

AtriCure, Inc.
Form DEF 14A
April 10, 2015

UNITED STATES
SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20549
SCHEDULE 14A

Proxy Statement Pursuant to Section 14(a) of the
Securities Exchange Act of 1934
(Amendment No. __)

Filed by the Registrant

Filed by a Party other than the Registrant

Check the appropriate box:

Preliminary Proxy Statement

Confidential, for Use of the Commission Only (as permitted by Rule 14a-6(e)(2))

Definitive Proxy Statement

Definitive Additional Materials

Soliciting Material Pursuant to §14a-11(c) or Rule 14a-12

AtriCure, Inc.

(Name of Registrant as Specified In Its Charter)

(Name of Person(s) Filing Proxy Statement, if other than the Registrant)

Payment of Filing Fee (Check the appropriate box):

No fee required

.. Fee computed on table below per Exchange Act Rules 14a-6(i)(1) and 0-11

(1) Title of each class of securities to which transaction applies:

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(3) Per unit price or other underlying value of transaction computed pursuant to Exchange Act Rule 0-11 (set forth the amount on which the filing fee is calculated and state how it was determined):

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(1) Amount Previously Paid:

(2) Form, Schedule or Registration Statement No.:

(3) Filing Party:

(4) Date Filed:

ATRICURE, INC.

6217 Centre Park Drive

West Chester, Ohio 45069

NOTICE OF 2015 ANNUAL MEETING OF STOCKHOLDERS

TO BE HELD ON MAY 20, 2015

To Our Stockholders:

You are cordially invited to attend the 2015 Annual Meeting of Stockholders (Annual Meeting) of AtriCure, Inc. (the Company or AtriCure). The Annual Meeting will be held at our principal executive offices located at 6217 Centre Park Drive, West Chester, Ohio 45069 on Wednesday, May 20, 2015, for the following purposes, as more fully described in the accompanying proxy statement:

1. To elect nine directors to serve for a one-year term that expires at the 2016 Annual Meeting of Stockholders and until their successors have been duly elected and qualified;
2. To ratify the appointment of Deloitte & Touche LLP as our independent registered public accounting firm for the year ending December 31, 2015;
3. To conduct an advisory vote on the compensation of our named executive officers as disclosed in this proxy statement; and
4. To transact such other business as may properly come before the Annual Meeting.

The Annual Meeting will begin promptly at 9:00 a.m. EDT, and check-in will begin at 8:30 a.m. EDT. Only holders of record of shares of AtriCure common stock (Nasdaq: ATRC) at the close of business on April 1, 2015 will be entitled to notice of, and to vote at, the Annual Meeting and any postponements or adjournments of the Annual Meeting.

We continue to take advantage of U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission rules that allow companies to furnish their proxy materials over the Internet. As a result, we are mailing to most of our stockholders a Notice of Internet Availability of Proxy Materials (Notice) with this proxy statement and our 2014 Annual Report. The Notice contains instructions on how to access and review those documents over the Internet. The Company believes that this process allows us to provide our stockholders with the information they need in a more timely manner.

A complete list of stockholders entitled to vote at the Annual Meeting will be available for examination by any stockholder for any purpose in connection with the Annual Meeting during normal business hours at our principal executive offices for a period of at least 10 days prior to the Annual Meeting.

By order of the Board of Directors,
/s/ M. Andrew Wade
M. Andrew Wade

Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer

West Chester, Ohio

April 10, 2015

YOUR VOTE IS IMPORTANT!

REGARDLESS OF WHETHER YOU PLAN TO ATTEND THE ANNUAL MEETING, PLEASE PROMPTLY COMPLETE, SIGN, DATE AND RETURN THE ENCLOSED PROXY CARD IN THE ACCOMPANYING POSTAGE-PAID ENVELOPE, WHICH REQUIRES NO ADDITIONAL POSTAGE IF IT IS MAILED IN THE UNITED STATES. EVEN IF YOU HAVE VOTED BY PROXY, YOU MAY STILL VOTE IN PERSON IF YOU ATTEND THE ANNUAL MEETING. YOU MAY REVOKE YOUR PROXY AT ANY TIME BEFORE IT IS VOTED AT THE ANNUAL MEETING.

ATRICURE, INC.

*****IMPORTANT NOTICE*****

Regarding Internet Availability of Proxy Materials

for the Annual Meeting to be held on May 20, 2015

You are receiving this communication because you hold shares in the above company, and the materials you should review before you cast your vote are now available.

The proxy statement and annual report to security holders are available at:

<http://ir.atricure.com/phoenix.zhtml?c=189981&p=proxy>

ATRICURE, INC.

PROXY STATEMENT

FOR

2015 ANNUAL MEETING OF STOCKHOLDERS

The Board of Directors of AtriCure, Inc., a Delaware corporation, is soliciting the enclosed proxy from you. The proxy will be used at our 2015 Annual Meeting of Stockholders to be held on Wednesday, May 20, 2015, beginning at 9:00 a.m. EDT at our principal executive offices located at 6217 Centre Park Drive, West Chester, Ohio 45069, and at any postponements or adjournments thereof. This proxy statement contains important information regarding the 2015 Annual Meeting of Stockholders. Specifically, it identifies the matters upon which you are being asked to vote, provides information that you may find useful in determining how to vote and describes the voting procedures.

In this proxy statement: the terms *we*, *our*, *us*, *AtriCure* and the *Company* each refer to AtriCure, Inc.; the term *Board* means our Board of Directors; the term *proxy materials* means this proxy statement, the enclosed proxy card and our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2014, filed with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC); and the term *meeting* means our 2015 Annual Meeting of Stockholders, including any postponements or adjournments thereof.

We are sending these proxy materials on or about April 10, 2015 to all stockholders of record at the close of business on April 1, 2015 (the Record Date).

