



## **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, JANUARY 26, 2021, 6:30PM**

**Members Present:** Chuck Lansford, Trisha Crowley, Lin Warfel, Shandra Summerville, Emily Bluhm, Debbra Sweat, Mariel Huasanga, Gabe Lewis, Brian Gaines, Shree Thaker, Nicole Darby and Leanne Brehob-Riley

**County Staff:** Darlene Kloeppe, Megan Robison and Mary Ward (Administrative Assistants)

**Others Present:** Brad Uken (Manager, Champaign County Farm Bureau); George Danos (Champaign County Auditor)

County Executive Kloeppe started the meeting at 6:00 p.m.

#### **I. Welcome and Introductions**

#### **II. Presentations on redistricting rules and things to consider**

##### George Danos, County Auditor

George presented three considerations for determining mapping criteria.

Decision Rules: One criterion for the number of seats on county board is how efficiently we arrive at decisions. He presented some different options looking at the number of seats on the County Board and what number might be optimal. We currently have 11 two member districts for a total of 22 members. If the goal is to avoid gridlock, then the optimal number of districts would be either 15 or 19, odd numbers which would necessitate single member districts. Multi-candidate districts insulate governance from wholesale change but still involves total county participation. Single member districts could be staggered to prevent losing institutional knowledge.

Population Trends: He does not think that population trends should be a criterion. This type of criterion is fuzzy and conflicts with another criterion, Communities of Interest. There is no reason to project population change. We should use the actual 2020 Census Data (this is required).

Communities of Interest: One community of interest could be Academic or Campus Town. If Campus were to have 3 or 4 seats, that would politically insulate the academic community from localized turnout swings. Keeping precincts intact is important. It prevents confusion in both the voters and those conducting the vote. When precincts are split by different jurisdictions, you get more ballot configurations and individuals have gotten the wrong ballot before. So, it is important to keep the precincts together.

Mr. Warfel feels that there are approximately ten major parts to the county government. Of those ten major parts, communities of interest weigh them very differently. For example, roads mean more to the county/rural people than perhaps to students. The general principle would be that those who value roads should be kept together as a community of interest, so their county board member understands their concerns. Mr. Warfel gave examples of communities

of interest: Highway/Roads, Taxes, Justice, etc. Mr. Danos said that communities of interest aren't generally drawn to correlate to an arm of the county government, they are usually geographical. They might correlate to a branch of government but usually tend to be the community itself.

Ms. Kloeppel said that the group would have to decide how to define communities of interest. It's could be defined as racial/ethnic communities, geographic communities or it could be people with shared interests.

Ms. Crowley stated that it is a county board decision as to the number of districts and number of representatives from each and that had to be made before any other redistricting decision. The County Board will need to make that decision. If we have input to give them, we need to be giving them that now.

Shree Thaker joined the meeting and introduced herself.

Brad Uken, Manager, Champaign County Farm Bureau, was involved in the process ten years ago. Champaign County Farm Bureau has 10,000 members in the county many of which are in the rural areas and small towns. Farm Bureau focuses on three things: information, education, and advocacy. Government, and the County Board specifically, is important to their members. The County Board is our form of local government. The decisions they make impact police protection and the zoning that regulates our farmland. Decisions made by the County Board determines the quality of roads that are used to both consume services in the urban areas of the county as well as to transport crops and livestock to market. The appointments the County Board makes has impacts on our cemeteries, drainage, and fire protection districts. All these things directly affect our rural members.

We understand that the county is very diverse and has a larger urban than rural population. This makes it difficult to develop a new County Board map as it relates to representation and protecting communities of interest. What is Farm Bureau looking for in this process? We hope the panel will set aside differences and take into consideration the big picture, the future of the county and all its residents. We ask the panel NOT to consider voting patterns, voting records, past election results, party affiliation, incumbency, or other such political factors. Districts need to be compact and contiguous. The process needs to be open to the public with open houses or online forums to allow the public to see the work of the panel including the maps under consideration. Allow for public comment at meetings and provide an opportunity for the public to submit their ideas, or even maps, to the panel. Work to protect areas of interest. Be sure to follow state and federal laws as they pertain to redistricting. Mr. Uken thanked the committee for being willing to serve. It won't be an easy process. He encouraged the committee to look at the resolution and process from ten years ago. It worked well. Farm Bureau looks forward to being part of the process.

