



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

(301) 952-3700
County Council

2021 Redistricting Commission

Virtual Public Hearing
Monday, July 26, 2021
Minutes

Members Present

Rev. James J. Robinson, Chair
Dr. Charlene M. Dukes
David C. Harrington

Council Staff

William M. Hunt
Colette R. Gresham, Esq.
Raj A. Kumar, Esq.
Karen T. Zavakos, Esq.
Kathleen H. Canning, Esq.
Donna J. Brown
Charlotte D. Aheart

Consultants

& Consultant's Staff

Dr. Nathaniel Persily, Esq.
Zahavah Levine
Roselyn E. Pugh, Esq.

MNCPPC Staff

James Cannistra
Robert Gelner

Speakers

Mary Cook
Bradley Heard
Kari Fisher
Janis Willard-Robinson
Patrice Murray

1. Welcome and Opening Remarks – Chairman/Pastor Robinson

The hearing was virtually called to order at 5:02 p.m. Chair, Robinson gave an overview of the Redistricting Commission's role, staffing and Charter Section 305. Chair Robinson indicated that COVID-19 has caused significant delays in the release of appropriate population census data from the U.S. Census Bureau and that

draft plans released to the public for comment are based on projected numbers supplied by Hastaq. Chair Robinson further indicated that the actual census data is expected to be released on August 16, 2021, or later.

2. Review and Approval of Minutes – June 21, 2021 and July 19, 2021

The Commission reviewed and approved the Minutes, as written, from June 21, 2021 and July 19, 2021.

3. Dr. Nathaniel Persily provided a brief overview of Proposals in Response to Comments Received at or Before the July 19, 2021 Public Hearing

Dr. Persily, Professor of Law, Stanford Law School, and consultant to the Redistricting Commission, explained the different options for the Redistricting Plan based on comments received from the Commission's first public hearing. He indicated that the exercise is to understand the trade-offs between the different plans. Dr. Persily also indicated that his role is to set forth the trade-offs based on his experience with the 2011 Redistricting Commission and his consultation experience on a national level.

Dr. Persily addressed comments from residents in Bowie. Those residents oppose a draft plan that would move Collington Station from District 4 to District 6. Dr. Persily indicated that the propose draft plan was based not based on a least change map but instead the proposal was based on achieving a 1% population deviation.

Dr. Persily indicated that the draft plan to move all of District Heights from District 6 to District 7 received some criticism. He indicated that the idea behind moving all of District Heights was based on a least change plan and not splitting communities. He also indicated that another option would be to go through Walker Mill and take one precinct of 3,500 people, which would split Walker Mill. He further indicated that another option would be to move all of Walker Mill and parts of Forestville or to go South into Morningside to pick up 3,600 people but that option would split Forestville.

Dr. Persily indicated that a letter was received from the Town of Upper Marlboro regarding its annexation plans for the Town. Dr. Persily indicated that more information was needed but that the plan as presented on its face would lead to malapportionment.

Dr. Persily indicated that a letter was received from Tamara Brown, a member of the 2011 Redistricting Commission, requesting that Clinton remain in-tact. Dr. Persily indicated that a potential split in Clinton was based on a 1% deviation in population but that could be avoided if the Commission does not follow a 1% deviation model for a plan.

Dr. Persily concluded his briefing on public comments by highlighting three points: First, moving or adding a precinct from one area to another will likely leave another community feeling aggrieved. Second, while it is important to consider individual comments, those comments are from one individual as opposed to an entire community. Third, there is a two-step process for redistricting in the County: the Commission provides a Plan and Report to the County Council and the Council has the final decision making authority to set the boundaries of in a final Redistricting Plan.

4. Each Registered Participant or Speaker was allowed 3 minutes to provide comment and input on proposed draft plans

Mary Cook elected not to provide public comments.

Bradley Heard, a resident of District 7, indicated that he submitted a letter over the weekend to cover the developments since last week's public hearing. Mr. Heard also submitted a list of revised proposed criteria to account for maintaining population equality, keeping Metro sites remaining consistent, not splitting precincts, and not splitting municipal boundaries. Mr. Heard indicated that he was using 2019 data to provide a new map which would keep Clinton together and would allow room for the expansion of Upper Marlboro. Mr. Heard stressed the importance of allowing the Redistricting Commission time to submit a legal plan in the first instance.

Kari Fisher, a resident of District 1, White Oak Manor, opposed moving her locality from District 1 to District 2. Ms. Fisher indicated that it would adversely affect a minority population. Ms. Fisher was informed, upon her request, that she would have until August 2, 2021 to submit additional comments or testimony on the proposed draft plans.

Janis Willard-Robinson, a resident of Bowie, opposed the draft plan to move Collington Station from District 4 to District 6. Ms. Willard-Robinson indicated that residents of Collington Station pay taxes in Bowie and receive services from Bowie and that these factors should be considered by the Commission. Ms. Willard-Robinson also requested additional time to submit public comment.

Patrice Murray, a resident of Bowie, indicated that it is critical that the County maintain its integrity in defining Councilmanic Districts. Ms. Murray indicated that neighborhoods and cities boundaries should be upheld, and that, at all cost, Bowie should be maintained together.

Dr. Persily talked about trade-offs with the stabilization of neighborhoods and a least change plan.

Chair Robinson indicated that the least disruptive boundary changes are important.

Commissioner Dukes indicated that the issues raised by the speakers are important because most people do not want to move from their respective districts but the Commission also needs to make recommendations to the County Council based population shifts.

5. Staff update on public comments/questions

Staff attorney to the Commission, Mr. Kumar, indicated that there will not be another public hearing but that the Commission will have public meetings on August 2, 2021 and August 16, 2021. Mr. Kumar also indicated that the Commission must submit its Plan and Report to the County Council on September 1, 2021. Mr. Kumar further indicated that the public should continue to submit comments through August 2, 2021.

Commissioner Harrington indicated that the public comments were outstanding and that all comments will be given serious consideration. Commissioner Harrington also indicated the desire to have least disruption or least change plan as possible.

6. Questions and Answers

Commissioner Dukes indicated that Charter Section 305 requires districts to be compact, contiguous, and equal in population. Commissioner Dukes also indicated that equal population, least change and avoid splitting of precincts are being taken into consideration in drafting of a plan for Council's consideration.

Chair Robinson indicated that all suggestions will be taken into consideration.

Commissioner Harrington indicated that the Commission will transmit a proposed Plan to the Council and the Council will ultimately decide on the boundaries of a final Redistricting Plan. Commissioner Harrington also indicated that while there was testimony regarding Statewide legislative districts, the Commission only makes recommendations on local Councilmanic Districts.

7. Next Public Meeting – Monday, August 2, 2021 at 3:00 p.m.

Chair Robinson announced that the Commission will hold its next meeting on August 2, 2021 at 3:00 p.m.

8. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 6:05 p.m.