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS REGARDING THIS SOLICITATION

AND VOTING AT THE ANNUAL MEETING

Why am I receiving these proxy materials?

We sent you these proxy materials because our Board is soliciting your proxy to vote at the meeting. As a stockholder of record at the close of business on April 1, 2015, you are invited to attend the meeting and are entitled to and requested to vote on the items of business described in this proxy statement.

What information is contained in this proxy statement?

The information in this proxy statement relates to the proposals to be voted on at the meeting, the voting process, the compensation of our directors and most highly paid executive officers during 2014 and certain other required information.

Who is entitled to vote at the meeting?

Only stockholders who owned our common stock at the close of business on April 1, 2015 are entitled to notice of and to vote at the meeting and at any postponements or adjournments thereof. If you are not a stockholder of record but hold shares in street name (that is, through a broker or nominee), you will need to provide proof of beneficial ownership as of April 1, 2015, such as your most recent brokerage account statement, a copy of the voting instruction card provided by your broker, trustee or nominee, or other similar evidence of ownership. All stockholders should be prepared to present photo identification for admittance.

What items of business will be voted on at the meeting?

The items of business scheduled to be voted on at the meeting are:

1. The election of nine nominees to serve as directors on our Board;
2. The ratification of the appointment of our independent registered public accounting firm for the 2015 year; and
3. An advisory vote on the compensation of our named executive officers as disclosed in this proxy statement.

These proposals are described more fully below. As of the date of this proxy statement, this is the only business that our Board intends to present or knows of that others will present at the meeting. If any other matter or matters are properly brought before the Annual Meeting, or any postponement or adjournment thereof, each properly executed proxy card will be voted in the discretion of the proxies named therein.

How does the Board of Directors recommend that I vote?

Our Board recommends that you vote your shares:

1. FOR each of the director nominees;
2. FOR the ratification of our independent registered public accounting firm for 2015; and
3. FOR the approval of the compensation of our named executive officers.

What are my voting rights?

On each matter to be voted upon, you have one vote for each share of common stock you own as of April 1, 2015. You may vote all shares owned by you as of April 1, 2015, including (1) shares held directly in your name as the *stockholder of record* and (2) shares held for you as the *beneficial owner* through a broker, trustee or other nominee such as a bank.

What constitutes a quorum?

A quorum is required to conduct business at the meeting. The presence at the meeting, in person or by proxy, of the holders of a majority of the shares of our common stock entitled to vote at the meeting will constitute a quorum. As of April 1, 2015, 28,362,693 shares of our common stock were outstanding. Both abstentions and broker non-votes are counted for the purpose of determining the presence of a quorum.

What is the difference between holding shares as a stockholder of record and as a beneficial owner?

If your shares are registered directly in your name with our transfer agent, American Stock Transfer & Trust Company, you are considered, with respect to those shares, the *stockholder of record*, and these proxy materials are being sent directly to you by us. As the *stockholder of record*, you have the right to grant your voting proxy directly to the persons named as proxy holders or to vote in person at the meeting. We have enclosed a proxy card for your use.

If your shares are held in a brokerage account or by another nominee, you are considered the *beneficial owner* of shares held in *street name*, and these proxy materials are being forwarded to you together with a voting instruction card. As the beneficial owner, you have the right to direct your broker, trustee or nominee how to vote and are also invited to attend the meeting. Please note that since a beneficial owner is not the *stockholder of record*, you may not vote these shares in person at the meeting unless you obtain a legal proxy from the broker, trustee or nominee that holds your shares, which gives you the right to vote the shares at the meeting. Your broker, trustee or nominee has enclosed or provided voting instructions for your use in directing the broker, trustee or nominee as to how you would like them to vote your shares.

How can I vote my shares in person at the meeting?

Shares held in your name as the stockholder of record may be voted in person at the meeting. Shares held beneficially in street name may be voted in person only if you obtain a legal proxy from the broker, trustee or nominee that holds your shares, which gives you the right to vote the shares. Even if you plan to attend the meeting, we recommend that you also submit your proxy card or voting instructions as described below so that your vote will be counted if you later decide not to, or are unable to, attend the meeting.

Can I vote my shares without attending the meeting?

Whether you hold shares directly as the stockholder of record or beneficially in street name, you may direct how your shares are voted without attending the meeting. Stockholders of record may submit proxies by completing, signing and dating their proxy cards and mailing them in the accompanying pre-addressed envelope. Stockholders holding shares beneficially in street name may vote by mail by completing, signing and dating the voting instruction cards provided by their broker, trustee or nominee and mailing them in the accompanying pre-addressed envelope.

What if I want to revoke and change my vote?

You may change your vote at any time prior to the vote at the meeting. If you are the stockholder of record, you may change your vote by granting a new proxy bearing a later date (which automatically revokes the earlier proxy), by providing a written notice of revocation to our Secretary prior to your shares being voted or by attending the meeting and voting in person. Please note that attending the meeting will not cause your previously granted proxy to be revoked unless you specifically so request. For shares you hold beneficially in street name, you may change your vote by submitting new voting instructions to your broker, trustee or nominee, or, if you have obtained a legal proxy from your broker, trustee or nominee which gives you the right to vote your shares, by attending the meeting and voting in person.

What vote is required to approve each item and how are votes counted?

The vote required to approve each item of business and the method for counting votes is set forth below:

Election of Directors. The nine director nominees receiving the highest number of affirmative **FOR** votes at the Annual Meeting (a plurality of votes cast) will be elected to serve as directors. You may vote **FOR** all of the director nominees or **WITHHOLD** your vote for any or all director nominees. A properly executed proxy marked **WITHHOLD** with respect to the election of one or more director nominees will not be voted with respect to the director or directors indicated, although it will be counted for purposes of determining whether there is a quorum.

