

COUNCIL DISTRICT COMMISSION TECHICAL FORUM MINUTES

October 27, 1998

A Council District Commission Technical Forum was held in the lower level meeting room of the Council Chambers, 57 East 1st Street, on October 27, 1998 at 5:36 p.m.

COUNCIL DISTRICT COMMISSION PRESENT

Vice Chairman Wilford Andersen
Lynda Bailey
Teresa Brice-Heames

COUNCIL PRESENT

Keno Hawker

STAFF PRESENT

Cindy Barris
Steve Burg
Jerry Dillehay
Barbara Jones
Jeff Martin
Ellen Pence
Tom Remes

OTHERS PRESENT

Florence Adams
Pas Gutierrez
Alan Heslop
Dina Higgins
Marilynn Wennerstrom
Others

Wilford Andersen, Vice Chairman of the Council District Commission, advised that Spanish interpretation for the meeting is available to any citizen upon request. No requests for Spanish translation were received.

1. Welcome.

Vice Chairman Andersen welcomed everyone to the meeting and expressed appreciation to all for their attendance.

2. Overview of districting process.

Vice Chairman Andersen advised that the City has retained National Demographics as consultants to assist the District Commission and the City in developing district boundaries. Vice Chairman Andersen introduced Dr. Florence Adams and Dr. Alan Heslop, representing National Demographics.

Dr. Heslop spoke concerning the importance of the districting process, noting that districting modifies the fundamental manner in which citizens interact with their representatives. Dr. Heslop stated that Mesa has undertaken steps to ensure that the districting process is "open" and provides an opportunity for citizen involvement. Dr. Heslop urged individuals to participate in the districting process and, in turn, encourage other citizens to become involved.

Dr. Heslop outlined two basic legal requirements pertaining to the districting process: a) establish districts that are equal in population (based on 1995 census data) and b) establish districts that give fair representation to all groups. Dr. Heslop stated that pursuant to the Voting Rights Act, Hispanics (Mesa's largest minority group) must not be excluded or disadvantaged in any way in the districting process.

Dr. Heslop advised that a preliminary report regarding the districting process will be available next week and will contain further information relative to legal requirements and computer demographics.

3. Review of citizen kits.

Citizens present related difficulties experienced in obtaining kits from the City's libraries. Assistant to the City Manager Ellen Pence informed those present that citizen kits are available at the Chamber of Commerce, the Mesa City Plaza building, the Municipal facility at 55 North Center, Mesa's three libraries, and the City's Internet website. Ms. Pence advised that kits can additionally be requested through the City's hotline (644-3456) and that approximately 60 requests have been received to date. Ms. Pence expressed appreciation for the feedback from the citizens present and indicated that staff will follow up with the locations (e.g., libraries) to ensure the availability of kits for interested individuals.

Dr. Heslop responded to questions from those present concerning the role of citizen input in the districting process and efforts to achieve broad consensus. Dr. Heslop commented that all districting proposals to date in other communities involving National Demographics have incorporated one or more citizen plans.

At the request of Commission Member Brice-Heames, Dr. Heslop provided a summary of the presentation by National Demographics to the City Council at the October 15, 1998 Study Session. Dr. Heslop highlighted three major topics of discussion: a) covert gerrymandering, b) procedures/scheduling, and c) citizen kits/preliminary report.

Dr. Adams, President of National Demographics, presented a page-by-page review of materials included in the citizen kits, including a list of contents, instructions, general information about the districting process, Mesa districting criteria, 1995 mid-decade census statistical data (total population, voting age population, zero population enumeration districts, minority population percentages/counts), maps, and annexations. Dr. Adams noted that information is provided in both English and Spanish and that based on the latest census data, ideal districts will consist of a population of 56,353. Dr. Adams reported that Hispanics comprise approximately 15 percent of the City's total population.

Dr. Adams delineated differences between decennial census blocks, groups, and tracts and mid-decade census enumeration districts. Dr. Adams explained the process for preparing/submitting maps and anticipated methods of analysis. Dr. Adams suggested that individuals initially consider data at the census tract level.

4. Question and answer on districting.

Drs. Heslop and Adams and Councilmember Hawker responded to questions pertaining to the process for the selection of Commission Members and district boundary recommendations/approval as outlined in the initiative recently approved by voters.

In response to a question from Commission Member Brice-Heames, Dr. Heslop commented regarding the importance of developing population equality and the initial utilization of total population data versus voting age population data. Dr. Heslop spoke concerning efforts to obtain fair representation for all groups (majority minority districts, ability to elect, or opportunity for maximum influence upon a district).

Dr. Heslop responded to questions from citizens present relative to district population deviation, redistricting following the Year 2000 census, and the development of contiguous districts.

Dr. Adams advised that the District Commission will be meeting at 5:30 p.m. on November 4, 1998, at which time a preliminary report and three broad-based alternative maps will be made available. Dr. Adams stated that staff and the consultants are in the process of obtaining maps illustrating the manner in which the

community is organized (e.g., school district boundaries, neighborhood associations) in order to incorporate data and digitize boundary lines. Dr. Adams encouraged assistance from citizens relative to this procedure and urged individuals to periodically contact the City Manager's Office for updated materials.

5. Adjournment.

Drs. Adams and Heslop thanked the citizens present for their time and attendance. Drs. Adams and Heslop advised that they may be contacted through the City Manager's Office should individuals have questions or require additional information concerning the districting process.

Without objection, the Council District Commission Technical Forum adjourned at 6:47 p.m.

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Council District Commission Technical Forum of the City of Mesa, Arizona, held on the 27th day of October 1998. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held.

Dated this ____ day of _____ 1998

BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK