

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

NAME OF GROUP: Commission On Reapportionment

DATE: April 20, 2011

TIME: 9:00 A.M.

PLACE: UCOB, Legislative Chambers, 6th Floor

MEMBERS PRESENT: Vernon Benjamin, Michael Catalinotto, Cynthia Lowe, Richard Messina, Dare Thompson, Bill West, Paul Benkert (arrived at 10:08 AM)

MEMBERS EXCUSED: None

OTHERS ATTENDING: Legislators Hansut, Harris, Maloney, Roberts, Madsen, Rodriguez, and Gregorious; Dennis Doyle, Director, UC Planning Department; Robert Leibowitz, Principal Planner, UC Planning Department; Laura Walls, Deputy Comptroller; Jim Quigley, Town of Ulster Supervisor; Hugh Reynolds, Reporter, Ulster Publishing; Patricia Doxsey, Reporter, Daily Freeman; Michael Novinson, Reporter, Times Herald Record; Tom Kadgen, LWV; Lee Cane, LWV; Victoria Fabella, Deputy Clerk, Legislature; Michael Baden, Town of Rochester Planning Board; Manuela Michailescu, Town of Rochester Councilwoman; Joel Tyner; David O'Hallaran; Butch Denner; Robin Yess; Dennis Arluck; Fawn Tantillo; Beth Murphy; Mike Harkavy; Rokki Carr

- The meeting was called to order by Michael Catalinotto at 9:10 AM.
- A motion was made by Dare Thompson, Seconded by Vernon Benjamin, to approve the Minutes from the April 6, 2011 Meeting. All in favor, Carried.
- Draft Maps Versions 1- 4 are available on the Commission's website and in hardcopy form for today's meeting.
- Draft Map

Vernon asked the Commissioners to jot down any issues that need revisiting or items requiring further discussion that may arise throughout the process. During breaks, Vernon will post those items on the large easel pad. Every change/revision made to the map will be tracked via the software.

The Commission will begin with a blank canvas. Vernon recommended starting with the City of Kingston. Dare made a recommendation to begin in Marlborough. After discussion, the Commission agreed to begin work on their map in Marlborough.

The Commission created one complete district in Marlborough and then continued working on the map moving West creating districts using trial and error to stay within the allowable population deviation range. Creation of each district required lengthy discussion and consideration of the following: geography, historical relationships, where communities go to shop, all previously heard public input, prison populations, schools districts, and each Commissioner's own knowledge of each area. The Commission periodically overlaid the election districts onto the map to aid in determining where the lines should be drawn. Draft Map Versions 1 through 4 were used as reference tools.

Shawangunk proved to be a particularly difficult area for the Commission. Dare strongly reiterated the concerns heard at the Shawangunk Town Board Meeting about the Town being disenfranchised in the past. The Commission created a district within the allowable deviation that includes part of Shawangunk, encompasses much of Wawarsing, part of Rochester and all of Denning. General consensus of the Commission is that this district may be too large and contain unrelatable communities. Therefore these newly created district lines may have to be revisited.

The Commission took a recess at 11:09 AM and resumed at 11:25 PM.

The Commission continued working on the map, picking up with the Lloyd area, working West towards New Paltz. The Commission then directed its efforts North towards Esopus. The Commission successfully accommodated the written request it received to have the Bruderhof communities placed in the same district.

The Commission recessed for lunch at 12:15 PM and resumed at 1:17 PM.

Upon return from the break, Facilitator Catalinotto requested that the Commissioners each provide feedback on the process thus far. Mr. Catalinotto said that he is pleased with the progress the Commission has been able to make in a few hours. He said that he had proposed the idea of a consultant, but he now believes that will be on the back burner because Michael thinks the Commission is making enough progress to get the train out of the station. The Commission is on its way.

Cynthia thanked Michael. She said she is really pleased to hear that.

Vernon commented that the Commission has created districts with a dominance of percentages over the population mean. Therefore, when the Commission gets to the North towns there may be a problem. Vernon thinks the Commission should strive to create a completed map today.

Paul Benkert said the Commission has made a lot of progress in a short time. He thinks there are a couple towns that need tweaking but otherwise Paul believes the Commission is doing well.