Ratification of the Independent Registered Public Accounting Firm. For the approval of the ratification of the independent registered public accounting firm, the affirmative **FOR** vote of a majority of the shares represented in person or by proxy and entitled to vote will be required for approval. You may vote **FOR**, **AGAINST** or **ABSTAIN** for this item of business. If you **ABSTAIN**, your abstention has the same effect as a vote **AGAINST**.

Advisory Vote on Compensation of Named Executive Officers. For the approval, on an advisory basis, of the compensation of our named executive officers, the affirmative **FOR** vote of a majority of the shares represented in person or by proxy and entitled to vote will be required for approval. You may vote **FOR**, **AGAINST** or **ABSTAIN** for this item of business. If you **ABSTAIN**, your abstention has the same effect as a vote **AGAINST**.

If you provide specific instructions with regard to certain items, your shares will be voted as you instruct on such items. If you sign your proxy card or voting instruction card without giving specific instructions, your shares will be voted in accordance with the recommendations of the Board (**FOR** all of the nominees to the

Board, FOR ratification of the independent registered public accounting firm, FOR the approval of the compensation of our named executive officers and in the discretion of the proxy holders on any other matters that properly come before the meeting).

What is a broker non-vote ?

Under the rules that govern brokers who have record ownership of shares that are held in street name for their clients who are the beneficial owners of the shares, brokers have the discretion to vote such shares on routine matters. The ratification of the appointment of an independent public accounting firm (Proposal 2) is considered a routine matter. Your broker, therefore, may vote your shares in its discretion on this routine matter if you do not instruct your broker how to vote on them. If a matter is not considered routine, then your broker is prohibited from voting your shares on the matter unless you have given voting instructions on that matter to your broker. **Because Proposal 1 (election of directors) and Proposal 3 (advisory vote on compensation of named executive officers) are not considered routine, brokers holding shares for their customers will not have the ability to cast votes with respect to Proposals 1 and 3 unless they have received instructions from their customers. It is important, therefore, that you provide instructions to your broker if your shares are held by a broker so that your votes with respect to Proposals 1 and 3 are counted. Your broker, therefore, will need to return a proxy card without voting on Proposals 1 and 3 if you do not give voting instructions with respect to these matters. This is referred to as a broker non-vote.**

How are broker non-votes counted?

Broker non-votes will be counted for the purpose of determining the presence of a quorum for the transaction of business, but they will not be counted in tabulating the voting result for any particular proposal.

How are abstentions counted?

If you return a proxy card that indicates an abstention from voting, the shares represented will be counted for the purpose of determining both the presence of a quorum and the total number of shares represented and entitled to vote with respect to a proposal (other than with respect to the election of directors), but they will not be voted on any matter at the meeting. Accordingly, abstentions will have the same effect as a vote AGAINST Proposals 2 and 3.

What happens if additional matters are presented at the meeting?

Other than the three proposals described in this proxy statement, we are not aware of any other business to be acted upon at the meeting. If you grant a proxy, the persons named as proxy holders, Michael H. Carrel (our President and Chief Executive Officer) and M. Andrew Wade (our Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer), will have the discretion to vote your shares on any additional matters properly presented for a vote at the meeting. If, for any unforeseen reason, any of our nominees is not available as a candidate for director, the persons named as proxy holders will vote your proxy for such other candidate or candidates as may be nominated by our Board.

Who will serve as inspector of election?

The Secretary of the Company will tabulate the votes and act as inspector of election at the meeting.

What should I do in the event that I receive more than one set of proxy/voting materials?

You may receive more than one set of these proxy materials, including multiple copies of this proxy statement and multiple proxy cards or voting instruction cards. For instance, if you hold your shares in more than one brokerage account, you may receive a separate voting instruction card for each brokerage account in which

you hold shares. In addition, if you are a stockholder of record and your shares are registered in more than one name, you may receive more than one proxy card. Please complete, sign, date and return each proxy card and voting instruction card that you receive to ensure that all of your shares are voted.

Who is soliciting my vote and who will bear the costs of this solicitation?

Your vote is being solicited on behalf of the Board, and the Company will bear the entire cost of solicitation of proxies, including preparation, assembly, printing and mailing of this proxy statement. In addition to these mailed proxy materials, our directors and employees may also solicit proxies in person, by telephone, by e-mail or by other means of communication. Directors and employees will not be paid any additional compensation for soliciting proxies. We may reimburse brokerage firms, banks and other agents for the cost of forwarding proxy materials to beneficial owners. We may also engage the services of a professional proxy solicitation firm to aid in the solicitation of proxies from certain brokers, bank nominees and other institutional owners. Our costs for such services, if retained, will not be material.

Where can I find the voting results of the meeting?

We intend to announce preliminary voting results at the meeting and publish final results in a Current Report on Form 8-K to be filed with the United States Securities and Exchange Commission within four business days after the meeting.

What is the deadline to propose actions for consideration at next year's annual meeting of stockholders or to nominate individuals to serve as directors?

As a stockholder, you may be entitled to present proposals for action at a future meeting of stockholders, including director nominations.

Stockholder Proposals: For a stockholder proposal to be considered for inclusion in our proxy statement for the annual meeting to be held in 2016 (2016 Annual Meeting), the written proposal must be received by the Secretary of AtriCure at our principal executive offices no earlier than November 12, 2015 and no later than December 12, 2015. However, if the date of our 2016 Annual Meeting changes by more than 30 days from the date of the meeting, then your notice must be received no later than the close of business on the later of (i) the 150th day prior to the date of the 2016 Annual Meeting or (ii) the 10th day following the date we make a public announcement of the date of the 2016 Annual Meeting. Any notices delivered outside of these dates shall be considered untimely. Such proposals must provide the information required by our Bylaws and also must comply with the requirements of Regulation 14A of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 and any other applicable rules established by the SEC. Proposals should be addressed to:

AtriCure, Inc.

