

## Public Hearing

November 19, 2011

Ms. Keeffe called the public hearing to order at 10:00 a.m. In attendance were Board Members Ms. Keeffe, Mrs. Dacek, Mrs. Rivera-Oven, Mr. Naimon, Ms. Phillips, and Board Staff Ms. Jurgensen, Mrs. Harris, Ms. Roher, Mrs. Rzeszut, and Ms. Merino. The following is a summary of the discussions during the meeting.

Ms. Keeffe thanked all attendees for taking the time to be present and expressed her commitment to an open process with the community. She stated that, as a result of redistricting Congressional, County Council, and School Board boundary lines, as well as budget cuts, staff has proposed some precinct boundary changes, mergers, and deletions. Ms. Keeffe noted that the Board of Elections will be increasing outreach to the community to vote at one of the 5 Early Voting sites (with information about location, parking, and accessibility) or by Absentee ballot by mail. She stated that the time constraint the Board is under played a major factor in the delay of public notification. Ms. Keeffe encouraged people to respond and let us know of any issues.

Ms. Jurgensen reviewed changes to the Congressional, School Board and County Council District boundary lines. She pointed out 61 precincts that have been impacted by the new boundary line configurations.

### Public Comments:

Barbara Sanders, on behalf of The League of Women Voters: Stated that as a frequent observer of the Montgomery County Board of Election meetings, she could personally attest to the great amount of effort expended both by staff and Board members on the proposal for precinct boundary lines. She commended the staff and Board members on their efforts. Mrs. Sanders expressed her concern with the lack of notification describing the need to review precinct boundaries and polling place locations adding that the public deserved more advance knowledge, including an approximate time and location where the changes would be posted. (Comments attached)

Barbara Ditzler: Expressed concern with the relocation of Precinct 13-14, St. Luke's Church, to 13-66, Argyle Park Activity Center. She stated that Precinct 13-14 is separated by barriers of the Beltway and a golf course. Ms. Ditzler urged the Board to take a second look at the proposed relocation of Precinct 13-14. (Comments attached)

Senator Richard S. Madaleno, Jr.: Apologized for the late nature of the legislative redistricting proposal. Senator Madaleno expressed concern with merging Precinct 7-32, Chevy Chase Library, into Precinct 7-01, BCC High School, and Precinct 13-34, Kensington Town Hall, into Precinct 13-26. Senator Madaleno stated that the precincts had communities with a large population of senior citizens and there would be difficulty in accessing the polling places due to heavy traffic during rush hour. (Comments attached)

Jana Goldman: Stated that Precinct 13-14 has the highest voter turnout in the County and expressed concern with merging it with Precinct 13-66, Argyle Recreation Center. Ms. Goldman stated that the precinct has been moved many times in past elections and the voters have always surpassed these obstacles. Ms. Goldman stated that she was unaware of budget issues resulting in the need for some precinct mergers. (Comments attached)

Dolly Kildee: Expressed concern with Precinct 09-02, Gaithersburg High School; she stated that there was a delay of notification to the public about the public hearing and not enough information on mergers and eliminations of precincts. Ms. Kildee stated that the Board of Elections should put more energy into giving the public better notification of public hearings and important changes to precincts. (Comments attached)

Lew Winarsky: Urged the Board to reconsider the decision to relocate Precinct 13-14, St. Luke's, to Argyle Recreation Center. Mr. Winarsky expressed that the move will be a tremendous burden on the elderly community and new families. He suggested that the Board of Elections consider a list serve process through Silver Spring Government Center for future notifications.

Dave Drake: Stated that he would like to know if he could get copies of the maps. Mr. Drake wanted to get clarification on the polling place for Precinct 04-20, Robert Frost Middle School.

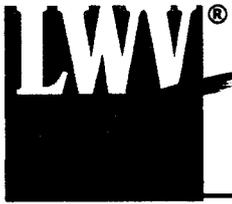
Josephine Wang: Stated that she received a 2 day notice of the Public Hearing and did not have time to prepare anything in advance. She stated that language barriers have resulted in more confusion, especially with other diverse communities. Ms. Wang asked if the Board would consider an outreach to the Chinese and Korean communities.

