

Minneapolis Charter Commission Minutes

Special Meeting

March 27, 2012 - 4:00 p.m.

Room 317 City Hall, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Commissioners Present: Clegg (Chair), Cohen, Connell, Dolan, Ferrara, Johnson, Kozak, Metge, Peltola, Rubenstein, Schwarzkopf, Sandberg

Commissioners Absent: Gerdes (excused), Lazarus (excused), Lickness

1. Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 4:06 p.m. Roll call was taken.

2. Adopt Agenda

Dolan moved adoption of the agenda, as amended to add Item 3a, "Receive and file public comments received after the March 26 deadline". Seconded.

Adopted upon a voice vote.

Absent - Gerdes, Lazarus, Lickness.

3. Chair's Report

Clegg stated that the City Clerk and Elections Department had reviewed the final maps and determined that there were no additional precinct issues.

An email had been received from Redistricting Group Member Gary Thaden regarding possible issues with ward boundaries. (Mr. Thaden's email is included in the meeting record.)

Garth Dietrich, GIS Consultant for the Redistricting Group, stated that he had checked the list of possible issues and all but one were due to the difference between the data received from Hennepin County, which is the correct data, and the neighborhood and street data received from the GIS Department. Because the data came from two different sources, it didn't visually line up one hundred percent when zooming in to a detailed level. The Ward 7/13 boundary was adjusted slightly on the north side of Lake Calhoun with no population change.

Ferrara inquired if there was a process for technical updates that could occur after the final vote today. Carol Bachun, Assistant City Attorney, stated that she was not aware of a process but could check with the Secretary of State's Office.

Clegg thanked all the members of the Redistricting Group for their hard work during the process, Garth Dietrich for his invaluable assistance, as well as the City Attorney's Office, City's Clerk's Office, and the Elections Department.

3a. Receive and file public comments received after yesterday's deadline.

Metge moved to receive and file public comments received after the March 26 deadline. Seconded.

Adopted upon a voice vote.

Absent - Gerdes, Lazarus, Lickness.

Discussion

4. Park District Maps:

- a) Preliminary approval of Park District maps; and
- b) Approval of transmission to Park Board for comment

Clegg explained that the Charter requires that the Park District maps be sent to the Park Board for comment. If there are no substantive comments from the Park Board, he did not intend to call another meeting of the Redistricting Group because they have already tentatively approved the maps. The Charter Commission would give the final approval. However, if the Park Board requested substantive changes, a Redistricting Group meeting would be held.

Schwarzkopf moved preliminary approval of the Park District maps and approval of the transmission of the maps and statistics to the Park Board for comment, as well as transmittal to the School Board. Seconded.

Adopted upon a voice vote.

Absent - Gerdes, Lazarus, Lickness.

5. Final Approval of Ward Boundaries Maps will be linked when available

Clegg stated that the approval of the ward boundaries would include the adjustment to the boundary between Wards 7 and 13 on the north side of Lake Calhoun. The Commissioners had received in their packets a resolution of the Charter Commission adopting the final ward boundary plan.

Ferrara moved to adopt the resolution approving the final ward boundary plan. Seconded.

Metge stated that she had received affirmation from both Stevens Square and Elliot Park regarding the split created in those neighborhoods. She had received several comments regarding Wards 2 and 6. There is still a movement to place all of Seward into Ward 2 and all of Whittier into Ward 6. Specifically in Ward 6 all but a small piece of Eat Street is being removed and put into Ward 10, there was a November/December City Council action that authorized CPED and Public Works to pursue the reopening of Nicollet Avenue, there is a multi-million dollar alternative streetcar analysis for Nicollet Avenue from the Met Council, and there is the Xcel power line struggle underway regarding the Greenway.

Connell suggested adding to the record an explanation of the rationale for the Seward and Whittier moves.

Clegg stated that the rationale for putting the strip of the Seward Neighborhood into Ward 6 was to try to consolidate the community of interest that is the East African/Somali population. There is a heavy concentration of that population along and immediately south of Franklin Avenue and in two large residential towers at the east end of that extension. Whittier Neighborhood has a population of 13,000 and would comprise half of a ward. The Redistricting Group looked at a number of variations that would have put a part of Whittier in Ward 6 but every time it was attempted, the Ward 6 population of African Americans was significantly diluted which conflicted

with the goal of trying to increase opportunities for that community of interest in Ward 6.

Metge stated that one of the goals of the Redistricting Group was to change wards as little as possible and requested that the City Attorney address the Ward 6 boundaries and whether or not they were legal. Emails had been received suggesting that the boundaries could constitute gerrymandering.

Bachun stated that one of the recommended Redistricting Principles was to change the ward boundaries as little as possible; however, there were also procedural rules that stated that the Redistricting Group would try to follow the Principles to the extent possible. Because of the shifts in population it was not possible to keep the current boundaries. The Redistricting Group considered factors such as communities of interest, neighborhoods, organizations that came forward that wanted to stay whole or wanted to be with other neighborhoods, historical issues, Charter requirements, whether the wards would be compact and contiguous, and whether the wards were more than twice as long as wide. They also considered the Voting Rights Act. By looking at communities of interest, the Redistricting Group created minority coalition wards in Wards 6 and 9. The combined Hispanic and Black voting age population in each of those wards totaled more than 50%.

Clegg stated that it was one of the Redistricting Group's Principles to change the ward lines as little as possible within the bounds of fairness and equity. However, another Principle was putting communities of interest together. Sometimes those two principles were in conflict.

Kozak stated that after viewing the statistics and hearing public testimony, it became clear to him that standing pat would not produce the best plan. The Voting Rights Act also mandates fairness to minorities. He felt that the Redistricting Group did the right thing.

Ferrara thanked the Advisory Group members for their participation which made it possible for the Redistricting Group to create the map before the Charter Commission today. Between the public hearings and the many comments received verbally and in writing, he had changed his views about what should change. He thought it was a very successful process and the Redistricting Group responded to the communities as best they could within the restrictions in the center of the city. He was glad to have been a part of the process.

Clegg noted that all Redistricting Group members had received a copy of Commissioner Lazarus' email expressing his regret at being unable to attend today's Redistricting Group meeting. He asked that he go on record in support of the final map approved by the Redistricting Group. (Lazarus' email is included in the meeting record.)

Peltola stated that the Redistricting Group learned from the public testimony to honor the past, but not cling to it in order to create an important balance. He noted that he respected Commissioner Schwarzkopf who helped the Redistricting Group do just that with his historical knowledge. Peltola also noted a typographical error

on page two of the resolution which the Commission accepted as an administrative correction.

Rubenstein thanked the Advisory Group and the members of the community as well as Chair Clegg for his work. The process was educational and often difficult. She began to see it as a tug of war between individual community interests and the Redistricting Group's task to balance those interests and to see the whole. The Redistricting Group worked hard to do that. It was a great start in a new direction, and she appreciated being a part of it.

Johnson stated that she supported the proposed map. She thanked the Advisory Group and the community for their feedback. Going forward, the map gives the city the opportunity to bring diversity to the city council. She thanked the Commissioners for their work and Commissioner Clegg for his leadership.

The Ferrara motion to adopt the resolution approving the final ward boundaries, with the adjustment to the Ward 7/13 boundary on the north side of Lake Calhoun, was adopted unanimously by roll call vote.

Absent - Gerdes, Lazarus, Lickness.

Sandberg moved to adjourn. Seconded.

Adopted upon a voice vote.

Absent - Gerdes, Lazarus, Lickness.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:35 p.m.

Peggy Menshek
Charter Commissioner Coordinator