



## **DISTRICTING COMMISSION MEETING**

**March 9, 2022**

**4:00 P.M.**

### **MINUTES**

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m.

#### **COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:**

Col. Bob Burns  
Dr. Michiel Noe - virtual  
Christopher Villa – arrived 4:03  
Joshua Fematt – arrived late 4:20  
Martin Bartlett  
Daniel Anchondo – arrived 4:02  
Isabel Carrillo  
Cynthia Renteria  
Gilbert Esparza III

#### **COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:**

NONE

#### ***City Staff:***

*Karina Brasgalla, Executive Secretary, Assistant Director Economic and International Development; Russell Abeln, Assistant City Attorney, City Attorney's Office; Kevin Smith, Assistant Director Planning and Inspections Department*

### **I. CALL TO THE PUBLIC – PUBLIC COMMENT**

Call to the Public will begin at 5:00 p.m. Members of the public will be allowed 5 minutes to present, with additional time granted at the discretion of the presiding officer.

Ms. Judy Ackerman spoke regarding Precinct 60, legal fiction. Precinct 60 is not contiguous with other precincts in District 4, must join another District.

Mr. Sito Negron spoke on his Precinct 36, Sunset Heights. Mostly agreed with Commissioner Renteria. Noted that Precinct 36 has a lot in common with central/south central neighborhoods that are contemporaries

Ms. Carol Wallace: President of League of Women Voters. Noted that the League had been working on redistricting since 2020. Mentioned South Side and Mission Valley as not feeling fairly represented. Hoped to keep like neighborhoods together. Felt three maps were very effective – the League’s two and Commissioner Renteria’s.

Ms. Sylvia Carreon: Mission Valley Civic Association. Expressed disappointment in the February 23 meeting. Felt that the men were going against the women, as none of the women’s maps were going forward. Felt that changing a submitter’s map was wrong. Shared her own experiences working with men as a woman. Agreed with Ms. Ackerman.

Mr. Ed Talamantes commented about Commissioner Esparza’s map from last meeting and Colonel Burns’ map this session. Mentioned Commissioner Esparza’s comment that more representatives may be better, commented that he would prefer one representative south of the freeway

Dr. Kathleen Staudt commented regarding political science background, mentioned gerrymandering in District 8. Voiced concern for south and south central El Paso. Supported Commissioner Renteria’s map, especially on the cohesiveness of central in that map.

Chair Bartlett asked staff to clarify the deadline on new map submissions

Ms. Brasgalla responded that March 2 was the deadline, and that today is the last day the commission will be considering maps submitted by outside entities.

Chair Bartlett clarified that any maps that had appeared online between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 9<sup>th</sup> were due to a lag in uploading, not as later submissions

Ms. Brasgalla confirmed no new map submittals; any new ones would be versions edited by the Commission

Mr. Jesus Valdez commented that the maps on the website were wrong regarding census blocks. Deviations are very off. Asked that the maps be fixed correctly. Expressed concern with existing maps. Noted that Public Draft 1-B was very good on many metrics, but was not the best map. Advocated for Commissioner Draft #6 by Commissioner Esparza.

Chair Bartlett asked for a data QA/QC from staff

Ms. Brasgalla showed the precinct boundaries in District 5 causing deviation, spoke to staff efforts to correct maps. Added that shape files come directly from County Elections Office and Census Bureau and that maps are accurate to the census

Ms. Carmen Rodriguez commented on Precinct 60’s omission or inclusion from District 4 depending on the mapmaker, noted lack of contiguity. Also commented on District 8 – has to move either south or east. Discussed redlining in south El Paso. Questioned Commissioner Anchondo’s motion from last week. Felt there was undue influence on Commissioners. Asked Commissioners to be fair, consider the whole City

Ms. Veronica Carrillo ask the Commissioners to listen to the El Paso community above personal preference. Lives near El Paso High, active member of El Paso High Neighborhood Improvement Association. Asked for a District for the Central El Paso neighborhoods. Noted the health challenges in El Paso are highest in Central El Paso. Felt that breaking up the area would reduce

their ability to get help on issues. Also supported a Mission Valley District. Noted that Precinct 60 does not make sense in the Northeast

Ms. Laurie Cooper disagrees that the current map is gerrymandered, noted that the Mission Valley is not gerrymandered. Stated that there was representation going back to 2000. Stated that the Valley was not just one big community of interest. Feels as though Districts 5 and 7 work. Stated that one of the criteria in redistricting was to keep the bounds as close to the same as possible, and that the only maps submitted that do so are the 4 that she had submitted today. Noted that District 7 almost always elects representatives from north of the interstate and believed that they represent the District well. Reiterated that the current map is not gerrymandered.

