



**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL
RESEARCH DIVISION**

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**SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON REDISTRICTING
Meeting minutes**

**September 27, 2021
3:00 p.m.**

Location: City Council Chamber

In attendance: City Council Members Aaron Bowman (Chair), Danny Becton, Garrett Dennis, Randy White; School Board Members Kelly Coker and Darryl Willie

Excused: Council Member Brenda Priestly Jackson

Also: Council Members Ron Salem, Al Ferraro, Michael Boylan, Joyce Morgan, Ju'Coby Pittman; Jeff Clements - Council Research Division; Paige Johnston – Office of General Counsel; Eric Grantham – Information Support Services; Bill Killingsworth and Howard Seltzer– Planning and Development Department; Maritza Sanchez – Legislative Services Division; Jerry Holland – Property Appraiser

Meeting Convened: 3:05 p.m.

Council Member Bowman convened the meeting and the attendees introduced themselves for the record. Mr. Bowman reviewed the agenda and said the meeting would be mainly for status reports on where the process stands at the moment.

Public Comment

Carnell Oliver said there does not appear to have been any coordination with the Supervisor of Elections thus far in the process and he's interested in knowing the political party registration figures for the various plans. There have always been behind-the-scenes dealings going on in Jacksonville and he wants the committee to have Supervisor of Elections Mike Hogan at a future meeting to comment on the ramifications of the redistricting process on elections and voting precincts.

Redistricting Process Update

Chairman Bowman said he believes a lot of progress is being made in the discussions of council members in noticed meetings and of individual council members with Planning and Development Director Bill Killingsworth. The south/east districts seem to be reaching agreement more readily, although there is still

a need for Districts 2 and 7 to agree on a boundary on the northwest end of District 2. The same process needs to happen for Districts 8 and 12. After those two boundaries are settled, then the single-member district process should be nearly finished. He said the committee needs to look at the at-large residence areas before the special election to fill the at-large seat vacated by the death of Council Member Hazouri is completed. Mr. Bowman said he will ask Mr. Killingsworth to look at who has filed to run for that seat and be sure future maps take the residences of those candidates into consideration so as not to draw the eventual winner out of their residence area in this process. He recommended that the current at-large council members meet as the district members have done to talk about mutually agreeable borders.

Review of Draft Maps

Bill Killingsworth said he met last Wednesday and Thursday with the council members from the south/east and north/west sides of the river, respectively, and showed a new map that resulted from those meetings. He will be meeting with Council Member Gaffney later this week to discuss the District 2/7 boundary. He is also looking for a boundary adjustment along the District 8/12 boundary that meets Council Member Pittman's community of interest expectations, hopefully without the need to affect any other districts.

Council Member White said he thought the District 8/12 boundary had been largely settled at last Thursday's meeting with adjustments agreed to between Beaver Street and Old Plank Road. Mr. Killingsworth said the two areas being discussed didn't provide enough population to meet the size variance requirement for District 8, so an additional adjustment is needed. Council Member Pittman asked how the districts balance if the Baldwin area is put back in District 12. Mr. Killingsworth said that the calculation done last week came up short on population for District 12, but the next census block to the east of the two adjustments discussed last week is a very large block (1,400 people), so going to the east from Baldwin provides either too little or too much population. He invited Ms. Pittman to come to the Planning Department to explore some alternative scenarios for where to gain the right amount of population to achieve the needed size balance.

Council Member Ferraro said he would meet with Mr. Killingsworth in preparation for a noticed meeting with Council Member Gaffney about refining the District 2/7 boundary. Chairman Bowman said he won't be scheduling a full Special Committee meeting for the next 3-4 weeks while the council members meet to work out their differences and reach mutual agreement. Mr. Killingsworth said the mapping and data analysis computer in his department is very fast and can help members analyze various scenarios quickly and easily and can produce some possibilities that could be acceptable to all parties. Multiple council members can't meet in the mapping office simultaneously because of space constraints and the Government in the Sunshine open meeting requirement. Council Member Becton said he had a good experience doing that for his district a couple of weeks ago and recommends that members schedule meetings with Planning staff and explore various scenarios to know what works and doesn't work for them in preparation for a called meeting of the four members in the most affected districts. Mr. Bowman said he will ask his ECA to start polling those four members for calendar availability for a meeting to be held in 3 weeks after Mr. Killingsworth has had the chance to meet with those four members individually to explore options. He asked Council Member Becton to be the facilitator at that meeting because of his prior experience in exploring adjustments to his district's boundaries.

Proposed At-Large Residence Areas

Chairman Bowman asked attorney Paige Johnston of the Office of General Counsel for legal guidance on how the at-large residence area redistricting works and what rules apply. Ms. Johnston said there is no specific guidance in the City Charter or Ordinance Code that makes the process for the at-large residence areas any different than that for the single-member districts. The Special Committee may wish to establish guidance for the Planning Department to use in its process as it did for the single-member districts. She noted that the 10% maximum population variance applies to the at-large residence areas as well as the

districts. Council Member Salem advocated for not drawing the person elected in the December/February special election for the vacant At-large Group 3 seat into a residence area with current incumbents eligible to run for re-election.

At the committee's request Mr. Killingsworth gave the 2020 population statistics for the current at-large residence areas. With a county population of 995,000, the target population for each of the five residence areas is 199,000. The residence area current populations are as follows: Area 1 – 209,779; Area 2 – 191,496; Area 3 – 208,962; Area 4 – 202,376; Area 5 – 182,954. The significant deviation between Areas 1 and 3 on the high side of the target and Area 5 on the low side means that some adjustments will be needed to achieve the maximum 10% deviation requirement.

Council Member Dennis gave the history of the at-large residence areas which were intended to spread at-large representation around the city instead of being concentrated in a small area which was the case before the residence areas were established. He said it should not be too difficult to make the numbers balance, provided the current incumbents are protected. Mr. Killingsworth said having to wait to learn the identities and addresses of the upcoming special election candidates throws a wrinkle into the process, but that should be known by next Monday after the qualifying period ends and the department can plot the candidates' residences. He noted that there is a population difference of 50,000 between the sides of the river, so a river crossing district will be necessary again as it was 10 years ago to make the residence areas balance and meet the maximum deviation requirement.

Overview of Legislative Process

Paige Johnston said that the City Charter requires that the redistricting process be completed within 8 months from the August 12th release of the Census data, so the deadline is mid-April for City Council to adopt a plan. The Ordinance Code lays out the legislative process and the public hearing requirements. The Special Committee has 150 days from the Census data release to submit a proposed plan to City Council, which will be January 9th at the latest. The legislation to adopt the final plan will include a number of exhibits to the ordinance itself: the final maps; an explanation of the methodology used for the redistricting process; narrative descriptions of all the district/residence area boundaries; and all proposed map variations considered throughout the process. Ms. Johnston said she will circulate the full legislative packet to the Special Committee when its work is concluded to get the committee's approval for introduction of the legislation. When the bill is filed with the council then the Rules Committee takes over the process and holds a series of at least three public hearings. In response to a question from Chairman Bowman about the last day in December that the committee could file a report with the Council Secretary, Ms. Johnston said the reporting process for the proposed plan won't follow the usual "Wednesday of committee week" legislation submission deadline requirement. She suggested that the Friday of the last council meeting week before the council's winter break (December 17th) would be a likely deadline unless the committee chooses to meet over the Council recess.

Council Member Ferraro asked when the Rules Committee take over the redistricting process from the Special Committee. Ms. Johnston said that occurs once the bill is introduced in City Council and referred to the committee. Given the timeline just discussed (submission of the bill by the end of the last council meeting week in December), January 11, 2022 would be the first council meeting after the winter break and the ordinance would be introduced that night and referred to the Rules Committee. The Rules Committee must then hold at least 3 public hearings on the proposal within 45 days after the bill is introduced. In response to a question from Mr. Ferraro about what power the Rules Committee has over the plan once it has been referred, Ms. Johnston said the committee can change the map based on what the members hear at the public hearings, on requests of other council members, on other public input, etc. If there is a "substantial" change to the plan after it is introduced in council then at least one more public hearing must be held. The City Council determines what constitutes a "substantial" change for that purpose. Mr. Killingsworth said that in his experience, "you'll know it when you see it" when it comes to

determining a substantial change. In the process 10 years ago there were no substantial changes, only minor tweaks to the plan after the plan was introduced.

Comments

Council Member Morgan asked for clarification of the timing of the next special committee meeting. Chairman Bowman said the Districts 2, 7, 8 and 12 council members need to meet and reach consensus on mutually agreeable boundaries that meet the legal requirements, then he will hold another full special committee meeting to ratify that consensus and discuss the at-large residence areas. The special committee will then give Planning Department final directions to produce the proposal maps for referral to Council. If those four council members can't reach consensus, then the special committee will have to vote to make the final decisions. Mr. Bowman assured Ms. Morgan that her district has not changed at all.

Council Member Boylan thanked Mr. Becton for calling the noticed meetings to help the south/east council members work out their consensus and thanked Chairman Bowman for guiding the committee process smoothly. Mr. Bowman thanked the council members for being open to compromise and to reaching a mutually agreeable outcome.

Council Member Becton asked Mr. Killingsworth how he planned to craft an at-large residence area proposal. Mr. Killingsworth said he will talk to the at-large members who will have to gain and lose the most population and see what they suggest to guide the development of a map. He said in his experience incumbents may have a deep interest in where the boundaries are drawn for reasons that sometimes are and sometimes are not very apparent, but there is always a reason. Mr. Becton said it appears to him that the at-large areas have evolved gradually without major changes from decade to decade.

School Board Member Darryl Willie said he had just emailed school location and attendance zone maps for the Planning Department's use in the mapping process.

Council Member Salem said he will be working with Mr. Killingsworth to map the residences of the At-large Group 3 candidates filing to run in the special election and then will meet with Council Member Freeman (the only other at-large incumbent eligible to run again) to work out an at-large residence area proposal for the committee to consider.

Next meetings

Chairman Bowman urged the Districts 2, 7, 8 and 12 council members to meet individually with the Planning Department in the next two weeks and then to jointly hold a noticed meeting around October 15th to achieve a consensus solution. The Special Committee will then meet in late October or early November to finalize its decision and propose plans.

Meeting adjourned: 4:12 p.m.

Minutes: Jeff Clements, Research Division

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9.29.21 Posted 5:00 p.m.