

COUNCIL DISTRICT COMMISSION MINUTES

July 5, 2001

The Council District Commission of the City of Mesa met in the lower level meeting room of the Council Chambers, 57 East 1st Street, on July 5, 2001 at 5:30 p.m.

COMMISSION PRESENT

Pat Langdon, Chairman
Jim Driskill
Dwayne Priester
Marti Soza

COMMISSION ABSENT

Alice Swinehart

COUNCIL PRESENT

Mayor Keno Hawker
Jim Davidson
Claudia Walters

Chairman Langdon welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. Convene an Executive Session.

Chairman Langdon stated that the members of the Commission have determined that an Executive Session is not warranted at this time.

2. Approval of minutes from May 9, 2001 and May 16, 2001 Commission meetings and acknowledgement of the minutes of first round of public hearings on redistricting.

It was moved by Commission Member Driskill, seconded by Commission Member Soza, that the minutes from the May 9 and 16, 2001 Council District Commission meetings be approved and that the minutes from the May 23 and 24, 2001 and the June 4, 6 and 7, 2001 public hearings be acknowledged.

Upon tabulation of votes, it showed:

AYES - Langdon-Driskill-Priester-Soza
ABSENT - Swinehart

Chairman Langdon declared the motion carried unanimously by those present.

3. Hear, discuss and consider the recommended plan and two alternative plans.

Dr. Alan Heslop, representing National Demographics Corporation, addressed the Commission relative to this agenda item. Dr. Heslop noted that of particular concern to the City of Mesa is compliance with the Department of Justice regulations implementing Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act. Dr. Heslop commented that the City's current districts are not in compliance with the Federal population standard and that growth has been explosive particularly in several districts of the City. Dr. Heslop noted that District 4 currently has a total Hispanic population of 47.63% and a Hispanic voting age population of 43.66% (benchmarks) and that Districts 1 and 3 also contain a significant Hispanic population. Dr. Heslop emphasized that under the 2000 Census and given the residential locations of the Hispanic population, it is not possible to maintain these Hispanic population levels in specific districts, and that maintaining the benchmark populations in at least two districts will result in the distortion of district lines and a somewhat higher population deviation level overall.

Dr. Heslop spoke concerning the favorable response and participation to date in the districting process, noting that 15 fully developed plans, three partial plans and many excellent written comments were submitted. Dr. Heslop acknowledged, in particular, the citizen maps submitted by Marilyn Wennerstrom, Marti Soza, Joseph A. Gorski, Ann Kulik and Teresa Brice-Heames. Dr. Heslop stressed that the level of citizen participation has been exemplary.

Dr. Heslop presented the Recommended Plan and Alternatives 1 and 2 prepared in response to the input received from citizens. Dr. Heslop discussed the following noteworthy features contained in the Recommended Plan:

- District 4 total Hispanic population is 48.16% and Hispanic voting age population is 44.03%.
- Two other districts have been created with significant Hispanic populations:

District 1 with total Hispanic population of 18.59% and Hispanic voting age population of 16.06%; District 3 with total Hispanic population of 19.59% and Hispanic voting age population of 16.73%.

- The population deviation in each district is relatively low, with an overall deviation of 7.93%.
- District 5, a rapid growth area, has a negative deviation, and Districts 1 and 2, which are relatively slow growth areas, have positive deviations.
- The Districts in the plan respect the major communities of the City, follow several well-known boundaries, depart little from existing district configurations and incorporate significant citizen input.
- Each district in the plan includes a high school.

Dr. Heslop urged the Commission Members to consult with their attorney regarding the Recommended Plan's compliance with the Federal Voting Rights Act and State law.

Dr. Heslop reported that Alternative 1 achieves the benchmark in District 4 with a total Hispanic population of 48.16%, a Hispanic voting age population of 44.03%, and a total deviation of 7.07%. Dr. Heslop commented that Alternative 1 would create a positive deviation in District 5 and a slightly negative deviation in District 6.

Dr. Heslop advised that Alternative 2 also meets the benchmark, with District 4's total Hispanic population at 48.05% and the Hispanic voting age population at 43.87%. Dr. Heslop stated that the deviation in District 5, an area of rapid growth, is positive. Dr. Heslop explained that in Alternative 1 and Alternative 2, a high school would not be included in each district.

