



REDISTRICTING COMMISSION

MINUTES SEPTEMBER 22, 2021

1. Call to Order

The Councilmanic Redistricting Commission meeting was called to order at 6:01 PM with all members present.

2. Review and Approval of Minutes

Jim Thornton made a motion to approve the minutes from September 20, 2021. Erik Robey seconded. The minutes were approved with an unanimous vote.

3. Public Comment

1. **Wanda Boker, Havre de Grace, MD** – Ms. Boker is a homeowner and former business owner in Havre de Grace. She supports having both Aberdeen and Havre de Grace in one Councilmanic district. She feels they would be better represented and it would not be a conflict of interest. She said each municipality compliments each other due to geographic location. Many residents live in one city and work in the other and rely on the businesses in each City. She hopes the Commission and the County Council welcome having both cities in a single district. She said the population of both combined represent approximately 30,000 residents. The mayors believe that it is in favor of both their constituencies. The residents hope that by combining the Cities, the future Council representative would actually live in one of their cities.

It was opened for Commissioner comments and questions. Wayne Goddard asked questions and Ms. Boker responded that she feels that Havre de Grace's current representation does not represent Havre de Grace's interests, but rather a diluted representation of the many interests included in the district. The interest of the people in Havre de Grace are not being taken as seriously as others who live in similar living situations. Ms. Boker said some distinct needs that are important and should be represented at the County level are Aberdeen Proving Ground, commuter population, expansion and maintenance of the Amtrak station, and the arts and entertainment industry. Christine Bracknell had comments.

2. **Councilman Adam Hiob, City of Aberdeen** – Mr. Hiob passed out answers to questions that were posed to Aberdeen at the last meeting and the MOU. Mustafa Sidik asked for time to review the documents.

It was opened for Commissioner's questions or comments. Mr. Goddard had questions. Mr. Hiob said he does understand that Council Member Wagner would no longer be the representative of Aberdeen and that the map they presented would now have him in a district that goes to North Harford. One objective when creating the map was not to have one Council Member have to challenge another Council Member, and with this proposal, there is not another Council Member in the same district as him. Council Member Wagner would still remain in his district, as his community in District E is not a community of interest with Aberdeen and Havre de Grace. Mr. Hiob acknowledges that there would be significant changes to only District E and F. Mr. Hiob said he read the document "Goals and Purposes of the Commission". Mr. Hiob said the population deviation is all less than 5% for each district in their proposal. He acknowledged that it would make significant changes and extra work on the Board of Elections; however, he feels the point of redistricting is to get the districts corrected. Mr. Hiob said he was not aware of a document created 10 years ago by Mr. Charles Kearney, Council Attorney with Paul Ishak, Redistricting Commission Chair at the time. Mr. Goddard read portions of the document. Mr. Hiob said that the primary point that a district has multiple sub-jurisdictions in it is not a new practice in the State. He says in terms of interest, Aberdeen and Havre de Grace have similar interests, and both cities are looking to expand beyond their current jurisdictions. He said this is a primary issue that a Council Person must take a position on and it is difficult to vote on when you have such different community interests within a district. Mr. Sidik had a question. Mr. Hiob said a lot of legislators and county council members across the State that have multiple jurisdictions within their district. He said they are two Cities that build off each other. He added that the only differences the Cities have had was regarding the hospital, but he added that was not between the Cities, but rather a business decision. Mr. Goddard had a follow up question. Mr. Hiob said the hospital was a gain for Aberdeen and an unfortunate loss for Havre de Grace; however, other forces pitted them against each other. He said it was a once in a lifetime event. He added he was not on the Council at the time. He said it has created Havre de Grace into a more arts and entertainment district that benefits from tourism and Aberdeen has, and benefits from, a more technical and medical standpoint

Mr. Thornton had a question for Mr. Goddard; he asked if his position is shifting from a legal position to a more "conflict of interest" position. Mr. Goddard said that is a two-prong question. He said the legal memorandum addresses the Maryland Constitution which mandates due regard for political subdivisions. It is the consequence of not giving due regard that the conflict arises. His concern is two-fold: the citizens that support this might not understand or might not be getting the information on the ramifications that could occur down the line from their leadership.

Mr. Thornton asked further questions to Mr. Hiob. Mr. Hiob said they believe that both mayors have been elected by their constituents either by large margins or unopposed in their elections. The City of Aberdeen has received letters of support from citizens and the Commission will be receiving them tonight. Mr. Hiob does not know of any politically driven agenda in wanting to combine the Cities of Aberdeen and Havre de Grace.

Council President Vincenti arrived at the meeting.

3. **Adam Rybczynski, City of Havre de Grace** - Mr. Rybczynski provided a letter of information from Maryland Municipal League. He also has more letters of support (329 collected to date).

