

COUNCIL DISTRICT COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES

December 16, 1998

A Council District Commission Public Hearing was held in the Auditorium of Rhodes Junior High School, 1860 South Longmore on December 16, 1998 at 6:33 p.m.

COUNCIL DISTRICT COMMISSION PRESENT

Chairman Pat Langdon
Wilford Andersen
Lynda Bailey
Teresa Brice-Heames
Mary Jo Whalen

STAFF PRESENT

Cindy Barris
Barbara Jones
Jeff Martin
Frank Mizner
Tom Remes

OTHERS PRESENT

Florence Adams
Robert Blatz
Donald Costello
Marion Porch
Roxana Rojo
Gloria Romey
Ted Romey
Roy Schult
Harold Stewart
Marilynn Wennerstrom
Others

Lynda Bailey, Council District Commission Member, advised that Spanish and sign language interpretation for the meeting are available to any citizen upon request. No requests for translation were received.

(Items were discussed out of order but for purposes of clarity, will remain as listed on the agenda.)

1. Welcome.

Commission Member Bailey welcomed the citizens to the meeting. Commission Member Bailey introduced members of the Commission in attendance at the meeting and recognized the presence of Councilmember Dennis Kavanaugh.

Commission Member Bailey briefly explained the purpose of the public hearing and expressed appreciation to City staff for their support and assistance. Commission Member Bailey introduced Dr. Florence Adams, President of National Demographics, Inc., the consultant who is assisting the Commission and the City in developing district boundaries.

2. Review and discuss citizen kits.

Dr. Adams advised that the districting process is predicated upon federal mandates relating to population and minority representation. Dr. Adams stated that districts should be drawn that are equal in population to the extent possible (ideal districts contain populations of approximately 56,353) and provide fair representation to all groups. Dr. Adams noted that the Voting Rights Act and later Court decisions make clear that Hispanics, Mesa's largest minority, must not be excluded or disadvantaged in any way in districting.

Dr. Adams outlined additional criteria adopted by the District Commission for use in guiding the districting process, including communities of interest; access, recognition, and geography; and population and growth. Dr. Adams stated that districts should be composed in a manner that enhances the spirit of community; districts should be drawn that are contiguous and reasonably compact; and districts should be designed, where possible, to reflect present and future directions of growth (thereby minimizing revisions necessary in the redistricting following the decennial census).

Dr. Adams indicated that the meeting this date is one in a second series of public hearings concerning the districting process. Dr. Adams presented background information pertaining to the first series of public hearings and the utilization of citizen kits as a component in developing district boundaries. Dr. Adams noted that the deadline for the submission of citizen kits was December 1, 1998 and that more than 60 citizen plans were submitted.

Dr. Adams reported that citizen submissions consisted of maps (entire City and/or individual districts), letters, and comments/suggestions and that various ideas were introduced, resulting in significant refinement when compared to the initial concept plans (red, blue, and green) prepared to assist citizens in developing kits. Dr. Adams displayed numerous citizen plans submitted and reported that emerging trends included three districts in both the northern and southern portions of the City, with a provision for two districts in the east to accommodate growth. Dr. Adams stated that the citizen plans and analyses have been compiled into booklet form and are available for review.

3. Review of recommended districting plan and two alternative plans.

Dr. Adams presented a recommended districting plan and two alternative plans prepared in response to input received from citizens. Dr. Adams noted that the three plans meet established criteria (with the exception of geographic equality, which cannot be obtained), but said that the recommended plan is preferred, particularly given the significant number of continuous (straight) lines along major streets and more easily identified district boundaries.

Dr. Adams stated that communities of interest (e.g., residential/retirement centers and areas of influence as defined by Building a Healthier Mesa) are configured diversely but remain intact within the plans; each district in each plan contains a high school; and each plan includes two districts in the east to accommodate growth. Dr. Adams indicated that it is not feasible to create a majority minority district in Mesa but related efforts to achieve minority influence. Dr. Adams reported that Hispanic population concentrations vary by approximately two percent among the three plans.

Dr. Adams commented that opportunity exists for revisions prior to the development of a final plan and encouraged input from citizens concerning the recommended plan and two alternative plans.

