

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

**NAME OF GROUP:** Commission On Reapportionment

**DATE:** April 25, 2011

**TIME:** 5:00 P.M.

**PLACE:** UCOB, Legislative Chambers, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Vernon Benjamin, Paul Benkert, Michael Catalinotto, Cynthia Lowe, Richard Messina, Bill West, Dare Thompson (arrived at 5:26 PM)

**MEMBERS EXCUSED:** None

**OTHERS ATTENDING:** Legislative Chairman Fred Wadnola, Legislators Hansut, Frey, Maloney, Ronk, Rodriguez and Loughran; Dennis Doyle, Director, UC Planning Department; Robert Leibowitz, Principal Planner, UC Planning Department; Tom Turco, Commissioner, BOE; Vic Work, Commissioner, BOE; Hugh Reynolds, Reporter, Ulster Publishing; Patricia Doxsey, Reporter, Daily Freeman; Lee Cane, LWV; Victoria Fabella, Deputy Clerk, Legislature; Michael Baden, Town of Rochester Planning Board; Frank Cardinale; Fawn Tantillo; Joseph & Ellen DiFalco, Beth Murphy; Mike Harkavy; Kitty Brown

- The meeting was called to order by Vernon Benjamin at 5:13 PM.
- Draft Map

Facilitator Benjamin began the meeting by giving a summary of the problems the Commission must address based on where the Commission left off at its last meeting with Draft Map Version 5a.

Bill West said the Commission received e-mail input from Legislator Frey stating reasons why the Commission should consider putting the Bishop's Gate Community in the same district with Barclay Heights and the Village. Cynthia Lowe said, in the interest of full disclosure, Legislator Frey lives in that area. The Commissioners discussed the suggestion and examined the map. There is no consensus, at this point, as to whether the Commission agrees this is a reasonable request. The Commissioners agreed to revisit this after all of the other agreed upon issues are addressed.

Commissioner Benkert commented that he has heard a great deal of input recently suggesting the Commission consider some of the elements from Mike Baden's plan. Vernon said he reviewed Mike's plan during the hours he spent earlier today working with the map and software in the Planning Department to come up with possible solutions. Vernon asked Rob to bring up the map he worked on today. Vernon pointed out the changes that were made:

- Olive, Shandaken, Denning and Hardenburgh were joined to form one district. Vernon believes this is a natural fit.
- Hurley, with the exception of West Hurley, is extended over to Marbletown.
- Rochester is whole, and expanded into Wawarsing.
- Wawarsing is kept out of Denning, but goes into Walker Valley which is necessary for the numbers.

- The Village of Ellenville is kept intact and the extra population for the district comes from Wawarsing.
- Gardiner is kept whole.
- The Town of New Paltz is kept whole and spills into Esopus, following the school district boundaries.
- The Rosendale District follows the 213 corridor.
- The City of Kingston is split into 3 districts following existing ward boundaries.

Vernon said this plan keeps more towns whole than any other plan the Commission has developed. Vernon noted that this map stays just within the allowable deviation.

There was some discussion about the districts in the City of Kingston. Vernon asked Rob to bring up the minority percentages for these districts. They are 28%, 31% and 39%. Dare said that is consistent with the feedback she received, that the minorities are really spread throughout the community. Dare also noted there is no block of population that the Commission is ignoring. Vernon said there has also been feedback that minorities are engaged and involved in the political process so there is no problem the Commission needs to address in that sense. Paul Benkert questioned whether or not the ward groupings are the most logical combinations. The following wards are currently grouped together to form the three City of Kingston districts: 1,2,4; 3,5,6; 7,8,9. The Commissioners closely examined the overall boundaries of these ward groupings.

The Commissioners zoomed out from the City, and again evaluated and discussed the draft map. Rich Messina commented that he would like to have a detailed version of this map printed out so that he can take it home and thoroughly review it. He said that most of the inquiries he's gotten are directed around which roads the Commission has used for boundary lines. Vernon commented that this will take extra time that the Commission doesn't have.

The Commission reviewed the districts in Saugerties, and, after much discussion and debate, agreed to make some changes to make the district around the Village more compact. The NYS Thruway was used as a boundary, and existing election districts were considered. Before finalizing any changes in Saugerties, the Commission took a short break.

The Commission took a recess at 6:13 PM and resumed at 6:23 PM.

Before continuing in Saugerties, Paul Benkert said that he has received communication from a former Legislator who was upset that every plan developed joined the Town of Ulster with the Town of Kingston. Paul said he would bring the issue up for discussion in a meeting however he doesn't see another logical way to address this area. He thinks it's a natural fit based on the shape of the area, and Paul noted that's the way the Town Board wanted it. The consensus of the Commission is to leave the two areas joined as is.

The Commission picked up where it left off in Saugerties. Paul Benkert said since Saugerties has to have three districts based on its population, the goal is to make the two districts that encompass the Town as equal as possible (The third district is comprised of a portion of Saugerties and a portion of the Town of Ulster). Paul commented that based on his daily business operations and personal experience, he agrees that Bishop's Gate is closer to, and associated with, Barclay Heights. He does not consider Bishop's Gate to be part of Glasco. Vernon is still not in 100% agreement. Paul noted that the Commission is not protecting anyone politically, as there are incumbents living in both the districts being questioned. After further discussion and trial and error manipulating the census blocks, the Commission agreed on some additional changes creating a difference between the two districts of 175 people.

Paul Benkert suggested that Rob print out a large copy of this map for each Commissioner to take home and review. Then, the Commissioners can come back and vote on the plan on Wednesday.

Vernon Benjamin made a motion to adopt this plan, version 6, and send it to the Legislature for their action, Seconded by Cynthia Lowe for the purposes of discussion. Although no official vote was taken, Commissioners Benkert, Catalinotto, Messina, Thompson, and West expressed that they were not in favor of the motion. MOTION WITHDRAWN.

The Commissioners asked Rob to put Mike Baden's plan up on the large screen, and they compared it to the work they completed today. Dare noted that Mike also used ward boundaries when creating this districts in the City of Kingston, although he grouped them together differently.

- Next Meeting Date

The next meeting will be on Wednesday, April 27, 2011 at 3:00 PM.

- Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Vernon Benjamin, with all in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 6:46 P.M.

**Respectfully Submitted,**

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