Attn: Secretary

6217 Centre Park Drive

West Chester, Ohio 45069

Nomination of Director Candidates: You may propose director candidates for consideration by our Board. Any such recommendations should include the nominee's name and qualifications for Board membership and should be directed to our Secretary at the address set forth above. In addition, our Bylaws permit stockholders to nominate directors for election at an annual meeting of stockholders. To nominate a director, the stockholder must provide the information required by our Bylaws, as well as a statement by the nominee consenting to being named as a nominee and to serve as a director if elected. In addition, the stockholder must give timely notice to our Secretary in accordance with the provisions of our Bylaws, which require that the notice be received by our Secretary no earlier than November 12, 2015 and no later than December 12, 2015.

Copy of Bylaw Provisions: You may contact our Secretary at our principal executive offices for a copy of the relevant Bylaw provisions regarding the requirements for making stockholder proposals and nominating director candidates.

PROPOSAL ONE ELECTION OF DIRECTORS

The Board of Directors

Our Amended and Restated Certificate of Incorporation provides that each director shall be elected at each annual meeting of stockholders for a term of one year. Our Board currently consists of the following nine directors: Michael H. Carrel, Mark A. Collar, Scott W. Drake, Michael D. Hooven, Richard M. Johnston, Elizabeth D. Krell, Ph.D., Mark R. Lanning, Karen P. Robards and Robert S. White, each of whose terms expire at this meeting.

Director Nominees

The Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee recommended and the Board nominated the following people, all of whom are current directors, for re-election as directors: Michael H. Carrel, Mark A. Collar, Scott W. Drake, Michael D. Hooven, Richard M. Johnston, Elizabeth D. Krell, Ph.D., Mark R. Lanning, Karen P. Robards and Robert S. White. If elected, these nominees will hold office as directors until our 2016 Annual Meeting and until their respective successors are elected and qualified or until their earlier death, resignation or removal.

Biographical Information of Directors and Director Nominees

The names of each member of the Board and nominee for director, where indicated, their ages as of April 1, 2015, length of service on the Board and certain biographical information is as follows:

Richard M. Johnston. Mr. Johnston, 80, has served as one of our directors since June 2002 and as Chairman of the Board since February 2005. From 2000 to 2010, Mr. Johnston served as a Managing Member of Camden Partners Holdings, LLC, a private equity firm, and he is now a Retired Member of that firm and provides certain consulting services to it. Mr. Johnston currently serves as a director of BioMedical Enterprises, Inc. Mr. Johnston has previously served as director of privately-held LipoScience Inc., Lombard Medical Technologies PLC, a publicly-held company in the United Kingdom, Medivance, Inc. and Webmedx, Inc., all Camden Partners portfolio companies. He also served as Chairman of privately-held Picis, Inc. as well as a director of Pet DRx Corporation, a publicly-held company. From 1961 to 2000, Mr. Johnston was employed by The Hillman Company, an investment holding company with diversified operations, where he served from 1970 to 2000 as Vice President, Investments and as a director. From 1979 to 2003, Mr. Johnston was Chairman of the Board of The Western Pennsylvania Hospital and its successors, The Western Pennsylvania Healthcare System and West Penn Allegheny Health System. Mr. Johnston received his B.S. from Washington and Lee University and his M.B.A. from The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania. Mr. Johnston's service as a director of several medical device companies and chairman of the board of a large healthcare system provides him insight into the high-level corporate governance, executive compensation and business management matters that the Company and the Board consider on a regular basis.

Michael H. Carrel. Mr. Carrel, 44, has served as President, Chief Executive Officer and director since November 2012. Mr. Carrel served as President and Chief Executive Officer of Vital Images, a publicly-traded medical imaging software company from 2008 until 2012 until it was sold to Toshiba. Mr. Carrel originally joined Vital Images in January 2005 as Chief Operating Officer and Chief Financial Officer. Prior to Vital Images, Mr. Carrel was President and CEO of Zamba Corporation, a publicly-traded technology company and Chief Financial Officer of NextNet Wireless, a privately-held provider of non-line-of-sight plug and play broadband wireless access systems, now part of Motorola. Mr. Carrel is a member of the Board of Directors of Lombard Medical, Inc. and the American Heart Associations of Cincinnati and Minnesota. Mr. Carrel holds a B.S. in Accounting from The Pennsylvania State University and an M.B.A. from The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania.

Mark A. Collar. Mr. Collar, 62, has served as one of our directors since February 2008. Mr. Collar retired in 2008 as an officer within the Procter and Gamble Company where his roles included President of the Global Pharmaceuticals and Personal Health business. Mr. Collar joined Procter and Gamble in 1975 as a sales representative, then moved into advertising, and subsequently assumed roles of progressive responsibility within the Health and Personal Care, Beauty Care, New Business Development, Pharmaceuticals and Personal Health Care Products divisions over his 32-year career. Mr. Collar, who now owns his own investment and consulting business, is a director of First Financial Bancorp, a publicly-held bank holding company and Enable Injections, a start-up company focusing on high volume injection devices for biologic drugs, and serves in director and advisory roles in several philanthropic, academic and economic development organizations. Mr. Collar received his B.S. from Northern Illinois University. Mr. Collar's experience as a public company executive and board member provides him insight into high-level corporate governance and business management matters which the Board considers on a regular basis.

Scott W. Drake. Mr. Drake, 47, has served as one of our directors since September 2013. Mr. Drake currently serves as President and Chief Executive Officer of the Spectranetics Corporation. Spectranetics is a publicly-held growth company that develops, manufactures and distributes single-use medical devices used in minimally invasive procedures within the cardiovascular system. The company's products are sold in more than 40 countries and are used to access and treat arterial blockages in the legs and heart and to remove pacemaker and defibrillator cardiac leads. The 2014 acquisition of AngioScore, Inc. broadened the company's portfolio of highly differentiated technologies and supports the organization's aggressive growth trajectory. Prior to joining Spectranetics, Mr. Drake served as Senior Vice President, Operations of DaVita, Inc., a leading U.S. provider of kidney care and dialysis, from 2009 to August 2011. Previously, Mr. Drake held several positions of increasing responsibility within various healthcare business units at Covidien, Plc over a period of 17 years, including: Global Business Unit President, Respiratory and Monitoring Solutions, President, Valleylab (re-named as the Surgical Solutions Group) and Vice President and General Manager, Critical Care. Mr. Drake is an EY 2014 Entrepreneur Of The Year. He serves on the Board of Directors for the Spectranetics Corporation, Just Right Surgical, and the Medical Device Manufacturers Association (MDMA). Mr. Drake holds a B.S. in Business Administration from Miami University of Ohio. As a seasoned executive, Mr. Drake has significant leadership experience managing growing businesses, achieving sustainable revenue growth and driving operational improvements which the Board considers as valuable skills for evaluating and improving the Company's competitive position.

Michael D. Hooven. Mr. Hooven, 59, is one of our founders and has served as a director since August 2002 and as a consultant during 2007 and 2009. From August 2002 through December 2006, Mr. Hooven served as Chief Technology Officer, and from August 2002 through February 2005, he served as Chairman of the Board. From November 2000 to August 2002, he served as our President and Chief Executive Officer. Mr. Hooven is currently President and Chief Executive Officer of Enable Injections, a start-up company focusing on high volume injection devices for biologic drugs. From 1994 until its acquisition by AtriCure in August, 2005, Mr. Hooven served as President and Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of Enable Medical Corporation, a developer and manufacturer of surgical instruments that Mr. Hooven co-founded. In 2012 Mr. Hooven was appointed by the Governor to the Ohio Third Frontier Advisory Board, a \$2 billion state-funded initiative to promote high-tech business growth in Ohio. Mr. Hooven is also a director of BioOhio, a nonprofit organization which promotes the acceleration and growth of life science companies in Ohio, and Minimally Invasive Devices LLC, a privately-held medical device company that develops products that facilitate minimally invasive surgery. From 1986 to 1994, Mr. Hooven served as Director of New Product Development at Ethicon Endo-Surgery, Inc. In addition, Mr. Hooven has also served in a variety of positions at Cordis Corporation and Siemens Medical of Siemens AG. Mr. Hooven received his B.S. and M.S. from the University of Michigan. As the founder of our Company, Mr. Hooven possesses a familiarity with respect to its operating history and, as a founder and senior executive of, and consultant to, several other companies in the medical and surgical device industry, he brings to the Board an industry-wide perspective that can be utilized in evaluating and improving the Company's competitive position.

Elizabeth D. Krell, Ph.D. Dr. Krell, 66, has served as one of our directors since June 2006. Dr. Krell is currently a private consultant on matters pertaining to Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulated products,

as well as FDA policies and procedures. From 2003 to 2004, she served as the Executive Vice President for Technology and Regulatory Affairs at the Advanced Medical Technology Association (AdvaMed), the largest trade association for medical device manufacturers. From 1975 to 2001, she served in the FDA, starting as a bench researcher and ending in the FDA's top science job as the Acting Senior Advisor for Science, advising the Commissioner and other top FDA officials on science and science management. Dr. Krell served from 1990 to 2001 as the Deputy Director for Science in the FDA's Center for Devices and Radiological Health (CDRH). In this position, she provided executive leadership in the development of programs to assure the safety and effectiveness of medical devices and diagnostic products and the reduction of population exposure to radiation emitted from medical, industrial and consumer products. Previously, she directed CDRH's science and engineering labs. Dr. Krell currently serves as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Global Medical Device Nomenclature Agency. Dr. Krell received her B.A. from S.U.N.Y. Binghamton and her Ph.D. from Georgetown University. Dr. Krell brings valuable risk assessment and healthcare compliance skills to the Board as a result of her experience designing safety and effectiveness programs as well as familiarity with many aspects of the FDA's policies and procedures, which plays an important part in the Company's business.

Mark R. Lanning, C.P.A., C.G.M.A. Mr. Lanning, 60, has served as one of our directors since February 2006. Mr. Lanning currently serves as Vice President-Finance and Chief Financial Officer of Frisch's Restaurants. Prior to joining Frisch's, Mr. Lanning served as Vice President, Investor Relations and Treasurer of Hillenbrand, Inc., Hill-Rom, Inc. and Hillenbrand Industries, diversified leaders in the healthcare equipment, funeral services, and material handling industries. Prior to joining Hillenbrand in 1988, Mr. Lanning spent twelve years in various accounting positions with Ernst & Whinney (now EY). Mr. Lanning, a Certified Public Accountant and a Chartered Global Management Accountant, is presently a member of the Business and Industry Executive Committee of the American Institute of CPAs (AICPA). In addition, he has served as a member of Council of the AICPA and is a past Chairman and Board member of the Indiana CPA Society. Mr. Lanning received his B.S. in Accounting from Ball State University. As a certified public accountant, Mr. Lanning developed significant experience in preparing, auditing, analyzing and evaluating financial statements and dealt with broad and complex accounting issues comparable to those of the Company, which qualifies him as an audit committee financial expert under SEC rules.

