

Ad Hoc Reappraisal Committee

Final Report

Submitted to Buncombe County Board of County Commissioners

July 19th, 2022

Ad Hoc Reappraisal Committee

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Ad Hoc Reappraisal Committee

I. Overview

The Ad Hoc Reappraisal Committee was formed and created by the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners (BCBOC) by resolution on September 7, 2021 with the following charge and purpose.

WHEREAS, recognizing that legally required tax assessments of real property and the reappraisal process are confusing and largely misunderstood, and in light of recent charges that the process is not equitable this Board desires to create an ad hoc committee;

WHEREAS, the goals of this committee would align with the County's Racial Equity Action Plan, including:

1. to identify citizen concerns,
2. provide guidance on future assessments, and
3. provide input into equity concerns;

WHEREAS, this committee will be comprised of seven members as follows:

- 7 members
 - 2 Members from the Board of Equalization and Review (Debbie Lane & Miriam McKinney)
 - 5 Community Members
 - 3 At-large members (Dwayne McAfee, Bobbette Mays, Melanie Pitrolo)
 - 1 Real Estate professional (residential preferred) (Jonathan Hunter)
 - 1 Equity representative (Brenda Mills)

WHEREAS, staff will consist of the Assessor, Chief Appraiser, a Tax Analyst, and a County Attorney

An eighth (8th) Committee member added after resolution passed by the BCBOC (Ori Baber)

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In addition, a **Planning Team** was formed consisting of:

Burnett Walz – Facilitator

Christina McEntee – Facilitator

Rachel Edens – Chief Equity & Human Rights Officer

Keith Miller – Property Assessment Officer

Sybil Tate – Assistant County Manager

Lillian Govus, Max Taintor, Kassi Day – Communication and Public Engagement

The purpose of the Planning Team was to set agendas, assure that each committee meeting was fully supported, and the group discussion was facilitated.

Syneva Economics Report to the Committee

A Request for Proposals (RFP) was issued for a Property Appraisal Equity Analysis on December 15th, 2021. (Attachment A) Syneva Economics was selected. Tom Tveidt with Syneva presented an overview of findings at a committee meeting. The full report is attached to this document (Attachment B)

Buncombe County Communications and Public Engagement Team (CAPE)

The CAPE Team was fully involved in supporting the Committee's efforts to identify citizen's concerns. To assure we cast the widest net with the most equitable approach, the CAPE Team developed an outreach plan with the input of the Committee members. (Attachment C). A Community Survey was administered with and there were 1200+ respondents across 27 different neighborhoods that provided 500+ comments (Attachment D). Additional survey information and results can be found at this URL: <https://publicinput.com/Report/judoxcpanrn> In addition, public Comment was also held at most of the Committee meetings to allow the community an opportunity for direct communication with the committee.

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II. Committee Meeting Agendas:

Public Comment was held at every committee meeting from December 8, 2021 – April 6, 2022

November 8, 2021: Committee Orientation

November 17, 2021: Kirk Boone, Teaching Assistant Professor in Public Finance and Government with the UNC School of Gov't
Chris McLaughlin, Professor of Public Law and Government with the UNC School of Government

December 8, 2021: Dwight Mullen, Ph.D.

January 12, 2022: Larry Clark, Director of Strategic Initiatives with the International Association of Assessing Officers
By-laws

Community Survey development

January 26, 2022: Rachel Edens, Chief Equity & Human Rights Officer - Property Appraisal from an Equity Lens
John E. Hudson, Interim County Budget Director - Tax Rate vs. Property Appraisal
Eric Cregger, Tax Analyst - Buncombe County Property Assessment (PART 1)

February 9, 2022: (Virtual Meeting)
Communication and Public Engagement Team – Solicit feedback on Community Survey Outreach efforts
Keith Miller – Buncombe County Property Assessment (Part 2)

February 23, 2022: (Virtual Meeting)
Rachel Edens - Racial Equity Action Plan Overview
Community Input Survey final report out
Keith Miller – Buncombe County Property Assessment (Part 3)

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- March 9, 2022: Rachel Edens - Equity Analysis Tools
Tom Tveidt, Syneva Economics – Awarded the proposal bid to provide the County with a Residential Property Assessment Equity Data Analysis
- April 6, 2022: Property Appraisal Process Simulation – Hands-on activity to simulate Property Appraisal, Appeals, and the Exemption process
- April 20, 2022: Urban 3, Joe Minicozzi – The Urban 3 presentation precipitated the creation of the Ad Hoc Reappraisal Committee
- May 4, 2022: Visioning (see section V)
- May 18, 2022: Creation of Recommendations (see section VI)
- June 1, 2022: Review and Finalization of Recommendations
- June 14, 2022: Recommendations Presentation Development

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III. Level Setting

Committee Members selected for the Ad Hoc Reappraisal Committee came in with varying backgrounds, experience, levels of understanding, and subject matter expertise. In an effort to bring committee members together on some common ground, subject matter experts were invited by the planning team with the goal of level setting basic understanding of property appraisal rules, laws, historical and current equity perspective, and current assessment office operations.

