



Legislation Text

File #: 21-0522, **Version:** 1

Agenda Item Wording:

Public Hearing and City Council District Decennial Redistricting Presentation.
Deadline for Action: 9/20/2021

Submitting Department: Administration

Contact Name and Phone Number: Allison Mackey, Communications Manager 713-4535

Department Recommendation:

Receive initial presentation from Jeff Tilton, Senior Consultant, National Demographics Corporation, receive presentation on public outreach plan from Allison Mackey, Communications Manager, and hold public hearing number two to receive public input on the process and criteria for revising voter districts boundaries for the City of Visalia Council as required by law following each census.

Background Discussion:

Every ten years, cities with by district election systems must use new census data to review and, if needed, redraw district lines to reflect how local populations have changed. This process, called redistricting, is intended to ensure, among other things, that all districts have nearly equal population. The redistricting process for the City of Visalia must be completed by April 17, 2021.

The City must adopt boundaries for five Council districts that are generally equal in population based on new census data from the 2020 Census, and that comply with State and Federal election laws, including whether there is a legal requirement for one or more majority-minority districts. Detailed demographic data is needed to develop legally appropriate district boundaries. The City does not have these skills in house, therefore, an experienced demographer, NDC, a professional consulting firm has been retained to perform the needed technical tasks to establish these new districts and provide information to the public to assist in the public submittal of proposed district boundaries.

Census Data

The U.S. Census Bureau released Redistricting Data in a “legacy” text format on August 12, 2021, followed on August 18, 2021 when the Statewide Database released the “legacy” format data in a reformatted version.

California’s official 2021 Redistricting Database has announced that on September 20, 2021, they will release California’s Official Redistricting Database including adjusted, inmate reallocated Redistricting Data, electoral datasets (Voter Registration and Statement of Vote) on 2020 Census Blocks and citizen voting age population tabulations on 2020 Census Block geography. The Statewide Database additionally notes that by September 30, 2021, the Census Bureau will release Redistricting Data in easier to use formats with data extraction tools. Until this information is released, and the City’s consultant has time to format it, no meaningful analysis on the census data

or new map requirements can be determined.

Redistricting Rules and Goals

The current district boundaries are based on 2010 census data as required by law. The districts must now be redrawn using the 2020 census data and in compliance with the FAIR MAPS Act, which was adopted by the California legislature as AB 849 and took effect January 1, 2020.

Under the Act, the council shall draw and adopt boundaries using the following criteria in the listed order of priority (Elections Code 21621(c)):

1. Comply with the federal requirements of equal population and the Voting Rights Act
2. Geographically contiguous
3. Undivided neighborhoods and “communities of interest” (socio-economic geographic areas that should be kept together)
4. Easily identifiable boundaries
5. Compact (do not bypass one group of people to get to a more distant group of people)
6. Shall not favor or discriminate against a political party

Other traditional redistricting principles include minimizing voters shifted to different election years, respect voter’s choices, future population growth and preserving the core of existing districts. By law, the City must hold at least four public hearings that enable community members to provide input on the drawing of district maps:

- At least one hearing must occur before the city draws draft maps
- At least two hearings must happen after the drawing of draft maps
- The fourth hearing can happen either before or after the drawing of draft maps
- City staff or consultants may hold a public workshop instead of one of the required public redistricting hearings

To increase the accessibility of these hearings, cities and counties must take the following steps:

- At least one hearing must occur on a Saturday, Sunday, or after 6 p.m. on a weekday
- If a redistricting hearing is consolidated with another local government meeting, the redistricting hearing portion must begin at a pre-designated time
- Local public redistricting hearings should be made accessible to people with disabilities

Per prior City Council direction, the first public hearing was held by the Measure N Committee, with staff and consultant assistance. A report of this hearing, and follow-up direction, was the subject of a City Council agenda item on the September 14th City Council meeting.

The purpose of this second public hearing is to inform the public about the districting process and to hear from the community on what factors should be taken into consideration while creating district boundaries.

The public is requested to provide input regarding communities of interest and other local factors that

should be considered while drafting district maps. A community of interest under the relevant Elections Code 21621(c) is “a population that shares common social or economic interests that should be included within a single district for purposes of its effective and fair representation.”

