

**Commission on Reapportionment
Meeting Minutes**

DATE & TIME: March 10, 2021 – 6:00 PM
LOCATION: Powered by Zoom Meeting by Dialing (646) 558-8656,
Meeting ID: 956 1062 6098
PRESIDING OFFICER: Commissioner Donna Lutz (rotating Chair)
LEGISLATIVE STAFF: Fawn Tantillo
PRESENT: Commissioners Sarah DeStefano Donna Lutz, Andy Monk, Regis
Obijiski, Kenneth Panza, Travis Rask and Kathleen Waithe
ABSENT: None
QUORUM PRESENT: Yes

OTHER ATTENDEES: Ulster County Attorney Kristin Gumear, Ulster County Planning
Dennis Doyle and Robert Leibowitz; Mike Baden, Supervisor, Town of Rochester; Fred Hajazi,
Citygate GIS.

Chair Lutz called the meeting to order at 6:02.

Motion No. 1: To approve the minutes of February 10, 2021 with minor corrections

Motion By: Commissioner Panza
Motion Seconded By: Commissioner DeStefano
Discussion: None.
Voting in Favor: Commissioners DeStefano, Lutz, Monk, Obijiski, Panza, Rask and Waithe
Voting Against: None
No. of Votes in Favor: 7
No. of Votes Against: 0
Disposition: Minutes approved.

The Ulster County Planning Department introduced Mr. Hajazi of Citygate GIS to present their mapping programs.

The Website Subcommittee reviewed their recommendations for the Commission website.

New Business

Old Business

The next meeting of the commission is April 14, 2021 at 6:00 and will be Chaired by Commissioner Andy Monk with Commissioner Regis Obijiski as Vice Chair.

April agenda topics will include:

- Presentation on vendors by the Department of Planning
- Update by Website Subcommittee
- Press Release

Chair Lutz asked if there was any other business, hearing none;

Motion to Adjourn

Motion Made By: Commissioner Panza
Motion Seconded By: Commissioner Waithe
No. of Votes in Favor: 7
No. of Votes Against: 0
Time: 7:30 PM

Respectfully submitted by: Fawn Tantillo
Minutes Approved: April 14, 2021

**Commission on Reapportionment
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Planning Dennis Doyle and Robert Leibowitz; Mike Baden, Supervisor, Town of Rochester; Fred
Hajazi, Citygate GIS.

Donna Lutz

Welcome to everyone. I'd like to call the meet March meeting of the Ulster County
Commission on Reapportionment to order we had up well, you spoke about the typos already,
so I don't have to go into that. I guess. I just have to, apparently raised my voice a little bit
higher. So, I don't sound like Ken. Sorry, Ken. (laughter)

So, we can approve the minutes of the February 10 meeting

Fawn Tantillo

With the typo's corrected.

Donna Lutz

There's, no other issues with them. Okay.

Kenneth Panza

So moved.

Sarah DeStefano

Second

Donna Lutz

Thank you. Okay, and we have a presentation this evening by Citygate GIS. Is this with Rob and Dennis?

Fawn Tantillo

Yes, I believe they're both on and we're

Robert Leibowitz

We're on but Fred is the is from Citygate and

Fawn Tantillo

I see Fred is here. Let me ask him to unmute. It's is it Fred Hajazi. Okay. I think he's there. He's got his got his audio on but he didn't get there we go. We should be seeing him momentarily.

Fred Hajazi

Hi, I didn't do video because... I mean, can you guys hear me? Yes. I didn't do video because I haven't had a vaccine. I haven't been to the hair cutting places.

Fawn Tantillo

You would be in good company.

Fred Hajazi

Yeah, I thought I don't scare you guys, the first presentation. But I'm here to show software. So not, not myself. So whenever you guys are ready, I can kind of get into talking about it.

Donna Lutz

Whenever you're ready for it.

Fred Hajazi

Alright. So I'm not I wasn't going to spend too much time talking about PowerPoints and whatnot. I'll just kind of briefly explain our company and what we do. And then we can kind of get into maybe talking about how things work on the from from a software perspective. Can you guys see my screen that I shared? Yes. All right, perfect. So we've been doing redistricting software since mid 90s. And we generally produce software for states and localities in the US, but we've also done Canada and a few other countries where they've used our software. I believe when we work with you guys last time in 2010. If that, I don't think all of you guys were present back then. But some of you were. And things have come a little ways as far as what you can and can't do on on computers and mapping. So we've had we have a lot of new capability. But the biggest thing is the availability of online maps and the ability to allow others to participate in the process. And I think that's something that you guys have expressed as being important.

Kenneth Panza

So, what we are seeing is a login.

Fred Hajazi

Yeah, I haven't logged in yet. Okay.

Kenneth Panza

Just wondering if that was a what you intended?

Fred Hajazi

Yeah, no, I haven't logged in yet. I was, I was gonna get in get into and I just had a map of Arkansas up. Obviously, it's much bigger than then your county, but I can show the functionality the same here. So anyway, what we provide, as far as capability goes, we have a desktop application, which is what I'm going to show and that desktop application once you create a plan, you can then share that online in a number of different ways. You can share it so that people can comment on it. So, they can see a picture of the plan as you created it and then they can place their comments on it and, and then the person was fixing the plan on the desktop can see those comments and respond to it, you can place the plans out there for people to just simply view a no comment, then we also have the ability for people to create their own plans and submit them. And then finally, we have the ability for folks to draw their communities of interest. And then those communities of interest show up as areas inside the map here that I'm working on. And then I can, if I'm the line drawer, I can decide, okay, I want to make sure that this community is kept together. Or if I need to split somebody, at least I know that I'm doing it as opposed to finding out at a public hearing. So that's the general basics of what we provide in in software. Before I get started, is there any specific concerns that you guys have that you want me to cover?

Alright, so this is a, the basic map that comes up when I start the software. And before I get into a plan, I'll just pass zoom around a little bit, and you guys can see how it works. So, the orange lines in this case are precinct boundaries. And then as we get further in, the software will show the block boundaries, these are sent this is census data. And as I get further in, it'll show for me the street names. And then the footprint of the of the buildings in the area. And this map is nationwide. So, it really doesn't matter where I where I look. The, the results are very similar as far as what features show up on the on the on the map. So here we were outside of Albany, and the map is essentially the same map. And while I'm working, I have an option of looking at different types of maps. So, I can go in here and say, Well, this white background is nice, but what I really want to see his imagery. So, I'm going to change my map type to an imagery type map. And now what happens is when I zoom in, I'll see this day, the imagery background, behind my, behind my census data. And depending on what kind of work I'm doing, I may decide to use other kinds of maps sometimes when they're working in western United States, for example, where geography and elevation makes a difference, what we'll do is we'll switch to a map that shows elevations like this. So, then we can actually see, see, the maps like this. And of course, as I mentioned, this goes right underneath of our census data. So that while we're working, we can actually see if the boundaries are following certain geographic features or whatnot. Generally, we use this this white base map because it's easier

on the eye as far as looking at the, the background of the of the districts. So, I'm going to just open up a plan, and just kind of show how the assignment process is done. Actually, I'll open up a plan that I created earlier. So, this is a senate plan in the in the case of Arkansas. And right now, for at least for them we're using because the census data as was mentioned is postponed till end of September. There is other data from the Census Bureau available that we can use. And the Census Bureau does a rolling tabulation called the American Community Survey. So, what used to be on the long form of the census is now in what's called the ACS, the American Community Survey. And the latest ACS is for 2019. So, we have data for 2019 population. So, because of the data being delayed, in the case of Arkansas, they want to start to see what the what the boundaries might look like and what districts need to grow and which ones need to shrink based on that data. And that's what we're looking at here on the screen. So, if I look at the map, immediately, the software throws on here next to the district numbers, a little arrow either up or down or a checkbox that says this district is within tolerance. It needs to shrink or it needs to grow and it also shows that in a special sheet down below. So, this is just a regular Excel spreadsheet if you've ever used one, and in this case, it's, it's using is showing the ACS 2019. For me, which is that's what I was interested in, it will show for me, the total population in a particular district. So that's the all persons my target, which is where I want to be, that's my ideal population. How far Am I off from where I want to be in in percentage, and how much is that in actual people. So, kind of quickly, I can tell, like looking at district one, it needs to shrink by 27,829 people. District five is actually good, it's within tolerance. 3.37% tolerance for them, it's 5%, up or down.