Bill West said that he would be very much opposed to trying to resolve this today. He would like to step back after today's progress and make a thorough evaluation of the work. Facilitator Catalinotto agreed, and said he would like to sleep on it. Bill said that whatever the Commission does will be carved in stone for 10 years. Bill thinks the plan deserves a tremendous amount of consideration, even if it means the Commission does not meet the April 26th deadline.

Rich Messina referenced Vernon's comment about wiggle-room and offered some suggestions on how to alter Marlborough, Plattekill and Lloyd. Rich asked Rob Leibowitz to provide the Commissioners with print-outs of the work completed today. Rich also commented that everything accomplished today is solely, without a doubt, the work of the Commission.

Dare too thinks the Commission will have to do some tweaking. She encouraged the public to submit input on the Commission's newly created districts. Dare reiterated that the Commission has really made an effort to get people to feed the Commission information since the start of the process.

Michael suggested requesting through Vicky that the Legislators who have an interest and a point of view submit to the Commission in writing what their concerns are so that the Commission can consider them when making final decisions with respect to the districts. That way the Legislators will have another opportunity for input. Michael reiterated that it was a prior concern of the Legislature that the maps were not created by the Commission. He

said the map created today is a product of the Commission. Michael said that he now has a more positive view of the process than he's had at any time during the period of time the Commission has been working.

Cynthia said that the Commission has tried its best to apply every single thing the Commission has heard for consideration on a map. Cynthia said she believes it is abundantly clear to anyone who is watching the manipulation of the process that the Commission cannot always accomplish what everyone wants. Cynthia also commented that she is much more pleased with the Commission's progress at this point in the day than she expected to be.

Michael asked that all Legislators be provided with a copy of the map created today to go along with the request for input. The Commissioners agreed. Vernon suggested requesting that all input be submitted by Saturday, 4/23/11, by 9:00 AM so the Commissioners can utilize the input during its next meeting.

The Commission resumed work on its map focusing on the Rosendale and Marbletown areas. The Commission then proceeded to the Northwest towns. Then moving to the North portion of the County, general consensus of the Commission was to create four districts encompassing the Towns of Kingston, Ulster, Saugerties and the Village of Saugerties.

As the Commission progressed with its work, it was essential to make constant alterations to the districts it created in order to keep the populations in each district within the allowable deviation range.

The Commission next worked with the City of Kingston, agreeing that the population warranted 3 inclusive districts. Draft map versions 1 - 4 all split the City into 3 districts using the existing 9 wards; three per district. Bill West asked to see the demographics in the three districts. The software demonstrated the minority population is spread about evenly across the districts. Dare commented that may not be what the Commission wants. Cynthia wants to make sure the Commission doesn't separate a population density that it shouldn't. Dare said the Commission doesn't want to dilute a minority voice, but strengthen it if possible. The Commission used trial and error to manipulate the 3 districts to produce a district with a large minority population. As the district lines are altered, the software recalculates the demographic percentages. The Commission was able to create a district with a minority population of 46% (the others being 32% and 20%). However, there were some concerns about the overall look of the districts and how the areas related to each other.

The Commission took a recess at 2:53 PM and resumed at 3:13 PM.

The Commission revisited the South and West areas of the County, exploring ways to shift the newly created district lines to better accommodate the wishes of the towns and more evenly distribute the populations among the districts. Each time a district line was altered, it proved to have an impact on the surrounding districts.

The Commission completed Draft Map Version 5, agreeing that it still needs alterations. The map will be posted on the Commission's website.

- Next Meeting Date

The Commission will hold its Public Comment Meeting for the North portion of the County at 7 PM this evening at the Olive Free Library in West Shokan. Bill West and Michael Catalinotto will not be in attendance.

The Commission scheduled its next meeting for 9AM on Saturday, April 23, 2011.

- New/Old Business

Michael Catalinotto made a motion to withdraw his proposal to hire a consultant because of the progress made at today's meeting. Seconded by Bill West, with all in favor. Carried.

- Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Paul Benkert, Seconded by Dare Thompson, with all in favor. Carried. The meeting was adjourned at 4:12 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Victoria Fabella, Deputy Clerk, Ulster County Legislature