



OFFICE OF THE CHAMPAIGN COUNTY EXECUTIVE

1776 East Washington Street, Urbana, Illinois 61802-4581

Darlene A. Kloeppe, County Executive

Champaign County Redistricting Advisory Group

MEETING NOTES FOR TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2021, 6:00PM

Members Present: Chuck Lansford, Trisha Crowley, Lin Warfel, Shandra Summerville, Emily Bluhm, Debbra Sweat, Gabe Lewis, Brian Gaines, Nicole Darby and Leanne Brehob-Riley – all present via Zoom

County Staff: Darlene Kloeppe, present via Zoom and Mary Ward (Administrative Assistant) at Brookens and via Zoom

Others Present: None

County Executive Kloeppe started the meeting at 6:02 p.m.

I. Welcome

II. Update from County Board

Ms. Kloeppe gave an update from the County Board. At its February 9, 2021 Committee of the Whole meeting, the County Board indicated they are satisfied with the current configuration of county districting at 11 districts and 2 representative per district. A resolution was passed at the February 18, 2021 County Board Meeting setting the 2021 apportionment plan number and type of districts at 22 members and 11 county board districts.

Ms. Kloeppe also gave an update on the census data, which will not be finalized until at least September. That means we, and everyone else in the state, will be late on redistricting. After speaking to the United Council of Counties attorneys she learned that in Illinois the Governor or legislature may be able to change our deadlines, which will affect all jurisdictions needing to redistrict, not just the counties.

Discussion followed on how to proceed with meetings, proposing that the group get the criteria to judge the maps established and then take most of the summer off until we get the census data and can start drawing maps. We also could have a public hearing on the criteria to judge the maps and get public input on that. We could update the group over the summer with any information that comes up and then start meeting again in August or September. The group felt that meeting schedule was reasonable.

Would it be useful to have a public information session once we come up with the criteria? We could maybe do a press release explaining the stage we're at and here's the criteria. Mr. Gaines said he likes the idea of a hearing on the criteria without any maps, but he's not sure they would draw any interest without the maps. He would not expect many people to show up for this and we don't want to mislead people into thinking they were going to see/discuss maps and we not have anything to show. We shouldn't expect a huge number of people at any public hearing. Ms. Crowley felt that there would be danger in an abstract discussion in which people hear suggestions that seem very clear-cut kind of considerations but when the maps actually are

voted on, other considerations, perhaps political, would be used. Ms. Summerville proposed that the criteria be presented to the County Board. It could be an informational session. Also, the tool that Leanne presented that we plan to use to draw maps could be presented to them. It was suggested we could do a presentation from the committee to the County Board at one of their upcoming meetings.

Ms. Kloeppel will keep the group posted as to the timelines and when we have the census data.

III. Presentation on 2011 NAACP Map and things to consider

Ms. Summerville was able to get some information on this from people who were involved 10 years ago. There were some things NAACP wanted to emphasize:

- Number of districts to match the population in the community. They looked at what would be true representation when they did those maps; that was equitable, fair and that it balanced the population in the districts.
- More than one person representing the district because that person may not adequately represent the entire district. Especially in districts that are predominately black, or predominately minority or other types of representation.

Ms. Kloeppel asked if they were advocates of more than one representative per district because of the total number? Ms. Summerville said, no, they were advocates for more than one rep per district because of the accountability. They wanted more than one so there would be accountability and true representation. They thought there should be more than one representative per district because not everyone in the district might agree.

Ms. Crowley asked what's the impact on representation with two representatives per district. Mr. Gaines answered that for the purposes of redistricting, it doesn't matter what the total number of representatives is. How they're elected will impact representation but that is not a redistricting choice. It doesn't change the way we establish the districts. How they're elected is up to the County Board to decide.

Mr. Lansford asked about keeping the number of total representatives to a smaller number. The County Board makes that decision and they have decided to keep it at 11 districts with 2 representatives per district for a total of 22 members.

