



Ward Realignment Committee

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, September 14, 2023

6:00 PM

The Empowerment Center, 615B Pine Street, Cambridge

Committee Members Present: Jim Sicks (chair), Greg Meekins (vice chair), Lou Hyman, Barbara Knepp, Talibah Chikwendu, Carlos Estin (attended virtually)

Committee Members Absent: Tabria Cornish

Staff present: Cheryl Hannan, Scott Shores

Chairman Sicks called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM with a quorum present of himself, Mr. Hyman, Ms. Knepp, and Ms. Chikwendu.

Talibah Chikwendu made a motion to approve the minutes from last week's meeting. Barbara Knepp seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Motion carried.

{Vice Chair Meekins and Mr. Estin joined the meeting.}

Chairman Sicks asked for a recap of where we are from last meeting to help shape the direction for tonight's discussions. All agreed the focus should be on keeping Wards compact and contiguous as possible and that the main priority was to fix the Wards which are out of compliance. Secondly, if existing issues with Ward boundaries can be addressed without doing a wholesale change, they would be considered.

The committee worked collaboratively from large printouts of the ward maps with the census blocks which are on the borders of each ward highlighted. A census block is the smallest designated area with population which can be considered for movement from one ward to another. A census block does not necessarily equal a geographic block.

The committee began by focusing on Ward 5, which is currently the smallest ward and out of compliance. They discussed several potential census blocks which could be moved to Ward 5 and settled on several that are in "the corner" of where wards 3, 4, and 5 meet. The objective of focusing on these blocks was to maintain the principles of contiguous and compactness to move these adjoining blocks from Wards 3 & 4 into Ward 5. These movements resulted in all 3 Wards being within tolerance, with Wards 3 and 4 being slightly smaller.

The next area considered was to reduce the size of Ward 1, currently the largest ward, by again looking for a census block that would be contiguous to Ward 3 and maintain the principle of compactness and racial diversity. A block was identified that brought Ward 1 within tolerance while bringing Ward 3 closer to the goal.

So, the next focus for the committee was on finding a block that was contiguous between Ward 2 (too large) and Ward 4 (too small) with enough population to smooth out the differences in sizes. A block was identified. This resulted in an almost equal distribution of population across



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the 5 Wards. Wards 1, 4, and 5 are slightly over the 100% target and Wards 2 and 3 are slightly under at 99% and 97%, respectively.

The committee agreed that this result was a thoughtful approach to rebalancing the wards and was acceptable to all of them and asked City staff to put it into the model to validate the above calculations and ensure racial distribution in the wards was not diminished by these movements.

The revised model will be the beginning of the conversation for next week's meeting. Where it will be decided whether to make further adjustments or to move forward with this proposal.

A motion for adjournment was made and approved. Meeting adjourned at 6:59 pm.