Karla Walker: Expressed concern with the merging of Precinct 07-32, District 16. Ms. Walker stated that the merge would directly impact many elderly voters as well as many retirees living on Connecticut Avenue. She suggested that the Board consider merging it with Precinct 07-16, North Chevy Chase Elementary School instead. (Comments attached)

Ms. Keeffe thanked everyone for their comments and emphasized that final decisions would not be made until December 12, 2011.

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Date

  
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Mary Ann Keeffe, President



## THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS *of Montgomery County, MD, Inc.*

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Testimony before the Montgomery County Board of Elections  
on Precinct Boundary and Polling Place Changes  
November 19, 2011

I am Barbara M. Sanders of Silver Spring, speaking today on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Montgomery County, MD, as co-chair of its committee on voting and election issues. We are commenting today on the process and not on any of the proposed changes.

As a frequent observer of the Montgomery County Board of Elections meetings, I can personally attest to the great amount of effort expended by both the staff and Board members to arrive at this proposal of precinct boundaries and voting location changes. The League applauds your efforts to be prepared with the precinct data and a review of possible merger scenarios, in advance of the General Assembly and County Council's redistricting decisions this fall.

Most of the public has heard about at least the Congressional district changes completed recently, but very few are aware of the ramifications of merging these three new redistricting maps to produce precincts that reside in only one set of districts. Similarly, although Montgomery County budget constraints are also public knowledge, we highly doubt that more than a handful of people know this has reduced the Board's funds, especially in the number of election judges available for the 2012 elections.

The League commends the staff and the Board members for balancing the need to reduce the number of election judges by combining smaller precincts while attempting to minimize the distance voters must travel to a new polling place. You are making the best use of the more limited funds with these proposed precinct mergers, especially when coupled with reducing the number of private voting sites requiring rental payment.

We know the County's registered voters are not going to be happy with any changes to their voting rituals – whether it be the candidates for whom they vote, due to the redistricting changes made by the State Legislature and the Council, or the place they cast their vote, by the changes we are discussing today. We would like them to be aware that you have approached these changes with an eye towards causing the minimal amount of disruption possible under the economic constraints imposed.

Again, the League of Women Voters thanks you for all the detailed attention you have paid to this process. Nonetheless, we lament the lack of any press release describing the need to review precinct boundaries and polling place locations, or even a Board of Election website notice until this week, of the opportunity for public comment on the proposals. The public deserved more advance knowledge, including an approximate time and location where the changes would be posted.

We hope your press releases about the changes that you will enact shortly will include some of this detail so there is greater public understanding of both the process and your efforts. It is especially important to advise voters that additional precinct boundaries and voting site changes may occur prior to the 2014 election, after the Maryland General Assembly determines the legislative district lines in the upcoming session. Enhancing the public knowledge of the process will help to counter the idea that all electoral changes are done on a whim to make it harder for a person to cast his or her vote. Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

1225 Noyes Drive  
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

November 18, 2011

To: Montgomery County Board of Elections:

I believe that changing our precinct 13-14 at St.Luke's Church to 13-66 Argyle Park Activity Center, is short sighted, impractical and will suppress voter turnout. As a member of the League of Women Voters, I closely follow elections as part of the Making Democracy Work Committee, participate in polling place support, and advocate for good election practices.

The proposal to relocate 1,981 voters to a voting place at Argyle that has 755 registered voters is illogical. I agree that having 755 voters at one polling place is inefficient and instead suggest that you combine Argyle with precinct 13-19, Margaret Schweinhat Senior Center, as they are located within .5 mile of each other and are geographically compatible. In looking at the polling places list, I counted 43 locations that have fewer than our 1,981 voters that precinct 13-14 has.