Robert Leibowitz

That's what they that's what they that's what their settings are, without what we used last time as well.

Fred Hajazi

Okay, that's a common setting for, for the US and Canada is 25%. So, it's a lot easier. And so, if I want to look at one of these districts, let's say if I wanted to look at district, let's look at 22, because it has 21 right next to it that needs one needs to go up, one needs to go down. So if I go to, um, I'm going to set my layer two precincts, and I'm gonna say go to district 22. So, when I do that, the software kind of pops me into it. And then it scrolls down, I am down by 10,000 people. And I need to go up from here. So I can now just go into my edit tools and going to assignment and say, Okay, I'm going to pick this precinct and assign it to 22. And that's what happens, they just move that. And then it recalculated the numbers. And now I'm

5% down. And if I add more, then I actually went over. So now I need to come down. So that's the basics of redistricting. And the software gives you a lot of different tools for looking at demographics, and population and whatnot. I don't want to kind of get too deep into this. But before I kind of get into anything else, is there any questions on what I just showed? So within, within the software, we also,

Fawn Tantillo

I just had to unmute myself, I had a question. So, this district looks a little gerrymandered with that little "L" out around Lake City. What if I wanted to put those two districts back and take out that little "L" shape? How hard is that?

Fred Hajazi

To go back to the way that it was? And then take out this L shape? Yes, yeah, I can just undo it. And say I don't want to do what I just did, which is take up the red is what you what it used to be. So, it's showing that for me. So, I'm going to undo the, the one edit, and then the second edit that I just did. So I'm running a lot of different things. So now I'm here. And then I can say okay, I actually want to look at this area here and add this to my district. So, then I just do that.

And then of course the numbers get calculated accordingly. If I want to see some, I mean not normally when I'm working, I don't do it blindly like this, I actually will go in here and look at population numbers. And when I am looking at population numbers, actually these numbers that are showing here, the 2271, and the 11,000, and the 7761. These are the populations of each of these precincts. So, I can kind of tell how many people I'm going to have before I actually assign it. And I can even do something like I want to see not just total population. I also want to see black and Hispanic population. So now I have total population, black population, Hispanic population stacked on top of each other so I can kind of see where I'm going to go as I'm drawing my districts.

So, as I said, there's a bunch of different tools that allow you to do these things. And once we're happy with it, there's a number of analytical tools. And I can compare one plan with another plan. I can check plan for error. So, if I click that it'll, I can check for discontinuities in the plan. And it says 32 discontinuity. So, if I go in here and say, okay, district one is fine district twos fine all the way till five, five has one discontinuity. So, if I click it, it'll take me out to different district five. It'll say part one, which is right here is the big one. And then Part two is this little piece that got accidentally assigned to district five in the middle of a river. So, then

I can ask the software to suggest the solution, which is put it in District 17. And that it does that for all for, for my entire plan. I can also check Brian assigned areas. So, if anything got accidentally left out, in this case, there was 21 on assigned areas.

Robert Leibowitz

Like this little piece on the border of Louisiana got left on assigned. So this little piece here was left on assign the software finds it, and then recommend solution to fix it.

We had that all when we did it last time. A lot of this is an upgrade from last time. But I don't think last time you had the recommended solution, I think yes.

Yeah, we didn't have the recommended solution. Of course, that got added. So beyond that there are tools for doing compactness analysis. There are reporting tools, there are map creation tools. If I go into my reports, for example, we have a new report that's kind of popular. I'll just kind of show how it works. It's called a district member snapshot. I'll just run it on one district. I'm

Sarah DeStefano

Sorry to interrupt Fawn. Travis is in the waiting room, if you wouldn't mind letting him in. Sorry. No worries.

Fawn Tantillo

I guess we have a couple people in there was so involved watching this. And Regis. Okay.

Robert Leibowitz

Yeah, let me I have to share that reports figure out how to do that.

Fawn Tantillo

Sorry, Travis.

Fred Hajazi

So, when you do a report, this is an example report. In this case, it provides a... it shows a district it gives it a little map how many people are in the district? What's the ideal population? How far are you from ideal population, what the size of the district is. And then if there's any cities in the district, you'll list them. And give provides some demographics, they want to see in comments in there. So, if there were any comments inside the district, it would show that and if they're outside the district, they would show that so this is an example of that kind of a that kind of a report. So, going back to the software. So, one of the one of the key things is the ability to share plans online and be able to get comments back. I'll kind of show that how that integration works. So, I'm going to close this plan and create a simpler plan so that we can kind of do this quickly.

Robert Leibowitz

So, this is a smaller plan, which is incomplete. But for the purposes of doing a demo, it will work. So in the software, we have something called, in menu called Data Exchange. And here I get to upload and share plans with individuals or the member, members of the public. So, if I click that, I can say I'm interested in sharing this plan for commenting. And I have a number of ways of doing that. I can set it up so that everybody can see everybody else's comments. Or I can set it up so that everybody can see that a comment was placed but they won't know what the comment is. Or I can set it up so the comments are only visible to the person that placed it. So, I'm going to say all comments, visible upload plan for commenting. So, I'm going to just click that. And it exists do I want to update it? Yes, I do.

So, what it will do is you'll generate what's called a QR code. So, if you if you were doing this in a, in a public setting, you could actually just have people fold their phone, phone up to it, and be able to open up the commenting page. So, they could put their comments right there on on the, on their phone. But if they didn't, you could share that link online. And I'm going to do that. And then I'll share with you guys what that looks like. So, I'm going to share that screen. So, this is the plan we just uploaded, and it comes up over Google, I'm going to change the background map to the standard Google Map. So this is the plan. And if I want to place a comment here, I can then go in here and say add a comment. And maybe I don't know, put it, put it here and say I dislike it provide my name and say, What's up with this coming down in the district. So, let's add that in as my comments. And so the comment hasn't been validated. That's why it's got a question mark in it. So now what I'm going to do is go back to the software.

And if I go to my area where I can see comments, this thing was called Fred new AR plan. And this Fred new AR plan, it's got it's got online commenting, I'm going to add it as an overlay. And it's, it's gonna say okay, and there's that comment I just placed online. And if I click it, it'll show the common What's up with this coming down in the district. And it will show the time that it was done was done. So, this kind of gives me a way to interact with the public really easily. And be able to see where people are having issues and where they're commenting on particular plans, so that I can then go ahead and address it. We've used this very successfully in in school redistricting, which tends to be a lot more contentious, and address the public comments before they came to the public hearing, where at least be aware that this is an area that's going to be an issue and then explain upfront what the reasoning was for picking one. One adjustment over another. We also have a similar tool for communities of interest. So that's what this thing is. You can enable collection or disable it. And then once the once people provide their communities of interest, you can download as an overlay. And then they show up in these little boundaries like this, let me turn this labels off. And you can display, display them and then as you're making your, your redistricting plans, you can decide whether you're going to split it or not split or at least you're aware of it at that point. So that's, those are sort of the the ways we engage with the community. The other side of this is the ability to actually edit plans. So, I will share how that works. And then that will be it from my part of the presentation.

Fred Hajazi

So, this is the... gray log me off... When you log into it, it basically give... gives you a dashboard that allows you to communicate with other people. So, if I have questions or if I'm working with other people, I have, you know, all the people that are on here and I can say you know, I want to send the message to them. And then if I have a question about something, this is my way of communicating. And then I have my plan manager, I can go in here and manage my plans. I can validate them after I've done the plans. This is me as a member of the public. And this submit the plan for review. Bye Bye, you guys. So, the plan goes through a check at that point, the validate check. And if it's complete and within appropriate deviation, then the plan gets submitted for review, and then if I open the plan...

So, it's similar to the to the to the app to the desktop application we have except it runs on the internet, and it's using a Google basemap. And I can select things and decide what district I want to put them in, oops, what district I want to put it in, and then make assignments like that. It's very simple. But it allows the members of the public to make these make plans and

then submit them for redistricting, to be for the redistricting commission to consider. Any questions on anything?

