



## **OFFICE OF THE CHAMPAIGN COUNTY EXECUTIVE**

1776 East Washington Street, Urbana, Illinois 61802-4581

**Darlene A. Kloeppe, County Executive**

### **Champaign County Redistricting Advisory Group**

#### **MEETING NOTES FOR THURSDAY, JANUARY 14, 2021, 6:30PM**

**Members Present:** Chuck Lansford, Trisha Crowley, Lin Warfel, Shandra Summerville, Emily Bluhm, Debbra Sweat, Mariel Huasanga, Gabe Lewis, Brandon Boys, Brian Gaines, Nicole Darby and Leanne Brehob-Riley

**County Staff:** Darlene Kloeppe, Megan Robison and Mary Ward (Administrative Assistants)

**Others Present:** Pattsy Petrie (former County Board); Wayne Williams (Cunningham Township Assessor)

County Executive Kloeppe started the meeting at 6:34 p.m.

#### **I. Advisory Group Introductions**

County Executive Kloeppe gave a few opening remarks regarding the work of the group. This is an Advisory Group and not a County Board Committee. The meetings will be recorded and posted to the website so the public can see what we're doing. The County Board has been asked to come up with the number of districts that we need to form and the number of representatives per district, hopefully the end of February. The requirement is that we need to come up with a map for the board to consider by no later than May. If there would be a delay in getting the census data, the deadline might change.

The Advisory Group members then introduced themselves and told a little about themselves to the group.

#### **II. Meeting Organization and Schedule**

The group will meet again the last week of January. We will also need to have some public hearings and input from the County Board as we move forward. We need to figure out what to focus on at the next meeting. Feels like the group is representative of the county "communities of interest".

#### **III. Presentations on redistricting rules and things to consider**

Leanne Brehob-Riley presented and walked through the Champaign County Redistricting Project software used in 2011 to provide a starting point for updating our map. The app is currently login protected but can be made available to the Advisory Group and will be made available to the public when complete. The group will have to decide if it wants to use the same criteria or to modify the criteria that were used in 2011. There are several interactive maps with pop-up windows that provide more information that can be considered while working through this project.

Discussion ensued about how exact the population groups need to be in relation to the communities of interest because geographically a large part of the county is rural or small town. The goal is to create equal population districts and need to be created in such a way to keep the

communities of interest together. This group will have to determine the amount of variance that will be allowed. Ms. Crowley said that a 10% is more than the courts will allow; a 5% variance is pushing the edge. Ms. Kloeppe said there are limits and rules to all these criteria. Mr. Warfel asked if there was anything that showed where there might be population growth in the next 10 years. There is some information included in the popups, it includes estimated growth for 2020-25. Ms. Kloeppe said we can also check with the county planners to see where future growth might be based on development.

Wayne Williams, Cunningham Township Assessor & Treasurer of CC Democrats, followed redistricting closely the last time this was done and gave advice realizing that political parties likely will not agree on the map. In his opinion, it is the most important to look at amount of population deviation between the districts. State of Illinois law says that you shouldn't cross boundaries (townships, precincts, etc.) but that makes it hard to keep communities of interest together. As to population deviation, his research has shown an up to 10% population deviation has been allowed by the Courts. Those were mostly cases from the 90's. With today's tech, we should be able to get that close to 0%. As far as gerrymandering goes, the last few cases the Supreme Court has said that partisan gerrymandering is ok, racial gerrymandering is not ok.

Patti Petrie, former County Board Chair was on the board when it went from 27 members to 22 members and helped with the map we are currently using. It's difficult to get a good map due to the way statute is written to meet the criteria and it was difficult to come up with a balanced map. We are a square county and with a donut in the middle with the heavy population. The number of districts will be the driving force in how the group looks at demographic, geographic and racial layout of the county. Need to look at the growth, density and racial makeup of the county because of where the housing is and where the development is going. She would encourage GIS and this group to make a presentation to the County Board so they're thinking about all the issues and not just population as they decide on the number of districts. Modeling could be done to see how a various number of districts will help meet the criteria you decide to use to create the districts. She would like to see more diversity in the districts. She would encourage reducing the size of the County Board. There were a lot of maps that were presented last time that were never given serious consideration. Also, it is important to engage the community in this process and get their input.