Karen P. Robards. Ms. Robards, 65, has served as one of our directors since November 2000. Since 1987, Ms. Robards has been a partner of Robards & Company, LLC, a financial advisory firm. From 1976 to 1987, Ms. Robards was an investment banker at Morgan Stanley where she headed its healthcare investment banking activities. Ms. Robards served from 1996 to 2005 as a director of Enable Medical Corporation, a developer and manufacturer of surgical instruments, which AtriCure acquired on August 10, 2005. From 2007 to 2010, Ms. Robards also served as a director of Care Investment Trust, a publicly-held real estate investment trust focusing on investment opportunities in the healthcare industry. Ms. Robards currently serves as Vice Chair of the Board and Chair of the Audit Committee of BlackRock Closed-End Mutual Funds and as a director of Greenhill & Co. Ms. Robards is a founder and director of the Cooke Center for Learning & Development, a not-for-profit educational organization in New York City. Ms. Robards received her B.A. from Smith College and her M.B.A. from Harvard Business School. The Board believes that the Company benefits from Ms. Robards' substantial knowledge and experience in the areas of corporate finance and capital markets, most of which was gained within the healthcare field. Ms. Robards also qualifies as an audit committee financial expert under SEC rules due to her experience in analyzing financial statements during her professional career and her membership on other public company audit committees.

Robert S. White. Mr. White, 53, has served as one of our directors since March 2013. Mr. White serves as President and Chief Operating Officer of Entellus Medical, a privately-held company that delivers innovative, high quality, minimally invasive therapeutic solutions to healthcare providers and their patients who suffer from sinusitis. Prior to joining Entellus, Mr. White served as President and CEO of TYRX, a privately-held company acquired by Medtronic, Inc. TYRX commercializes innovative, implantable combination drug and device products focused on infection control. Prior to joining TYRX, Mr. White held several positions with Medtronic, Inc. Mr. White served as President of Medtronic Kyphon following its \$3.9 billion acquisition of the spinal

treatment business. During his time with Medtronic, Mr. White also served as President of Physio Control and was responsible for commercial operations of the Cardiac Rhythm Disease Management business as Vice President of U.S. Sales and Global Marketing. Earlier in his career, Mr. White held positions with General Electric Company and Eli Lilly and Company, among others. Mr. White serves on the Board of Directors of Novadaq, a publically traded provider of clinically relevant imaging solutions for use in surgical and diagnostic procedures, and HyperBranch Medical Technology, a privately-held company that develops and markets products capable of adhering tissues, promoting healing, preventing fluid and air leaks, and reducing infections. Mr. White holds a B.S. in Aerospace Engineering from the University of Missouri-Rolla and an M.B.A. from Cornell University. The Board believes that Mr. White's significant knowledge of the medical device industry and experience in growing companies commercially uniquely benefit AtriCure and enhance its capacities in business development initiatives.

Board of Directors Recommendation

THE BOARD RECOMMENDS THAT YOU VOTE FOR EACH OF THE NINE NOMINEES FOR DIRECTOR LISTED ABOVE.

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND BOARD MATTERS
Independence of the Board

The Nasdaq Stock Market (Nasdaq) listing standards require that a majority of the members of a listed company's board of directors qualify as independent, as affirmatively determined by the board of directors. Our Board consists of the following nine directors: Richard M. Johnston (Chairman), Michael H. Carrel, Mark A. Collar, Scott W. Drake, Michael D. Hooven, Elizabeth D. Krell, Ph.D., Mark R. Lanning, Karen P. Robards and Robert S. White. Our Board has affirmatively determined that each of the directors and nominees, other than Michael H. Carrel, our President and Chief Executive Officer and Michael D. Hooven, who has been an employee and a consultant of ours, are independent directors under the listing standards established by Nasdaq.

As required under the Nasdaq listing standards, our non-management directors meet in regularly scheduled executive sessions at which only independent directors are present.

Committees of the Board

Our Board has four standing committees: the Audit Committee, the Compensation Committee, the Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee and the Strategy Committee. Each committee has a written charter which is available on our website at www.atricure.com under Investors-Corporate Governance. From time to time, our Board may also appoint committees for special purposes. The table below provides the membership of each of the committees, with further discussion on each committee and its function below the table.

Name	Audit	Compensation	Nominating and Corporate Governance	Strategy
Mr. Collar		X	C	X
Mr. Drake			X	X
Mr. Johnston		C	X	X
Dr. Krell, Ph.D.		X	X	
Mr. Lanning	C*	X		
Ms. Robards	X*			
Mr. White	X			C

C = Chair

* = Board designated audit committee financial expert under SEC rules

Audit Committee. Our Audit Committee is responsible for overseeing our financial controls, annual audit and financial reporting and reviews the effectiveness of our internal control over financial reporting and accounting and reporting practices and procedures with our management and our independent registered public accountants. In addition, this Committee reviews the qualifications of our independent registered public accountants, is responsible for their appointment, compensation, retention and oversight and reviews the scope, fees and results of activities related to audit and non-audit services. Our Board has determined that each member of the Audit Committee meets the independence and financial literacy requirements of the Nasdaq rules and the independence requirements of the SEC. Our Board has also determined that Mark R. Lanning and Karen P. Robards each qualify as an audit committee financial expert, as defined in SEC rules.

Compensation Committee. The Compensation Committee's principal responsibilities are to assist the Board in overseeing the Company's management compensation policies and practices, including to determine and approve the compensation of our Chief Executive Officer, review and approve compensation levels for our other executive officers, review and approve management incentive compensation policies and programs, review and approve equity compensation programs for employees and exercise discretion in the administration of those

programs, review with management our disclosures under Compensation Discussion and Analysis, or CD&A, and produce an annual report on executive compensation that contains a recommendation with respect to inclusion of the CD&A in our filings with the SEC. The composition of the Compensation Committee satisfies the independence requirements of Nasdaq.

Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee. The Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee is responsible for reviewing and making recommendations on the composition of our Board and selection of directors, periodically assessing the functioning of our Board and its committees, overseeing certain regulatory compliance issues in connection with our Corporate Integrity Agreement between the Office of Inspector General of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and making recommendations to our Board regarding corporate governance matters and practices. The composition of the Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee satisfies the independence requirements of Nasdaq.