Dr. Adams advised that a meeting of the District Commission has tentatively been scheduled for January 13, 1999 at 5:30 p.m., at which time she will present her final report. Dr. Adams said that it is anticipated that the Commission's final report will be presented to Council at a Study Session to be held at 7:30 a.m. on January 14, with Council action scheduled for the Regular Council Meeting to be held on January 19 at 5:45 p.m.

4. Question and comments on recommended districting plan and two alternative plans.

Councilmember Kavanaugh, 2146 West Isabella, speaking as a resident, commended Dr. Adams for her work. Councilmember Kavanaugh stated support for District 3 within the recommended plan, commenting that the plan retains unity among communities in the southwest portion of the City. Councilmember Kavanaugh expressed concern that neighborhoods in the vicinity of Price and Broadway are not included in District 3

within the second alternative plan and recommended configuration of District 3 in a manner similar to that of the recommended plan.

Roxana Rojo, 445 South Dobson, #2097, noted the concentration of Hispanic population within District 4 of each plan and stated that it is her understanding that minority representation is to be equalized among districts. Ms. Rojo expressed concern relative to the availability of funding.

Dr. Adams explained requirements under federal law and commented that equalized minority representation among districts would in essence retain the provisions of an at-large system and electing a minority would be difficult, particularly given the fact that Hispanics account for approximately 15 percent of the City's total population. Dr. Adams stated that districts are to be equal in total population and that each district will have an equitable opportunity to vie for funding.

Teresa Brice-Heames, Council District Commission Member, 606 North Robson, said that she has communicated with numerous individuals from the Hispanic community who have indicated a preference for minority concentration within one district, commenting that a greater concentration may assist efforts to elect a minority representative. Ms. Brice-Heames stated that the area included in District 4 contains the City's oldest infrastructure, and newer portions of the City likely will not have as extensive a need for economic investment. Ms. Brice-Heames noted redevelopment plans within District 4 and said that it is the opinion of many citizens that should a minority representative be elected, he or she can appropriately present the necessity for funding within the district.

5. Presentation on possible impact of new council districting system.

Dr. Adams introduced Marion Porch, former Intergovernmental Relations Liaison for the City of Glendale. Dr. Adams reported that a district system has been implemented in Glendale, and to date, district boundaries have been modified twice. Dr. Adams requested that Ms. Porch comment concerning potential effects of a new districting system.

Ms. Porch expressed appreciation for the opportunity to speak. Ms. Porch stated that the citizens of Mesa are currently involved in the exciting and challenging exercise of mapping the future of the City. Ms. Porch related observations resulting from the implementation of districting in Glendale and other jurisdictions throughout the country and outlined expectations for the City.

Ms. Porch stated that voter turnout typically increases initially, then subsequently decreases, particularly in districts where only candidates for Mayor (no Councilmembers) appear on the ballot. Ms. Porch said that districts tend to become paramount to the City overall; strategic long-term planning is often relinquished to the needs of individual districts; and compromise is frequently necessary. Ms. Porch spoke concerning the evolving role of the Mayor as a mitigating factor in achieving consensus, the additional demands upon Councilmembers as constituents' expectations increase, and the subsequent need to provide staff assistance to Councilmembers. Ms. Porch expressed the opinion that the cost of government operations will increase as a result of districting.

Ms. Porch indicated that smaller, defined boundaries provide an enhanced opportunity for citizens to address their Council representatives and participate on committees and task forces, resulting in increased diversity for the City. Ms. Porch noted that technological advances expand Council accountability and that more extensive preparation by Councilmembers is required.

Ms. Porch commented that local government is typically the most responsive level of government, and districting enhances such responsiveness. Ms. Porch encouraged citizen participation. Dr. Adams thanked Ms. Porch for her input.

In response to a question from Pat Langdon, Chairman of the Council District Commission, Ms. Porch indicated that accommodations to the General Plan often occur in response to the adjustments to strategic planning that result from districting.

6. Adjournment.

Commission Member Bailey expressed appreciation to the citizens for their time and interest. Commission Member Bailey noted that the final public hearing concerning the districting process will be held on December 17, 1998 at 6:30 p.m. at Mesa Junior High School. Commission Member Bailey encouraged citizen attendance and input.

Without objection, the public hearing adjourned at 7:16 p.m.

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Council District Commission Public Hearing of the City of Mesa, Arizona, held on the 16th day of December 1998. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held.

Dated this ____ day of _____ 1999

BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK