

Commission on Reapportionment Meeting Minutes

DATE & TIME: June 8, 2022 – 6:00 PM
LOCATION: Legislative Chambers, 6th Floor, County Office Building, 244 Fair Street, Kingston, NY
PRESIDING OFFICER: Regis Obijiski
LEGISLATIVE STAFF: Fawn Tantillo
PRESENT: 1st Deputy Chair Sarah DeStefano, 2nd Deputy Chair Andy Monk, Donna Lutz, Kenneth Panza, Travis Rask, and Kathleen Waithe
ABSENT: None
QUORUM PRESENT: Yes

OTHER ATTENDEES: Kristin Gumaer, County Attorney; Robert Leibowitz, Dennis Doyle, Department of Planning; Supervisor Michael Baden;

Chair Obijiski called the meeting to order at approximately 6:02

Mr. Leibowitz projected a copy of the draft redistricting map and displayed sections as needed.

Motion No. 1: To APPROVE the minutes of Public Hearings on May 16, 2022, and May 19, 2022

Motion By: Commissioner Donna Lutz
Motion Seconded By: Commissioner Andy Monk

Discussion: None.

Voting in Favor: Commissioners Obijiski, DeStefano, Monk, Lutz, Rask, Panza, and Waithe
Voting Against: None
No. of Votes in Favor: 7
No. of Votes Against: 0
Disposition: **Minutes APPROVED.**

Commissioners reflected on comments they received at the Public Hearings and noted they also received written comments including a bipartisan letter from Ulster County Board of Elections (BOE) Commissioners that included some technical concerns.

Commissioners discussed comments at length including those from residents from towns who objected to the town being divided into 3 districts, residents of Rochester and Kerhonkson who asked for Kerhonkson to be made whole, the request that they pay more attention to neighborhoods, keeping villages and hamlets whole, and the Board of Election's technical requests and concerns about micro districts, concerns regarding City of Kingston Wards.

Commissioners noted that each town felt they were unique and special, that some town divisions were unavoidable and discussed the fairness of various districts in the Draft Final Plan map at the public hearing.

Commissioners reviewed the Charter language defining what features they were required to consider and what features they, as a group, had tried to consider: out of the 24 municipalities, 14 are too small to be their own

district and the other 10 are too large so single member districts will have to overlap. They discussed their original goals such as the attempts to make as few town divisions as possible, emphasizing “if it is possible”.

Commissioners discussed how to proceed, if they should make changes based on those comments or if they should proceed with caution and not be swayed by every comment.

Some commissioners felt that making some modifications to the Draft Final Plan map on the comments was appropriate and emphasized it was a “draft” and any changes would have to comply with the Charter.

Commissioner discussed the BOE observations about micro-districts and the differences they pointed out between BOE mapping tools and Maptitude. Mr. Leibowitz explained some minor corrections he made to the Draft Final Plan to the border of Woodstock and making the Villages of New Paltz and Ellenville whole.

The BOE comment about the boundary between Town of Ulster and Hurley was a different problem. Mr. Leibowitz reviewed the minor discrepancies with other county IT staff and believes the difference between the BOE map and the Commission Maptitude map may be the mapping software they are using. They observed that the BOE mapping software uses parcels while Maptitude uses census blocks and this would account for the differences along this boundary. The commission acknowledged they must use the census blocks.

Commissioners discussed the request from BOE and the Democratic and Republican Committees in the City of Kingston to redraw City of Kingston districts to conform to the City’s Wards. This was a bipartisan request to redraw Legislative District 5 to include Wards 1, 2 and 3; Legislative District 6 to include Wards 3, 5 and 9; and Legislative District 7 to include Wards 6, 7 and 8.

The Commissioners acknowledged they did not consider the City of Kingston Wards when making the Draft map for Public Hearing. They noted that while these requested changes would work for now, the City of Kingston will be reapportioning Wards to make them equal populations next year. They reviewed the reasoning behind the way they divided the City of Kingston based on neighborhoods and other commonalities. It was noted that while the deviation of the requested changes was within the acceptable deviation, it was more extreme than the Draft Plan the commissioners presented to public hearing.

After much discussion, Chair Obijiski asked for Commissioners to weigh in and the commissioners reached a consensus to keep the districts of the City of Kingston the way they were presented in the Draft Final Plan map at Public Hearing.

Commissioners discussed other public comments. There was a general agreement the Final Draft Map for the public hearing was good, but it was only a draft and could be improved. They noted that the numbers in the draft final map were striking with a mean of 1.86 and a median 1.97. They discussed how to address a recurring comment from the public to make fewer districts per town where possible.

Some commissioners expressed frustration and felt further discussion was a waste of time. They noted the hours they worked on the Final Draft Map for public hearing and were concern that new iterations may solve an issue in one district but create problems elsewhere. They were willing to consider small changes such as making Kerhonkson whole but were doubtful that a better iteration of the map could be developed in the remaining time.

Other commissioners were more optimistic. They felt they could make additional improvements and wanted to continue to work toward develop a map that reflected the commissions original goals and addressed the public’s request to keep more towns whole. They were confident that an even better iteration of the map was possible.

Commissioner Panza introduced a printed map as an example of potential changes that addressed several of the public concerns in southern Ulster. A cursory review of this map received mixed reviews as commissioners pointed out what they liked and didn't like in that version of the map.

Commissioners ultimately agreed that more work could be done and were willing to consider some of these changes but disagreed on how much change they were willing to consider. Mr. Leibowitz offered to assist any of the commissioners and was willing to work to make changes the commissioners suggested.

Chair Obijiski asked the commissioners to take some time to review maps that were presented and prepare maps for discussion at the next meeting. The next meeting was scheduled for June 22 with the location to be determined.

Chair Obijiski asked if there was any other business. Hearing none he called for a motion to adjourn.

Motion Made By: Commissioner Monk
Motion Seconded By: Commissioner Lutz
No. of Votes in Favor: 7
No. of Votes Against: 0
Time: 7:36 PM

Respectfully submitted by: Fawn Tantillo
Minutes Approved: July 13, 2022