Strategy Committee. The Strategy Committee is responsible for reviewing and providing guidance with respect to potential mergers, acquisitions, divestitures, joint ventures and other key strategic transactions outside the ordinary course of business (Corporate Strategic Transactions), reviewing with management prospective candidates for Corporate Strategic Transactions, reviewing periodic reports from management on completed Corporate Strategic Transactions and providing periodic reports to the Board of any Corporate Strategic Transactions being considered, or authorized and approved, by management.

Charters for each of these committees are available on our website at www.atricure.com under Investors Corporate Governance.

Meetings of the Board and Committees of the Board

During 2014, the Board held six meetings and took action in writing on two occasions. The Audit Committee held seven meetings, the Compensation Committee held seven meetings, the Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee held four meetings and the Strategy Committee held three meetings.

Our directors are strongly encouraged to attend the Company's annual meeting of stockholders. All of our directors attended the 2014 Annual Meeting, as well as at least 75% of the aggregate of all Board meetings and all meetings of Committees on which such directors served during 2014.

Consideration of Director Nominees

Stockholder Nominations and Recommendations. As described above in the Question and Answer section under What is the deadline to propose actions for consideration at next year's meeting of stockholders or to nominate individuals to serve as directors? our Bylaws set forth the procedure for the proper submission of stockholder nominations for membership on our Board. In addition, the Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee may consider properly submitted stockholder recommendations (as opposed to formal nominations) for candidates for membership on the Board. A stockholder may make such a recommendation by submitting the following information to our Secretary at 6217 Centre Park Drive, West Chester, Ohio 45069: the candidate's name, age, home and business contact information, principal occupation or employment, the class and number of shares of AtriCure stock beneficially owned, information regarding any relationships, arrangements or understandings between the candidate and AtriCure, and any other information relating to the candidate that is required to be disclosed in the solicitation of proxies for election of directors or is otherwise required, including the candidate's written consent to being named in the proxy statement, if any, as a nominee and to serving as a director if elected.

Director Qualifications. Members of our Board should have the highest professional and personal ethics and values, and conduct themselves consistent with our Code of Business Conduct and Ethics. Other than an age limit of 75 for election of directors set by our Board, the Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee has not established specific minimum qualifications for director candidates. The Board determined to waive the age limit

for Richard M. Johnston with respect to election at the Annual Meeting because of the Board's determination that his knowledge and insight continue to benefit the Board and enhance overall Board effectiveness. The Committee believes that candidates and nominees must reflect a Board that is comprised of directors who (i) are predominantly independent, (ii) are of high integrity, (iii) have qualifications that will increase overall Board effectiveness and (iv) meet other requirements as may be required by applicable rules, such as financial literacy or financial expertise with respect to audit committee members.

Identifying and Evaluating Director Nominees. Typically new candidates for nomination to our Board are suggested by existing directors or by our executive officers. However, candidates may also come to the attention of our Board through professional search firms, stockholders or other persons. The Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee will carefully review the qualifications of any candidates who have been properly brought to its attention. Such review may, in the Committee's discretion, include a review solely of information provided to the Committee or may also include discussions with persons familiar with the candidate, an interview with the candidate or other actions that the Committee deems proper. The Committee will consider the suitability of each candidate, including the current members of our Board, in light of the current size and composition of the Board. In evaluating the qualifications of the candidates, the Committee considers many factors including issues of character, judgment, independence, age, expertise, diversity of experience, length of service, other commitments and the like. The Committee evaluates such factors, among others, and does not assign any particular weighting or priority to any of these factors nor does the Committee have a formal policy with respect to diversity. Candidates properly recommended by stockholders are evaluated by the independent directors using the same criteria as other candidates.

Director Compensation

We pay an annual retainer, quarterly in advance, to our non-employee directors of \$25,000. We also pay an additional fee of \$25,000 to the Chairman of the Board, \$15,000 to the Chairperson of the Audit Committee, \$10,000 to the Chairperson of the Compensation Committee, \$7,500 to the Chairperson of the Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee and \$10,000 to the Chairperson of the Strategy Committee. Non-employee directors receive a fee for each Board meeting of \$1,500 for in-person attendance and \$1,000 for participation by telephone at Board meetings that require substantial preparation and follow-up by members of the Board. Non-employee directors also receive a fee for each Committee meeting of \$1,000 for in-person attendance and \$500 for participation by telephone.

Upon joining our Board, each non-employee director receives an initial grant of 50,000 stock options which vest one-fourth on each of the first four anniversaries of the date of the grant. Annually, concurrent with each annual meeting of stockholders, each of our non-employee directors who has been a director for at least six months receives 10,000 stock options, which vest one-third on the earlier of each anniversary of the date of the grant or the annual meeting of stockholders that year. Options granted to non-employee directors have a term of 10 years and an exercise price equal to the closing stock price on the date of grant.

Director Compensation Table

The following table summarizes compensation earned by our non-employee directors for the year ended December 31, 2014.

Name	Fees Earned			Total (\$)
	or Paid in Cash (\$)	Stock Awards \$(¹)	Option Awards\$(¹)	
Richard M. Johnston	\$ 80,750		\$ 105,330	\$ 186,080
Mark A. Collar	55,750		105,330	161,080
Scott W. Drake	35,500		105,330	140,830
Michael D. Hooven	33,000		105,330	138,330 ⁽²⁾
Elizabeth D. Krell, Ph.D.	43,000		105,330	148,330
Mark R. Lanning	61,563		105,330	166,893
Karen P. Robards	40,000		105,330	145,330
Robert S. White	48,000		105,330	153,330

⁽¹⁾ Amounts in the option awards column represent the aggregate grant date fair value of option awards computed, as of each award date, in accordance with Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB) Accounting Standards Codification Topic 718, Compensation Stock Compensation (ASC 718). No stock awards were granted during 2014.