Defining Neighborhoods and Communities of Interest

The public will be asked, what is your neighborhood? What are its geographic boundaries? Examples of physical features defining a neighborhood boundary can include, but are not limited to, natural neighborhood dividing lines such as highway or major roads, rivers, canals and/or hills, areas around parks or schools and other neighborhood landmarks. In the absence of public testimony, planning records and other similar documents may provide definition.

Beyond neighborhoods defining communities of interest, the specific question for citizens is, what defines your community? This can include, but is not limited to, geographic area, plus shared issue or characteristics like shared social or economic interest and impact by city policies. The City is seeking an answer to the question, would this community benefit from being included within a single district for purposes of its effective and fair representation or would it benefit from having multiple representatives? Of note, definitions of communities of interest may not include relationships with political parties, incumbents or political candidates.

Public Mapping and Review Tools

Through NDC, the City of Visalia has made public mapping and map review tools available. With different tools for different purposes, they include:

- Simple Map Review Tool
 - o Online Interactive Review Map, similar to Google maps in ease of use.
 - o Used to review, analyze and compare maps, not to create them.
 - o Includes overlays of “community of interest” and other data.
- Simple Map Drawing Tool
 - o This is the paper “Public Participation Kit” for those without internet access or who prefer paper.
 - o This includes total population counts only, no demographic numbers.
 - o This has the Excel supplement for those who are comfortable with the program and do not wish to use online tools.
- District R
 - o Online tool that is focused on drawing communities of interest.
- Caliper’s Maptitude Online Redistricting
 - o Online mapping tool available in six languages.

Community Outreach and Next Steps

In order to communicate with and engage the public in the redistricting process, the Public Outreach Plan for City Council Redistricting 2021-2022 was developed and is guiding the outreach process.

This Plan includes the communication objectives of 1) Educating the public on the redistricting process, 2) Communicating the public hearings and public meeting schedule and 3) Asking the

public's help in planning and drawing new City districts.

The Plan outlines the mediums used, ranging from the City website (www.visalia.city/drawvisalia <<http://www.visalia.city/drawvisalia>>) and press releases to social media and community messaging. This Plan was made available to the public and reviewed by the Measure N Committee at the August 23, 2021 public hearing and meeting. While Measure N made no formal recommendations, many of the various suggestions from Committee members have been noted in the Plan.

As outlined in the schedule of meetings and community outreach, the first of two mapping workshops will be held Wednesday, October 13, 2021 at 6 p.m., with the second being held on Saturday, October 23, 2021 at 10 a.m. The public is invited to attend one or both of these workshops, as they are supplemental workshops provided to review the mapping tools available and to answer questions on the process.

On December 6, 2021, the City Council will conduct a Draft Map Hearing (Public Hearing #3) and a Draft Map Hearing (Public Hearing #4) to consider draft maps, which are yet to be determined depending on release of the delayed U.S. Census data and state prisoner population adjusted counts. A representative National Demographics Corporation will be physically present for both of these hearings.

Boundaries must be adopted before April 17, 2022. Staff recommends Council receive input from the Community regarding the Redrawing of Election District Boundaries receive a report from staff on the redistricting process and permissible criteria to be considered to redraw same, as requested.

Fiscal Impact:

N/A

Prior Council Action: On 9.9.21 Confirmed Council direction regarding participation in the redistricting process by the City's Commissions and Committees. On 7.19.21 Authorized staff to enter into a contract with Doug Johnson of National Demographic Corporation to provide the demographic and mapping services noted in option two, services that are needed to arrive at a proposed adjusted map of the five Council Member districts for public review and comment and Council consideration and approval; and 2) Authorized staff to extend the contract with Nielsen Merksamer, the City's State lobbying firm; and 3) Directed Staff to return with a presentation from NDC regarding the overall process and criteria requirements. 4) Appropriated an additional \$65,000 to cover the anticipated costs of redistricting 5) Utilized the Measure N Committee to assist with outreach and oversight of the redistricting process.

Other: None.

Alternatives: N/A

Recommended Motion (and Alternative Motions if expected):

Not Applicable - No action at this time. This is the second of four required public hearings to receive public input on the Decennial Redistricting Process. No action will be taken until after the fourth public hearing.

Environmental Assessment Status: N/A

CEQA Review: N/A

Attachments: (1) Visalia Public Hearing 9.20.21 NDC Presentation (2) COV Redistricting Public Outreach Plan Updated 9.13.21