It was opened for Commissioner questions or comments. Mr. Goddard asked if the Commission could have a copy of the notice and explanation that was provided to residents of Aberdeen and Havre de Grace explaining to them the proposed map and the potential ramifications of such a change so they could make an informed decision on whether to sign the letter to the Commission. Mr. Rybczynski said he would send that through the Commission email. He said the mayors got this information out to residents through presentations at Council meetings, they've held special Council meetings on this issue, promoted through community groups, videos and emails. Mr. Thornton had questions. Mr. Rybczynski said Mr. Martin makes decisions for the residents of the City as is his job. Mr. Rybczynski is not aware of any politically driven agenda in wanting to combine the municipalities. Mr. Goddard had additional questions. Mr. Rybczynski deferred that to his legal counsel.

4. **April Ishak, City Attorney for Havre de Grace, MD** – She is a resident of Havre de Grace in addition to being the City Attorney. She agrees with Mr. Sussman's letter (Counsel to Aberdeen) that the section of the State Constitution relates to the legislative districts, not directly to the councilmanic districts. However, she thinks there are several things you need to take into account. There are several examples in the State of Maryland; if it were illegal, it would not exist in other districts in Maryland. She says the "in due regard" is not only for conflict of interest. She would argue that the due regard should also be for the consent of these two communities. The citizens of Havre de Grace are under Charter rule. There is strong support from the community, and they have been given opportunity to comment. She thinks the conflict of interest is theoretical, at best. She was intimately involved in the hospital situation that Mr. Goddard referenced. The final decision was determined by the Board of Upper Chesapeake and the Cities have never had hard feelings toward each other as it was a business decision. Both Cities have a joint interest in the EMS system; this is something that a representative will

have to deal with for both Cities. A water issue, zoning, Route 40 corridor, and schools are also issues for both. She believes that their areas have lost representation over the years. The communities are tied together like “two lungs”; she doesn’t view it as competition.

Mr. Goddard had comments and a question. She said she isn’t frustrated with representation but rather their understanding of the municipalities and dual government functions. She believes there is a disconnect. Ms. Bracknell asked a question. The redistricting proposal is fair under the Charter. She feels it makes it more compact and it is contiguous. Mr. Thornton had a question. Ms. Ishak does not believe there would need to be a referendum to enter into a MOU with the City of Aberdeen. There are no requirements; however, he did ask the City Council for a vote. She is not aware of any political motivation that is driving this map proposal. Mr. Goddard has a follow up question. Mr. Ishak said that she would like to see someone from that quadrant of the county elected and someone who understands how municipalities work. She said District E representative is running unopposed and she hasn’t thought about how it would affect District F’s representative. Mr. Sidik asked a question. She is not aware that any research has been done with this plan about populations that might be disenfranchised.

Mr. Robey left the meeting, 6:45 PM; he returned at 6:54 PM.

4. Commission Work Session

Christine Bracknell asked to make a statement about the points made at the Monday’s meeting. Mr. Sidik allowed her to read the statement. The statement will be attached to these minutes.

Mr. Sidik had comments. Mr. Goddard responded to Ms. Bracknell’s statement.

Joel Gallihue brought up Mr. Robey’s updated map. Mr. Robey submitted updates to his map earlier today in order to adjust the population numbers so they fell into legal limits. His changes are:

- Change 1-15 from District A to District F
- Remove my request to split precinct 1-10
- Keep all of 1-10 in district A

Ms. Stephanie Taylor, Director of the Board of Elections, is in attendance and made comments.

The next map viewed is the map submitted by Jen Wilson, a citizen. Mr. Gallihue explained the changes proposed. Mr. Sidik asked if it takes into consideration Bel Air’s request. Mr. Gallihue said yes. It was opened for questions.

Mr. Goddard asked if we had the ability to see the election districts. Mr. Gallihue said he would send a link to view it as the numbers are fairly small and not visible on the monitors. Mr. Goddard said he looks at things with the goal of having as equal populations as possible. He said if he can see the fringe districts, he might be able to make it better and more equitable.

Mr. Sidik said his goal is to get a finite choice of maps to present at tomorrow's virtual meeting. They looked at the statistics for the existing map. Mr. Gallihue will be giving the Commission final maps from the GIS system. The final map options are:

Map #1 – Current map

Map #2 – Mr. Robey's revised option

Map #3 – Aberdeen and Havre de Grace proposal

Map #4 – Aberdeen and Havre de Grace Plus option

Map #5 – Wilson option

Mr. Kearney asked if people could go into Dave's Redistricting website and see the maps that have already been created. Mr. Gallihue said anyone can go into the website and make a map. Mr. Thornton said to make sure we educate the viewers to they can review them and offer feedback. Mr. Sidik will create a table that shows the different deviations of each option and send it to Mr. Gallihue tomorrow. Mr. Robey had comments regarding his map; Mr. Taylor had additional comments.

Mr. Sidik said for tomorrow's meeting he will provide a brief presentation first, then public comments and close out with comments from Commissioners.

Mr. Sidik opened it for Commissioner comments. Mr. Sidik and Mr. Kearney reviewed how the Commissioners and participants will be invited to tomorrow's virtual meeting.

5. Adjournment

Mr. Thornton made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Robey seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 7:38 PM.

Approved _____

Chairperson

Date