Geographically, precincts 13-14 and 13-66 are not compatible for being combined. They are two totally separate neighborhoods isolated from each other by the barriers of the beltway and a golf course. Perhaps looking at a precinct map they look next to each other, but geographically they are not contiguous. It is virtually unwalkable and must be accessed in a circuitous manner via either Colesville Road or Georgia Avenue to get to Forest Glen Road on the other side of the beltway. There is no direct route. This would translate to 3 different bus rides for anyone who doesn't own a car and is coming from our neighborhood to the Argyle polling place. It also is passing at least 3 polling places that are closer to our neighborhood.

I urge you to keep precinct 13-14 intact for this election cycle. With the legislature redrawing its districts in 2012, there is a good possibility that Districts 18 and 20 will change in our area, since we are right on the border. As it is, most of our neighborhood is in Legislative District 18, but some is in 20. There is certainly a high probability that changes will be made. Much closer voting precincts are the Silver Spring Library (20), MNCPPC (20), and Woodlin School (18).

Waiting for final changes for legislative voting districts is a prudent plan that I hope you will follow before making any changes to precinct 13-14.

Sincerely,  
Barbara Ditzler

RICHARD S. MADALENO, JR.  
STATE SENATOR  
18th Legislative District  
Montgomery County

Budget and Taxation Committee



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November 10, 2011

Mary Ann Keefe  
President  
Montgomery County Board of Elections  
18753 North Frederick Avenue, Suite 210  
Gaithersburg, MD 20878

Dear Ms. Keefe,

I am writing in response to the recent decision by the Montgomery County Board of Elections to move forward with a proposed plan for the merging of county precincts prior to the completion of legislative redistricting.

Below, I have outlined several recommendations concerning changes in District 18. These suggestions were prepared in consultation with Delegate Alfred C. Carr, Jr., Delegate Ana Sol Gutiérrez, Delegate Jeffrey D. Waldstreicher, District 18 members of the Montgomery County Democratic Central Committee and both current and former District 18 precinct officials. I am hopeful that the Board will give these ideas serious consideration.

Under the currently proposed plan, eight precincts within District 18 will be merged together resulting in the permanent elimination of four precincts:

1. Merge 7-32 (Chevy Chase Library) into 7-01 (B-CC High School)
2. Merge 13-17 (McKenney Hills Center) into 13-58 (Knights of Columbus Hall)
3. Merge 13-26 (Cedar Lane Church) into 13-38 (Kensington-Parkwood ES)
4. Merge 13-14 (St. Luke's Woodside Park) into 13-66 (Argyle Rec. Center)

While these consolidations adequately respond to the reality of reduced funding faced by the Board, the following recommendations highlight concerns within these precincts related to polling location accessibility, proximity and efficiency.

1. The proposed merging of Precinct 7-32 (Chevy Chase Library) with 7-01 (B-CC High School) fails to acknowledge certain distinguishing demographic

Ms. Mary Ann Keffe  
President  
Montgomery County Board of Elections  
November 10, 2011  
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Rosemary Hills Elementary School. This consolidation would serve the dual benefit of unifying Chevy Chase view at a single polling location and providing for the recent expansion and development of the National Park Seminary complex.

3. Merging Precinct 13-14 into 13-66 (Argyle Recreation Center) is understandable, save for the fact that the Argyle Recreation Center is located on the opposite side of the Beltway. Consequently, access is limited to this polling location from 13-14 and 13-66 to Georgia Avenue, Sligo Creek Parkway and Colesville Road, all of which become congested during rush hour traffic.

I appreciate your attention to this matter and am hopeful that the Board will review these suggestions with an understanding of their effect on polling location accessibility for District 18 voters. While I understand that new fiscal realities at the County level have forced the Board to examine the possibility of merging precincts for cost saving purposes, I believe such consolidation should not come at the expense of voter equality of opportunity.

As always, please feel free to contact my office if I can be of any additional assistance to the Board. I look forward to the final adoption of a plan that is mutually acceptable to both Board members and District 18 voters.

Sincerely,



Richard S. Madaleno, Jr.  
Senator  
District 18

Cc: Delegate Alfred C. Carr, Jr.  
Delegate Ana Sol Gutierrez  
Delegate Jeffrey D. Waldstreicher

**Testimony of**  
**Jana Goldman**  
**before the Montgomery County Board of Elections**  
**Nov. 19, 2011**

I thank the Board for the time today to speak in opposition to the proposed merger of voting precinct 13-14 with precinct 13-66.

My name is Jana Goldman. My husband and I have lived in the Woodside Forest neighborhood of Silver Spring for 12 years and lived elsewhere in Silver Spring since we moved here from Michigan almost 20 years ago.

Not only am I a voter in precinct 13-14, but since 2004, I have been a Chief Election Judge, all but once assigned to my home precinct.

Our usual voting site was Grace Episcopal Church, located right in the center of our neighborhood and offering easy walking, biking, and driving access to our precinct's more than 2,000 registered voters.

The church was no longer an acceptable site, as I understand, because wheelchair access was not up to the standard of the Americans With Disabilities Act. Our precinct was moved to the International School at Dale and Wayne which caused confusion because it was difficult to find the entrance to the polling site, which was at the rear of the building.

Yet, the voters of 13-14 overcame that obstacle to cast their ballots, assured that this was just temporary until the church remedied the access situation.

The next election, when the situation at Grace had not yet been resolved, our precinct was moved again. This time, St. Luke's at the corner of Colesville and Dale, welcomed us and was gracious to us for two rounds of voting, including the 2008 Presidential election and the icestorm the day of the February 2008 primary. Despite falls in the icy parking lot and hazardous weather, the voters of 13-14 overcame those obstacles to cast their ballots.

Now we learn that another obstacle is being placed in the way of the voters of precinct 13-14. This time, a proposed merger with another precinct and a relocation of the polls to outside of the Beltway and beyond the Silgo Creek Golf Club.

Our precinct has, I believe, one of the highest voter turnout percentages in the county, so I know that the voters of precinct 13-14 will overcome any obstacle to cast their ballots.

I question why they should have to?

Is it a problem finding a suitable polling place? If the three churches in our neighborhood, which is bounded by Georgia, the Beltway and Colesville Road, can't or won't accommodate us, why not Woodlin Elementary School? If Grace Church itself isn't possible why not the adjoining day school? Have the county offices on Georgia and Spring been considered?

We should be doing everything possible to make voting accessible to more people. To me that means having more neighborhood places to vote - not fewer or located farther away.

I know that my neighbors in Woodside Forest and Woodside Park want to work with the Board to make voting - that incredible privilege that we have to ensure democracy in the United States -- accessible to all.

Thank you again for this time today.

Jana Goldman

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My name is Dolly Kildee. Because I am Democratic chair of Precinct 09-02, which is one of those precincts proposed to be changed, I received notice of this meeting from the Democratic Central Committee. However, I also followed the deliberations of the Montgomery County Redistricting Commission, so my comments will deal with both.

My first concern of course is notification. Your memorandum is dated Monday, November 14, 2011, to the Central Committee among others, who then had to notify the affected central committee member, who then had to notify me. So I received notice yesterday, Friday, about the hearing today, Saturday.

The Open Meeting Act requires that a public body must give "reasonable advance notice of the session". Although reasonable may be open to interpretation, I don't think one day qualifies.

Precincts are a basic building block for citizens to build a relationship with their representative in government, and they should be aware of any changes that are being considered. And in this day of modern technology, there are many ways for the Board to reach out to a broad spectrum of people.

This short notice allowed little time to gather any information concerning how this change will affect my precinct. Attached to the notice was an excel spreadsheet that gave no information on what area of the precinct that was being deleted was going to be attached to mine, how many voters would be affected, and the reasons why these changes are being proposed.

In some of my information gathering, I was told that one of the reasons these precinct boundary changes were being made was to accommodate changes made to the Board of Education boundaries. On the other hand, the County Commission in its deliberations tried to ease the work of the Board of Elections by using the 2010 precincts and descriptions faithful to

precinct lines. Were they ever advised that the boundaries might change, or did anyone suggest that they too should just not take the current boundaries into consideration?

