



AGENDA STAFF REPORT

City of West Covina | Office of the City Manager

DATE: January 18, 2022

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: David Carmany
City Manager

SUBJECT: PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING ELECTION DISTRICT BOUNDARIES

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council:

1. Open the public hearing to receive input from the community regarding election district boundaries; and
2. Direct public dissemination of District Boundary report.

BACKGROUND:

State law requires that the City Council districts be updated to reflect data from the 2020 Census.

These districts will be used for future elections of the West Covina City Council, including for the filling any vacancy in the office of a member of the City Council. The redistricting plan must comply with the United States Constitution, the Voting Rights Act, and the California Elections Code.

The districts are to contain substantially equal population. In adopting boundaries, cities are required to use the following criteria: (1) districts should be geographically contiguous, (2) districts should respect the geographic integrity of any local neighborhood or local community of interest, including racial, ethnic, and language minorities, in a manner that minimizes division, (3) district boundaries should be easily identifiable and understandable by residents, and (4) districts should be drawn to encourage geographic compactness. Districts will not be drawn for the purpose of favoring or discriminating against an incumbent, political candidate, or political party.

On January 17, 2017, the City Council adopted Ordinance No. 2310 to change from an at-large election system to by-district elections with five districts. On February 21, 2017, the City Council approved a settlement agreement in the matter known as Sanchez v. City of West Covina. This settlement set forth requirements relating to selection of a districting consultant, selection of district boundaries and sequencing of elections. As a result, a Request for Proposals (RFP) was issued on March 14, 2017 for district consultant services. On May 2, 2017, the City Council awarded a contract for election district consulting services to National Demographics Corporation (NDC), a well-known company in the industry.

There were a total of four public hearings conducted with public input and participation. In total, the City Council reviewed 23 maps (20 that were submitted by members of the community and three that were submitted by NDC). The City Council selected 6 maps to bring back at the November 14, 2017 Council meeting for further discussion and selection. At the December 5, 2017 Council meeting, the City Council adopted Ordinance No. 2328,

designating the boundaries for the five single-member districts and the sequence of district elections.

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, ensures all districts have nearly equal population. The redistricting process for the City of West Covina must be completed by April 17, 2022.

On May 3, 2021, the City released an RFP for redistricting services. On May 24, 2021, the City received three proposals and at the September 21, 2021 Council meeting a contract was awarded to NDC.

The redistricting process requires four public hearings. The first public hearing was held on November 18, 2021. This is the second of four required hearings.

DISCUSSION:

The purpose of this 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 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.” (Elections Code § 21601(c)(2).)

Possible features defining a community of interest might include, without limitation:

1. School attendance areas;
2. Natural dividing lines such as major roads, hills, or highways;
3. Areas around parks and other neighborhood landmarks;
4. Common issues, neighborhood activities, or legislative/election concerns; and
5. Shared demographic characteristics, such as:
 - (a) Similar levels of income, education, or linguistic insolation;
 - (b) Languages spoken at home; and
 - (c) Single-family and multi-family housing unit areas.

Language Requirements for Redistricting

Per Elections Code § 21608, the City must provide language services in applicable languages, as provided by the Secretary of State. Pursuant to Elections Code § 21608(h), applicable language requirements for city redistricting purposes include any language that is spoken by a group of city residents with limited English proficiency who constitute 3% or more of the city’s total population over four years of age for whom language can be determined.

On June 11, 2021, the Secretary of State released guidance for cities regarding these language requirements. In addition to English, the City of West Covina is required to provide qualifying materials and “live translation” (interpretation) services in the following languages upon a request made at least 72 hours in advance of a hearing or workshop:

- Chinese (including Mandarin and Cantonese)
- Spanish

Publication and Noticing Requirements for Redistricting Public Hearings

Per Elections Code §§ 21608(c) and 21608(g)(3), the City is required to “publish” the hearing date, time, and location at least 5 days in advance on the internet; a website calendar that lists the time and location satisfies the publishing requirement. On November 29, 2021, the public hearing information was published the City’s website calendar. Elections Code § 21607.1(d) states that if a public hearing is consolidated with a regular or special meeting of the council that includes other substantive agenda items, the public hearing shall begin at a fixed time regardless of its order on the agenda, except that the Council may first conclude any item being discussed or acted upon, including any associated public comment, when that time occurs.

Next Steps

The dates for the third and fourth public hearings to consider draft maps are yet to be determined, but will be published as required by law.

Prepared by: Lisa Sherrick; Assistant City Clerk

CITY COUNCIL GOALS & OBJECTIVES: Enhance City Image and Effectiveness