Discussion ensued about counting the student population of approximately 50,000 out of 209,000 people. How do you account for that they're here 8 months and then they're gone and are in the center of the donut? May have to look at which criteria is there more flexibility in not meeting. Also, there is a segment of the county that is transient - professors and other workers who come and leave. We could have a conversation about that in the future. It was noted that we will have to use the Census numbers.

Ms. Summerville had a question for Ms. Petrie regarding the number reps per district. Wanted to clarify her recommendation for the number of reps per district. Was that based on the number of districts now? Ms. Petrie answered that her working theory is to reduce the board size by having more districts but only one rep per district.

Brian Gaines, U of I Political Science Professor, indicated that it's better to have a sequence where the number of districts is chosen, the magnitude is chosen, and electoral role is chosen. Better to get the details on the nature of the map and then draw the map. Pick the criteria of

what's important to us. In terms of sequencing decide on criteria in advance. Districts must consist of contiguous blocks. Important criteria:

- Population Equality - population equality is as of the moment of the Census. This is a Census that might be unusually prone to short term movements due to the pandemic. His understanding is that there is not much leeway in drawing a map based on forecasts and expectations on how the population might change over the next decade. We will have to use the population of 2020 and use it over the next decade. Even in two years it will be out of date.
- Continuity - some people would like to see some continuity of districts from one map to the next. May not be possible if you're altering the number or makeup of districts.
- Compactness – not drawing unusual shapes, wiggly districts, keep it to simple shapes.
- Crossings - not crossing boundaries, township boundaries, city boundaries.
- Competitiveness (political) – can be ignored, in some states the people who draw the maps are not allowed to know anything about voting behavior. It is a popular criterion and the case people try to make is that you should have more competitive districts and not fewer.
- Communities of Interest – you can't draw a map designed to minimize different racial and minority groups.

It's helpful to have a set of criteria beforehand. His preference would be getting the numbers right, getting criteria right and then doing the map making. Technology is on the side of transparency.

Discussion ensued about communities of interest. Mr. Warfel asked for thoughts on how to balance communities of interest? Mr. Gaines answered that you really need to listen to the people to tell you what the communities of interest are. Ms. Kloeppel added that when she set up the Advisory Group, she tried to get varied interests in the group. The group needs to come up with what they think are those we should consider. We could possibly do a survey and let the public choose what they identify with.

Other topics were discussed. Ms. Kloeppel asked about the possibility of using the supercomputer to help draw the maps. Dr. Gaines will have to check after we have data, number of districts, number of reps, etc. Ms. Crowley said that the county code states that if the re-apportionment is not completed by July 1, then there is automatically a re-apportionment commission. Ms. Kloeppel will distribute a timeline. Ms. Petrie added to the discussion that there weren't any true non-biased, strictly academic view on the shape of the map. There was always some group that came in and said this map doesn't work for us. If we set up the criteria and then we evaluate all maps against the criteria. Criteria can sometimes get a little fuzzy. You might think something is a 4 meeting a criterion and someone else may think it's a 3. Ms. Petrie said you will get map fatigue. Maybe GIS can start with existing maps and we can see what changes as we move lines against the criteria. She believed the last map was selected with no discussion because of map fatigue.

#### **IV. Next Topics**

At the next meeting, there will be 3 or 4 speakers, like at tonight's meeting.

George Danos, the current county Auditor, has experience paying attention to where districts are

Brad Uken, Director of Farm Bureau, presented one of the maps to be considered last time

Gabe Lewis, RPC, Census Information

Have reached out to NAACP. They don't have anyone at this time, but will continue to seek input.

We could also potentially do an exercise to help come up with criteria to be considered.

Board's decision on number of districts, as soon as possible.

We also need to be scheduling public presentations/hearings.

#### **V. Reading on related topics (attached to agenda)**

The meeting was concluded as 8:25 p.m.