

**Item Title:** Motion to Call for Citizen Commission to Suggest Election Method and District Reforms for the Wake County Board of Commissioners

**Specific Action Requested:**

**That the Board of Commissioners considers a motion to establish a citizen commission to suggest election method and district reforms for the Wake County Board of Commissioners.**

**Item Summary:**

Per the Board's rules, a Commissioner may add an item to the agenda when the request is received by the Manager at least seven days before the meeting. Consistent with the Board's rules, Commissioner Portman has placed an item on the agenda asking the Board to consider the following proposal:

**Background**

Wake County has elected its county commissioners from 7 residency districts, with each one being elected county wide "at Large".

There are pros and cons to AT Large vs District election methods that warrant review and consideration. In North Carolina Commissioners are elected all at large, all by districts, and some with a split of some at large and some by district.

In 2015, after the Democratic sweep of the Wake county commission the Republican dominated General Assembly legislated a change to the method of election from all at large to all by district, the legislation also changed the size of the board from 7 to 9, with 7 elected by district and 2 elected by "super districts". The law also called for all commissioners to stand for election in 2018 and a return to staggered terms in 2020.

As the board understands well, that change was ruled Unconstitutional due the errors in the creation of the 2 super districts.

But today we have lingering issues that should be addressed. The North Carolina General Assembly has not acted to correct the law or to implement any new changes. Federal courts have dictated a return to the maps prior to the 2015 law, as a direction to allow the 2016 and 2018 elections absent direction from the general assembly.

I think it is in the best interest of Wake county citizens to be sure changes are adopted that will;

1. A return to 4 year terms is key to allowing a return to staggered terms.
2. Redistricting will be required after the 2020 census, in 2021 for the 2022 elections. We have time now to rectify this ambiguity and to demonstrate to the public an alternative method of redistricting that is both fair and impartial. Wake should form a citizen advisory board to study and recommend the following.
  - a. Term of 4 years
  - b. Staggered term for continuity of the board

- c. Review of At Large vs District vs Hybrid of both
- d. Consideration of election by the voters of the board chair

**Attachments:**

- 1. Presentation