Commission on Redistricting

Wednesday October 20, 2021

Start Time: 5:10 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
Bruce Goldensohn

Council Staff
Jeff Zyontz
Pamela Dunn

Planning Staff
Corinne Blackford
Nick Holdzkom
Erik Westbrook

The meeting began at 5:11 pm.

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

Next, the Chair requested approval of the meeting minutes. The October 13th meeting minutes were approved without amendment.

The Chair then explained the process by which each revised draft map would be presented and discussed by the Commission. Each presenter was given five minutes to present the updated version of their map – highlighting the changes made from the previous version in response to Commission and public comments.

Following each presentation, the Commission discussed the revised map for approximately 10 minutes. The maps were presented/discussed in the order in which they were initially submitted.

Map 1 was presented by Cmr. Stein: https://cmsinternet.mcgov.org/COUNCIL/Resources/Images/FinalMap1-10_20_21.PNG;

Map 2 was presented by Cmr. Makstein: (https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/COUNCIL/Resources/Images/FinalMap2-10_20_21.PNG); and,

Map 3 was presented by Cmr. Ahmad: (https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/COUNCIL/Resources/Images/FinalMap3-10_20_21.jpg).

Following the presentation and discussion of Map 3, Cmr. Ervin made a motion to approve Map 1 as the Commission's plan for redistricting. The motion was seconded by Cmr. Stein. A discussion of the motion ensued. Once all comments were heard, the Chair called a roll-call vote on the motion to approve Map 1. The results of the roll-call vote are listed below:

Commissioner	Vote
Bruce Goldensohn	No
Samuel Statland	No
David Stein	Yes
Mariana Cordier	Yes
Valerie Ervin	Yes
Arthur Edmunds	Yes
Laura Ard	Yes
Imad Aldean Ahmad	No
Nilmini Rubin	No
Jason Makstein	No
Keshia Desir	Yes

A majority of Commissioner's voted their approval of Map 1 as the Commission's plan for redistricting. Following this vote, Cmr. Goldensohn made a motion for the Commission to vote approval of the map as unanimous. The motion was seconded. Requiring a unanimous vote, the Chair asked if there were any objections. Cmr. Makstein objected, thus the motion failed.

The Chair then thanked all Commissioners for their hard work, dedication, and service, and clarified the process for drafting of the accompanying report. Mr. Zyontz offered to produce a first draft. That draft will be sent to Commissioners within a week. After Commissioners provide feedback and edits, a final draft will be posted prior to the meeting for approval to transmit.

The Commission will meet on November 3rd to approve the transmittal of the report and plan to the County Council. The meeting closed at 6:33pm.

Note: At its meeting on November 3, 2021, the Commission voted to attach the following addendum. The dissenting opinion statements in the addendum refer to material discussed on October 20th; however, these statements were submitted after the close of the meeting.

ADDENDUM

At its meeting on November 3, 2021, the Commission voted to add the following two dissenting opinions to the meetings of October 20, 2021.

Dissenting Opinion Statement - Commissioner Jason Makstein

The Montgomery County Redistricting Commission ("the Commission") recommended a redistricting map to County Council based on a 6-5 vote. There were three proposed maps before the Commission and this statement focuses on the differences between the approved Map 1 (proposed by David Stein) and Map 2 (proposed by me, Jason Makstein). There was never a vote on Map 2, but I believe it would have received 5 votes from those across the political spectrum. There was a vote to make Map 1 unanimous and I declined for the reasons laid out in this statement.

The two maps were quite similar in many ways but had key differences. For the final maps, both Map 1 and Map 2 used a similar design for down county districts based on what I proposed in the initial maps sent to public a few weeks before. Map 1 and Map 2 both fulfill the equity lens with respect to the African American / Black and Hispanic communities in the down county districts.

However, Map 1 does not fulfill the equity lens in the upcounty districts (District 2 – blue and District 7 – orange). You can view my final map and presentation, demonstrating how Map 2 fulfills the equity lens upcounty here:
https://www.dropbox.com/s/8atxdwvv3j4tl0r/Jason%20Makstein%20Final%20Map.pdf?dl=0

The Map 1 fails to consider the equity lens with respect to Asian and Pacific Islanders in any meaningful way. In addition to dividing populations of minorities, Map 1 splits up Clarksburg and splits the districts so that upcounty will not have proper representation.

The biggest issue with this map is how it splits multiple Asian / Pacific Islanders communities of interest. The first area of concern is, one of the most predominantly Asian / Pacific Islanders areas in Montgomery County is the North Potomac and Travilah area. Looking at the "Predominant Racial or Ethnic Group, 2020 by Census Tract" (Figure 15), you will see there is exactly one Asian Majority (50% - 70%) area on the map. The approved Map 1 splits this census tract and this community in half between North Potomac (District 2) and Travilah going into the Potomac/Bethesda /Chevy Chase district.

Second area of concern with Clarksburg and Cedar Grove. This one is more complicated because Clarksburg, Germantown, and Cedar Grove areas all have large segments of Asian / Pacific Islander populations and they cannot all be together (due to other constraints around the map). However, in my Map 1 there is a stronger base of Asian / Pacific Islanders in each of the districts. If you look at the images here: https://www.dropbox.com/sh/z8gh7ol2c4rm7oo/AAADcsUaASfWVo3VaXuRhRrra?dl=0 you will see that in from an equity perspective it is clear this community should have its fair share and that they have a lot in common with the other equity focus areas considered for this project. Map 1 waters down the Asian / Pacific Islander vote by splitting these two major population centers of Asians / Pacific Islanders into 3 districts.

Clarksburg is one of the fastest growing areas in all of the upcounty and that growth is focused over a very large area (you can see how fast here from Montgomery Planning: https://montgomeryplanning.org/tools/research/forecasting/). It is very diverse as seen in above in the image "Predominant Racial or Ethnic Group, 2020 by Census Tract" (Figure 15). Map 1 splits Clarksburg up into pieces. You can see the effect on these more diverse communities in Clarksburg and how it splits off a significant portion so that most reside in one district instead of making two more diverse districts and separating Clarksburg and Germantown. Instead, the more white, wealthier, and less diverse areas are being centered in the approved Map 1's district 7.

Here is an upcounty approximation each of Map 1 and Map 2 overlayed on the 2019 version from Montgomery Planning of "Equity Focus Areas (EFA) and Predominant Race or Hispanic Origin"

Map 1: https://www.dropbox.com/s/73tcn03w7tldzvu/2019_equity_races_edit_david_map.png?dl=0

Map 2: https://www.dropbox.com/s/bpjzaz98hm6tuzy/2019_equity_races_edit_jason.png?dl=0

Germantown is another very diverse area of the county and is the largest census designated place in Montgomery County with over 90,000 people and very fast growing. Putting the two largest population centers in the upcounty into a single district heavily dilutes the upcounty vote in the other "upcounty" district which then in reality ends up being not much of an upcounty district by population weight. These two large populations centers are also by far the most diverse in the upcounty.

If we use the term upcounty to represent the top 1/3 of the county highlighted in this https://www.dropbox.com/s/pb73zxz853l6fo7/Upcounty_example2.png?dl=0 which is about 350,000 people, these people deserve fair representation as well.

What is happening to the upcounty vote is like how the Asian / Pacific Islander community is being split up there into 3 districts instead of a possible 2. The upcounty, depending on where exactly you start is divided into at least 4 different districts. So instead of having two entire districts upcounty per the 300,000 people, there is one very solid upcounty district which stretches a large area and then the rest of population is divided into 3 other areas.

A large part of where all this started with questions C and D on the ballot was about a lack of feeling represented in upcounty. Adding two new Councilmembers and still lacking upcounty representation would not help this and could result in future ballot questions if people continue to not feel represented.

I have a couple other notes about minor issues I have noticed with this map that if you choose to make changes I have suggestions that may help resolve other residents' complaints.

1) A possibility that exists to get Derwood in with Rockville / Gaithersburg per the desire of the folks of Derwood (220 people have signed petition so far) https://sign.moveon.org/petitions/correct-the-marginalization-of-derwood. In addition to that desire is their future possible annexation into Rockville (https://www.rockvillemd.gov/DocumentCenter/View/107/Application-for-Annexation-ANX?bidId=). This issue could be resolve by splitting a few voting precincts down into block groups which is possible. Splitting precinct 06-003 so only municipality is with Gaithersburg/Rockville should give enough flexibility to bring Derwood into that district. Then split 04-034 to get Derwood separate from Redland.

2) Precinct 04-035 is part of North Potomac under 500 people and some have wondered why this small slice isn't in with North Potomac and is instead with Gaithersburg / Rockville.

3) The only minor issue with down county is that I think the District 4 (light blue) would look better if it included Forest Glen instead of the small chunks of Bethesda and Potomac. This is mostly just about the look and shape of district I have no substantive complaints about this area.

Dissenting Opinion Statement - Commissioner Imad (Dean) Ahmad

Following the lead of Commissioner Jason Makstein, I submit this dissent from the Montgomery County Redistricting Commission's ("the Commission") recommended redistricting map to County Council selected from three choices by a majority of the Commission. Map 1 (submitted by David Stein and collaborators) was approved 6-5. Map 2 (submitted by Jason Makstein seconded by Nilmini Rubin) and Map 3 (submitted by me, Imad Dean Ahmad, and seconded by San Statland) were not voted on. As Commissioner Makstein has explained the reasons for his dissent, and I have been asked to do the same by a member of the general public, I submit this statement for the record.

I must begin by acknowledging that the selected Map has many good features thanks to Mr. Stein's willingness to hear and consider constructive criticism from other commissioners. Conversely, I sought to incorporate as many features from Mr. Stein's effort (as well as Mr. Makstein's) consistent with the considerations explained below.

The main distinctions between Map 3 and the others is the location of Leisure World, a white, elderly community situated at the intersection of three districts. In Map 3 it is in the same district as Olney and Norbeck/Norwood with whom its population shares common concerns. In Map 1 it has been put into plurality Black East County and in Map 2 it is put into the same district as Wheaton. The peculiar placement of Leisure World in Maps 1 and 2 are a byproduct of tailoring Wheaton in to a Hispanic plurality district. Map 3 recognizes the Hispanic plurality in the Germantown-Montgomery Village area by uniting them into a single district, honoring the desire of Montgomery Village not to be merged with the "Midcounty" or "Northeast" County. Map 3 makes Germantown-Montgomery Village a united upcounty district. While some have faulted the fact that although this district is plurality Hispanic, non-Hispanic Whites have a slight plurality in the voting age population (28.7 vs. 26.6%). This overlooks the fact that as the population ages, the voting age majority will soon be Hispanic as well.

Another difference is how the maps deal with the boundaries of the rest of the upcounty. Because of the low population density of the upcounty, there is no way to maximize its representation without some trade-offs. Map 1 elected to split North Potomac from Travilah while Map 2 puts Montgomery Village out of the upcounty. Map 3 puts Potomac and a small part of Bethesda into a second mostly up-county district.

Like Map 2, and unlike Map 1, Map 3 does not split the Asian / Pacific Islander majority census tract in the North Potomac and Travilah area. Similarly, Map 3 does not split the Asian / Pacific Islander population center in the Clarksburg/Germantown/Cedar Grove area into 3 districts. Map 3 also leaves Clarksburg intact (except for a small piece due to precinct lines which may be corrected by adjusting the precinct boundaries).

No map is perfect. The final version of Map 3 paid attention to homogeneity of adjacent neighborhoods and incorporated as many of the public comments on the draft maps as I could without violating the ground rules to which the commission was committed.

Imad Aldean (Dean) Ahmad