Kenneth Panza

I have a quick question. This is Andy. I was curious to know how much of the data can be imported into the program and how much of it needs to be entered? For example? Do we have the ability to import like school districts and other local legislative districts? Or would we need to figure those out ourselves and then enter them in.

Robert Leibowitz

So, you can this, this does, let me go back to the software. Again, there are a number of ways of bringing in additional data. And I'll kind of go over that. So, you can just simply go into here and add what's called a shapefile, which is, which is a format for map data, which the county also uses. So, if you have school district, you can just add them here. And we do that frequently. The other way to do it is add online content. So, for example, there are map servers that have data on them. And I might be interested in adding that information. And so, if I, sorry, if I decide to do that, I can go to my access online content. And then I can go online, find a map service and had them and I've done a few of them here. So, um, I for Alaska, I wanted to add the boundaries for the Alaska Native corporations. So, I added that as a layer. And, for example, if I wanted to see a COVID map of the US, that's not a redistricting layer, per se, it's just a separate layer that I want to add to my... to my map. And if I hit yes, it will then show it for the whole us like that.

As the last time, we did add to district I created a legislature location, which we didn't use at all. And then we added the election boundaries. So that was the only thing we added to other ones.

Kenneth Panza

Okay. And those... those blocks that you were clicking on, Fred, to add and subtract additional people to the thing, those are like census blocks, right?

Robert Leibowitz

It was using precinct boundaries, but you can use census blocks, it doesn't really make any difference. So I can change this and go to down to the blocks to do it. Got it.

Kenneth Panza

And voting precincts are something that's sort of already loaded into the maps to the program?

Robert Leibowitz

Exactly. The Census Bureau calls them voting districts. That's what we call them vt DS stos. You'll see that term show a lot. Because this is a generic term for a precinct. And they are they load them in ahead of the ahead of the their release of the population data. So they're already there in the geography. Great.

Andy Monk

Thanks.

Kenneth Panza

For being on a laptop or a desktop, what are the requirements for that?

Robert Leibowitz

Um, for a county type redistricting, I mean, you're dealing with a far smaller data set than you would for a state like when we do California, you're looking at a million plus blocks. When you're doing a county you're looking at maybe maybe 10,000 15,000 blocks, and we can handle California on a regular laptop you you wouldn't have any problems doing a county on on any computer you have sitting around. Anything with Windows 10 you should be able to do it.

Kenneth Panza

How about Windows seven?

Robert Leibowitz

I haven't tried it on Windows seven to be honest. But um, I mean, we can obviously try it as the software is. Is it available to be tried so anybody can download it and try it.

Kenneth Panza

Is it compatible with Macs as well? On a laptop, which is a 13 inch screen, and I admit it's a little hard to read a lot of these numbers. Yeah, I have other computers with larger screen. Yeah, to be able to, you know, do something on one computer to be able to switch over and do use that same file on another computer with a larger screen.

Robert Leibowitz

You could and really even on that laptop, the screen might be small, but you could probably get an external, external monitor hooked up to it, that will be bigger. But definitely going from computer is not an issue. To answer the Mac question, unfortunately, the mapping software only runs on Windows, we have had people use it in Windows emulators. And it actually runs really fast. So unless you have the absolute latest version of Mac, which I think doesn't have a Windows simulator yet, all the other versions do and they work.

Kenneth Panza

Great, thank you.

Robert Leibowitz

And that's just the desktop. If you're on the web version of the software, then it doesn't really make a difference what computer you're on.

Kenneth Panza

Right. And so what's the difference between the desktop and the web based version? Are they similar in terms of functionality, maybe one is more powerful than the other?

Fred Hajazi

Yeah, for redistricting, you really need a lot of functionality that a typical web user wouldn't the web application is really meant for the public. And the public is not going to understand compactness measures, for example, or how to make maps or how to how the spreadsheet is laid out, they're not going to understand a lot of these this type of functionality. So in the, in the public version, you really just have a simple assignment to with a pre canned spreadsheet. Whereas in here, I actually can add, you know, additional tabs of data, I can look at, look at different types of analysis, or create reports for output. So there's a lot of functionality here that we don't really, we can really put into the, into the web application,

Andy Monk

That makes sense.

Kenneth Panza

Could we export some of those data to an Excel file,

Fred Hajazi

It already is. So, this, this, this thing that I have right here is already Excel, you can actually see the formulas in it. And I can go into data exchange here. And actually, well, I can go to here and just open it in Excel. And that I can share with you guys the Excel.

So, it looks like this. So, it's basically the same thing we're just looking at. Okay, and it just comes up in Excel.

Kenneth Panza

Now, can you import Excel spreadsheets in?

Fred Hajazi

Yep, the same way that I just did the other the other thing? I would I, the process is a little bit more involved, because I have to tell it, which columns that I create means what? So if I call my "all persons", you know, "the people of the county", then I have to tell the computer that that means "all persons".

Robert Leibowitz

Where is the comment portion of it.? Where's that served? That's served on your server for everybody? Or is it...

Fred Hajazi

So, we there's a couple of different options. You can you can have it on your own server. And we have a number of states including Arkansas, we did that. They set up on Amazon and Amazon server and we just put everything on it for them. Or you can go through our server and everything is every client gets their own their own sub section on this on the server so that you,r your stuff isn't going to get mixed in with somebody else's

Dennis Doyle

Fred, can you talk a little bit about the licensing availability? Is it my number of users single users and then compare that the costs?

Fred Hajazi

Sure. So, I provided, I think I provided you guys some cost for the desktop. Part of the software...

Dennis Doyle

Is that single user?

Fred Hajazi

Single use it single person. So if you have two computers, let's say if you have a computer at home and one at the office, there's still one person, so we licensed it by that. And then on the online stuff, it really depends on what you guys want whether you want to put your own server in or whether you want to use ours. And how long you mean, I would really recommend using ours because it doesn't make sense to buy a piece of software that you're just going to use for a couple of months or you know, three months of redistricting. So, it would be just cheaper to just rent it for those for that period of time. And depending on that length of time, and all that we can we can provide you guys with with pricing.

Dennis Doyle

So, what you don't offer you don't offer a multiple license for a single software. For example, if if all the members of the Commission wanted to run a desktop version?

Fred Hajazi

Yeah, we do. We do in prices, the price drops as you go up. Okay, so I provided just one cop the cost of one seat, but if you guys wanted, let's say, five seats for 10 seats, the price wouldn't be the same thing multiplied by 10. It would it goes down considerably as you go up.

Dennis Doyle

And what's the price for one seat?

Fred Hajazi

I think it was 50 to something 5200, 250? I don't have it in front of me. But but it was something something in that ballpark.

Dennis Doyle

Okay. All right.

Kenneth Panza

And is that license for a limited amount of time? Or does that mean that we can then use the software for as long as we need to?

Fred Hajazi

You can use it for as long as you need to. It's perpetual?

Andy Monk

Cool.

Dennis Doyle

Hey, Rob, is a 2010 version we got still work or not? Ah, yes.

Robert Leibowitz

It actually does.

Dennis Doyle

I think it does. I thought it would I thought that we don't want to buy another version, because we do. But But my sense would be is is that's a that's a good check as whether how long we can use it.

Robert Leibowitz

I don't think I actually have the full full version. I think I just have LTE sitting around somewhere.

Fred Hajazi

Yeah, we, they part of the reason why we actually completely rewrote the software in for this cycle. And the reason we did that is because this software has to last all of the 2020 decade. And I couldn't ask somebody to take software that was written in 2008 and be using it in 2019. So that's the kind of the reason why this is a completely new rewrite for us. Because this has to last because if there's a lawsuit, in you know, in seven years, you guys have to be able to pull this out. And all this stuff has to work. And believe it or not people are in lawsuits right now over the 2010 plan, which makes no sense to me. But whatever reasoning, they, makes sense to them.

Kenneth Panza

Makes sense the lawyers.

Fred Hajazi

Yeah, they get paid.

Fawn Tantillo

Fred, do we have we ever have the ability to look at let's say Hispanic populations by household in the or is it just in that census block,

Fred Hajazi

You will never be able to look at the number of Hispanics by household because that would be illegal.