Guest Educator	Key Take-away
Kirk Boone: Teaching Assistant Professor in Public Finance and Government with the UNC School of Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Role and responsibility of the assessor ✓ Property appraisal methodology and standards
Chris McLaughlin: Professor of Public Law and Government with the UNC School of Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ State Law governing the property appraisal process ✓ What local governments can and cannot do
Dr. Dwight Mullen, PhD: Retired Professor and Historian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ History of black homeownership in Buncombe County ✓ The impact of public policy decisions, and their negative outcomes for underserved populations
Larry Clark: Director of Strategic Initiatives with the International Association of Assessing Officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Data which an assessor must consider ✓ Why is the data important? ✓ How the data tells the story
Rachel Edens, Buncombe County Chief Equity & Human Rights Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Property Appraisal from an equity lens ✓ Equity vs. equality ✓ Racial Equity Action Plan overview ✓ Developing recommendations with equity considerations ✓ Equity Analysis Tools for decision making
Keith Miller, Buncombe County Property Assessment Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ An overview of the assessment process in Buncombe County

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IV. Visioning – In the facilitation process for developing recommendations, Committee members were asked to brainstorm the following set of questions to arrive at their collective vision for the future.

What do we want to see in place 4 years from now (2026) as a result of this committee’s recommendations? How have lives been changed? How has the community has been impacted? What is in place that is making a difference and nearly eliminating citizens’ concerns about the reappraisal process? What is different about this reappraisal cycle as a result of implementing your recommendations?

Key Vision Elements	<i>Expanded and accessible taxpayer assistance</i>	<i>Transparent, efficient, and effective stewardship of the county budget</i>	<i>Fair and equitable taxation practices in Buncombe County</i>	<i>Engaged and informed community resulting in increased knowledge of the property assessment process</i>
Detailed vision items	There continues to be grant funding dollars for taxpayers who need assistance	County budget thoughtfulness	Primary vs secondary home or investment (S.C. model)	Expand education on re-appraisal process
	The County funds thru local, nonprofits housing repair programs specifically to assist elderly and disadvantaged residents	The property office has been expanded by the County with additional personnel to assist homeowners more with appeals	Tax Air B&Bs as a business vs. single family home	On-going education for property owners on appeals
	Expand rebate program to include low and moderate income	Re-appraisal ambassador or liaison	Tax short-term vs long-term at a different rate	Better representation in the appraisal system (perception of fairness)
	Increase the limits to tax exemption			Clear and transparent process on re-appraisal

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V. The County's Equity Analysis Tool

- What populations and/or communities benefit from this request or change? How?
- What populations and/or communities will be burdened? How?
- How do you plan to mitigate unintended consequences?
- What data source did you use to evaluate and answer these critical questions?

The Committee utilized this tool throughout the visioning and development of recommendations to assure their work was built on a foundation of equity.

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VI. Strategic Directions and Actionable Recommendations

Once the Committee developed their vision items, they then worked through a series of exercises to develop their strategic direction categories and actionable recommendations. It's important to note that the recommendation development process was very purposeful and structured to ensure that all voices were heard, all recommendations were considered, and most importantly there was participation from all Committee members. In addition, the intent of the Committee's recommendations are to be high-level and strategic in nature.

Strategic Direction	Actionable Recommendations	Next Steps / Actions Required	Time to Implement: Short (1-6 mo's), Med. (7-12 mo's), Long (12+ mo's)
Develop assessment policies to optimize tax revenue	Differentiate short-term rentals, investments and/or secondary home's assessment approach from that of single-family homes used as primary residence	Collaborate with County planning, County legal, NCDOR, and UNC-SOG to determine best policy	Long Term
	Allocate short-term rental revenue to fund HHS Homeowner Grant Program	Dependent on outcome of recommendation above	Long Term
	Focus lobbying efforts to increase revenue streams (supports the two above)	Will require lobbying resources	Long Term
Increase Capacity in Assessment Department	Develop process to correct the percentage of properties with incorrect attributes	Conduct relist and / or community outreach mailer	Medium Term
	Increase frequency of property re-assessments (every 2-3 years)	Establish dedicated reappraisal team	Long Term
	Develop key metrics to trigger increase in staff	Currently in place	Short Term
Increase Education & Outreach	Leverage Social Media, Faith-based organizations, and non-profits to engage and educate the community	Need to develop comprehensive communications plan	Medium Term
	Provide expert community ambassador to provide education on the appraisal process	Develop project plan with CAPE	Medium term
	Partner with local board of realtors to provide assistance / education with the assessment and / or appeal process	Identify willing volunteers	Long Term
	Reassess limits on exemptions to expand eligibility and participation	Will require legislative change to accomplish	Long Term
Enhance Permitting Compliance	Partner with Real-estate professionals and Builders Association to ensure accurate property attributes are reported by homeowners (enforcement required)	Need to develop comprehensive communications plan	Medium Term
	Enhance internal process for communication between Assessment & Permitting Dept's	Currently in place	Short Term