

ORANGE WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY

Policies and Procedures for Assuring Public Participation in OWASA's Decision Making Processes

The Orange Water and Sewer Authority (OWASA) is committed to providing opportunities for all individuals, regardless of race, color, national origin (including limited-English proficiency), age, disability, sex, or prior exercise of rights or opposition to actions prohibited under federal non-discrimination laws to participate in its public meetings and decision-making processes.

Introduction

OWASA is a single-purpose organization whose mission is to reliably provide high-quality water, wastewater and reclaimed-water services to the Towns of Chapel Hill and Carrboro, and to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. OWASA communicates with the public primarily through its website at www.owasa.org. The default language on the website is English; however, the information on the website can be automatically translated into other languages by selecting a language in the upper right corner of any web page. OWASA recognizes that the current translation software, Google Translate has limitations, but believes it nevertheless provides significant benefit in the sharing of information. Information about OWASA's services, programs, and decision-making can also be obtained by calling OWASA at (919) 537-4343 or in person at OWASA's office at 400 Jones Ferry Road, Carrboro, NC 27510.

Description of the Community Served by OWASA

OWASA's service area primarily encompasses the Towns of Chapel Hill and Carrboro. The OWASA service area boundaries are defined by a written agreement between Orange County and the Towns of Chapel Hill, Carrboro, and Hillsborough, and to the east, by agreement with the City of Durham.

The Town of Chapel Hill was founded in 1783 and formally laid out in 1793 in conjunction with the siting of the University of North Carolina (UNC). The Town of Carrboro, originally known as West End, was first settled in 1882, growing up around a University of North Carolina railroad spur located about a mile from the center of the Town of Chapel Hill and the woolen mill sited nearby. While each town continues to value its own unique history and characteristics, over the years the two towns have physically grown together and become a cohesive community. The University and UNC Hospitals are major employers, although many residents live in Chapel Hill and work in the nearby Research Triangle. There are no major industrial or manufacturing employers. OWASA provides service to approximately 21,200 customer accounts within a population of 83,300 people.

The presence of the University and associated UNC Medical Center have had a significant impact on the demographics of the community. Although a range of education levels and incomes exist throughout the community, much of the population is well educated, with higher incomes. Regardless of income level, education is valued by the community and the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools are well funded. Both the Town of Chapel Hill and Orange County

operate public libraries, and parks and recreation facilities, including recreation teams and activities for children and adults. The two towns also operate a free public bus system together. The unemployment rate is low, but not all jobs are well-paid. This is particularly true of non-academic/professional positions at the University and UNC Health medical Center. The local economy is impacted by the presence of the University and its students, which make up 38% of the population. More detailed information about the demographics of the community can be found in the chart attached hereto as Appendix A.

Access to Public Meetings

Public participation in OWASA's decision-making processes happens primarily through meetings of the Board of Directors. The Board meets every month on the 2nd Thursday of the month, except on holidays. During periods of an officially declared emergency, the Board may meet virtually using applications, such as Microsoft Teams, Skype, or similar technology. Virtual meetings will be available to the public in real time. Members of the public may contact the Clerk to the Board of directors before the meeting to arrange to log in as a participant of the meeting. Questions and comments can also be submitted before or after a meeting in writing to the entire Board, or by phone to the Clerk who will share them with the Board by email.

In non-emergency times, meetings will be held in facilities accessible to persons with disabilities and mobility challenges, and served by the public bus system. Examples are the community meeting room in OWASA's administration building or the Council Chamber at the Chapel Hill Town Hall. Board meetings will be televised live.

All meetings of the Board will be archived on OWASA's website. Written summaries of meetings will be posted on the day following the meeting and unabridged video of the meeting will be posted within two working days after the meeting. Official Minutes of the meeting will be posted following adoption by the Board of Directors.

Members of the public who need oral interpretation or written translation services or accessibility services in order to meaningfully participate in OWASA's programs and services can contact the Clerk to the Board of Directors by email or by phone at (919) 537-4217 to receive accommodations at no cost. This information can also be found on the OWASA website within the Board of Director's page.

When the Board meets in person, the printed Agenda for each Board meeting will include time at the beginning of the meeting for Petitions and Requests from members of the public. Speakers may address the Board on any topic of concern. Matters may be discussed briefly and then referred to staff to provide additional information to the Board and may be placed on a later Agenda. Petitioners are kept informed about the progress of staff's investigation and notified when the matter will come before the Board for further discussion. In times when the Board meets virtually, the public is invited to submit petitions or requests in writing to the Board of Directors or staff and will be given the opportunity to participate live in the virtual meeting.

During live meetings, in addition to Petitions and Requests, the Board asks for public comment on all items on each Board Agenda during the meeting itself, after presentation of the item by

staff and before discussion by the Board. Comments can also be submitted in writing prior to a meeting and all comments are shared with the Board. When meetings are held virtually, members of the public are invited to submit comments in writing prior to the meeting, and all comments are shared with the Board. Members of the public interested in a particular item are invited to share their email addresses with staff, are kept informed about reports prepared for the Board on that item and are notified when the matter will come before the Board for further deliberation.

