

## City of Topeka Redistricting Commission Minutes – August 18, 2022

CYRUS K. HOLLIDAY BUILDING, Topeka, Kansas, Thursday, August 18, 2022. The Redistricting Commission of the City of Topeka met in special session at 5:00 P.M. with the following Commissioners present: Commissioner Jessica Porter (District 1), Laura Pederzani (District 2), Vicki Arnett (District 6), Jeff Wagaman (District 7) and Bill Hill (District 8) -5; and Commissioners Teresa Leslie-Canty (District 3) and John Nave (District 4) participated remotely -2. Absent: Commissioner Marcus Clark (District 5) -1. Commissioner Michelle Hoferer (District 9) presided -1.

Public comment could be submitted via email to [cclerk@topeka.org](mailto:cclerk@topeka.org) or delivered in-person or mailed to the Office of the City Clerk located at 215 SE 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Room 166, Topeka, Kansas, 66603. All meetings are open to the public, televised and available for viewing online at <https://www.topeka.org/citycouncil/redistricting-commission/> or at <https://www.facebook.com/cityoftopeka/>.

AFTER THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER, the MINUTES of the August 11, 2022, meeting was presented.

Commissioner Porter moved to approve the minutes. The motion seconded by Commissioner Wagaman carried unanimously on voice vote. (8-0-0)

### INTRODUCTION OF PROPOSED MAPS:

Commission Chair Hoferer requested Staff provide a short explanation of the proposed Redistricting Maps on display.

Commissioner Clark entered the room.

Tom Vogue, Data Analyst, City Technical Support Group, provided an overview of the following map proposals:

- 2022 Redistricting Commission Map (current population) includes an overlay of the Neighborhood Improvement Association (NIA) Boundaries
- Plan A includes five precinct changes
- Plan B includes eight precinct changes
- Plan C includes fifty precinct changes

## PUBLIC HEARING

Public Hearing for the purpose of receiving comments and input from interested citizens relating to the redistricting of council district boundaries.

Commission Chair Hoferer opened the public hearing. She stated she has received a list of citizens that have signed up to speak and each individual will have four (4) minutes to address the Commission.

Rhiannon Friedman, President, Downtown Topeka, Inc., thanked the Commission for their time and commitment to the process. She spoke in support of keeping the current boundary of the Downtown Business Improvement District intact. She reported DTI and the NOTO Arts District appreciate the support each respective council member provides.

Commissioner Wagaman asked if the DTI Board discussed the advantages of having two council members representing the downtown area.

Ms. Friedman stated there may be advantages; however, Councilmember Karen Hiller has represented District 1 for many years, and her unified voice and passion for downtown has served the area in the best way possible.

Connie Hood, resident of the 300 block of NW Fairchild, spoke in support of recommending Plan A to the Governing Body and unifying the NE Seward corridor in Oakland. She expressed concern with funding being funneled away from North Topeka residents and the NOTO Arts District to the downtown area. She spoke to the difficulties faced by the North

Topeka East and Oakland areas and the lack of funding received to improve quality of life in those areas.

Tom Hedges, Oakland resident, spoke in support of Plan A and reuniting the Oakland area. He noted Plan A includes only five precinct changes making it the least disruptive to the neighborhoods.

Kenneth Jessop, Oakland resident, spoke in support of Plan A. He stated as a resident of the Garden Park Neighborhood he would like to be reunited with the Oakland area in District 2.

Susan McClacherty, Chairperson for the Valley Park NIA and Citizens Advisory Council (CAC), stated she believes the current redistricting process does not clearly identify the problem to be addressed which she believes is urban revitalization. She referenced the required population of 14,164 people per district, which is not consistent with the data needed to get the desired outcomes, based on her understanding of the concerns expressed by Commissioners regarding the deterioration of the city's core and the migration of people to areas outside current city boundaries. She expressed concern with the annexation of new developments with no infrastructure in place, the lack of affordable housing, the in proportion of funding opportunities for developers compared to home owners, the inclusion of minors in the population count for precincts and the wide range variances of precinct counts, she questioned why a council boundary could not split a precinct boundary, and the greater possibilities of having two separate council representatives does not equate to outcomes unless measurements are tied to the goals that are trying to be reached. She expressed her dissatisfaction with the timeline of the public input process and stated she did not have time to sufficiently gather input from NIAs.

Commission Chair Hoferer reported the Commission must follow the regulations set by City Code and based on the 2020 US Census numbers. She suggested Ms. McClacherty contact

Governing Body members as it relates to other concerns.