⁽²⁾ This amount does not include the Company's payment of premiums under the group health care plan sponsored by the Company for Mr. Hooven, his wife and son which totaled \$17,329 in 2014.

Corporate Governance Guidelines

The Board has adopted Corporate Governance Guidelines to promote the effective functioning of the Board and its Committees, to promote the interests of stockholders and to create a common set of expectations as to how the Board, its Committees, individual directors and management should perform their respective functions. The Board believes that ethics and integrity cannot be legislated or mandated by directive or policy and that the ethics, character, integrity and values of our directors and management remain a critical safeguard in quality corporate governance. The Corporate Governance Guidelines establish the practices the Board will follow with respect to, among other practices, board composition and selection of board nominees, director responsibilities, chief executive officer evaluation, management development and succession planning, director compensation, board committees and annual board and committee performance evaluations. A copy of the Corporate Governance Guidelines is available on our website at www.atricure.com under Investors Corporate Governance.

Code of Business Conduct and Ethics

AtriCure is committed to maintaining the highest standards of business conduct and ethics. Our Code of Business Conduct and Ethics reflects our values and the business practices and principles of behavior that support this commitment. Our Code of Business Conduct and Ethics is an integral part of our business conduct compliance program and embodies our commitment to conduct operations in accordance with the highest legal and ethical standards. The Code of Business Conduct and Ethics applies to all of our officers, directors and employees and is supplemented by an additional Code of Ethics which is applicable to our Chief Executive Officer, Chief Financial Officer and other senior financial officers. Each officer, director and employee is responsible for understanding and complying with the Code of Business Conduct and Ethics. Each Code is available on our website at www.atricure.com under Investors Corporate Governance. We will post any amendments to either Code, as well as any waivers that are required to be disclosed by the rules of the SEC or Nasdaq, on our website.

We have also adopted and implemented voluntary standards established by the Advanced Medical Technology Association (AdvaMed), a United States trade association for medical device manufacturers, governing interactions between medical device manufacturers and healthcare professionals known as the

AdvaMed Code of Ethics on Interactions with Health Care Professionals (AdvaMed Code). These standards are intended to ensure that such interactions are transparent and comply with applicable laws, regulations and government guidance. The standards address interactions related to sales and marketing practices, research and development, product training and education, grants and charitable contributions, support of third-party educational conferences and consulting arrangements.

Compensation Committee Interlocks and Insider Participation

During 2014 and through the date of this proxy statement, none of the members of our Compensation Committee were or are an officer or employee of the Company, had or have any relationship with the Company requiring disclosure under Item 404 of Regulation S-K and no executive officer of the Company served or serves on the compensation committee or board of any company that employed or employs any member of the Company's Compensation Committee or Board of Directors.

Certain Relationships and Related Party Transactions

Our Audit Committee charter provides that the Audit Committee will review and discuss with management potential transactions with related parties. Related party transactions requiring Audit Committee approval include transactions that are significant in size and transactions that involve terms or aspects that differ from those which would be entered into between independent parties.

Communications with the Board of Directors

Stockholders are invited to communicate to the Board or its committees by writing to: AtriCure, Inc., Chairman of the Board of Directors or the Chair of a Board committee, 6217 Centre Park Drive, West Chester, Ohio 45069. All such stockholder communications will be forwarded to the specific director or directors to whom the communications are addressed.

Board Leadership Structure

The Company has separate Chief Executive Officer and Board Chairman positions. Mr. Johnston serves as our Chairman of the Board and presides over Board meetings and provides the Company with the benefit of his strategic and creative vision, an appreciation for and understanding of the risks associated with the Company's business and an intimate knowledge of the Company's technologies and the medical device industry. Mr. Carrel serves as our President and Chief Executive Officer and provides the Company with the benefit of his extensive knowledge of the Company's operations, an understanding of the day-to-day challenges faced by companies in the medical device industry and his business and financial know-how.

The Board currently believes that, at this time, based on the skills and responsibilities of the various Board members and management, and in light of the general economic, business and competitive environment facing the Company, the separation of the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer roles enhances appropriate oversight of management by the Board, Board independence, the accountability to our stockholders by the Board and our overall leadership structure. Furthermore, the Board believes that maintaining separation of the Chairman function from that of the Chief Executive Officer allows the Chief Executive Officer to properly focus on managing the business, rather than requiring a significant portion of his efforts to be spent on also overseeing Board matters.

Board's Role in Risk Oversight

The Board maintains oversight responsibility for the management of the Company's risks and closely monitors the information it receives from management to provide oversight and guidance to our management team concerning the assessment and management of risk. The Board approves the Company's high level goals, strategies and policies to set the tone and direction for appropriate levels of risk taking within the business.

The Board has delegated oversight for matters involving certain specific areas of risk exposure to its committees. Each committee reports to the Board of Directors at regularly scheduled Board meetings, and more frequently if appropriate, with respect to the matters and risks for which each committee provides oversight.

The Audit Committee oversees the integrity of our financial statements, risks related to our financial reporting process and internal controls, the independent registered public accounting firm's qualifications, independence and performance and the Company's corporate finance matters. The role of the Audit Committee includes receiving, at least annually, a discussion of the major risk exposures identified by senior management, the key strategic plan assumptions considered during the assessment and steps implemented to monitor and mitigate such exposures on an ongoing basis.

Our Compensation Committee is responsible primarily for the design and oversight of the Company's executive compensation policies, plans and practices. A key objective of the Compensation Committee is to ensure that the Company's overall executive compensation program appropriately links pay to performance and aligns the interests of the Company's executives with its stockholders.

The Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee oversees risks related to our corporate governance, including Board and director performance, director succession and the Company's Corporate Governance Guidelines and other governance documents. The Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee is also responsible for conducting a re