Board Committee meetings are also open to the public. Committee meetings are held on an as-needed basis. Members of the public can sign up to receive email notifications of such meetings. Meetings are normally held at the accessible OWASA administration building. Committees permit interested members of the public to speak on matters before the committee, and comments can be submitted in writing before or after the meeting. During periods of an officially declared emergency, meetings are held virtually using the same applications as those used for regular Board meetings.

OWASA periodically holds community information meetings about specific projects it is working on, or plans it is updating. These meetings are often held at the OWASA building's community meeting room, but meetings of particular interest to those in a particular community location may be held in a more localized accessible community location. Members of the public are invited to comment and submit questions in person during live meetings and may comment and submit questions in writing before or after the meeting and are invited to share their email addresses with staff, so they can be kept informed about reports prepared for a committee or the Board on that item. Those on the email list will be notified when the matter will come before the committee or the Board for further deliberation. During periods of an officially declared emergency, meetings are held virtually using the same applications as those used for regular Board meetings.

Details about how to participate in meetings, including how to obtain translation or interpretation services or hearing or disability accommodations for the meeting, will be available on the Board of Directors' page on the OWASA website or by contacting the Non-discrimination Coordinator at (919) 968-4421, or the Clerk to the Board of Directors at (919) 537-4217.

All public meetings are noticed in accordance with the NC Open Meetings law by sending an email through an email application to a list of media and other community organizations such as El Centro Hispano, a regional nonprofit Latino service organization which maintains a local office. Members of the public can also sign up to receive notifications of planned meetings on the Board of Director's webpage or by contacting the Clerk to the Board of Directors at (919) 537-4217.

Members of the Board of Directors can be contacted by email using the link on the Board's page on the OWASA website or by sending an email to board_and_leadership@owasa.org. Comments can also be communicated to the Board through the Clerk to the Board of Directors by calling (919) 537-4217.

Access for Persons with Limited English Proficiency

OWASA strives to ensure that persons with limited English proficiency (LEP) can participate in its decision-making processes in a meaningful way. To this end, OWASA has developed a *Plan to Address Limited English Proficiency Among OWASA Customers* which can be found here [insert link to the webpage where it is posted] or obtained from OWASA's Non-Discrimination Coordinator by calling (919) 968-4421 or emailing sglasgow@owasa.org. OWASA's language access policy is consistent with the Language Access Plan.

The Clerk to the Board of Directors maintains a list of resources for translation and interpretation services for Spanish and other languages. Members of the public in need of oral interpretation or written translation services should contact the Non-Discrimination Coordinator at the email address or phone number above, or the Clerk of the Board by email or phone at (919) 537-4217.

Access for Individuals with Disabilities

In addition to information found in this document about OWASA's efforts to ensure that people with disabilities have the opportunity to participate in its decision-making processes, OWASA has developed a *Disability Nondiscrimination Policy* which can be found here [insert link to the webpage where it is posted] or obtained from OWASA's Non-Discrimination Coordinator by calling (919) 968-4421 or emailing sglasgow@owasa.org.

APPENDIX A

OWASA Service Area Demographics			
Total Population - Chapel Hill and Carrboro Combined			83,000
Category	Percent, Chapel Hill	Percent, Carrboro	Average
Race			
White Alone	66.90%	68.20%	67.55%
Black or African American Alone	10.90%	11.00%	10.95%
Asian Alone	13.00%	9.40%	11.20%
Two or More Races	2.90%	4.20%	3.55%
Hispanic or Latino	6.30%	7.10%	6.70%
Total Hispanic	7.00%	7.10%	7.05%
Age and Sex			
Under 5	4.00%	3.70%	3.85%
Under 18	16.10%	20.90%	18.50%
65+	11.20%	9.50%	10.35%
Male	47.00%	54.30%	50.65%
Female	53.00%	47.70%	50.35%
Education			
High School or Higher (Percentage of population over 25)	96.00%	95.10%	95.55%
Bachelors Degree or Higher (Percentage of population over 25)	76.90%	70.60%	73.75%
University Undergraduates (per UNC-CH)			24.00%
University Graduate Students (per UNC-CH)			14.00%
Household Income			
Median Household Income	\$ 73,614	\$ 58,702	\$ 66,158
Less Than \$15,000			12.00%
\$15,000 - \$25,000			8.00%
\$25,000 - \$50,000			20.00%
\$50,000 - \$75,000			14.00%
\$75,000+			46.00%
Housing			
Owner Occupied	53.30%	42.80%	48.05%
Median Value of Owner Occupied Units	\$ 399,700	\$ 368,800	\$ 384,250
Language			
Speak only English			80.00%
Speak languages other than English			20.00%
Speak English less than "very well" (LEP)			6.00%
Employment			
Population In Labor Force Over Age 16			65.00%
Unemployment in Labor Force Over Age 16			3.00%
Computer and Internet Use			
Households With Computer	97.50%	93.90%	95.70%
Households With Broadband Internet Subscription	89.90%	70.60%	80.25%
Health			
Persons With a Disability, Uner Age 65	4.40%	6.60%	5.50%
Persons Without Health Care, Under Age 65	5.30%	9.90%	7.60%
Data In This Chart Gathered from EPA's environmental justice screening and mapping tool, EJSCREEN, using information gathered from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2014-2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, and From US Census Bureau 2015-2019 Information for Chapel Hill and Carrboro			