Commissioner Clark reported the Commission designated Commissioner Pederzani to contact the NIAs to inform them about the public hearing process.

Commission Chair Hoferer stated citizens will have the opportunity to provide public input at the September 1, 2022, Redistricting Commission meeting as well as written public comment can be sent to the City Clerk at [cclerk@topeka.org](mailto:cclerk@topeka.org). She reported citizens will also have the opportunity to provide public comment at Governing Body meetings.

Mary Torrence, League of Women Voters of Topeka-Shawnee County, reported the foundation of the organization is for all citizens to have an equal, effective voice in electing their representatives, achieved through equal population in each district as well as drawing boundaries that encompass citizens with common interests and concerns *i.e.* NIAs. She expressed the importance of NIA input on the redistricting maps. She stated the League requests that the Commission create a redistricting plan based on public input received, solicit comments on the proposed plan and ascertain whether the needs of residents are being met.

Upon no one else appearing, Commissioner Hoferer closed the public hearing.

Commission Chair Hoferer encouraged Commissioners to reach out to citizens to gather more public input. She stated they will work towards a plan to submit to the Governing Body at the September 1<sup>st</sup> Commission meeting.

Commissioner Porter stated she has a proposal to submit for consideration that would result in a small amendment to Plan A.

Commissioner Arnett inquired on the process to finalize a map at the September 1<sup>st</sup> Commission meeting to recommend to the Governing Body.

Commissioner Nave stated in regards to process he would suggest they consider each

map with any proposed amendments until they come to a consensus without creating confusion. He referenced the 23 emails they received with the majority supporting Plan A. He noted he plans to communicate with District 4 residents regarding his proposed changes before September 1<sup>st</sup>.

Commissioner Wagaman thanked the citizens that have provided input. He stated he believes they do not need to make major changes to district boundaries and strongly favors Plan A at this time. He stated he will be prepared to vote on a map proposal at the September 1<sup>st</sup> meeting.

Commission Chair Hoferer instructed Commission members to submit proposals to Mr. Vogue as soon as possible so the maps can be posted on the website and accessible to the citizens and Commissioners.

Commissioner Pederzani requested Staff continue pushing the redistricting information to citizens via social media platforms and local media outlets.

Mary Fieghny, Deputy City Attorney, stated each proposal will be titled as a new plan and posted to the City's website. She referenced the Kansas Open Meetings Act and reminded Commissioners to be mindful of serial communication violations.

Commissioner Porter made reference to the Hi-Crest Neighborhood being represented by Districts 3, 4 and 5 and the impact it has on the representation of the African American voting community. She proposed to amend Plan A by moving Ward 6, Precinct 1, from District 3 to District 4, and moving Ward 4, Precinct 8, from District 4 to District 3. She noted this would provide representation from Districts 4 and 5.

Commission Chair Hoferer stated the new proposal from Commissioner Porter would be submitted for consideration as Plan D. She directed Staff to post Plan D to the website as soon as

possible.

Commissioner Arnett stated if the Commission is considering Plan A, she would propose Ward 9, Precinct 1, remain in District 6. She stated she would like to consider all comments received in comparison to the proposed maps.

Commission Chair Hoferer reported the majority of the emails and comments that they have received support Plan A.

Commissioner Wagaman spoke in support of the proposal submitted by Commissioner Porter.

Commissioner Clark asked Commissioner Porter why she thought the unification of the Hi-Crest Neighborhood was impossible.

Commissioner Porter stated unification is impossible due to the size of the precincts that surround the area.

Commissioner Nave spoke in support of the proposal by Commissioner Porter and thanked her for making changes based on research of the area. He stated he hopes to receive additional input from citizens about the process.

Commissioner Arnett proposed to amend Plan A by keeping Ward 9, Precinct 1, in District 6.

Commission Chair Hoferer stated the new proposal from Commissioner Arnett would be submitted for consideration as Plan E.

Commissioner Wagaman referenced anticipated population growth in District 7 and stated he would not be opposed to losing population on the east side of District 7.

Commission Chair Hoferer referenced growth in the southeast area of the city.

Commissioner Pederzani cautioned against factoring in anticipated population growth of

developments that may not happen.

Commissioners expressed their appreciation to citizens for providing input.

Commissioner Nave moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion seconded by Commissioner Pederzani carried unanimously by voice vote. (9-0-0)

NO FURTHER BUSINESS appearing the meeting adjourned at 6:09 p.m.

(SEAL)

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Brenda Younger  
City Clerk