Commission Member Driskill expressed concerns regarding the distortion of district lines and stated the opinion that it is unfortunate that they cannot remain more compact. Commission Member Driskill added that due to the fact that Mesa is on a fast track to complete its districting process in anticipation of the 2002 City election, he would be in favor of approving one of the submitted plans.

Commission Member Priester spoke in favor of the Recommended Plan. Commission Member Priester also acknowledged that the plans will accommodate the City's continued rapid growth.

Commission Member Soza voiced support for the Recommended Plan and commented that she is in favor of the proposed plans if it is the opinion of NDC that such plans are in compliance with Department of Justice regulations.

In response to a question from Commission Member Soza regarding a higher deviation in the Recommended Plan, Dr. Heslop clarified that relative to total population deviation, although it is higher than NDC generally recommends, it is not likely that a court challenge would take place with regard to the level of total deviation. Dr. Florence Adams of NDC added that NDC's initial concept plans permitted greater compactness, but were slightly below the benchmark.

Chairman Langdon congratulated Dr. Heslop and Dr. Adams for their outstanding efforts in this regard. Chairman Langdon also spoke in favor of the Recommended Plan and commented that it effectively addresses the Commission's concerns relative to the Hispanic population in District 4.

Don Peters, an attorney representing the District Commission, stated the opinion that the Recommended Plan and Alternatives 1 and 2 meet the Commission's criteria and that he would have no reservations with the submission of any of the plans to the Department of Justice.

It was moved by Commission Member Driskill, seconded by Commission Member Soza, that the Recommended Plan be approved for presentation at the second series of public hearings.

Upon tabulation of votes, it showed:

AYES - Langdon-Driskill-Priester-Soza
ABSENT - Swinehart

Chairman Langdon declared the motion carried unanimously by those present.

It was moved by Commission Member Priester, seconded by Commission Member Soza, that Alternatives 1 and 2 be presented at the second series of public hearings.

Upon tabulation of votes, it showed:

AYES - Langdon-Driskill-Priester-Soza
ABSENT - Swinehart

Chairman Langdon declared the motion carried unanimously by those present.

4. Discuss schedule for second round of public hearings on redistricting.

Chairman Langdon stated that a presentation before Council is scheduled for the July 12, 2001 Study Session, to be followed by a second series of public hearings as follows:

July 12 - Shepherd Junior High School
July 16 - Pedro Guerrero Elementary School
July 17 - Hale Elementary School
July 18 - Mesa City Council Chambers – Lower Level
July 19 - Superstition Police/Fire Substation

Chairman Langdon stressed that the second series of public hearings are extremely important and will provide the Commission, the Council and citizens with the opportunity to offer suggestions and revisions to the plans prior to the development of a final plan.

5.. Items from citizens present.

Janie Thom, a Mesa resident, advised that Mesa residents who reside in an area of District 2 (bounded by Broadway Road to Baseline Road and Val Vista Drive to Gilbert Road) were ineligible to vote in the last City Council election due to the fact the area was previously situated in District 6. Ms. Thom explained that under the Recommended Plan, such individuals would once again be ineligible to vote in the upcoming 2002 City election. Ms. Thom also voiced similar concerns regarding Alternative 1, but noted that the area in this plan is bounded by Broadway Road to Baseline Road and Greenfield Road to Gilbert Road. Ms. Thom commented that in her estimation, approximately 35,000 individuals would be disenfranchised and expressed the opinion that it would be unfair to deny these residents the right to vote in two City Council elections.

Dr. Adams sympathized with Ms. Thom's concerns, but clarified that unfortunately, individuals may be unable to vote as a result of this process. Dr. Adams added that moving District 4 into that area would result in a dilution of District 4's Hispanic population.

In response to a question from Chairman Langdon, Dr. Adams advised that NDC will conduct research relative to the number of individuals in District 2 who would be ineligible to vote in the upcoming election. Dr. Adams stated that she would also address this issue at the upcoming public hearings.

Teresa Brice-Heames, a resident of Mesa, voiced support for the Recommended Plan and Alternatives 1 and 2, noting that the plans contain the highest concentration of Latino voters to date, but also expressed concerns that the three plans will split the Evergreen Historic Neighborhood into two districts.

Special Assistant to the City Manager Jenny Sheppard provided clarification for the Commission Members relative to the dates for the second round of public hearings.

6. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Districting Commission meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Districting Commission Meeting of the City of Mesa, Arizona, held on the 5th day of July 2001. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

Dated this ____ day of _____ 2001.

BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK