

City of Concord

Redistricting Committee Minutes of October 20, 2021

The Redistricting Committee met at 5:30 P.M., on October 20, 2021.

Members Present: Mayor Jim Bouley, Chair
Councilor Byron Champlin
Councilor Nathan Fennessy
Councilor Amanda Grady Sexton
Drew Biemer
Jim Richards
Stephen Shurtleff, state Representative in the N.H. House of Representatives
Jae Whitelaw

Members Absent: Councilor Fred Keach
Kathy Rogers
Michael Vlacich

City Staff Members: Sam Durfee, Senior Planner
Jim Kennedy, City Solicitor
Janice Bonenfant, City Clerk
Ashley Hamilton, Deputy City Clerk

Public Guest: Councilor Candace Bouchard
Tony Schinella

1. Call to Order

Mayor Bouley called the meeting to order at 5:30 P.M.

2. Introduction

Mayor Bouley welcomed members of the newly formed Committee and stated his belief that the most important goals, during the redistricting review process, were to ensure all residents had equal representation and accessible polling locations within the Wards. He noted that the City needed to review and submit any proposed Redistricting changes to the State Legislature so they could develop their own Redistricting changes. It was noted that census blocks did not follow Ward lines and would need further consideration when reviewing the numbers, similar to solving a puzzle or math problem.

City Solicitor, Jim Kennedy, stated that an ambitious goal for the Committee was to complete the redistricting review process within three meetings, so recommendations could be sent to advise City Council, during their scheduled November 8th meeting. He noted that this process took place after the census, to review population changes within Wards, to ensure the deviation for representation was met. He stated that a concern to consider would be whether to include the Men's and Women's State prison population in the counts, as they were included in the census number for the Ward. He noted that a precedence was set and upheld in the First Circuit Court, so the American Civil Liberties Union of New

Hampshire (ACLU) was content with the inclusion of prisoners included in population, due to services they received. He reiterated that the Committee was required to comply with State law configurations and requirements stated in RSA 44-A. It was also noted that changes were made to allow Ward line adjustments and changes to be made via Council approved Ordinances instead of City Charter edits as the process was more efficient to update and was a fairer practice for residents.

Senior Planner, Sam Durfee, noted that additional items to consider during review included: existing street boundaries, natural boundaries, census blocks, and political boundaries.

City Clerk, Janice Bonenfant, stated that her goals were to ensure that all Wards had an accessible polling location within the Ward, which included easy access, well lit parking areas, ample venue size, had restrooms, and an area for Ward Officials to eat. She noted that Concord was unique and had two School Districts (Concord and Merrimack Valley) which needed to be taken into Consideration. She noted that her wish list would be have all Merrimack Valley School District residents consolidated into one Ward, to reduce election costs and resident's confusion, and also to secure a more accommodating polling location venue for Ward 9 voters, as COVID-19 made Havenwood inaccessible. It was noted that Ward 1 had approximately 75% Merrimack Valley School District residents and 25% Concord School District where as Ward 2 was the opposite breakdown.

Action: Representative Shurtleff made a formal motion to continue to include the prison population in the Ward counts as they were provided services and representation. Councilor Champlin seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously passed with no dissenting votes.

Senior Planner Durfee gave Committee members enlarged maps to take home and gave an overview of the current landmarks, ward lines, census numbers and further explained the legend items. He also gave everyone a print out of the census numbers and explained the Committees' goal to review and shift Ward lines where applicable to accommodate the population influx, per the census data. He noted that the prison population made up 2,200 people in Ward 3, and now included the newly built women's prison.

Mr. Drew Biemer questioned if the Ward 4 population decrease had anything to do with remote learning at the Law School, to which Mayor Bouley noted his belief that the increase was likely related.

Mayor Bouley assigned all members the task to take the census information and enlarged maps home, to review further and come up with proposed changes.

Senior Planner Durfee noted that a GIS mapping program extension existed, that he would test and bring to the next meeting, that would allow for live time modifications, to show proposed changes. He noted that the next meeting, with this program, would allow the numbers to be reviewed along with boundaries live time.

Mayor Bouley reiterated that his goal for the Committee was to get all recommendations to Council for their November 8th meeting so they could hear public testimony, vote, and get their decisions to the State.

3. Other Discussion Items – The next meeting date was set for Tuesday October 26, 2021, at 5:30 P.M. in Council Chambers.

4. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at approximately 6:13 P.M.