



**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL
RESEARCH DIVISION**

117 WEST DUVAL STREET, SUITE 425
4TH FLOOR, CITY HALL
JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA 32202
904-255-5137

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON REDISTRICTING

Meeting minutes - Amended

**November 2, 2022
12:00 p.m.**

Location: City Council Chamber

In attendance: Council Members Terrance Freeman (Chair), Aaron Bowman, Rory Diamond, Nick Howland, Sam Newby, Ju’Coby Pittman, Randy White

Also: Council Members Al Ferraro, Randy DeFoor, Reggie Gaffney, Ron Salem, Tyrona Clark-Murray; School Board Chair Daryl Willie; Jason Teal, Mary Margaret Giannini, Helen Roberson, Paige Johnston – Office of General Counsel; Merriane Lahmeur, Sharonda Davis - Legislative Services Division; Margaret Sidman – Council Secretary/Director; Jeff Clements – Council Research Division; Steve Cassada – Public Information Division; Kim Taylor – Council Auditor’s Office; Bill Killingsworth – Planning and Development Department; Dr. Dr. Doug Johnson - National Demographics Corp.

Meeting Convened: 12:00 p.m.

President Freeman convened the meeting and the attendees introduced themselves for the record. Mr. Freeman emphasized to staff that maps and other documents must be available to council members and general public attendees both in person in the Council Chamber and online when the meetings start. Regarding questions raised at yesterday’s meeting and how the Special Committee narrowed its consideration to two maps, he stated that the Plaintiff’s map doesn’t reflect the current political representation of the City Council or the county, the combination of rural and urban communities, and it fails to acknowledge incumbents. The Orange map used the Plaintiffs’ map as a base and was adjusted by the consultant to recognize incumbency, but still suffers from the other shortcomings of the Plaintiffs’ map.

Council Member DeFoor said none of the maps presented address an important issue regarding representation of historic neighborhoods. Riverside, Avondale and Ortega have been integrally connected for over 100 years and are a consolidated community of interest and should not be arbitrarily carved up among multiple districts. Failing to recognize and protect that community of interest will jeopardize the future of any map. Ms. DeFoor said she has been told by Property Appraiser Jerry Holland that there are

defined neighborhoods that are used in the appraisal process and she wants any representations made to the Court that the City does not have defined neighborhoods to be officially corrected on the record.

Council Member Pittman said Jacksonville has a long history of coming together to accomplish what everyone wants to achieve, and everyone needs to proceed on that basis through this redistricting process.

President Freeman asked Dr. Doug Johnson, the City's redistricting consultant, to elaborate on how the Committee got to the 2 maps (Maroon and Lime) selected by the Committee yesterday. Dr. Johnson said the Plaintiff's map makes a change to District 3 that was not necessary since the committee had previously decided not to make any changes to the unchallenged districts south and east of the river; their District 12 mixes very urban and very rural communities in an unusual way; it also affects the districts of incumbent Council Members by pairing some incumbents against one another, which was not preferred.

President Freeman asked General Counsel Jason Teal about the potential to do real-time map analysis in meetings, about the accuracy of maps being displayed on the computer screens and streamed online matching the physical maps distributed in the Council Chamber, and about application of Voting Rights Act requirements to the redistricting process. Mr. Teal said the PDFs of the maps distributed at yesterday's meeting were emailed to all Council Members and they are "zoomable" down to a great degree of detail to see individual streets. The maps Dr. Johnson displayed on the screens represented images from his internal software program and had with different colors than the PDF maps that were handed out to the Council members and the public. However, the district lines represented on the map were the same; the colors were just different from Dr. Johnson's software program and the printed maps. Dr. Johnson further indicated that the mathematical analysis of race and voting patterns needed for a Voting Rights Act analysis in order to demonstrate the need for race-conscious remediation in drawing districts is time consuming and the City does not have enough time to do a thorough job of that sort of analysis that would be defensible in court in the time left to meet the federal court's deadline. The Office of General Counsel has advised Dr. Johnson to create maps using a total population basis.

