

City of Hyattsville — 2022 Redistricting Committee

November 14, 2022, 7:30 PM–8:30 PM — Virtual

MINUTES

In attendance: Leland Dudek, Alicia Sanchez Gill Freemyn, T. Carter Ross (Recorder), Andrew Sayer (Chair), Krystil Smith. **Staff:** Sekour Mason, Cindy Zork. **Regrets:** Jennifer Gafford, Shakira Louimarre, Greta Mosher, Markus Tarjamo, Cynthia Totten. **Guests:** Sam Denes, Sophie Gorman Oriani, Edouard Haba, David Marshall, Melissa Schweisguth, Will Seath, Joseph Solomon, Emily Strab, Joanne Waszczak, Scott Wilson.

1. Roll Call

A quorum was noted and Chair Sayer called the meeting to order at 7:36 p.m. Attendance was registered.

2. Minutes

Minutes from the October 24, 2022, meeting were approved on a voice vote.

3. Legal Review Update

In reviewing minutes from the 2012 Redistricting Committee, Chair Sayer noted that year the committee was instructed to keep the difference between the most and least populous wards within 10% of each other. This differs from how the 2022 Commission understood its instructions, under which each ward could be no more than $\pm 10\%$ from one-fifth of the population of the city. Zork and Ross met via Zoom with City Attorney Skip Cornbrooks and City Clerk Laura Reams earlier on Nov. 14, and Cornbrooks confirmed that the 2012 instructions were the proper standard to reduce the risk of legal challenge. Chair Sayer noted that the Minimal Adjustments map has a min–max variation of 16.6%, but the Growth Conscious version 4 map is within the allowable range at 9.6%. Chair Sayer noted that instructions for the 2032 redistricting process should make clear the standard for allowable deviation.

4. Review Council Comments & Updated Map

Given that the Minimal Adjustments map had the least support before Council on Nov. 7 and would require more than minimal change to bring within compliance, the committee discussed if it would be best to focus work on Growth Conscious version 4 and the Council Request map.

Chair Sayer shared Growth Conscious version 4, the only change to which from version 3 is along Oliver Place an undeveloped area below the Metro tracks to Ward 4. The Metro tracks made a natural boundary and it is logical keep this unpopulated, undeveloped space within Ward 4.

Chair Sayer then discussed public comments and council feedback and how to best integrate them with the map (using Growth Conscious version 3 as the base). Overall, there were requests to look at extending Ward 4 across Queens Chapel to encompass a portion of the current Ward 3 south of Belcrest Road. There were also very passionate comments about where Suffrage Point should be located and whether or not adjacent

properties should be in the same ward; however, while this feedback was strong, it was not unanimous as to the best course of action to take. Finally, additional council requests came regarding opportunities to adjust the boundaries on the western side of Ward 2 to better align the West Hyattsville–Queens Chapel Sector Plan with Wards 4 and 5. Sayer noted that the majority of comments received were regarding Ward 2, which is natural as it sits in the middle of the map. Specific moves considered include:

- Move Park Place condominiums from Ward 5 to Ward 2 based on council member statement that it lies outside the West Hyattsville–Queens Chapel Sector Plan area.
- Keep the current Ward 2 southeastern boundary and place Suffrage Point within Ward 2.
- Move portions of current Ward 3 blocks primarily north of Queensbury Road to Ward 1 to offset the changes necessary to accommodate Suffrage Point-related changes.
- Move sections of current Ward 2 west of 38th Street south of Sacred Heart into Ward 5.

Attempts to accommodate all these changes in a single map resulted in wards that did not comply with the previously used or the updated population deviation restrictions. Further options to bring the map into compliance include:

- Put Suffrage Point in Ward 2 along with Hamilton Street and use the alley between Hamilton and Gallatin Streets as the Ward 1/2 boundary at that point.
- Keep the block of historic houses between Hamilton and Farragut Streets (both sides of the street) within Ward 2.
- Make 37th Avenue below Longfellow Street the eastern boundary for Ward 5 in section of the city and include the homes on the north side of Longfellow from there to Queens Chapel and up 36th Ave. to Sacred Heart within Ward 5.
- Consider if the homes along 40th Place adjacent to Suffrage Point and adjacent to the wetlands the development's stormwater retention system drain into should be accorded the same consideration of interest in the development as neighboring properties to the north and east of Suffrage Point. This may include drawing the eastern boundary of Ward 2 along the unnamed creek flowing from the Trumbule Trail wetlands to the Northwest Branch, putting Driskell Park in Ward 2.
- Consider moving additional blocks west of 38th Avenue north of Hamilton and south of Longfellow, as well as the entire Sacred Heart campus, into Ward 5.
- Keeping Park Place condominiums in Ward 5 to help with balancing the overpopulation of Ward 2.
- Move blocks east of 42nd Avenue and north of Queensbury into Ward 1 to help offset changes at the southern boundary of Ward 2.

Chair Sayer noted that it will take some running of numbers to understand which combination of moves would result in one or two compliant options.

In discussion, it was noted that council members do receive input from constituents that the Commission may not receive directly; however, unease was expressed about the perception associated with the Council Requests maps of council members selecting their voters instead voters selecting their representatives. It was also noted as a concern that the public will have less time to consider or comment on these new maps based on council

requests that will include significant changes compared to Growth Conscious map, which includes only a minor change to an unpopulated area compared to its earlier version.

Following discussion, the Commission voted to cease work on the Minimal Adjustments map (vote was 5–0 with all commissioners voting in favor). Next, the Commission voted to approve the development of up to two variant Council Requests maps that would meet legal requirements (vote was 5–0 with all commissioners voting in favor).

5. Final Recommendation to Council

In discussion, the Commission agreed to the need to provide a memo outlining the principles and rationale used by the Commission in developing the maps and making clear how the Growth Conscious version 4 map met those goals. It was also noted that while the Council Requests maps would not meet the same standards, where they aligned with the Commissions goals it would be noted. The Council Requests maps will also be offered to council as legal options, but without the specific endorsement of the Commission.

In addition, Sayer noted that the memo would include ethnic/racial breakdowns for each of the options to ensure previous council efforts to ensure at least one Hispanic opportunity ward remained in the city. He also intends to include information about how many people each option moves from their 2012 Ward so that council members can understand the level of disruption in each plan. Once shapefiles are developed for the options, compactness scores can also be calculated. Ross has also prepared for the memo information about the 2002 and 2012 redistricting cycles and the 2022 considerations fit within the changes made in prior cycles.

6. Schedule Going Forward

Zork noted the compressed timeline the process faces. If Council approves a map on Nov. 21, to keep things moving forward, the public meeting and council vote will happen on the same night, Dec. 19. This gives time for the required waiting period for a City Charter amendment. This would allow sufficient time to open candidate in February for the May 2023 election, as well as update voter rolls and inform citizens.

Mr. Marshall asked if the process could be delayed. Ross and Zork relayed that the city attorney had noted that, while a delay would not be illegal, the city charter does require the ward boundaries be updated “promptly” and that it would be inadvisable to delay the process as there is the risk that any election held under the old boundaries could be invalidated.

7. New Business

Dudek offered to buy all the Commission members a beer at Franklins once the redistricting process is complete.

8. Adjourn

There being no further business, Chair Sayer thanked Mason, Zork, Louimarre, and the rest of the city staff for their dedicated work during this process and then called for motion to adjourn at 9:06 p.m., which was approved on a voice vote.