

**OFFICE OF THE ULSTER COUNTY LEGISLATURE  
PUBLIC COMMENT MEETING MINUTES**

**NAME OF GROUP:** Commission On Reapportionment

**DATE:** April 20, 2011

**TIME:** 7:00 P.M.

**PLACE:** Olive Free Library, West Shokan, NY

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Vernon Benjamin, Cynthia Lowe, Richard Messina, Dare Thompson

**MEMBERS EXCUSED:** Paul Benkert, Michael Catalinotto, Bill West

**OTHERS ATTENDING:** Carl Chipman, Manuela Michailescu, Jon Dogar-Marinesco, Victoria Fabella, Deputy Clerk, Legislature

- The meeting began at 7:10 PM. The Commissioners in attendance introduced themselves. Cynthia emphasized that all versions of the map available via handout at this evening's meeting (See draft map versions 1-5) are simply drafts. Cynthia said draft map version 5 is the Commission's best attempt as of today at 4:30PM. Dare requested comments from the audience on draft map version 5.
- There were 2 speakers at tonight's meeting.

1.) Carl Chipman, Town of Rochester Supervisor

Supervisor Chipman congratulated the Commission on its most recent effort. He thinks it is excellent and shows that the Commissioners listened to the input it has received. Carl said that listening is part of the transparency and nonpartisanship that is needed to accomplish this process. Carl said that Rochester is almost equally split among Republicans, Democrats and Non-enrolled. Since he has been elected, Carl said he has worked hard to get the town to come together and work in unison, leaving out politics and doing what is right. Carl praised the efforts of his Town Board. Mr. Chipman said that he was so passionate when he spoke out against the previous draft map versions that divided Rochester into several different districts because he felt it was undoing all of the work that has been done in the Town. He said it was not about Republicans and Democrats, but about a Town in unity.

Carl said in looking at other districts in draft map version 5, they seem to make sense to him. When it comes to Wawarsing, he agrees with keeping the village intact. He said it makes sense to join the western part of Wawarsing with part of Rochester and Denning. He believes that area closely relates with Sullivan County. When looking at the Northern section, Mr. Chipman also agrees with joining Shandaken and Hardenburg. He went on to say that he sees communities and school districts intact. He commented that it was an intelligent decision to split Marbletown by High Falls. High Falls is a different community then Stone Ridge.

Dare Thompson commented that Shawangunk is an area the Commission wanted to do a better job with. Dare asked Carl his thoughts on joining the western part of Shawangunk with Wawarsing. Carl said that Walker Valley and Cragmoor share commonality with the mountain ridge.

Carl said he knows the County, and this is a plan he would support. Carl offered to help the Commission in any way he could.

2.) Manuela Michailescu, Town of Rochester Councilperson

Manuela said that she was shocked when the Commission presented its first three versions of the map because the Commission had attended the Rochester Town Board Meeting just 5 days prior. The Board told the Commission that it wanted Rochester to stay whole. Manuela said versions 1 - 3 were an outrageous attempt to destroy Rochester's identity. Manuela is a travel marketing specialist. She totally disagrees with what's going on in the County from this aspect, and Tourism is under the Planning Department. Manuela said she believes Ulster County is not what is seen in the posters in the County Building elevators. Ulster County is heritage and stone houses. Each Town has a unique identity that adds to the culture of the County. Manuela believes the previous maps destroyed those identities. Manuela is pleased with draft map version 5.

- Discussion:

Both Carl and Manuela expressed concern about the Planning Department having influence over the map.

Rich Messina stated that all the maps generated thus far have been produced under the direction of the Commission.

Vernon Benjamin clarified that the Planning Department has not produced any of the Commission's maps. There is a technician from the Planning Department who is assigned to work for the Commission to aid with technical aspects of the process.

Dare stated that minus some slight tinkering, she believes the Commission has done a good job in the North and West portions of the County. However, she is concerned about the eastern and southern portions.

There was some discussion about population deviation, and how dense populations created difficulties for the Commission while trying to create the new districts, i.e. prison populations, watchtower population.

Vernon discussed how the Commission took the opportunity to look at the City of Kingston from the point of view of minorities. The Commission created a minority district; a mid-town district represented by a 46% minority population. Dare commented that the Commission was also attempting to follow the culture of the city: there's a midtown, an uptown and the rondout.

Carl again reiterated his content with draft map version 5. He said that for many years Rochester has been represented by Legislators who live in the Village of Ellenville. When discussing issues, they are basically from an urban area and Rochester is a rural area. He said draft map version 5 guarantees Rochester a representative who truly understands the area.

- Adjournment

The Commissioners thanked those in attendance. The meeting ended at 7:40 PM.

**Respectfully Submitted,**

**Victoria Fabella, Deputy Clerk, Ulster County Legislature**