

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

NAME OF GROUP: Commission On Reapportionment

DATE: April 27, 2011

TIME: 3:00 P.M.

PLACE: UCOB, Legislative Chambers, 6th Floor

MEMBERS PRESENT: Vernon Benjamin, Paul Benkert, Michael Catalinotto, Cynthia Lowe, Richard Messina, Dare Thompson, Bill West

MEMBERS EXCUSED: None

OTHERS ATTENDING: Legislative Chairman Fred Wadnola, Legislators Terrizzi, Hochberg, Madsen, Loughran and Zimet; Dennis Doyle, Director, UC Planning Department; Robert Leibowitz, Principal Planner, UC Planning Department; Bea Havranek, Ulster County Attorney; Hugh Reynolds, Reporter, Ulster Publishing; Patricia Doxsey, Reporter, Daily Freeman; Michael Novinson, Reporter, Times Herald Record; Doug Short, Reporter, YNN; Paula Sirc, Reporter, Shawangunk Journal; Lee Cane, LWV; Victoria Fabella, Deputy Clerk, Legislature; Michael Baden, Town of Rochester Planning Board; Manuela Michailescu, Town of Rochester Councilwoman; Gerry Benjamin; Fawn Tantillo; Beth Murphy; Mike Harkavy, Rokki Carr

- The meeting was called to order by Bill West at 3:03 PM.

Facilitator West said that since he believes this will be one of the Commission's last meetings before action is taken on the map, he would like to hear Public Comment at the beginning of today's meeting. The Commissioners concurred.

- Public Comment

1. Dr. Gerry Benjamin

Dr. Benjamin recognized the efforts of the Commission. He said he was present at today's meeting to address the topic of weighted voting, which he opposes. Gerry believes it to be unconstitutional and not widely tested or practiced in New York State. He doesn't believe weighted voting was ever intended to be a redistricting solution and thinks it will certainly be challenged should the Commission choose this route. He doesn't think it is what the people of Ulster County want; as he believes they expect the Commission to craft single member districts. Gerry said he spoke with Legislative Chairman Fred Wadnola, and Legislative Counsel is also opposed to weighted voting.

2. Legislator Cathy Terrizzi

Legislator Terrizzi thanked the Commission for its efforts, but said that the constituency that she represents in Shawangunk has expressed concerns about the Town being divided into 3 districts. She understands that the Town must be divided because of its large population, but the people of the Shawangunk community are worried that being separated into three districts will result in a diminished voice for the township. Legislator Terrizzi recognized the

difficulties the Commissioners have been facing when constructing their map, but asked that they be more conservative in the dividing lines and split Shawangunk into two districts as opposed to three.

3. Fawn Tantillo

Mrs. Tantillo suggested that the Commission make a recommendation in its final report that redistricting be completed in the year ending in "3" as opposed to the year ending in "1." She said that she became aware that many of the census blocks have the wrong numbers in them. She said that cannot begin to be challenged until June or July. There is also the issue of the prison population, which makes up 21% of the district in Wawarsing, and 12% in Shawangunk. If future redistricting efforts occur at a later date, there will be time to closely look at and/or clean up the numbers. Fawn also said she came up with a possible solution for Saugerties.

4. Mike Harkavy

Mr. Harkavy said that while looking at Saugerties, he hopes the Commission keeps in mind that there are no incumbents since everyone will be running in new districts. He said decisions should not be made based on incumbency, but only on the census numbers.

5. Mike Baden

Mr. Baden said the plan the Commission was working on during Monday's meeting was great work. It mirrors a lot of the same issues that he came up against when drafting his plan. Although, he noticed that hamlets are not always kept together, i.e. Wallkill and Stone Ridge. He said hamlets are truly neighborhoods and he thinks taking one or two census blocks out of a hamlet and putting them with another district would be doing those people a disservice. He advised using the hamlet overlay available in the software to ensure it is not a problem anywhere else in the County.

6. Beth Murphy

Beth said she has been attending Commission meetings since the beginning and she thanked the Commissioners for the tremendous amount of time they have dedicated to the redistricting process. She commended the Commission for keeping politics out of the process and really focusing on the census blocks and trying to make the districts equal in population. Beth said Ulster County gets the gold star in setting the example for how citizens should reapportion a county.

- Discussion

Before beginning work on the map, Facilitator West asked Rob Leibowitz for clarification on Fawn Tantillo's comment about census blocks having incorrect numbers in them. Rob said what Fawn is referring to is that the group quarters data is not available yet. He said just looking at the aerials you can see a couple of the group quarters on Watchtower and on one of the Wallkill prisons are about a block over. It's not a huge deal. You just have to be cautious around those particular blocks. There is a census quality review process that happens in June. The County participated in this process back in 2000 as well. Commissioner West asked Rob if he was comfortable with the data that the Commission is using. Rob said yes. He is aware of where the problems are and it has not affected any of the districts the Commission has created.

Bill West said he wanted to make a point for Gerry Benjamin's edification. Columbia County is using weighted voting and went through the mathematical requirements. Per Bill's conversations with people in that area, they are very pleased and there are no problems with the process.

Bea Havranek said that she concurs with Dr. Benjamin's opinion. She believes if this Commission goes to weighted voting, at this stage especially, the County would be challenged immediately and it would only delay the process. Bea distributed copies of the Dutchess County and Rockland County Legislative Districts. Bea said if you look at their maps, they have single member districts. They are not weighted voting districts. They have combined towns, and they have cut towns into pieces and added them to others. These two sets of Legislative districts have been able to withstand any challenges to date.

There was further discussion amongst the Commissioners about weighted voting. This was followed by a debate after Commissioner Catalinotto questioned the genesis of the map the Commissioners worked on at their last meeting. After consensus was reached that the draft maps are in fact a product of the Commission, Cynthia Lowe made a motion to go back to the last map the Commission worked on during Monday evening's meeting. Seconded by Michael Catalinotto, with all in favor. Carried.

- Draft Map

After discussion and trial and error moving the census blocks, the Commissioners made some adjustments, as well as tweaks to accommodate existing election districts, to the following areas of the map:

- The northern portion of Marlborough, making the district division line straighter
- The northern portion of the Marlborough/Lloyd district, keeping the north portion of the district to the east of Rte. 9W and bringing the district up to the Esopus Town line
- The southern portion of the Lloyd/Plattekill district, making the district dividing line smoother and the district more compact
- The western portion of Shawangunk, giving as much of that area as possible back to the all-inclusive Shawangunk district, and creating a corridor to Watchtower to give the Wawarsing district its necessary population (Concern about the appearance of this district was expressed by some of the Commissioners.)
- The Saugerties districts were slightly tweaked to ensure communities within the districts remain intact

The Commission took a recess at 4:50 PM and resumed at 5:00 PM.

- Next Meeting Date

The Commission hopes to conclude its work at its next meeting, Monday, May 2, 2011 at 7:00 PM. After the Commission's work is complete, Legislative Chairman Fred Wadnola will call a Special Meeting to set a public hearing.

- Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Vernon Benjamin, Seconded by Michael Catalinotto, with all in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 5:09 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Victoria Fabella, Deputy Clerk, Ulster County Legislature