When the legislative districts are redrawn will our precincts change again?

In the future, maybe the Board of Elections could consider looking at the big picture and doing a major precinct reorganization?

In conclusion I'd just like to suggest that the Board of Elections put more energy into giving the public better notification of public hearings on important changes to our precincts.

Thank you.

Dolly Kildee  
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dollykildee@hotmail.com

Email from Karla Walker 11/12/2011

**District 16 Summary of the Situation Regarding 7-32**

The Senior Residency on Connecticut (directly across from the Chevy Chase Library (the polling place), and the home of many very elderly voters), as well as 8101 Connecticut (the home of many retirees) are major sources of voters. The proximity of the polling place means that residents of these two facilities can vote easily. The Residency even uses its van to transport voters safely across busy Connecticut to the Library. There is a continuous flow of Residency voters all during Election Day. The 8101 voters simply have to walk next door (no crossing Connecticut) to vote. Some of our best precinct workers (including the current precinct chair, Bonnie Wicklund) live in 8101. The other major group of 7-32 voters are working people, who tend to vote during rush hours on their way to work or on their way home.

The coordinator of Precinct 7-01 (Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School), Dee Schofield indicates that this is by far the hardest to reach of the precincts she coordinates, especially during morning and evening rush hours. The only way to get there from 7-32 is to drive the length of E-W Hwy (Connecticut to downtown Bethesda). During morning rush, the trip can easily take 30 minutes or longer, and coming back to Connecticut in the evening takes at least that much time. The traffic usually is better during the day, but compared with the Library, it's still a long haul.

There remains the question as to whether the Residency management would allow the use of their van to transport voters to BCC. Previously they haven't allowed its use for voter transport to early voting sites (they've indicated that it's too time-consuming and they have to use it for many other purposes throughout the day). There obviously is a big difference in the time it would take to carry Residency voters to BCC, versus shuttling them across Connecticut. Therefore, voter transport to 7-01 is a problem.

**From Dee Schofield, Precinct Coordinator**

**Comparison of Facilities**

When the Library was renovated, an elevator down to the lower level was installed. The elevator is immediately accessible from the front exterior entrance. And the exterior entrance is immediately accessible from the driveway. Seniors who have trouble walking (the majority of the Residency voters, and others as well) have a relatively short trip into the building and onto the elevator. The community room on the lower level where the voting machines are set up is a short trip from the elevator. There is good handicapped access.

BCC High School, on the other hand, is not as accessible (although it is of course is ADA-compliant). The distance from the driveway drop-off point into the polling room is much further. I've seen weary seniors (current 7-01 voters) resting in chairs at the Democratic table,

tired from their exertions getting to and from the polling place. Although I don't have exact measurements, my impression from having walked it myself is that the walk is about twice as long at BCC as it is at the Library.

7-01 is not a viable option. Possible Alternate Polling Site for 7-32

If 7-32 is to be eliminated and combined with another precinct, by far the most logical one would be 7-16 (North Chevy Chase Elementary School on Jones Bridge Road). The school is much closer to all the residents in 7-32. It's a short drive up Connecticut, right on Manor Rd. for a couple of blocks, then a left on Jones Brides for one block. This is a short enough drive that the Residency probably would agree to run their van shuttle. And even during rush hour, it would take FAR less time than navigating E-W Hwy.

Access to the polling room at North Chevy Chase is much easier than it is at BCC. The driveway in front is right next to the entrance.

I assume that the Board of Elections must have calculated some savings in recommending the closure of 7-32, although since the Library is a county facility, no facility rental savings are possible. As we discussed at our meeting, it'll be interesting to see what cost savings criteria they're applying (besides savings in rental fees).

In summary, unless the Board can show significant savings by closing 7-32, I'd recommend that the welfare of its voters (especially its seniors) would best be served by keeping it intact, with its current polling place. But if their decision is to close 7-32, then the only viable option would be to combine it with 7-16. I believe that the population figures for 7-16 aren't that large, and that the combined precincts would be well within size guidelines.