



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

INDEPENDENT REDISTRICTING COMMISSION MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING
FEBRUARY 12, 2022
COMMUNITY ARTS WORKSHOP
631 GARDEN ST, SANTA BARBARA, CA

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Johnson called the meeting to order at approximately 10:02 a.m.

ROLL CALL

Commissioners present: Chair Hon. Melinda A. Johnson (Ret.), Hon. Abraham Khan (Ret.), Hon. Elizabeth Allen White (Ret.).

Commissioners absent: None.

Staff present: Brandon Beaudette, Acting Assistant to the City Administrator; Marguerite Mary Leoni, Special Counsel; Ariel Calonne, City Attorney; Michelle Sosa-Acosta, Deputy City Attorney; Norma Cervantes, Administrative Analyst; Dr. Daniel Phillips, National Demographics Corporation.

Public Present: Randy Rowse, Oscar Gutierrez, Kristen Sneddon, Mike Jordan, Lindsey Baker, Lee Heller, and Dr. Lanny Ebenstein.

All present.

GENERAL BUSINESS

A. Changes to the Agenda

B. Public Comment. Any member of the public may address the Commission on any subject within its jurisdiction that is not scheduled on this agenda for a public discussion.

Lindsey Baker spoke on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Santa Barbara to encourage the Commission on transparency and equity in the electoral redistricting process.

C. Approval of the minutes of the Independent Redistricting Commission meeting of January 20, 2022. The Commissioners moved to approve the January 20 minutes with the following amendments: on page 2, change the date from January 20 to November 8; on page 3, change that Chair Johnson did not say that it was the Commission's role to select a map, not draft one, and instead write that Mr. Ariel Calonne said that statement.

NOTICES

INDEPENDENT REDISTRICTING COMMISSION REPORTS

1. Forum of future public hearings.

Brandon Beaudette spoke on behalf of City staff and recommended that any future in-person public hearings be held in locations that are accessible both physically and technologically. Mr. Beaudette also recommended City facilities or City-owned facilities.

Hon. White said that she was unavailable for an in-person public hearing on March 9. Chair Johnson asked whether it was possible to have a virtual appearance for Hon. White and have Chair Johnson and Hon. Khan appear in-person. Mr. Beaudette confirmed it was possible.

Chair Johnson commented that she liked the Community Arts Workshop location.

Mr. Beaudette then said that the March 30 public hearing would likely be an all-day public hearing.

2. Presentation by City staff on the community input received, including the issues identified by Hon. Frank J. Ochoa (Ret.).

Deputy City Attorney Michelle Sosa-Acosta spoke about the Banales Stipulated Judgment language since Hon. Frank Ochoa previously requested for such language to be incorporated into the redistricting goals and principles. Ms. Sosa-Acosta then spoke

on additional community input received, including public comment previously discussed with the Commissioners at the January 20, 2022 public hearing.

3. Presentation by the City's demographer, National Demographics Corporation ("NDC") on the release of additional draft maps. Commission members will discuss the viability of the draft maps.

Dr. Daniel Phillips from NDC presented on the release of additional draft maps as created by NDC.

Public Comment:

Lee Heller spoke regarding how councilmembers do not necessarily have to reside within a section of the City in order to care about that area and advocate for that area. Heller then said that the more important considerations are protecting communities of interest and balancing competing requirements. Heller also stated a preference for draft map 104.

Dr. Lanny Ebenstein spoke on behalf of the Santa Barbara District Elections Committee. Dr. Ebenstein stated that draft map 104 is the closest to achieving a Latino citizen voting age population majority in District 3 and that it is hard to achieve that. He then suggested to extend District 3 further down to Castillo Street. He said that if it is not possible to get a Latino citizen voting age population majority in District 3, then the Commission should aim for a plurality Latino citizen voting age population in District 3. Dr. Ebenstein further recommended that District 4 be extended onto East Beach.

