

COUNCIL DISTRICT COMMISSION MINUTES

September 16, 1998

The Council District Commission met in the lower level meeting room of the Council Chambers, 57 East 1st Street, on September 16, 1998 at 6:07 p.m.

COMMITTEE PRESENT

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

COUNCIL PRESENT

Jim Davidson

STAFF PRESENT

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

OTHERS PRESENT

Florence Adams
Bill Brando
Luule Brando
Joe Guinn
Alan Heslop
Marilynn Wennerstrom
Others

Chairman Langdon advised that Spanish interpretation for the meeting is available to any citizen upon request. No requests for Spanish translation were received.

1. Approval of minutes from the August 25, 1998 Commission meeting.

Commission Member Brice-Heames noted the presence of Phil Austin at the August 25, 1998 meeting and requested that his name be included under "Others Present."

It was moved by Commission Member Whalen, seconded by Commission Member Andersen, that the minutes from the August 25, 1998 Commission meeting be approved as amended.

Carried unanimously.

2. Hear, discuss, and consider plans for National Demographics Corporation to assist the District Commission in developing Council district boundaries.

- Background on National Demographics, key personnel
- Understanding of issues and challenges facing Mesa
- Method of approach and schedule
- Procedures for conducting public hearings on districting
- Approach to Spanish translation of materials and meetings
- Other ground rules

Chairman Langdon introduced Dr. Florence Adams and Dr. Alan Heslop, consultants who will be assisting the Commission in establishing district boundaries. Chairman Langdon related credentials for each and thanked them for their willingness to assist.

Dr. Heslop expressed appreciation for the opportunity to work with the Commission and commented that the City is well prepared for the districting process.

Dr. Heslop informed the Commission that Mesa is a Section V jurisdiction and that any changes to election law must be precleared by the U.S. Department of Justice. Dr. Heslop stated that the Voting Rights Act and later court decisions emphasize that minority groups must not be excluded or disadvantaged in the districting process. Dr. Heslop reported that activities and recommendations of the Commission and City Council will be recorded and forwarded to the Department of Justice.

Dr. Heslop noted the constitutional responsibility to assure that districting produces population equality. Dr. Heslop advised that the population totals to be used are those of the last official count (mid-decade census) and stated that based on the most recent census, districts should be drawn of approximately 56,000 residents. Dr. Heslop spoke concerning deviation and suggested that in order to minimize redistricting following the next census, negative deviation be incorporated in areas where the most growth is expected and positive deviation be included in areas where the least amount of growth is anticipated.

Dr. Heslop commented regarding the importance of public input and commended the City for its proposed citizen participation process. Dr. Heslop stated that an effort must be extended to ensure "openness" throughout the entire districting process and inform the public that district boundaries will not be established until citizens in all sections of the City have had an opportunity to provide input.

Dr. Heslop said that it is the Commission's task to develop guidelines to govern the districting process. Dr. Heslop distributed to the Commission a list of suggested criteria, including: a) constitutional issues of equality and fairness, b) community of interest (e.g., homeowners' associations and school attendance areas), c) access, recognition, and geography, d) citizen input, and e) population growth. Dr. Heslop suggested that the Commission adopt these (or alternative) criteria at a future meeting.

Dr. Heslop noted that Mesa has no distinctive natural topography (mountain ranges, etc.) but said that man-made geographical features should be taken into consideration. Dr. Heslop stated that districts must be established that provide voters recognition of their district, access to freeway systems, and access to their representatives. Dr. Heslop recommended that districts be compact and territorially contiguous.

Dr. Heslop responded to questions from the Commission concerning percentage of deviation, use of the mid-decade census as a basis for defining boundaries, the importance of ensuring full and fair representation to minority groups, the recommended outreach to the Hispanic population (the City's largest minority group), and the plan to provide citizen kits in Spanish, along with a forum, if necessary, for assisting individuals in exploring the kits.

Dr. Adams, President of National Demographics Corporation, stated the opinion that in addition to establishing guidelines/criteria, the utilization of citizen kits (pioneered by National Demographics) is critical to districting and provides an opportunity for citizen participation. Dr. Adams said that in response to concerns previously expressed, the citizen kits can be made available as early as October 16, 1998 (initially scheduled for October 30). Dr. Adams advised that the kits will contain a summary of the districting process, guidelines/criteria as adopted by the Commission, an instruction sheet, theme maps illustrating locations of minority populations and enumeration districts (units of geography by which the Census Bureau collected data for the mid-decade census), and population data.

Commission Member Brice-Heames questioned the ability to track population shifts within the community in addition to population growth. Dr. Adams outlined plans to provide historical data (which will illustrate patterns of change) but reiterated that the proposed districting is based on the 1995 mid-decade census.

In response to a question from Commission Member Andersen, Dr. Adams advised that the enumeration districts from the mid-decade census contain approximately 300 to 500 people and are larger than those utilized in the decennial census, which typically contain more minute data (city blocks).