President Freeman asked about the process by which maps being sent in by email from interested parties and the public are being shared with Council Members for their consideration. Mr. Teal said some of the maps submitted through the redistricting email box didn't contain any demographic data while others had links to data sites; for security purposes the City's security policies prohibit clicking on links to unknown sites. Mr. Teal asked Dr. Johnson to describe the sorts of data that would need to be submitted with proposed maps for them to be considered. Dr. Johnson said that shapefiles (outline of districts) or a block assignment/equivalency file (assigning Census data to districts) attached to an email or delivered via a data disc or portable storage device would be preferable. Dr. Johnson indicated that one publicly submitted map proposal contained a link to a map, but the link had been deactivated so was unable to be accessed.

President Freeman also asked how the constituent emails are being treated. Mr. Teal said the redistricting email box is intended to be a way of citizens communicating their thoughts to the council. If the email box gets so many emails that it becomes impractical for council members to open and read all of them, then the General Counsel's Office will ask for permission to read, summarize and categorize the public feedback for ease of understanding.

President Freeman asked about the status of the Plaintiff map. Dr. Johnson said the Orange map is derived from the Plaintiff map with some changes and the Maroon map was started completely from scratch. The Lime map is a version of the Maroon map with more compactness to the districts. The Orange map treated Districts 12 and 14 differently from the Maroon map. Mr. Teal said the federal court has not seen the Plaintiffs' map, or any proposed map, and has not opined on the constitutionality of any of them.

President Freeman reviewed the process for today's meeting and the rest of the week. The Special Committee will take up any proposed map changes as amendments, so any proposed changes need to be submitted to staff as soon as possible so they can be appropriately analyzed, which takes time. Dr. Johnson said every change to one district ripples through to at least 2 or 3 other districts; staff can do that relatively easily when working from the maps we have now, but it would be impossible to start all over on Friday with a new concept. President Freeman said Council Members should contact the General Counsel's Office or the Planning Department to request changes. Non-committee members can propose changes to the Committee as well and a Committee member will move them on the proposer's behalf. Thursday's meeting end time has been extended to 3:00 p.m. to give the Committee more time to work. In response to a question from Council Member DeFoor about how to propose changes, President Freeman said it should be brought to staff and the Committee and it will be discussed.

Dr. Johnson summarized 5 issues mentioned at yesterday's meeting:

- 1) Argyle area residents want that area to be unified in one district.
- 2) There is substantial sentiment to keep the Riverside Avondale historic district together in one district.
- 3) Incumbency – the Maroon map was drawn to keep each incumbent Council Member in their same district, regardless of whether either is eligible to run for another term. The boundaries of Districts 7, 8 and 10 can be adjusted and districts renumbered if that is desired. The Orange map does this somewhat.
- 4) District 9's elongated shape was necessary to keep an incumbent Council Member in their current district; if the location of Council Members who are not eligible to run for re-election is taken out of the equation, then the extended neck can be retracted and the district made more compact.
- 5) The issue of the Queen's Harbor development's connection to District 3 is only an issue with the Plaintiffs' map and Orange map – it is not problematic in the Maroon or Lime maps.

Public Comment

President Freeman asked everyone to please be respectful and follow rules of decorum in the Council Rules when making comments.

Shamari Lewis said the Committee is doing a good job so far. He questioned where Plaintiff groups came from and urged following the money trail.

Wayne Wood, founder of Riverside Avondale Preservation, opposed splitting up a very cohesive and successful neighborhood among multiple Council Members. Please preserve a designated Great American Neighborhood.

Nancy Powell said keep Riverside and Avondale together. She and Shannon Blankinship have submitted maps to that effect. Riverside/Avondale is a historic neighborhood and needs to be kept unified so it continues to be effective under its zoning overlay.