IV. Update on ESRI mapping tool – Leanne

Ms. Brehob-Riley gave an update on the software. We are an ESRI shop and the plan is to utilize their Redistricting Solution. It's a comprehensive web-based tool for redistricting, plan creation, management, visualization, editing and collaboration. It has built in tools to check for compactness and allowable population deviations. There are two versions of this tool. One is a software as service subscription and the other is a hosted subscription deployment that could be hosted in ESRI's cloud or on premise. The actual tool is the same in both subscriptions, the main difference is the hosted subscription allows for direct public participation. Anyone could log in, view maps, create maps, comment on maps; it allows for direct collaboration and integration of local data if we wish to add a layer for some reason.

The software as a service subscription only allows one person to create maps; so, GIS staff would have to do all the maps. Other tools would have to be used to share the maps. There is about a \$40,000 price difference. With the hosted subscription deployment, other units of government could use the tool, *i.e.*, Champaign, Urbana, school districts. We could purchase it jointly and have all the different agencies utilize it. There are on-going discussions about potential partnerships for the more expensive version. The software as a service subscription only Leanne and Nicole in GIS would be able to draw the maps. Less expensive for the product, but more expensive for staff time.

Mr. Gaines asked if there was a deadline for this decision. The hosted version has to be installed by ESRI staff. For that we would have to work within their time frame.

Mr. Warfel said that previously the Farm Bureau used an outside source to draw a map and submit it for consideration. During the last redistricting, the County had purchased a tool and the county drew all the maps and they also accepted maps from the outside. At that time, there was not an option to allow the public to draw maps on the same product. Ms. Brehob-Riley thought that at the time the County had set up a kiosk for the public to use to draw maps, but she wasn't sure anyone took advantage of it. As long as someone submits a polygon file, it can be analyzed. If everything is in one location, we can use the built-in tools to do the comparisons.

V. Criteria for evaluating maps

What are our priorities for drawing the maps? The required criteria include:

- *Equal in Population within a certain percentage
- *Contiguous and Compact
- *Retain Townships and Municipalities, as much as possible
- *Precincts Undivided, as practical
- *Communities of Interest

We can do a scoring scale or some other method, but we have to decide how are we going to compare the maps.

Mr. Warfel said that equal population is his number one priority. The communities of interest are a challenge because they vary so much. He feels that categories should fall into what are the services the county provides to particular communities of interest in the county. The student population is so different from rural/small towns in what services they get and need from the county. He feels the other three criteria fall into place easily.

Discussion followed on communities of interest. Ms. Crowley thought the group should try to list the communities of interest to be considered. Some that came up initially included: Students; Rural/Small Villages (< 3000); cities of Champaign and Urbana; the University; mid-size towns of Rantoul, Mahomet, Savoy and maybe include St. Joseph in that group; minorities.

The question was asked if there is a geographic concentration of Asians and Latinos in the community? Certainly, there is a concentration of African Americans in the community. Mr. Lewis answered that he would have to look into Census data for the minority populations. Mr. Warfel said that he thought that what is different from the past, is that now minorities are more

spread out than they had been, so harder to district by this as a group. Mr. Gaines added the simple answer is that no one knows at the moment and we'll have to decide what the definition of racial/ethnic categories are due to how the questions were asked on the census. Ms. Kloeppe said she can see this raising more questions. With minorities, if you're considering a minority, can you lump everyone together that's non-white? Are there legislative/legal findings about how you divide minority? Discussion followed on various minority groups and where they might be concentrated in the county. We will have to wait until we get the census data to see where they are. Mr. Warfel thought that one of the challenges would be giving the African Americans who are concentrated in one area a strong voice.

The idea that students are a community of interest poses a challenge as it is not readily identifiable in the data the way race/ethnicity is. We could use age as a proxy, but it's not quite the same thing. If we use age as a proxy for student, it can be pretty varied. Rural/Urban could differ slightly on how you regard the mid-size towns. The main distinction is Champaign and Urbana against everything else.

Mr. Lansford said sexual orientation might need to be considered, however this is not a question on the census. It is also not a geographically segregated community. Ms. Kloeppe asked what about people in different professions? We have a large university population, businesspeople, manufacturing, etc. Is that something we would separate based on the census? Mr. Warfel stated that he felt other than the university, those would be dispersed all over the county.