Chairman Langdon requested input from Dr. Adams concerning the distribution of the citizen kits and the availability of three alternative plans. Dr. Adams reiterated that the kits can be made available as early as October 16 but that it was initially anticipated (and is preferred) to provide the kits to citizens on October 30 simultaneously with a preliminary report and three alternative plans as samples of the City divided into groups of approximately 56,000 residents.

Dr. Adams stated that a series of public hearings should be scheduled for early November. Dr. Heslop encouraged the Commission to proactively recruit attendees. Chairman Langdon additionally urged those in attendance to encourage other citizens to attend and participate.

Discussion ensued concerning the time frame for the preparation/distribution of citizen kits. In response to a question from Commission Member Whalen, Dr. Adams said that it has been her experience that citizens are more likely to utilize the kits when a sample map is available.

Commission Member Bailey questioned the time frame for submitting citizen kits. Dr. Adams reported that a turnaround period of 72 hours is required and that a deadline of December 1 will allow preparation of a recommended plan by December 4.

Commission Member Brice-Heames commented that districting is a controversial issue and that steps should be taken to avoid the appearance that district boundaries have been predetermined. Commission Member Brice-Heames noted a preference to provide the citizen kits prior to the alternative maps and advise individuals that maps will be available at a later date if citizens are interested. Commission Member Brice-Heames suggested that a community other than Mesa be utilized to demonstrate the districting process.

Commission Member Andersen concurred and recommended that input received relative to the citizen kits be utilized to develop the three alternative plans and that citizens, in turn, then provide input concerning the alternative plans.

In response to a question from Commission Member Whalen, Dr. Adams stated the intent that alternative maps be included with the preliminary report, which will be available on October 30.

Commission Member Andersen reiterated the suggestion that citizen kits be submitted prior to the drafting of maps. Dr. Adams commented that although possible, such action is not recommended for a large jurisdiction and will delay the availability of alternative maps until December.

Dr. Heslop noted the significant role of citizen kits in the districting process and the value of three distinct alternative maps in inducing citizen participation. Dr. Heslop spoke in favor of actions that will provide citizens as much information and time as possible. Dr. Heslop encouraged Commission Members to submit their own plans.

Following additional brief comments, it was moved by Commission Member Brice-Heames, seconded by Commission Member Whalen, that citizen kits be made available by October 16, 1998, with a notation that alternative maps will be available with a preliminary report beginning October 30 and will be displayed at the subsequent series of public hearings.

Carried unanimously.

Mr. Martin requested input from the Commission pertaining to the suggested districting criteria. Mr. Martin indicated a preference that governing criteria be approved by both the Commission and the City Council by October 16.

Chairman Langdon spoke concerning the importance of the criteria and recommended that the Commission review the suggestions and schedule a meeting for further discussion/consideration at the end of September.

Commission Member Whalen concurred with Chairman Langdon.

Drs. Adams and Heslop responded to questions from Commission Member Brice-Heames pertaining to Spanish translation services to be provided through the City.

Chairman Langdon expressed appreciation to Drs. Adams and Heslop for their assistance.

Mr. Martin commented that Drs. Adams and Heslop have been highly recommended and that the City looks forward to working with them.

3. Discuss proposed draft budget for Council districting effort.

Assistant to the City Manager Ellen Pence advised that she has prepared a preliminary budget estimate (\$60-\$75,000) for various components of the public information work program. Ms. Pence highlighted significant costs and outlined anticipated marketing venues.

Commission Member Bailey suggested that blank maps be provided for citizens to prepare an initial proposal to compare to the three alternative maps that will be presented on October 30 and that additional blank maps be provided should citizens wish to redraw their proposed boundaries.

Discussion ensued pertaining to funding and the number of citizen kits to be made available.

Commission Member Brice-Heames spoke in favor of proactive measures and suggested that consideration be given to preparing a number of kits equivalent to the number of electors who voted at the last City election.

Ms. Pence related plans for advising citizens of the public hearings, including a hotline and direct mail. Ms. Pence reported that citizen kits will be available at the public hearings.

(Commission Member Bailey was excused at 7:31 p.m. for the remainder of the meeting.)

Ms. Pence responded to questions from Commission Member Brice-Heames concerning Spanish translation/distribution relative to press releases, availability of bilingual staff members, and consulting services. Commission Member Brice-Heames commended Ms. Pence and staff for the Spanish translation of a recent press release and requested feedback pertaining to the media response to marketing efforts.

4. Scheduling of future meetings and general information.

Chairman Langdon requested that Mr. Martin schedule another meeting of the District Commission and prepare a proposal for the public hearings.

5. Adjournment.

It was moved by Commission Member Whalen, seconded by Commission Member Andersen, that the meeting of the Council District Commission adjourn at 7:33 p.m.

Carried unanimously.

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

Dated this ____ day of _____ 1998

BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK