

# COUNCIL DISTRICT COMMISSION MINUTES

April 26, 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 April 26, 2001 at 6:30 p.m.

**COMMITTEE PRESENT**

Jim Driskill  
Dwayne Priester  
Marti Sezate Soza  
Alice Swinehart

**COMMITTEE ABSENT**

Pat Langdon, Chairman

**COUNCIL PRESENT**

Dennis Kavanaugh

Commission Member Dwayne Priester welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. Introduction of National Demographics, Inc. consultants.

Special Assistant to the City Manager Jenny Sheppard introduced Dr. Florence Adams and Dr. Alan Heslop of National Demographics, Inc. and said that they are the consultants who will be assisting the Commission and the City with the development of new district boundary lines.

2. Hear a presentation by Florence Adams and Alan Heslop of National Demographics.

Dr. Adams said that she is the President of National Demographics and has been associated with National Demographics since it was founded by Dr. Heslop in 1979. Dr. Adams stated that National Demographics has worked with many governmental jurisdictions, including cities, school districts, water districts and other types of local jurisdictions. Dr. Adams commented on National Demographics' municipal experience in Arizona, including initial districting for the Cities of Mesa, Phoenix, Surprise, Peoria and Glendale, and redistricting in Glendale and Peoria.

Dr. Adams explained that she and Dr. Heslop will report to the Commission throughout the redistricting process. She added that following each presentation to the Commission, the City Council will be updated with the same information. She provided a brief overview of topics to be discussed during ensuing meetings and noted that in addition to some discussion regarding criteria later in the meeting, a broader criteria discussion is scheduled for the May 9, 2001 Commission meeting. She added that at the May 16, 2001 meeting, she and Dr. Heslop will present approximately three rough plans for consideration, together with sample citizen kits and an analysis of Mesa's current districts. She noted that the current district analysis will aid in the process of equalizing population within new districts.

Dr. Heslop commented on Dr. Adams' vast experience with respect to municipal districting and reported that National Demographics specializes in districting. He stated that the company has

implemented municipal districting processes in numerous states including California, Mississippi, Illinois and Florida.

Dr. Heslop said that redistricting can evolve into a difficult, controversial process, if not conducted correctly from the beginning. He added that Mesa's initial districting process was conducted correctly. Dr. Heslop spoke about the guidelines of a good redistricting process, including: 1) provide well explained, publicly stated criteria; 2) apprise the public of the process through the media and make certain that the public understands how the redistricting process is going to be accomplished; 3) provide for honest, genuine input from the public regarding the line drawing process through the use of citizen kits; 4) describe the communities of interest in which voters reside; and 5) provide the City Council with clearly stated alternatives from which the best plan can be selected. Dr. Heslop commented on problems encountered by other jurisdictions when the foregoing guidelines were not followed.

Dr. Adams discussed Mesa's previous districting process and stated that there were constitutional issues of equality and fairness, equal population and voting rights. She commented on the various communities of interest that were considered including minority communities and communities defined by homeowner's associations and school district boundaries. She said that during the previous districting process, high school boundaries were closely considered which resulted in a high school being located within each district. She added that various current City Council members have voiced an interest in continuing the use of high school boundaries in the line drawing process. Dr. Adams spoke about the importance of considering access (following major streets) when drawing district lines and providing for citizen input throughout the process. She noted that National Demographics pioneered the use of citizen kits, which have proven to be an excellent tool for public involvement. She commented on the process of public involvement in the line drawing process, the importance of open communication with the public regarding plans submitted for consideration, Mesa's issues of growth and population and the tremendous growth in Districts 5 and 6 that must be addressed during the redistricting process.

### 3. Discussion concerning Districting Criteria.

Don Peters, an attorney with the firm of Miller, LaSota and Peters of Phoenix, addressed the Commission and said that he has been retained by the City to assist with the redistricting process. He explained that laws control the process and said that his primary goal is to ensure that when the redistricting process is complete, it is invulnerable to public challenges in Court.

Mr. Peters spoke about some of the legal issues that must be considered when drawing district boundary lines, including: 1) the principal of Federal Constitutional law that mandates equal representation (districts equal in population); 2) a ruling from the United States Supreme Court which states that race cannot be the primary consideration when drawing boundary lines; 3) the requirement under the Federal Voting Rights Act that (although it cannot be the primary consideration) race must be considered to ensure that retrogression in the ability of minorities to elect candidates of their choice does not occur; 4) new State law regarding municipal redistricting that has not yet been interpreted by the Courts; and 5) Mesa City Charter requirements regarding where incumbents are located when new boundary lines are drawn.

