



CITY OF READING

Redistricting Commission

Wednesday, January 12, 2022
Meeting Summary

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the public is prohibited from physically attending the meetings. The meetings can be viewed LIVE while the meeting is taking place via the Zoom link below, via the dial-in phone number and on Facebook. The recordings of the meeting will also be posted on the City's website after the meeting

Attending: M. Golembiewski, L. Olsen, T. Shade, P. Cianciosi (virtually), D. McLendon, L. Bellman, B. Kell, W. Bealer, and L. Kelleher

Absent: H. Ruiz and N. Castro

Mr. Golembiewski welcomed everyone and noted that a quorum was present.

Approval of the Meeting Summary

Mr. Golembiewski inquired if everyone present reviewed the December meeting summary and if any modifications were required. The Commission approved the meeting summary by acclamation with no changes.

Mapping Proposals

Mr. Golembiewski thanked the Commission for their work to explore the Council district boundary adjustments to create improved population neutrality. He asked those who submitted proposals to make presentations. He distributed print-outs of the proposals submitted.

Mr. Kell explained his numerical approach to attempt to equalize the population but minimize the need to relocate people to new districts. He stated that Proposal D has the smallest deviation but relocates six (6) precincts within District 3. Proposal B helps the population distribution within Districts 1 and 6, leaves District 4 intact, and moves 11

precincts.

Ms. Bellman noted that one of Mr. Kell's proposals splits the Centre Park Historic District into two (2) Council districts. She noted the associated pros and cons. She questioned if the Commission can improve the district's population neutrality and not considering the cohesion of the district's neighborhoods as stated in the Federal regulations.

Mr. Bealer agreed with Ms. Bellman's concerns about splitting Centre Park into two (2) precincts and two (2) districts. However, he noted that this proposal better aligns the 8th Street corridor.

Mr. Shade stated that one of Ms. Bellman's proposals will affect the District 3 elected Council member, moving her into District 4. He questioned how that impact would be handled.

Mr. Golembiewski suggested getting legal advice on the issues raised by Ms. Bellman and Mr. Shade. Ms. Kelleher stated that the City currently has two (2) attorneys but neither are experienced in election law. She suggested seeking advice from Mr. Kauffman, who is solicitor to the County Elections Board. Ms. Kelleher and Mr. Golembiewski will follow-up.

Mr. Shade stated that he disagrees with the Ms. Bellman's Proposal C which shifts the District 3 and 4 boundaries from north/south to east/west – southern boundaries start on Walnut Street with District 3 running to Pike Street and Union Street with the north/south dividing line running roughly from North 13th to North 10th Streets. He expressed the belief that the neighborhoods at the southern end are too disconnected from those on the northern end. He noted that when the Home Rule form of government began, his neighborhood was in District 2 and he and his neighbors have absolutely no connection with East Reading neighborhoods. He expressed the belief that District 3 is now cohesive in its boxy shape.

Mr. Kell read from the federal regulations noting that the Commission is charged with the need to achieve neighborhood cohesiveness rather than cohesion while providing good representation and population neutrality while considering the federal guidelines. He suggested using a proposal that minimizes changes for the population to avoid a change in the Council representation of the residents.

Mr. Kell noted his preference for his Proposal B and Ms. Bellman's Proposal A.

Ms. Bellman agreed, noting that this places the RACC and adjacent industrial area into one (1) district. She stated that her Proposal A only changes District 6 near the river, places all of the Callowhill and Centre Park Historic Districts into one Council District and equalizes the population. She explained why she believes in the proposal to make major modifications to

Districts 3 and 4, as previously explained, as those proposals make the 9th Street corridor more cohesive and incorporate all the Schools on North 13th Street into the same district.

Ms. Bellman stated that her preference is for her Proposal C or A

Mr. Shade stated that he recommends reverting to the original districts, noting that that change would move 16,000 people but achieve population equalization. He explained how different the various neighborhoods were in the 1950-60s, centered on the four junior high schools vs now.

Mr. Bealer highlighted the development that occurred across areas on the City over the past 10 years, noting that the Commission cannot predict what changes will occur over the upcoming decade.

Mr. Golembiewski agreed noting that in the 1950s Reading had a population just over 100,000. This census has shown us an increase in housing units and noted a previous conversation about if these units were illegally converted.

Mr. Olsen suggested not getting too far into the weeds while considering all the variables while trying to minimize change.

Mr. Shade recalled that when selling the Home Rule theory, those on that Government Study Commission stressed the importance of having direct district Council representation, rather than at-large representation. However, Council more often handles city-wide issues with minimal advocacy for district issues.

Mr. Kell stated that he disagrees with Ms. Bellman's Proposal C which creates major changes for Districts 3 and 4. He stated that his Proposal B and Ms. Bellman's proposal A provide better balance with the least amount of disruption.

Ms. Cianciosi stated that she prefers Mr. Kell's Proposal D as it makes small shifts to all districts.

Ms. McClendon stated that she supports keeping the district map as is, with no change.

Mr. Golembiewski called for a straw poll to see where the group is. The results are: 4 votes for the Mr. Kell B and Ms. Bellman A hybrid and 3 votes for no change. He inquired if the group is ready to vote on a recommendation or if another meeting is necessary.

The Commission decided to consider the two (2) options and to drive around to view the various boundaries and neighborhoods and return to decision making at the February

meeting.

Mr. Golembiewski inquired if the Commission is interested in selecting the person who will make the recommendation to Council. Mr. Kell and Mr. Olsen nominated Ms. Bellman to take the lead. The Commission agreed.

The next meeting is Wednesday, February 9th at 6:30 pm. The meeting adjourned at 7:54 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Linda A. Kelleher CMC, City Clerk