Joe Ross of the Northside Coalition said that incumbency protection should not be a factor and gives districts odd shapes for that purpose. We need accurate and fair districts to represent people.

Joanne Brooks of the Northside Coalition said the Maroon map is still racially gerrymandered, non compact and splits neighborhoods along racial lines. It would be better to consider race only as legally allowed.

Shannon Blankinship, Executive Director of Riverside Avondale Preservation said RAP has a distinct boundary, designated historic district and zoning overlay and needs to be kept together because it's an area with special needs and preferences. The Lime map needs only small tweaks to be acceptable.

Margaret Tocknell said she does not support the Maroon map because it splits Avondale into 3 districts. It is a distinct, historic, federally recognized Great Neighborhood. They all have common interests and it's not about politics but neighborhoods.

Perry Reynolds, Chair of the RAP board, urged keeping the RAP area together. It's a neighborhood that needs one Council Member to represent it.

Stanley Scott said the city has poor leadership and suffers from racism. The Black community has been disenfranchised forever. City leadership continues to do the same thing over and over.

John Draper said he was a City Council member when minority access districts were created 30 years ago. If we now have to call them Democrat access districts then you dilute Democratic power citywide. The state went down that road and is now Republican dominated.

Ben Frazier said a full Voting Rights Act analysis is not optional it's required by law. Ensure compliance with the VRA by using race only as little and as targeted as necessary. The Plaintiff have done the VRA analysis already so the City should use it.

Mike Ludwick of the Northside Coalition said the Committee must consider race to be defensible, but it went too far. The City needs to do the VRA functional analysis which is not optional. Use the Plaintiff's analysis which they freely offer.

Sallie Barnes of the Robinson's Addition area said her neighborhood is cohesive and happy with its representation and they don't want to be split. Leave District 9 alone. Voters will vote for whoever they want regardless of how you draw districts.

Daniel Henry quoted from the court's injunction that was denied yesterday and disputed statements earlier in the meeting that the existing districts are fair and congruent. District 12 is suburbanizing and is not as rural as it once was, and it has the largest Black population outside of District 7, 8, 9 and 10. He agrees that Riverside and Avondale should not be separated.

Essey Howard of the Northside Coalition said public comments are being ignored, maps weren't released publicly before the meeting, and 2 maps were eliminated from consideration yesterday before public comment was held.

Vanessa Cullins Hopkins thanked the Committee for having public comment earlier in the meeting today. All districts need a good economic base which is best achieved in the Plaintiffs' map by keeping the King/Soutel Crossing CRA together. The Maroon map has the King/Soutel CRA split into in 3 districts.

Carnell Oliver said all the maps are corrupt because they are driven by what Council wants not what the law requires. Council Members could have been good representatives but they haven't done it. Accept the Plaintiffs' map.

Kim Pryor said incumbents don't need to be protected in their current districts. If you have the city's best interests at heart you can represent constituents anywhere. The CPACs have not been consulted during the redistricting process.

Ayesha Covington, a plaintiff in the lawsuit, said the Plaintiffs are willing to help the City get where it needs to be with a fair map. These meetings are a waste of time and money.

Breshawna Stewart addressed crime on the Northside and the need for more police guarding schools.

Brian Hicks said the maps should stay the way they are now; he doesn't see a need for change.

Council Member Discussion

In response to a question from Council Member Diamond about how the Maroon map was developed, Dr. Johnson said he was aware of the current district maps and the Plaintiffs' map, but drew the Maroon map based on CPAC boundaries, neighborhoods, and geographical boundaries (rivers, major roads). Mr. Diamond asked Dr. Johnson to analyze whether putting the RAP area into one district can be accomplished. Mr. Diamond said the City was sued under the 14th amendment, not the Voting Rights Act and he thinks the Maroon map is legally defensible.

Council Member Pittman requested to meet with the consultant to find a way to recapture at least some of her current district since she has been almost completely drawn out of what she represents today. She would like to see the new District 8 moved further north to be consistent with the area it currently covers.