Fawn Tantillo

Okay. But it'll show me that per census block,

Fred Hajazi

It will show it to you but for a census block. And in fact, I don't know if any of any of this conversation has made it to you guys. The Census Bureau discovered last in the last three or four years that technically you could reverse engineer the census. So one of the big census, no no's is you cannot identify a single person, you should not be able to identify a single person using census data. So it needs census data needs to be anonymous. And some law, some math professors showed them that by looking at all the various tabulations that they do, if you put it all together and ran it through a big computer, you could technically identify one single individual and how they filled out the form

Robert Leibowitz

Just so you know, violating that is a \$250,000, fine and 10 years in jail, so don't do it.

Fred Hajazi

So, once they discovered that, they freaked out, and they went about trying to figure out how to deal with it. And so now there's this whole program of randomizing census data in situations where that has occurred. And there's all kinds of debate and all kinds of literature out there between people talking about how this is getting done. It's just worth being aware of it.

Fawn Tantillo

I just was wondering if we could use that information. So we're not sure we don't break up, let's say, I don't know that there's a lot of neighborhoods, maybe in Kingston or, or Ellenville, that might have a denser population of some of the minorities but we wouldn't want to break them up if we can identify them

Dennis Doyle

Well you can you have other tools in that in that in that mapping software to make sure you don't do that?

Fred Hajazi

Yeah, we do. And in general, of course, I wouldn't to discuss those things too much. And in open forums, because it is actually against the law to draw districts to favor or disfavor minorities,

Dennis Doyle

They're call interested communities rather than minorities.

Fred Hajazi

Correct, you can care about communities of interest. But if you say something like, as an example, that we would like to create a Hispanic district, or we would like to create a black district, those are definitely like ways of getting in getting yourself in court.

Dennis Doyle

So, just, just a quick comment, what's the what's the Is there any concern and maybe perhaps not in Arkansas, but the sort of using the American Community Survey as surrogate data to start a process? Our concern would be is, is that the at a block level, and particularly even at a tract level in Ulster County, the imputation errors are that are the are sometimes larger than the population that's recorded.

Fred Hajazi

That's a perfectly good concern. And I generally what I've been telling people is, please don't do anything with the 2019 ACS other than look and see in general, where things are going to be, and start to kind of plan that out so that you're not waiting till till if you're pressed for time, you're not waiting till the data comes out, and then have to rush so at least you have some idea of where things are going to go. And in the case of Arkansas, that's exactly what they're doing. Now, the neighbor to the north, Illinois is actually going to use ACS data, at least that's what they're talking about it for drawing their plans, because their, their constitution requires that they have plans done by June 1. And based on the last available census data. So that's what they're doing. And it's it, of course, creates all kinds of headaches, because ACS was created on 2010 geography, we're gonna have to move with 2020 geography. So we have to deal with geography alignments is a whole mess of things that happen when when you do that. But I

guess to answer your question is I would use it to see where things are, I wouldn't do anything that's any more than just viewing. And if you guys are in a public forum, I wouldn't even necessarily put plans out because people start to draw conclusions before they really should.

Kenneth Panza

We could use that data to compare with our existing districts and see how the population may have changed.

Robert Leibowitz

And what I was trying to get to in my email last time was the plus minus factor, you don't know if there is a change, it could be steady, it's within the within those confidence intervals. So, I don't know how long it would be using it.

Fred Hajazi

I mean, in the case of in the case of Arkansas, like when I did, did these maps, they were it was kind of nice, because we looked at it. And when we looked at it in 2001 2010, data, everything was green, essentially, everything was good. And then when we like right now, if I switch this out to like, this is the 2019. And you can see some, some go down, some go up, some are good. And if I go back and look at the just straight up 2010.

So, you see everything's good here. So, this is the this is the database than what it used to be everything is green, green, green. And then I go in and load in the ACS [American Communities Survey] data. And I can see where things have changed in a very quick way. And that was confirmed by the state because they said yeah, these, these districts up here are going to shrink because population has moved up here. The ones down here are going to increase because the population has moved out of here. So the ACS data was able to confirm that and they could start to make plans.

Dennis Doyle

So how does ACS data? I'm sorry? Does ACS data come down to the black level right now or not?

Fred Hajazi

No, it does not. But what we do, what we did for in order to do this analysis is we took it and then we went through a process called disaggregation. I could take it down to the blocks, and then back up to all the other to the other level so that we could actually create a one for one match between the two between the two.

Dennis Doyle

So, from the Commission's perspective, thinking about using ACS data, to even begin to start drawing district lines. It's a that's a tough call for from the technical people in the room here. I mean, I wonder is the data is not

Robert Leibowitz

Just that we're not in a rush, so I wouldn't even do it.

Fred Hajazi

Yeah, that's that's why I didn't want to be I didn't want to be that blunt. But for me, it's it's like it's it's a, it's a it's an exercise, but I don't know what conclusions you can draw from it at the end of the day. And we've just so you know, we found some of this out, when we started to do use ACS data for our housing action plan. We were getting questions about pieces of the data that are don't affect the entire plan, but they look weird in when you move the geography. If you look at the county geography, it makes sense. But when you move to town geography, people start asking questions. Well, I know they're not 325 people in this in this particular area. Yeah, you're right. But that's not what the ACS says.

Sarah DeStefano

Would you expect there to be significant population swings between 2019 when it was collected in 2020? Also?

Robert Leibowitz

That's also a good question.

Sarah DeStefano

Because I mean, I know obviously, Ulster County, we are already said that there are there increases that excuse me that the census maybe didn't pick up because it was done in April, is that right? Um, but I don't know, to what extent there will be changes between the census and when this data was collected itself, it would seem to me that there would be even maybe a reduction. o

Robert Leibowitz

The census, collected on April 1, and we started becoming like one of the most moved to metropolitan areas after that. in the country. We were like one of the top 10 places people were moving to, but so that's completely not captured by the census.

Fred Hajazi

Yes. And if I can add, it says ACS 2000, released in 2019, but it's a five year rolling survey. Yeah. You're really looking at 2017 data.

Sarah DeStefano

So, it may even show Yeah, so it's just not even data, we could really use it all.

Kenneth Panza

Yeah, and it sounds like since we're totally not under a time crunch, it makes more sense, just to wait for the actual census data to come out to us. Right.

Sarah DeStefano

I agree. Yeah.

Kenneth Panza

Because don't we have until December 31 2022. To know that right.

Robert Leibowitz

July? July.

Andy Monk

Okay.

Robert Leibowitz

July 22. I think

Kenneth Panza

It's still 22.

Robert Leibowitz

Yes. So

Andy Monk

Yeah, I don't think there's a rush.

Fawn Tantillo

You have to hold a public hearing on your plan by May 20, of 22.

Sarah DeStefano

That's a lot of time.

Kenneth Panza

If anything, though, it might be good to get that data into the software, if, if this is the one we purchase, and then we can start playing with it just to become familiar with how it works and the different features. So that when it comes time to actually import the actual data, like we won't share

any maps based on our findings, but we can get in and play with the software and see get a little more familiar with it before we have to start really using it in earnest.

Fawn Tantillo

I know Mike Baden is listening to this call he and I, I know both did as members of the public both played with this program the last time and I have to say I thought it was relatively user friendly from my perspective, and being able to go to the different maps where you could look at a... you know the, the actual pictures of the buildings, you know, then that map the the satellite picture overlay, because sometimes you be like, you know, like what is this little population center right here. There's like a lot of people in this census block what is that and You know, I felt the different maps were very useful switching back and forth.

Donna Lutz

That's good to know. Thank you. This, that does seem fairly easy, even watching the presentation. Thank you.

Fred Hajazi

I've used it before, though, once or twice, twice, eight hours a day, for the last two years.

Kenneth Panza

We may issue a warning is I've seen lots of GPS presentations. And they're all fabulous, you know, click this button that this happens and click this button and you get these wonderful looking maps. And then you say, Well, how can you do this? And the answer come back? Well, I'm not so sure that might complicate it. I've, you know, I've gotten into a couple of situations with a real, real issue to try and get something done once you lay out a real problem.

Fred Hajazi

Well, one thing I'll say is, besides writing software, we also do redistricting consulting, like we actually go in, like we went into the city of Austin and I was the line drawer, where I was using the software to draw the districts for them. And what I always say is the worst punishment for a software developer is to have to use his own software. So we tend to try to iron out all the problems that are in it so that we don't get stuck using using the software and have problems with it.

Fawn Tantillo

So, looks like you might be wrapping up. I see Michael Baden, he wasn't sure you were allowing public comment. But if you were he could add to the discussion or he can email us his thoughts.

Kenneth Panza

I saw that too. And I motion to allow public comment, because I think it would be good to get that information.

Donna Lutz

I second. Can I

Kenneth Panza

I know discussion is certainly reasonable to have a few questions come in.

Fawn Tantillo

So, Mike, can you unmute yourself and

Mike Baden

Yep, I have Thank you very much. First I just want to explain, you probably are wondering who's this guy coming to our meetings and doesn't have something more important in his life. I'm the town supervisor town of Rochester. Now, back with the last three district things. I was not a public official, except I was a member of the county planning board, the Rochester representative. And because of that, I was excluded from being considered for the commission. I had worked on the 2010 census as a regional crew leader. And wanted census numbers and data like this have always intrigued me. So I want to see it come full circle. As Fawn said, I am one of the members of the public who my public comment at the public to start with I attended just about every meeting of the previous commission. My public comment was I spent probably I bet somewhere in the neighborhood and Rob can probably correct me but somewhere in the neighborhood of about 40 or 50 hours in a public computer that the planning board planning department had in their offices. As a matter of fact, one evening, everybody left and forgot. I was there until the janitor came in at 11 o'clock and I was still in the back room working on the computer. And we startled each other. So my public comment was a was 23 maps, one for each legislative district. What I can tell you I found the software to be extremely user friendly. Admittedly, having worked for the census, I had a familiarity with census

blocks and tracks and things like that. And remember to the last group was tasked with going from 33 to 23 legislative districts. So, they were starting literally from scratch. They also were not having to worry about voting districts within each town because the Board of Elections was going to be recreating the voting districts based on the legislative districts. So with that being said a little bit of how I started. I literally went town by town with the idea that there's 23 there are essentially 23 towns and there's 23 legislative districts and then work from backwards from that. I tried to look for commonalities of roadways, neighborhoods. It was interesting you mentioned school districts. I tried to look in that as codes those things, and I created 23 voting districts. What I did not do was look at who lived where I can tell you I caused a bit of an uproar, because some of the legislators who were seated who wanted to continue, I managed in three or four districts to put two CD seated legislators in the same voting district. So that did cause a bit of an uproar. And I remember a Saturday working session where everybody wanted to know who the heck is this guy, Mike Baden, and why is he trying to get rid of our legislators. So I make light of it now, but I'm just telling basically telling you that these are the commonalities that I look toward when I created the districts, I'm very happy to say that the end result of what came out of it, it was an awful lot of what I presented remained. As a matter of fact, some of the voting districts were exactly the ones that I had proposed. And I know Fawn did similar to what I did, I think we were the only two people who actually took it to that level.

Robert Leibowitz

That was correct.

Mike Baden

And so, I plan to, you know, attend your meetings and just observe, because it's a bit of a hobby. I also. Now as a supervisor, I sit on the Ulster County supervisors and mayor's Association. And I've made them aware that I'm doing this, but I can tell you that the the supervisors have no stake in this really, because our town boundaries are our town boundaries. So you're not about to change those. So, I thank you for letting me talk. And anybody ever had any questions about the process? I can tell you, my, my ideas, I can tell you, literally, I went to census block by census block, and just started adding till I got to the magic number, and look for the commonalities within the neighborhoods in the towns.

Robert Leibowitz

And that's the process. Yeah,

Regis Obijiski

I feel better ready. Thank you, Mike. That was really great. And I think we definitely use you as a resource. Without a doubt I, you know, I think I'll speak for myself a little bit lost with with all of this, but to have that kind of experience and coupled with willingness is priceless. Thank you.

Donna Lutz

Does anyone have any other questions for for Fred?

Robert Leibowitz

And, Fred, you'll be sending us some quotes a variety of different quotes, right?

Fred Hajazi

Yeah, if you guys give me some ideas on what you're looking for time, like, like, for if you're looking for online stuff, just give me some ideas on what the length of time it is that you want to do it. So if it's, if it's from, let's say, I don't know, he said, it needs to be done by July was that that was the date you guys, the end of July, end of July. So then, let's say How long do you want us? How long do you want that process to last? Then I can provide a quote. And then if you want desktop, like how many? How many? You might you might want me to code I can do that.

Kenneth Panza

I'll put my hand up for desktop,

Robert Leibowitz

Right. Why don't I put something together and then I'll send it out to the commission for some options, and you all can review and then we can send it over to Fred.

Sarah DeStefano

Thank you, Rob. That sounds good. Okay. Thank you.

Donna Lutz

Okay, well, thank you, Fred. It was a great presentation. And thank you, Rob. Rob and, Dennis, for putting it together. I appreciate it.

Fred Hajazi

Very well. Have a good night, everyone. Thank you.

Donna Lutz

Thank you. Thanks. Okay. Okay. I guess next next point of business is is the report from the website subcommittee? Regis, you mind taking starting it, at least?

Regis Obijiski

Sure. Okay. Yeah. Thanks, Donna. What we what we did over the last couple of few weeks was take a look at what's on the county website right now. And we looked at all the links all of the information, some of the some of the links were not even OpenTable. And some worse, had some stole some very valuable information. We we agreed after noodling around that if we had it all in one place, so if we had our own set our own website, our own reapportionment commission Commission website, on the on the on the county server, of course that that would be, I think, easy for easy for everybody. So we we created, I don't know, if you had a chance to look at materials that that Donna Kathy and I sent you. The first was a homepage and it had a list of a list of vertical links. And what what also be on that home page is just a kind of a welcoming, welcoming message. I'll just go through this real quickly. And then, you know, we can feel to feel some comments. We went, we thought in somewhat logical order, and looking down that that list of List of vertical links and so the second one was a citizens guide. And thank you for one for sending sending us that the full Brennan Center report, we did find that we did find that like online. So I included that I included a short version. We found we found that and then the certainly the full report, so if you feel loose that Facebook's gets is, is retrievable with this this particular link. And the the third element in the citizen guide was something even a little bit more Elementary. And that was from dummies calm. The next was the reapportion link itself. And and that was basically the Ulster County charter, which really lines it all up. I think that's Section C 10. So click on that brings you brings you to that. The next link were FAQs. And these are FYI FAQs that were written a couple of weeks ago. And the next was a contact Contact link. And we looked at what's on the on the website right now. And that seems to work just just fine. We we liked the fact that it had a USPS address and also an E address. And I know we talked about, you know, what do we call it? And the army for the email and we kind of liked the UCR. See Ulster County reapportionment committee. And that's just a suggestion. We don't really have any stake in any of that

Fawn Tantillo

The email address that we talked about last time has been set up now. I don't remember it's I think it's reapporportionment@co.ulster.ny.us

Regis Obijiski

Is already set up?

Fawn Tantillo

Yes.

Regis Obijiski

Ah, where does it go?

Fawn Tantillo

It goes to me.

Regis Obijiski

Oh, okay. Okay.

Fawn Tantillo

You voted to do that last month. So I went ahead and set that email address.

Regis Obijiski

We did it okay.

Fawn Tantillo

You just haven't advertised it yet.

Regis Obijiski

Okay. Everybody has to learn how to spell reapportionment. The next was a commissioners, commissioners link. And that was Bios and, you know, few sentences were suggesting three or four sentences on each of us that would be submitted by by each of us. We had talked about headshots, and then our our committee thought that we'd recommend not having the headshot. So that went down. And we kept the the three or four sentence summary of each each of us. The next nice link was the well, when it comes, of course, but the 2020 census data length, and we thought that having the previous, the previous 2011. So if anybody wanted to compare the two they, they could, but it would feature the 2020 census data, the agenda and minutes, minutes link, I mean, one has that very much under control and to have that all in all in one place. And it was the same last time from 2011. You had that lined up really, really nicely. Dog we thought. And, oh, we had one of the things we had we had suggested was to we spoke a little bit about public input. And we emphasized not just meeting with, with legislators and elected officials, but but principally hearing from citizens themselves from people in the in the county. And we thought and this is again, just a justice suggestion that we could probably manage with a couple of Commissioners at a time being invited to do to town board meetings. So let's say we would we would ask the the town supervisors for about 20 minutes. And so we would make a brief, brief introduction and just saying, this is what we're here for. And if you have any comments, it's just a way of introducing ourselves. People may or may not have comments. Unless you live in a town of Rochester, perhaps about about redistricting. But if they do now, fine, if they don't, they know, they'll know exactly where to go. So it's just an introduction. It's Hello, how are you? And what would you advise us if, if you would, so we think that we could accomplish this all within this calendar year, if we if we divided it up, and it would be 20 minutes. And we're assuming, of course, that that most Tom board meeting is going to be held on line for the rest of the year, that may not be the case. But if that is, it's not too inconvenient. And we could we could set up a schedule with what is convenient for for each of the commissioners. So again, that's that's a suggestion. And that's meeting with, with all all municipalities and putting yourselves out there as a kind of a listening tour. But, also, an introduction.

Sarah DeStefano

Regis, is that in lieu of us holding our own meetings, per se? Like, I know, that we had discussed at prior meetings that, you know, maybe we would have Socrates in town, a bolster and, you know, another town, invite them to a meeting for public comment and another few towns at another meeting. Is this in addition to that, or is it in lieu of?

Regis Obijiski

Well,yeah, it? Well, it was,a lot of early wouldn't be an addition would not be would not be in addition, so either either as you as you're suggesting, we would have three towns, we would invite them to a virtual meeting. And we could batch them 234? Or we could do one at a time.

Sarah DeStefano

So and I don't I don't have a preference to either way. I was just commenting, I think both might be

Regis Obijiski

Oh, no, both of you...

Sarah DeStefano

...might be overkill for this volunteer group is all I was a little

Regis Obijiski

Absolute. Absolutely. So you know, whatever the pleasures of the group is fine. It was just something that we talked about it and we're, we're putting it out there. And then, and then we have some some useful links. And you know, these are things that we had nothing around and found and thought that they were pretty good. And I don't know if you had clicked on any to think that they were worthy of having on our page, a draft plan link, hearing link and a final plan, like, first of all to be determined. So does anyone have comments on other than what we just talked about?

Sarah DeStefano

I think it's great and very comprehensive. So well done. Regis, Donna and Kathy, thank you so much for putting all of this together. very good.

Travis Rask

That was really, really nice page.

Fawn Tantillo

Though. I just learned when we were trying to click on the links at the last meeting, and some of them didn't work. That the county legislature, which you were working under the auspices of the legislature and the county, the rest of the county from the county executive, the operations, the legislature apparently is developing our own website. And although it all looks like it's cohesive right now, ultimately, we're doing some of the links were broken, that's why some of the links were broken. So if you would, I can take this draft, and give it to the folks that are developing, you know, our website and see how, you know, they can work it in or any ideas that they have. And

Regis Obijiski

Yeah, I think I think all of this needs to be checked for accuracy too. And, you know, whether whether in fact, it's all germane or it is repetitious, so

Fawn Tantillo

But I can give them this to start off and if they need to talk to if they need your input Should I put them in touch with our subcommittee for now?

Committee Members

Yeah, okay.

Fawn Tantillo

Okay.

Kenneth Panza

No, that's not like it's carved in stone. I mean, as we can change it, now, it's don't work out. They just got deleted and we add other things, but you know, it's very flexible.

Regis Obijiski

Exactly, exactly. But we have a base set. So we really want us to base from which to start. starting point.

Fawn Tantillo

I thought was very comprehensive.

Donna Lutz

Thank you, Regis. And a lot of credit for that and, and

Regis Obijiski

and Donna I'm Kathy a lot of credit

Fawn Tantillo

Teamwork.

Regis Obijiski

Right?

Fawn Tantillo

So, do you want me to make a spreadsheet of when all of the town's meet right now? And and we could, you know, like see who wants to sign up to go to which towns board meetings or and then we would reach out to the towns to see if it's, you know, if they want us at a workshop or at their regular town board meeting or how they'd like to do it. But would you like me to try to start that off for you.

Regis Obijiski

That would be that would be that would be great is first of all is Is everyone amenable to, to this way of doing it? So, each town feels to so that they're getting, you know, the attention of this of this commission? Yeah,

Sarah DeStefano

I think this is a good idea. I think perhaps maybe even by email or offline, we should discuss sort of like a basic talking point. So that we all if we're splitting us up amongst the group, we all sort of are

discussing the same thing as we go to these different meetings. That would be my only thing is if we're, if it's not the whole group, then each town may get a completely different presentation. And and not sort of like a, you know, a more Yeah, yeah, uniform comment. But that that could be something we could discuss, you know, by email over the next month, even if necessary. Yeah, sir. Otherwise, I'm otherwise I'm super amenable to this.

Kathleen Waithe

That's exactly what I was going to say.

Regis Obijiski

That's great. Actually, actually, Sarah, we had thought we're talking about Kathy and Donna and I. And we said, we'll see how this how this goes this evening. And we would come up with with talking points, we would suggest talking points. So the three of us will come up with with that with with talking points for your for your input. But this is what you know, so that we're all on the same page, just as just as Sarah suggested, but that's something that we had already discussed. So expect that from us shortly.

Sarah DeStefano

Great. Thank you.

Donna Lutz

Thank you.

Travis Rask

Yeah, thank you guys.

Donna Lutz

Oh, I forgot It's me. Sorry.

Okay. Okay, our next meeting, then we will probably, are we doing this monthly now? Or did we decide? Did anyone I know we had spoken last month about maybe skipping up month but right. Right now I think we need

Travis Rask

Sounds like we're cooking. Yeah, I think we should do another month because we have some good progress going. And let's not...

Robert Leibowitz

I can put another demo from another company to next month as well.

Donna Lutz

Okay, great.

Fawn Tantillo

Great. That would be April 14th. I think, At 6:00 the clock.

Travis Rask

Great. actually might be the worst day of the year for me. I'll do my best. I'll do my best. But yeah, that one might be the worst day possible. And that's no joke. Problem. If they're not an extension at that point, and I'm still having to do them, we got a different, different issue. So April 14, I'll be there.

Sarah DeStefano

Godspeed over the next month. Travis?

Travis Rask

Very much. Thank you.

Fawn Tantillo

Okay. Well, Andy will be chairing that meeting. And Regis will be our Vice Chair for that meeting.

Donna Lutz

So, can I can I say then that we'll discuss the points of our points of interest? Yeah, our talking points for the meetings. For the next meeting. You know what I mean?

Fawn Tantillo

Yeah. Robert, is ready for the next meeting?

Robert Leibowitz

Yes, thank you.

Donna Lutz

And anything else anyone would like to discuss?

Andy Monk

I wanted to ask the group if you guys would be interested in having a virtual meet and greet with the legislators because I read the document that Ken shared with us. And it, you know, sort of narrates the process that they went through the last time. And I know, we've also talked about not wanting to be influenced by the legislators, but I do feel like maybe we should meet them and just, you know, it'd be nice to know who they are, who would be nice to know what their concerns might be that they might have. And whether or not we, you know, end up incorporating that into our final plan. I think it would more information is better than less or other folks interested in that.

Regis Obijiski

Sure. I am.

Donna Lutz

And we, you don't have to ask them if they're happy with their districts.

Regis Obijiski

Exactly.

Donna Lutz

The way everything was planned out. So,

Andy Monk

I mean, I actually am curious to know if they're happy or not, I just don't necessarily, that won't let that be the be all end all. But like, if there's a big problem that they're aware of, I want to be aware of it to me if there's a reason for it. Great, you know, but good to know,

Sarah DeStefano

I sort of wonder if, psychologically speaking, it might make more sense just to talk to the town's first so that we're not going into the town meetings with. We go into talking to the legislators with the ideas from the public, rather than the other way around. If that makes sense. That makes sense. But otherwise, I am amenable to having a meeting just to meet them and whatnot. I think sometimes, like one or the other can influence if you're, I don't mean it in in a negative or a nefarious way. But just inherently when you the first time you learn something, it influences your information gathering afterwards. So

Donna Lutz

Fawn, do we do we have to vote on that or

Fawn Tantillo

No?

Donna Lutz

Okay.

Kenneth Panza

Calendar for next time. Yeah.

Fawn Tantillo

Okay. And you may want to, like invite the Commissioners from the Board of Elections at some point, maybe further on in the process. Okay.

Donna Lutz

Any, any other new business that we want to discuss? Anybody have anything on their mind? Old business? Thank you. As you can tell, this is not my thing.

Fawn Tantillo

But you're doing great.

Sarah DeStefano

I do have a question. Maybe for Fawn. What I'm assuming that these meetings are all virtual, because the county isn't having any in person meetings? Yeah. As we start moving towards a more vaccinated public, do we get a sense of, is there anything on the inside talking about when meetings might be in person I'm I, I'm actually fine having them virtually thus far. But just from a planning perspective, as we go through the summer, are we expecting it to switch to in person? Is there any sense of that at all?

Each one of the executive orders keep coming, and they're sort of coming month, monthly. At this point. We are gearing up at the legislative office about the potential of having an in person session, possibly in August, September by the fall. But maybe continuing to hold committee meetings virtually for a while. So I'm not sure. As long as the executive orders are in place, we really can't have in person meetings. So that's, that's been our limiting factor. And we don't often know very far in advance, you know, we could we're guessing at this point, it's going to continue for a couple more months.

Dennis Doyle

And just so you know, those executive orders recovered from Governor they're not they're not a county executive, or they're coming from the governor's and their, their executive order basically

suspends the Open Meetings law, and allows you to hold open meetings in, in, in via, via zoom or via, you know, virtually, Once once those executive orders disappears, you're going to be back to meetings. I mean, it's you won't have the option of, of holding a virtual meeting, you have the option of letting people join virtually, but you don't have the option to meet as a board virtually, once those executive orders get Get, get suspended, or get.

Sarah DeStefano

I just wasn't sure if there was some sense from you know, the county government level, if they were looking at, you know, suspend or, you know, overturning those orders at some date, if everything goes as planned, that I might not be aware of, as, you know, generally a member of the public so, but good to know, thank you very much.

Fawn Tantillo

If I find anything out if I hear anything solid will definitely let you know,

Sarah DeStefano

I do appreciate that

Kenneth Panza

There are advantages to these remote zoom meetings. So when we go back to real meetings we're going to miss those advantages.

Fawn Tantillo

I suspect the legislature right now allows legislators to attend session via zoom twice a year and they can't be back to back meetings. That's in the legislative rules. They cannot attend committee meetings virtually. Well, they can listen to the meetings if they're like if they're added to before COVID they could listen to the meetings like on a phone or something. We had a contract Phone, but they couldn't vote. And they. So they have a lot of rules about virtual meeting, I suspect when COVID is over, the legislature may change some of their rules about virtual meetings. But there's a we're being very careful, like, like doing transcripts of each meeting is required in the governor's executive order. I know a lot of towns are not making transcripts of every meeting. We are. And I think the legislators actually like that and may want to continue that when we're meeting in person, but you know, they we can, we certainly can keep doing it. If you'd like it, I think it's nice to have a transcript of the

discussion. And you know, we'll see what the future holds. I think I think a lot of things are going to change after this.

Donna Lutz

Oh, interesting.

Kenneth Panza

Yeah, once we get back to the real, real environment, we're gonna keep some of the things we've learned how to do? Sure.

Travis Rask

I hope so.

Fawn Tantillo

And you may have to consider like, if we're going to meet in person at six o'clock, I'm not sure everybody can get to the county building by six o'clock, or, you know, we may have to, we may have to adjust those things, too. But initially, we would say, Dennis is absolutely right. Initially, when that executive order stops, we would have to meet in person.

Kenneth Panza

We really miss all the interaction.

Dennis Doyle

Yeah. And I think I think Unfortunately, the rule changes with respect to the executive order is going to have to wait till they actually changed the law, as well. So it's not just it's not just it's not just you can just go ahead and just change the rules on your own. The the Freedom of Information law and Open Meetings law, essentially, are governed what what boards, what boards, public boards can do. And so the legislature would actually act, it's not just the county legislature, but your board, it'd be governed by that. And so what ends up happening is, is they may have to change the law at the state level, to accept remote voting and remote meetings and all those other stuff. I'm not. I'm not sure we're headed in that direction yet.

Donna Lutz

Any other business?

Kenneth Panza

I'll move to adjourn if there's no more business

Kathleen Waithe

I'll second.

Donna Lutz

Okay. Kathy, thank you. Thank you, everyone. Thank you for being so kind. We got a lot we did get a lot accomplished. I'm, I'm really happy. And again, thank you, Dennis and Rob, for setting that up.

Sarah DeStefano

All right. Good night.

Donna Lutz

Thanks, everyone. Bye

Reapportionment Commission Webpage Draft

Regis Obijiski <regis.m.obijiski@gmail.com>

Tue 3/2/2021 1:07 PM

To: Sarah DeStefano <sarah.destefano@gmail.com>; Andy Monk <andy.j.monk@gmail.com>; kpanza@hvc.rr.com <kpanza@hvc.rr.com>; Travis Rask <Tmoney03@msn.com>
Cc: Donna Lutz <chombone@gmail.com>; kathy waithe <k.waithe@yahoo.com>; Fawn Tantillo <ftan@co.ulster.ny.us>; Regis Obijiski <regis.m.obijiski@gmail.com>

📎 1 attachments (81 KB)

Webpage.Home.Draft.docx;

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Sarah, Andy, Ken, and Travis:

At the February 10, 2021 Reapportionment Commission meeting, we discussed, among other things, the importance of developing a public communications vehicle to represent the work of the commission. All seven of us voted in favor of creating a communications committee of the commission. Donna Lutz, Kathy Waithe, and Regis Obijiski volunteered to serve on this committee. The attached Word document is a draft of the content of a webpage that is intended to replace and, in some cases, reuse bits of information currently on the official Ulster County website.

In creating this draft, we

- examined at least 12 links on the UC website that pertain to important information on reapportionment and redistricting, and we researched many more links elsewhere on related information;
- agreed that all the information pertaining to the commission should be on one place on the official UC website;
- created a rudimentary reapportionment commission homepage with vertical links (which, because of our combined technical skill level, do not yet work) in a logical descending order and a welcome statement for the homepage;
- included within this attached 9-page document current UC website links. These links do work but much of the information needs to be updated or replaced; and

- added our two-cents-worth of recommendations, such as retaining the 2011 e-address (ucrc@...), writing 3 sentences of bio information on each commissioner without headshots, and offering method of seeking public input from each municipality before the end of 2021.

Please read the draft document ahead of the March 10 meeting for cogency and accuracy, so that we can shape a communications product worthy of our purpose.

With gratitude,

Donna, Kathy, and Regis



Ulster County
ulstercountyny.gov

REAPPORTIONMENT COMMISSION 2021-2023

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“Drawing the Lines”

Welcome to the Ulster County NY
Commission on Reapportionment / Redistricting

America is a representative democracy. Reapportionment is the reassigning of representation based on population shifts according to the U.S. Census. Redistricting is drawing the lines of the district based on Census data. The numbers of representatives may remain the same, but drawing the lines of the districts must follow rules, like equality of numbers per district and contiguity of boundaries (sharing an edge). Here, in Ulster County, the Reapportionment Commission is responsible for re-districting.

Every ten years, in years ending in a “0”, the U.S Census counts all of the people living in our country. The Constitution of the U.S. directs that an enumeration takes place as a means of determining population shifts since the last census. The 2020 Census has been completed. The Reapportionment Commission will be seeking input first and foremost from the people of Ulster County on how to best to follow the rules and complete our task in the most reasonable way possible.

(Citizen’s Guide Link)

Brennan Center for Justice, “A Citizen’s Guide to Redistricting,” **A Short Version**
https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/7-things-know-about-redistricting#.YC_tFq829Bo.gmail

Brennan Center for Justice, “A Citizen’s Guide to Redistricting,” **Full Report:**
https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/2019-08/Report_CGR-2010-edition.pdf

Elementary explanation of Redistricting:
<https://www.dummies.com/education/politics-government/what-is-redistricting/>

(Reapportionment Link)

A Citizen Guide to Reapportionment
And the
Ulster County Charter
Commission on Reapportionment (Redistricting)
Section C-10

<https://www.ecode360.com/9670117>

(FAQs Link)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1) Does reapportionment and redistricting mean the same thing?

For purposes of the work of this county commission, the terms are used interchangeably. Reapportionment is often referred to the process of deciding on the number of seats in the US Congress' House of Representatives based on population changes. On this national level, Redistricting is the process of drawing the lines of the districts after reapportionment is complete. For now, Ulster County has the number of districts and legislators set at 23.

2) Why does Ulster County need a Commission on Reapportionment?

The Ulster County Charter (Section C-10) stipulates the establishment of a Commission on Reapportionment after each 10-year US Census to meet Federal and State laws that ensure equal and fair representation of all people in Ulster County. The decennial 2020 US Census has been completed.

3) If the number of districts and legislators is already decided, why not leave the current districts the way they are?

The 2020 Census will reveal any changes since 2010 in population not only in Ulster County as a whole but also in each of its municipalities. All of this information is key in

either confirming or changing district boundaries in order to meet the essential stipulation of equal population representation.

4)Does “equal population” mean that each district has the exact same number of people in each? Are the people counted only registered voters?

No to both questions. The New York State Constitution provides that districts should contain an equal number of inhabitants “as nearly as may be” and “to the extent practicable.” The permissible range is within 10%. The US Constitution also requires that each congressional and legislative district have about the same number of people. Additionally, US Supreme Court cases have confirmed that every person, regardless of their voting age or citizenship status, is afforded equal representation. Therefore, districts are drawn on equal population, not equal votes.

5)Are there other rules, besides “equal population” that must be followed in redistricting?

Yes. There are a few:

- The federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 was designed to combat any tactics denying minority groups the right for equal opportunity to participate in the political process by electing representatives of their choice. In the process, the minority group must meet three criteria:
 - Be sufficiently large with boundaries that are fairly regular
 - Be sufficiently politically cohesive; and
 - Demonstrate that they, as a majority minority, would otherwise lose the choice of their candidate.
- Contiguity and compactness, to the extent practicable, preserves the integrity of communities and municipalities as much as possible so that people are better able to elect representatives who will further their interests.
 - A district is contiguous if all areas in the district are physically connected; namely, a person can travel from any point in the district to another point in the district without crossing the district’s boundary.
 - A district is compact if it is without contorted, dispersed, spikey, or squiggly boundaries. A circle shape is a better example of compactness than hotdog or salamander shape.
- Favoring of or discrimination against political parties, incumbents, or candidates is not allowed. Therefore, gerrymandering is disallowed.

6)How were the Commissioners for Reapportionment selected?

The Ulster County Charter provides the guidelines for a process of selecting seven (7) commissioners. Interest and application were solicited publicly, requesting background information and intent. The initial four (4) appointments were gathered from the pool of interest; two members were selected by the Legislature’s majority leader and two members by the Legislature’s minority leader. From among the general pool of interest, the final three (3) members were selected by a review and voting process conducted by the four (4) peer members appointed by the Legislature.

7)Do the seven Reapportionment Commissioners receive a salary or stipend for their work?

No. The work of these commissioners is voluntary and uncompensated.

8)Are the meetings of the commission on reapportionment open to the public’s attendance and participation?

Yes. The meetings are open to public attendance, but active participation will be limited as indicated on the agendas and speaking opportunities will be timed and limited at the discretion of the chairperson of the commission. Public hearing(s) on the draft reapportionment plan, announced and provided ten (10) days in advance, will seek feedback on the usefulness and merits of the plan.

9)Does the commission on reapportionment report to the County Legislature and/or the County Executive for approvals?

No. The commission on reapportionment is designed to be independent. The commission will seek technical assistance from Ulster County (UC) attorneys, UC department of planning, and other UC personnel; however, the UC Charter stipulates that the finalized reapportionment plan as submitted to the County Board of Elections has the force and effect of law.

10)What are the timelines and deliverables of the commission?

- Jan 15, 2021: All seven commissioners are to be appointed and in place.
- Jan 30, 2021: The first meeting with County Executive and County personnel who are resources to the commission should occur.
- May 20, 2022: A draft reapportionment plan must be completed and made available 10 days prior to one or more scheduled public hearings.
- Jul 20, 2022: The commission shall have finalized, adopted by majority vote, and filed the reapportionment plan with the County Board of Elections.
- Day after the General Election in 2023: The commission on reapportionment shall be dissolved.

(Contact Link)

Contact Information

<https://legislature.ulstercountyny.gov/legislature/reapportionment-contact>

(Retain same USPS and Email addresses. Eliminate Fax Info)

(Commissioners Link)

Meet the Commissioners

<https://legislature.ulstercountyny.gov/legislature/reapportionment-members>

Same general Introduction

Bios in alphabetical order

3-4 sentences for each commissioner.

(2020 Census Data Link)

2020 Census Data

<https://ulstercountyny.gov/planning/census-2010>

Update the county-wide profiles for each of the municipalities and census-designated places. The 2010 data should be replaced with 2020 data, but the 2010 data should be retained in a second position for comparison.

(Agenda & Minutes Link)

<https://legislature.ulstercountyny.gov/legislature/reapportionment-meetings>

Retain this model for publishing agendas and minutes.

(Public Input Link)

<https://legislature.ulstercountyny.gov/legislature/reapportionment-public-input-meetings>

File all written public input and summaries of meetings that gather public input.

- i. This is an important calendar of public meetings to be held prior to the Draft Plan
- ii. Suggestion: Since all public meetings will likely be held virtually, via zoom or similar platform, for the remainder of 2021, ask each of the 23 municipalities to invite the RC for a 20-minute time slot at one of their Board Meetings planned in 2021 to receive public input on the 2022 Reapportionment Plan.
 1. Ask each of these municipalities to advertise RC presence on their website.
 2. Ask the media outlets designated as such by the county to include this calendar in their publications.
 3. The RC will fashion a calendar of voluntary participation at these virtual events—two commissioners per event.
 4. The RC communications committee will provide commissioners a script of information (e.g., a short description of the RC purpose and legal parameters under which the RC must operate, timelines and deliverables), emphasizing the importance of input principally from general county residents and, secondarily, from their elected representatives.
 5. The RC should ask municipalities to provide the RC with a transcript of this section of their meeting for our record of public input.
 6. The RC should remind participants at each of these events that further input may be submitted by email or USPS mail at the RC contact information on the UC hosted webpage.
 7. Summaries of all input will be posted to the Public Input link of the RC webpage

(Useful Links)

<https://legislature.ulstercountyny.gov/legislature/reapportionment-links>

Replace the existing content with the following:

Useful Links

- US Census Bureau 2020 Demographic Analysis Estimates, Dec 2020
https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/technical-documentation/methodology/2020da_methodology.pdf
 - Brookings Institute: 2010-2020 Lowest Population Growth in US History
<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2020/12/22/the-2010s-saw-the-lowest-population-growth-in-u-s-history-new-census-estimates-show/>
 - NYS Independent Redistricting Commission: State Summary, State Constitution References, Criteria and Rules of the Commission
<https://redistricting.ils.edu/state/new-york/?cycle=2020&level=Congress&startdate=>
 - Rules about Redistricting: equal population, minority representation, contiguity, political boundaries, compactness, communities of interest
<https://redistricting.ils.edu/redistricting-101/where-are-the-lines-drawn/>
 - Public Mapping Project: Equal Population, Adjusting Populations, Supreme Court on the 10% range of “equal”
<http://www.publicmapping.org/what-is-redistricting/redistricting-criteria-equal-population>
-

(Draft Plan Link)

<https://legislature.ulstercountyny.gov/legislature/reapportionment-draft-plans>

The Draft Plan, which will be completed by May 20, 2022, will include maps and be compared with the 2011 final plan. Links to these plans should be published in the

media approved by Ulster County. Written comments will be accepted on or before a specified deadline.

(Hearings Link)

One or two public hearings will be scheduled.

(Final Plan Link)

The Final Plan will be filed with the County Board of Elections on July 20, 2022. On July 21, 2022 the Final Plan will be entered into this website and a link included in a press release to the media approved by Ulster County,

DRAFT