(Councilmember Kavanaugh left the meeting at approximately 6:40 p.m.)

Mr. Peters commended the City on its selection of a consultant and said that he reviewed National Demographics' submission to the Justice Department in conjunction with Mesa's previous districting process and found their work to be extremely accurate and thorough.

Mr. Peters informed the Commission Members that under the Mesa City Charter, the Commission is the final decision-maker regarding district boundaries. He explained that the Commission will make an initial recommendation to the City Council, that the Council can accept or reject the initial recommendation, and if the Council rejects the recommendation and requests reconsideration, the Commission's subsequent decision will be considered final.

Mr. Peters spoke about the importance of establishing the criteria for establishing boundary lines at the beginning of the process. He explained that although some criteria are dictated by law, others will be a matter of choice and those criteria must be established at the beginning of the process to avoid vulnerability to legal challenges.

Mr. Peters stated that the Commission will be provided with the legal criteria and criteria recommended by National Demographics prior to the Commission's next meeting. He also spoke about the possibility of convening an Executive Session for the purpose of providing legal advice to the Commission in conjunction with the next scheduled public meeting.

4. Scheduling of future meetings and general information.

Ms. Sheppard referred to the *Schedule of Council District Meetings and Hearings for April Through July* (See Attachment) and noted the addition of a meeting to the schedule on May 9, 2001 at 5:30 p.m. She commented on the likelihood that an Executive Session will be scheduled immediately prior to the 5:30 meeting. Ms. Sheppard stated that the preliminary report and draft plans will be presented to the Commission at the May 16, 2001 meeting and thereafter presented to the City Council at the Council Study Session on May 17, 2001. She reported that the series of public hearings will commence on May 23, 2001 and informed the Commission members that Chairman Pat Langdon will speak to them regarding their attendance at the public hearings.

5. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Districting Commission meeting adjourned at 6:50 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 26<sup>th</sup> day of April 2001. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

Dated this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 2001.

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BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK

**SCHEDULE OF COUNCIL DISTRICT MEETINGS AND HEARINGS  
FOR APRIL THROUGH JULY**

**Discuss District Criteria and Interviews**

Thursday and Friday, April 26 & 27	Individual appointments between City Council/ Council District Commission members and NDC, Council Conference Room - 7th fl.
Thursday, April 26, 6:30 p.m.	Council District Commission meeting- Low Council Chambers
Thursday, May 9, 5:30 p.m.	Council District Commission, upper Council Chambers

**Presentation of Preliminary Report and Draft Plans**

Wednesday, May 16, 5:30 p.m.	Council District Commission, upper Council Chambers
Thursday, May 17, 7:30 a.m.	Mayor & City Council, Council District Commission, Council Study Session, lower Council Chambers
Wednesday, May 23, 6:30 p.m.	1 <sup>st</sup> public hearing, location TBA
Thursday, May 24, 6:30 p.m.	2 <sup>nd</sup> public hearing, location TBA
Monday, June 4, 6:30 p.m. (note: this is also a regular Council Mtg. Night)	3 <sup>rd</sup> public hearing, location TBA
Wednesday, June 6, 6:30 p.m.	4 <sup>th</sup> public hearing, location TBA
Thursday, June 7, 6:30 p.m.	5 <sup>th</sup> public hearing, location TBA

**Presentation of Recommended Plan and Two Alternatives**

Wednesday, July 11, 5:30 p.m.	Council District Commission Meeting, lower Council Chambers
Thursday, July 12, 7:30 a.m.	Council Study Session, lower Council Chambers
Thursday, July 12, 6:30 p.m.	6 <sup>th</sup> public hearing, location TBA
Monday, July 16, 6:30 p.m.	7 <sup>th</sup> public hearing, location TBA
Tuesday, July 17, 6:30 p.m.	8 <sup>th</sup> public hearing, location TBA
Wednesday, July 18, 6:30 p.m.	9 <sup>th</sup> public hearing, location TBA
Thursday, July 19, 6:30 p.m.	10 <sup>th</sup> public hearing, location TBA