Council Member Bowman said 10 years ago the numbers didn't work to put a subdivision at San Pablo Road and J. Turner Butler Boulevard into District 3 or 13 since it is so isolated from the rest of District 11. He asked that consideration be given to how to keep the RAP area which is a cohesive neighborhood.

Council Member Howland asked if race was considered in drawing Maroon and Lime maps. Dr. Johnson said it was not, and he only looked at the numbers afterward. Mr. Howland asked General Counsel Jason Teal if race needs to be used as a factor to draw the districts pursuant to the judge's ruling. Mr. Teal said it did not; you could do that analysis, but it's not required. The City can use any legally available methodology but is not required to include or exclude race as a consideration.

Motion (Pittman): direct the consultant to analyze shifting District 8 northward – **approved 7-0.**

Motion (Bowman): direct the consultant to analyze shifting Pablo Creek Preserve area in the San Pablo/JTB area to an adjacent district – **approved 7-0.**

Motion (Diamond) – direct the consultant to analyze keeping the Riverside/Avondale area all in one district, whether District 14, 10 or 8 – **approved 7-0.**

Council Member DeFoor said if the committee opts for the Lime map she would prefer that the Riverside/Avondale area be in District 14.

Council Member Clark-Murray asked about the role of incumbency protection. Mr. Teal said it's not a legal requirement that incumbents be protected but it has been a policy call in the past and in the current process to keep incumbents in their current district. It's OK to have oddly shaped districts if they are not shaped that way for racial reasons. Odd shapes are not illegal but have to be done for a defensible reason. Ms. Clark-Murray asked about how District 9 is contiguous in the Maroon map. Dr. Johnson said the district is contiguous in that all parts of the district touch. Compactness is different than contiguity, and there is a defensible reason for why District 9 has the shape it has. Ms. Clark-Murray said a portion of District 9 in the Maroon map is completely surrounded by District 10. The Woodstock area should be kept together (Commonwealth Avenue, Cassatt Avenue, Beaver Street, Melson Street). Dr. Johnson said if we move District 8 north as requested by Council Member Pittman then we can rotate Districts 8, 9 and 10 to a different configuration that would accommodate the Woodstock request.

Council Member Ferraro said the Eastport Road and Cedar Bay neighborhood needs to be put back in District 2 because it is a unified neighborhood that is separated from the rest of the proposed District 7 by

an industrial area, railroad tracks and a river. It's more appropriate in District 2. He will be meeting with the Planning Department later today to explore how to make that happen. No Committee member offered a motion for that change to be made.

Council Member Salem said he's heard no discussion of Murray Hill in the Riverside/Avondale discussion. It seems to him like a logical connection to the RAP district wherever that area ends up. Council Member Diamond said it should be included in the discussion of keeping RAP in District 14, 10 or 8, running separate numbers for the RAP area and RAP plus Murray Hill.

Motion (Diamond) – include a Murray Hill analysis in the previous motion regarding keeping RAP in one district, either 14, 10 or 8, calculating separate numbers for RAP and Murray Hill – **approved 7-0**.

Council Member Gaffney said it looks like the motions being made thus far are taking areas away from Districts 7, 8, 9 and 10 to benefit other adjacent districts. He asked his colleagues to not be overly aggressive in seeking adjustments they want because it is hurting other districts.

President Freeman asked for clarification of Dr. Johnson's earlier comments about the number of majority-minority districts being reduced from 4 to 3 under the Plaintiffs' map; Dr. Johnson said all 4 of the maps produce 3 districts with a majority Black population.

Jason Teal asked for clarification about whether Council Member Pittman's (sic - Clark-Murray's) request would be subsumed under Council Member Pittman's request for an adjustment to District 8. The Chair agreed that it was.

Meeting adjourned: 1:32 p.m.

Minutes: Jeff Clements, Research Division
jeffc@coj.net 904-255-5137
11.9.22 Posted 5:00 p.m.