

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

**RESEARCH DIVISION**

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**RULES COMMITTEE REDISTRICTING PUBLIC HEARING**

**Amended Meeting Minutes**

 **January 27, 2022**

**6:00 p.m.**

**Location:** Ed White High School

**In attendance:** City Council Members Priestly Jackson, White, DeFoor, Cumber (late arrival 6:32 pm); Council President Newby; School Board Members Kelly Coker and Daryl Willie

**Excused**: Council Members Dennis, Bowman and Diamond

**Also:** CM Pittman; Paige Johnston – Office of General Counsel; Bill Killingsworth– Planning and Development Department; Colleen Hampsey and Richard Distel - Council Research Division

**Meeting Convened**: 6:01 p.m.

Chair Priestly Jackson convened the meeting and the attendees introduced themselves for the record. She said that all iterations of the district map are posted for the public on the council webpage, and that comment cards would be collected until 6:30 pm so as to allow sufficient time for all speakers.

Paige Johnston, Office of General Counsel, provided the legal framework for the redistricting process. The Special Committee on Redistricting was initiated by CP Newby in July 2021 and included City Council Members: Aaron Bowman (Chair), Danny Becton (Vice Chair), Garrett Dennis, Brenda Priestly Jackson, and Randy White. The committee selected Bill Killingsworth, Director of the City of Jacksonville Planning and Development Department, and his team as expert consultants to assist with U.S. Census data collection and creation of the maps which would be discussed and considered by the Special Committee on Redistricting. The committee meetings were held on the following dates: August 18, 2021; August 24, 2021; September 27, 2021; October 28, 2021; and December 6, 2021. Also, members of the committee met in several noticed meetings to discuss specific geographical locations and individual City Council district concerns. Representatives of the Duval County School Board, specifically Chair Darryl Willie and Vice Chair, Dr. Kelly Coker, attended the meetings and provided input. Additionally, public comment was received at each committee meeting.

On October 28, 2021, Mr. Killingsworth and the Planning and Development Department presented the proposed City Council District and At-Large maps to the Special Committee on Redistricting for consideration. The maps were unanimously approved by the committee. On December 6, 2021, the committee held its final meeting. The Office of General Counsel provided the draft legislation incorporating the committee’s recommended City Council District and At-Large maps, the Duval County School Board district maps, and other documentation required by the *Ordinance Code*. The Special Committee on Redistricting unanimously approved the draft legislation and directed that it be filed prior to the January 11, 2022, City Council meeting per Section 18.107(a), *Ordinance Code*. The redistricting legislation, which has been assigned as Ordinance 2022-001 and was introduced at the City Council meeting on January 11, 2022, for referral to the Rules Committee for four public hearings.

Ms. Johnston explained the constitutional concept of one person one vote, and the intent to draw district maps to be as equal in size (population) as possible, using data provided every ten years by the US Decennial Census of Population. District sizes are to have not more than a 10 percent difference between the largest and smallest. Ms. Johnston said that other factors are considered, such as compactness, contiguity, communities of interest and geography. She explained the concept of gerrymandering, wherein a map might be drawn to intentionally favor one group over another, and she described “packed” (concentrating the opposing party's voting power in one district to reduce their voting power in other districts) and “cracked” (diluting the voting power of the opposing party across many districts) districts.

This redistricting process included consideration of geographical boundaries (the St. Johns River) and retaining incumbent districts. After the series of Rules Committee public hearings, the redistricting Ordinance 2022-1 will go to council for a vote between March 8 and April 12. Ms. Johnston explained the ability of the Rules Committee to make amendments based on what it hears at the public hearings, and that changes can be incorporated into the final version recommended by the Rules Committee to Council for action. Making a “substantial” change triggers another mandatory public hearing. In any event the process must be completed by April 12,2022.

Daryl Willie, DCSB, spoke briefly about the school board’s involvement in the redistricting process and noted that each council district encompasses two school board district seats.

Bill Killingsworth, Director of Planning and Development, described the methodology used to create the new map, which included guidance from the Special Committee on Redistricting to use the total population (not just voting age population), minimize river crossings, and minimize changing district boundaries and avoid drawing any current incumbent out of their district. Mr. Killingsworth said that the Census data indicated that there needed to be a reduction in District 11 and an increase to Districts 8 and 13 to create equal sized districts with roughly 71,000 persons in each. After receiving input from council members and the public meetings held by the Special Committee on Redistricting, Mr. Killingsworth and his team adjusted the district shapes to make the population counts as equal as possible. As one change was made to a district, other adjustments had to be made especially to adjacent districts. District 11 lost some of its population to districts 3 and 4, district 1 was unchanged, district 2 gained some from district 4, district 13 gained some from district 4, districts 9 and 10 did not change.

Public Comment

The first speaker talked about the perceived lack of transparency in the redistricting process; lack of public input in the map creation; racial packing in districts 7,8, 9 and 10; dissemination to the public after the ordinance is approved; census undercounting of minorities; the creation of a citizen oversight committee; drafting of an executive summary of the redistricting process including a clear methodology. She also suggested a Supervisor of Election comparison of district voter demographics (published monthly) using the old map and the new version.

The second speaker questioned the map boundaries, as related to retaining incumbency. He also mentioned community commonalities and said that East Arlington is more like the Beaches than Oceanway.

The third speaker spoke about logical district shapes and how the Marietta neighborhood is divided into three districts.

The fourth speaker spoke about partisan gerrymandering and unusual district shapes.

The fifth speaker talked about the lack of public input on the map creation, the need for an executive summary of the process, the overemphasis on incumbency and how the maps should have been designed by an outside independent entity.

The sixth speaker talked about the need for compact districts and changing the boundaries of the Argyle neighborhood.

The seventh speaker talked about using the OMB definition of race, the potential for lawsuits against the City, and racially reflective representation.

The eighth speaker talked about how maintaining the status quo does not lead to growth or improvements, ways to strengthen the minority vote countywide, and asked whether the new map shifts partisan advantage one way or the other.

The ninth speaker talked about race packing in districts 7,8,9, and 10; and about getting a demographic comparison from the SOE.

The tenth speaker talked about the overemphasis on incumbency, growth on the Westside, how to move Jacksonville towards progress, and the odd shape of districts.

The eleventh speaker talked about incumbency and how it should not have been part of the consideration, the need for more competitive elections, and how an outside entity should have made the map.

The twelfth speaker talked about Argyle, logical compact districts, and the overemphasis on incumbency protections.

The thirteenth speaker spoke about districts dissecting neighborhoods, and what a map would look like if made using different criteria.

The fourteenth speaker said that the redistricting process has just been theatrical, and that the districts are weirdly shaped.

The fifteenth speaker talked about the overemphasis on incumbency, partisan gerrymandering and fair representation.

Chair Priestly Jackson said that there will three more public hearings, on the next three Thursdays at three different high schools at 6:00 pm. The next meeting is February 3, 2022 at Atlantic Coast High School. She also made a point about the comments regarding the lack of input from the public on the map creation, noting that these meetings are that part of that process. The committee will discuss the concerns that are shared, and provide answers in the following meeting in order to keep constituents as informed as possible. With no further business, Chair Priestly Jackson adjourned the meeting.

**Meeting adjourned:** 7:07 p.m.

Minutes: Colleen Hampsey, Research Division

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2.3.22 Posted 5:00 p.m.