Councilmember Kristen Sneddon spoke and emphasized that the City is new to electoral districts. Councilmember Sneddon clarified that any changes in the electoral districts from redistricting would not affect her elections because she would be "termed out." She recommended the Commission maintain the current districts as they are as much as possible. She then said that new boundaries could lead to councilmembers representing districts that the councilmembers have not previously highly communicated with. She also highlighted the importance of having adequate representation for high fire risk areas. She explained that a councilmember would have to recuse herself or himself from high fire risk issues if the majority of her or his district is not a high fire risk area. She noted that by breaking up the high fire risk area into different districts, there is a greater possibility of inadequate representation because of the recusals. She also mentioned that there are businesses along the waterfront. She then said that if the waterfront would reside in one single district, there could be a dilution of business-interest-minded votes. Councilmember Sneddon stated that she prefers draft map 101R because it is the one with the least changes.

Councilmember Mike Jordan spoke and said that the redistricting process should respect the prior work done to establish the current districts. Councilmember Jordan said that there should be no major shifting in the current districts. He also mentioned that there should continue to be multiple representations on State Street as well as the waterfront.

He then said that the Banales settlement provides for the intent to create two Latino majority minority districts, but the agreement does not require those two districts. Councilmember Jordan said that he prefers draft map 104 with the following changes: extend District 1 so that it includes a portion of State Street; and extend District 3 to the southwest.

IRC Discussion:

Hon. White said that there appears to be a conflict between draft maps 104 and 101R.

Hon. Khan said he would like to hear about any continued discussions between the City Attorney and Hon. Ochoa. Hon. Khan said he wants to avoid continued litigation and a lack of finality. Hon. Khan said if it is not possible to create two majority minority districts, he would like to hear some degree of concession with the Banales plaintiffs.

City Attorney Ariel Calonne said that the City Attorney's Office has spoken with Hon. Ochoa. Mr. Calonne suggested that the Commission direct NDC on how to proceed with draft maps 104 or 101R.

Hon. Khan said that it may be possible to achieve a balance between draft map 104 and the current district boundaries.

Hon. White asked whether it would be possible to extend District 3's boundaries to Castillo Street as a boundary instead of highway 101 and see what impact that may have.

Chair Johnson said that some criteria may have to be more emphasized than other criteria. Chair Johnson asked whether NDC could speak to the Castillo Street suggestion. Chair Johnson then asked whether the Commission could drive around town to better understand the existing layout of the current districts.

Mr. Calonne said that the City could arrange site visits for the Commission and could arrange for a shuttle with various stops where the public could be present.

Hon. White agreed with the site visits idea.

Dr. Phillips spoke regarding the Castillo Street suggestion and said that NDC has looked into that option but has not seen an increase in Latino citizen voting age population numbers. Dr. Phillips also suggested to keep the highway as an identifiable boundary.

Public Comment:

Councilmember Oscar Gutierrez spoke about his experience growing up in District 3 and living on "the other side of the tracks" due to the highway boundary. Councilmember Gutierrez believes that allowing District 3 to extend beyond the highway could be more equitable. He said that the Census data does not show the true Latino population numbers because of age or citizen status differences. Councilmember Gutierrez plans

to reach out to District 3's residents regarding the different options in the redistricting process.

Lindsey Baker spoke about how Councilmember Sneddon was previously recused from a high fire risk issue because she lived in a high fire risk district. Ms. Baker said she would not want a similar instance to happen again.

4. Discussion of Future Agendas

Chair Johnson requested that the Commission participate in site visits as soon as possible.

Hon. White asked whether March 3 would work. The Commissioners confirmed.

COMMISSION AND STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Johnson adjourned the meeting at 11:10 a.m.

Approved and adopted by the Independent Redistricting Commission of the City of Santa Barbara on March 3, 2022.

SANTA BARBARA INDEPENDENT REDISTRICTING COMMISSION

HON. MELINDA A. JOHNSON, (RET.) CHAIR