

# COUNCIL DISTRICT COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES

December 12, 1998

A Council District Commission Public Hearing was held in the Auditorium of Brimhall Junior High School, 4949 East Southern Avenue on December 12, 1998 at 10:16 a.m.

## COUNCIL DISTRICT COMMISSION PRESENT

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

## STAFF PRESENT

Cindy Barris  
Denise Bleyle  
Steve Burg  
Barbara Jones  
Tom Remes

## OTHERS PRESENT

Florence Adams  
Fernando Cordova  
Richard Dyer  
Pas Gutierrez  
Maryan Klapp  
Sheila LeSueur  
Ken Neubert  
Marion Porch  
Beverly Selvage  
Marilynn Wennerstrom  
Others

Wilford Andersen, Vice Chairman of the Council District Commission, 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.

Vice Chairman Andersen welcomed the citizens to the meeting and thanked everyone for their attendance. Vice Chairman Andersen introduced members of the Council District Commission present at the meeting.

Vice Chairman Andersen briefly explained the purpose of the public hearing and introduced Dr. Florence Adams, President of National Demographics, Inc., the consultant who is assisting the Commission and the City in developing district boundary lines.

### 2. Review and discuss citizen kits.

Dr. Adams presented background information concerning districting, stating that the districting process is predicated upon federal mandates relating to population and minority representation. Dr. Adams advised that districts should be drawn that are equal in population (to the extent possible) 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. Dr. Adams indicated that the population totals to be utilized in implementing districting are those of the last official census count (1995 mid-decade census).

Dr. Adams said that the meeting this date is one in a second series of public hearings concerning the districting process. Dr. Adams provided an overview of 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.

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.

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

Dr. Adams explained the districting process and time frame for implementation as outlined in the initiative approved recently by voters. Dr. Adams responded to questions from citizens regarding initiative requirements to increase the number of Council districts and the impact of growth on future district boundaries (redistricting).

Dr. Adams informed the citizens 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.

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

Ms. Porph stated that voter turnout typically increases initially, then subsequently decreases, particularly in districts where due to staggered terms, only candidates for Mayor (no Councilmembers) appear on the ballot. Ms. Porph said that districts tend to become paramount to the City overall, and compromise is frequently necessary. Ms. Porph 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. Porph expressed the opinion that the cost of government operations will increase as a result of districting.

Ms. Porph 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. Porph noted that technological advances expand Council accountability and that more extensive preparation by Councilmembers is required.

Ms. Porph commented that local government is typically the most responsive level of government, and districting enhances such responsiveness. Ms. Porph encouraged citizen participation.

Dr. Adams thanked Ms. Porph for her input.

Ms. Porph responded to questions from Commission Members pertaining to districting in Glendale and the impact on planning and zoning issues, effect of geographical district size, and influence relative to minority representation on the Council.

6. Adjournment.

Vice Chairman Andersen expressed appreciation to the citizens for their time and interest. Vice Chairman Andersen noted that three additional public hearings have been scheduled for December 14, 16, and 17, 1998 at 6:30 p.m. Vice Chairman Andersen encouraged citizen attendance and input.

Without objection, the public hearing adjourned at 11:14 a.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 12th day of December 1998. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held.

Dated this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 1999

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BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK