follow-up to the Group's work and that the press release should also solicit written comments. Group Co-Chair Hazirjian shared that there may be a need for an additional Group meeting to review and approve the final Report document between the scheduled meeting in July and the August 15, 2021 deadline.

7. Meeting Evaluation

This item was not addressed due to the length of the meeting.

Adjourn

Group Member Dancy motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:35 pm. Group Member Sykes seconded the motion. Group members voted by roll call on the motion to adjourn, and it was approved unanimously.

This Meeting Summary was approved at the June 24, 2021 BOCC Elections Advisory Group Meeting.