

# Commission on Redistricting

Wednesday August 11, 2021

Start Time: 5:03 pm

## Meeting Minutes

### In Attendance:

#### **Commission Members**

Mariana Cordier (Chair)  
Arthur Edmunds (Vice-Chair)  
Imad Aldean Ahmad  
Laura Ard  
Keshia Desir  
Valerie Ervin  
Jason Makstein  
Nilmini Rubin  
Samuel Statland  
David Stein

#### **Council Staff**

Pamela Dunn  
Liz Olsson

#### **Planning Staff**

Corinne Blackford  
Nick Holdzkom  
Erik Westbrook

### Absent:

Bruce Goldensohn  
Jeff Zyontz

The meeting began at 5:03 pm.

It opened with a greeting to the Commission by Chair Cordier.

Next, the Chair requested approval of the meeting minutes. The July 14 meeting minutes were approved without amendment.

Corinne Blackford, Demographic and Employment Research Specialist with the Planning Department, relayed recently received information regarding the Census data release. She informed the Commission that Census data (in a legacy format) was expected to be released to the State tomorrow, August 15. She noted that the legacy format is a relatively raw data format to which the prison population data would be added by the State. Ms. Blackford expects the Planning Department to receive the County data from the State by the end of the first week in September.

The Chair asked if the Commissioners had any observations or remarks regarding upcoming meetings. It was noted that there have been 18 meetings attended to date, with another 20 scheduled. The Chair invited the public to reach out and request Commission attendance at any upcoming meeting, directing those interested to the Commission webpage where Commissioner contact information is located. Related to recent meeting attendance, several Commissioners commented on a recurring request to look at creating districts with similar interests. The Chair reiterated the Commission's legal obligations in redistricting such as compactness and contiguity. She also counseled commissioners not to share the practice maps they are making with the public as these are not sanctioned by the Commission. The Chair reminded everyone that there is now a form for comm input on the Commission webpage. As of this meeting only one entry had been received. Prior to the next meeting, all forms submitted to date will be sent to the Commissioners.

Following the discussion on community outreach, the Chair opened the floor for Commissioners to share their experience and thoughts in working with the Redistricting Map Tool (presented by Planning staff at the May meeting). Commissioner Makstein commented on his use of the tool noting that a change to a boundary typically results in modifications to multiple districts due to the equal population requirement. The Chair noted that members of the community requested use of tool; however, she stated that it is not possible for the Commission to share the software. Commissioner Makstein mentioned a public tool for mapping that is linked on the Commission webpage along with a tutorial on how to use it.

Next, the Chair opened the floor to a discussion of the process for proposing maps once data is received. She noted that she is open to ideas from commissioners about how the process should be structured but was not prepared to vote on a particular process. Commissioner Ahmad suggested commissioners bring maps to a future meeting (once the data is received). He supposed the proposed maps would likely fall into clusters which could lead to 2-3 possible maps for consideration with the Commission voting on one map that could be tweaked to reach a final map. The Commission expressed interest in gathering in person to physically look at maps. The Park and Planning building was mentioned as a possibility for this meeting.

Commissioner Stein suggested working out certain prerequisite issues prior to mapping – such as keeping the Cities of Rockville and Gaithersburg together, etc.... Chair Cordier supported identifying big issues. There was some discussion about prioritizing issues as well. Commissioner Ervin cautioned against trying to appease all community requests the Commission is receiving, noting that the priority must be the legal requirements/ground rules first. Commissioner Stein noted that even meeting the ground rules, would result in several permutations such that prioritizing certain issues could help make the process more efficient.

Nick Holdzkom, a GIS Research Specialist with the Planning Department, suggested that as Commissioners create map galleries, each map should note the decision rules used to create the map and should also

include a general rationale or mission statement for the map. Mr. Holdzkom also offered Planning staff assistance in helping draft language to explain mapping decisions.

Eventually, the Commission discussed the merits of working in groups – collaborating so that fewer proposed maps would be needed. The Chair noted she would confer with Mr. Zyontz that small groups of Commissioners could work together. Commissioner Makstein noted this would probably be fine as long as no group exceeded five Commissioners, in order to abide by open meeting rule.

Finally fall meeting dates and times were discussed. A poll conducted after the last meeting was only answered by about half of the Commission. One thing noted in the poll was that no one preferred a later meeting time and Tuesday appeared to be a day of the week when most Commissioners are unavailable. Another poll will be distributed to find two meeting dates in September such that the dates do not conflict with the Jewish holidays.

The meeting closed at 6:13 pm.