Mr. Warfel said that last time 22 maps were put together by various groups and Farm Bureau had at least one. Do you anticipate doing that again? Mr. Uken anticipates that various groups and individuals will put forth maps to be considered.

Ms. Kloeppel said that they are looking at all options. There is a tool that can be purchased to allow more public participation with mapping and we are considering the purchase of that now.

Mr. Uken said that last time the bulk of the maps came from RPC. They had the tools and software available to do that.

Ms. Summerville asked, with Farm Bureau in mind, what type of needs would they have? Communities of interest is a big subject, rural and urban communities of interest.

Gabe Lewis, Planner, Regional Planning Commission, presented a Census Data Slide Show. He went through some of the basics of the survey. The American Community Survey is conducted annually. The Census provides data at different levels. From largest to smallest, they are states, counties, municipalities, tracts, block groups and blocks. He shared some local population trends for the state and some surrounding counties. And he also shared community population estimates for Champaign County communities.

He went over the 2020 Census timeline. There were a lot of changes due to the pandemic. Most notably, while the students were asked to go home, an effort was made to get the students counted here. In the summer and fall when it was a little safer, they did go out in the community to do counts. Apportionment Counts and Redistricting Data have both been pushed back. The Census Bureau is working on a shortened timeline.

He went over the 'Hard to Count' populations in Champaign County. It includes the very young, the very old, young and mobile, people of color, foreign born/limited English-speaking households, renter-occupied housing, etc.

The self-response rates (those that completed the Census online) were listed for the County. During the Census they were able to see the number of those responses in real-time. Champaign County had 68.6% of residents do self-response. The University district had a rate of response of 50% or less. That is an area of concern.

Mr. Warfel asked how you get a handle on the undocumented workers and how many are here. They work with the Refugee Center of East-Central Illinois as well as the University YMCA which home to the new American Welcome Center. They have a close connection with the clients they serve.

Mr. Lansford brought up the issue of who do you count if they're temporary. The example he used was prisoners. Where should they really be counted? Students might fall into that same category. Have you heard anything about how this year's census count? Mr. Lewis answered that as far as he knows there is no change being discussed and they should be counted in the County where the prison is unless it's changed by legislation. He has not heard anything about changing the way students would be counted. It's always been that they would be counted in their campus community. He added that those in dorms, university housing, Greek housing or private certified housing are counted by the University and those numbers are sent directly to the Census. Group quarters, places like the University, prisons, nursing homes, etc. participate in the program where they send the information directly to the Census Bureau. As to the homeless, there was a count on the street, and they worked with C-U at Home and other providers to get those people counted.

Matt Banach, Civil Division, State's Attorney's Office, provided a timeline or schedule we need to keep to meet the legal requirements. There is a handout that they have provided in the packet. There is a caveat to the timeline. If the final census numbers are not ready until well into that

schedule, the whole state would have to reschedule or use another process through legislation. Ms. Kloeppel said she would watch for developments on that front.

### **III. Meeting Organization and Schedule**

The group will meet again in 3-4 weeks. Some reading material will be sent out. Be thinking about an exercise we'll do at the next meeting to discuss the criteria that we want to use. We also need to keep the populations in the districts equal within parameters. There are certain things we're required to do, but we decide how much variability we will allow within the categories of compactness, contiguous, and communities of interest. With the communities of interest, think about and send to Megan the communities of interest we might want to consider. Some might be rural/urban, minorities, etc. Please get input from others and turn in ideas for consideration.

Mr. Warfel wondered if Brian Gaines would have anything that could be shared with the group. He will look at some items to share with the group.

### **IV. Criteria for Evaluating Maps (Distributed)**

The meeting was concluded as 7:06 p.m.