Ms. Kloeppe asked the group if they thought age would be a criterion? Are there concentrations of older adults? The University area would have a large student age population? Mr. Gaines said potentially a large student age population would probably overlap with the student population. He didn't think that at the county level we would find a cluster of senior population. Mr. Warfel added that small towns have changed over the years, with some small towns having a much older population now. The towns without a school, grocery store etc. have an older population. Although, there probably not be enough to make their own district and they would blend into the rural population around them.

The group decided that the primary communities of interest we want to be concerned about are: Race/Ethnicity and potentially the break between Unincorporated Champaign County/Rural and the larger area of Champaign/Urbana.

Discussion continued with how careful we want to get with population equality between districts. Some presenters have touched on this and they felt that we need to be careful and get the populations as close to equal as possible. There is some leeway on this, and it might be difficult to do once lines are being drawn. Mr. Gaines said his short case against them getting within less than 1%, is that the data is out of date by the first election. The data is collected in 2020 and the first election is in 2022. We don't redistrict for every election. If we would put in 5% variances, he would be happy with that if it serves the purpose for compactness or addresses any of the other criteria well. Mr. Warfel asked if the previous map in 2011 was about 5%. That map was 5% or less and it was well proportioned. It was suggested maybe to start at 10% and have a goal to get to 5% and if we get close, ok. Mr. Lansford asked if we need to consider that a lot of students weren't counted. This year is the added unknown brought on by COVID and students being online and off-campus.

Districts being compact and contiguous was discussed. They are supposed to be both as much as possible. Mr. Gaines said the “as much as possible” gives us some wiggle room. Contiguous is basically required and not violated. Compactness is very difficult to measure. They ought to be compact and be simple shapes. There is no perfect measure on compactness. Not sure what is built into ESRI, but it won’t be perfect as there is no perfect measure.

Ms. Crowley said that Champaign and Urbana would have different interests. Political boundaries are a traditional criterion. Ms. Kloepfel said it is her understanding that the County Clerk does not intend to change precincts very much, however there will have to be some adjustments made. She was not sure if the decision had been made about the number precincts. Mr. Lansford asked if that was the County Clerk’s sole decision. Ms. Kloepfel said she thought the County Board would have to approve them although she hadn’t checked the statutes on that.

Mr. Warfel felt the current map does a decent job although a few districts, 8, 9 and 10, get just a little wonky. He said they weren’t rectangles, but they were reasonable. He feels “reasonable” is a really good goal.

Ms. Crowley asked do we start from scratch and draw brand new districts, or do we try to keep districts close to what they are. There is disruption if we start drawing lines in a completely new manner. Ms. Kloepfel said the way the County Board made their decision it seems they like the status quo. They would probably like to keep the new map as close as possible to the previous one. We can try some different things and see how they look.

We’ve used the word reasonable several different times tonight. How do we define reasonable? How will we decide what is fair? We will need to talk about this a little more at the next meeting and refine that more. What are the criteria you will use to say one map is better than another?

Mr. Gaines asked do we want to say in partisan competition terms these districts are competitive/not competitive, or do we want to say we deliberately are not going to make the slightest use of partisan data. Political science is not in agreement on this. What is the role of partisan competitiveness and how we measure it? This is not something that is in the Census Data. Ms. Kloepfel said that could possibly be a community of interest. Mr. Lansford asked how we could draw political maps since that is not a question asked on the Census. Ms. Kloepfel said that we can overlay local data onto the map, but should we include this criteria?

Mr. Warfel asked if the County Board was set on 11 districts and 22 reps. They have passed a resolution and they seem pretty set on that. We may do a presentation to the Board prior to presenting the maps to let them know our criteria, etc. We have to have at least two public hearings and one of those has to be after the map is presented to the County Board.

VI. Meeting Schedule

We’ll try to meet again in 3 weeks or so. Hopefully we’ll have more information from the state about the deadlines. We can try to finalize our criteria for evaluation various maps.

The meeting was concluded as 7:25 p.m.