Ms. Debbie Torres: Lives in District 6. Noted that many streets need to be redone, that there are no sidewalks, and other concerns. District 6 needs a lot of work. On representation: it's getting involved with your community. Does not feel that the latest person elected does that. Stated that the Mission Valley needs representation south of the freeway. Expressed disappointment that the person picked by the City representative for the districting commission has missed so many meetings.

Mr. Russel Abeln asked to refrain from personal attacks

Ms. Torres responded that it's on the record.

Ms. Brasgalla asked if anyone else present in chambers would like to speak. Hearing none, asked for those on the call.

Mr. James Penado expressed that map #5 is the best for keeping districts together in a way that regionally makes sense. Noted that Precincts 155 and 190 (south of freeway) would like to stay in District 6. One concern about Map #5 – District 8. Representative up for re-election but the map would put her in District 2.

Mr. Ben Ivy commented that they'd had success with their city representative in District 6, would like to see Precincts 155 and 190 stay in District 6

Ms. Dora Oaxaca wanted to voice support for Public Drafts 1-A, 1-B, and Commissioner Draft #6. Noted that the Valley had had a number of representatives from south of the freeway, listed their names. Also listed those from north of the freeway. Agreed with Ms. Cooper.

Chair Bartlett stated that several Commissioners would like to speak, asked if that was allowed

Ms. Brasgalla responded that they typically would not respond to Public Comment.

Mr. Abeln noted that the recommendation is not to respond to Public Comment

Ms. Brasgalla stated that it could fall under general questions about the drafting of district plans and it could be an option after returning to the regular agenda.

Chair Bartlett asked for a motion to return to the regular agenda.

**COMMISSIONER RENTERIA MOTIONED, COMMISSIONER ESPARZA SECONDED, MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. RETURNED TO ITEM 5 OF THE REGULAR AGENDA**

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II. **REGULAR AGENDA – DISCUSSION AND ACTION:**

- 1 Discussion and Action: Changes to the Agenda

None

- 2 Discussion and Action: Review of the January 26, 2022 Meeting Minutes

***COMMISSIONER ESPARZA MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES, DR. NOE SECONDED, MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY***

- 3 Discussion and Action: Review of the February 16, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Colonel Burns motioned to approve the Minutes, Commissioner Esparza seconded, motion passed unanimously

- 4 Information and Discussion: Updates on Board administration and Public Comment Submitted Electronically

Karina Brascgalla noted that March 16 and 30 were reserved for further meetings, with April 6 being the final meeting

Chair Bartlett asked Ms. Brascgalla to explain what will have happened by April 6.

Ms. Brascgalla clarified the 6-month residency rule

Chair Bartlett and Ms. Brascgalla clarified the timeline

Commissioner Anchondo asked a question

Ms. Brascgalla answered

Ms. Brascgalla read out public comments as submitted

Chair Bartlett asked from comments from commissioners

Hearing none, moved to Item 5

- 5 Information, Discussion, and Action: Drafting and Selection of District Plans, to include review of new submissions from Julian Quinonez, Commissioner Burns, Commissioner Renteria, and Laurie Cooper

Vice Chair Carrillo asked for more discussion on maps before advancing or excluding them

Commissioner Renteria agreed with Vice Chair Carrillo, called for transparency for the public

Ms. Brascgalla, Chair Bartlett, and Mr. Abeln clarified precedence of motions over discussion – Robert's rules

Vice Chair Carrillo asked to hold off on motioning until after discussions

Ms. Brasgalla commented regarding the timeline and the need to bring down the number of maps

Vice Chair Carrillo asked that large format printout of maps be made available

Commissioner Esparza commented about the previous meeting regarding advancing one of several very similar maps

Vice Chair Carrillo responded, reiterated call for more discussion

Vice Chair Esparza responded

Commissioner Renteria commented

Julian Quinonez presented his map via Teams

Chair Bartlett asked for questions, thanked Mr. Quinonez and other mapmakers for their submittals

Commissioner Burns presented his map

Ms. Brasgalla commented that the numbers in the table were incorrect, got correct numbers from Dave's Redistricting

Vice Chair Carrillo asked a question, expressed dislike for District 2 as drawn

Colonel Burns answered

Commissioner Renteria commented regarding District 2

Commissioner Anchondo asked about District 7, voiced concern about gerrymandering

Colonel Burns disagreed

Vice Chair Carrillo commented with concern about District 8

Ms. Brasgalla noted that District 2 has limited options given the population and geography, reiterated that population is of paramount concern

Chair Bartlett commented

Vice Chair Carrillo asked Ms. Brasgalla to repeat her comment

Ms. Brasgalla repeated the population requirement, acknowledged the difficulties with compactness

Colonel Burns commented regarding the difference between requirements and desires

Commissioner Villa commented about District 8, made suggestions on how to balance it

Vice Chair Carrillo asked about population numbers for certain areas from staff

Ms. Brasgalla responded that they were available for the working session, could make them available now; gave numbers for Precinct 60

Colonel Burns responded to Commissioner Villa regarding District 8, others regarding District 2

Commissioner Renteria asked for population discussion after all maps were presented, commented on limited time before Public Comment

Chair Bartlett asked for at least one more map presentation before Public Comment

Commissioner Renteria presented her map  
Vice Chair Carrillo asked for the correct deviation  
Ms. Brasgalla commented on deviations from Dave's Redistricting

Commissioner Esparza asked for compactness score  
Ms. Brasgalla commented on range of compactness values, effect of Ft. Bliss

Chair Bartlett asked for a motion to hear Public Comment  
Commissioner Renteria motioned, Vice Chair Carrillo seconded, motioned passed unanimously

### ***RETURNED FROM PUBLIC COMMENT***

Chair Bartlett recognized Commissioner Fematt  
Commissioner Fematt agreed that Commissioner Draft 5 is a good map, should have 155 and 190 added back to District 6

Commissioner Renteria responded to question before Public Comment on the compactness for her map, it was 52.

Ms. Brasgalla asked for any other comments before last map submission. Hearing none, went into the last map submission. 4 maps from Ms. Cooper.

Ms. Cooper presented her maps. Focused on the criteria to keep maps similar as much as possible. Demonstrated the support that candidates had across precincts across the interstate in District 6. Asked the Commission to consider voting maps. Noted that she had 4 maps because she was unsure regarding the southside Precincts. Spoke about redlining, commended the City for acknowledging it. Stated that she wanted to keep 3, 5, and 6 in their current configuration. Acknowledged Ms. Torres and Mr. Talamantes and their desire keep Precinct 150 in District 7, noted that her map keeps them in 7. Asked for questions.

Commissioner Villa asked why this was the first time the Commission was hearing from Ms. Cooper

Ms. Cooper responded that the meetings were at 4:00, and also the covid concern  
Commissioner Villa responded asking about digital options, also noted that they'd mostly heard from those requesting a Mission Valley district rather than those who wanted to keep the Districts the same.

Ms. Cooper responded that she didn't feel that that accurately reflected the feelings of those resident, would like to see the sample and the questions

Commissioner Renteria thanked Ms. Cooper, would like the Commission to be able to look at the maps online

Ms. Brasgalla responded that they were available

Commissioner Esparza commented that Ms. Cooper's presentation was enlightening  
Ms. Cooper responded that they needed to get away from the I-10 mentality  
Commissioner Esparza commented again on the new perspective  
Ms. Cooper commented regarding the communities of interest, noted that District 6 had had a representative that lived in the Valley for over 20 years

Commissioner Esparza asked about Precinct 60 in District 8. Expressed that he wanted a map that works for all the city, not just Precinct 60. But feels as though Ms. Cooper's map lumps neighborhoods into a District that goes over the mountain range

Ms. Cooper asked to bring up her map "D"

Commissioner Esparza commented on that map

Ms. Cooper expressed concern about the south side precincts

Commissioner Anchondo thanked Ms. Cooper for sharing her insights

Commissioner Renteria asked to look at several precincts in south central, also made a technical note

Ms. Cooper explained her boundary decisions, noted that they had benefitted from collaboration in the Valley

Commissioner Renteria asked a question if Map D was a result of editing in the Valley

Ms. Cooper responded that the goal was to give two representatives to the south side precincts, reiterated that 3, 5, 6, and 7 should be left alone

Vice Chair Carrillo thanked Ms. Cooper, asked how she had started with this map

Ms. Cooper responded that she started with the original map, kept representatives in place.

Noted that 1, 2, 4, and 8 remained mostly the same

Vice Chair Carrillo asked if she had a strong support for any of the maps

Ms. Cooper said no, no strong leaning outside 3, 5, 6, and 7

Vice Chair Carrillo asked about the boundaries of District 8 on Map "D", noted that it conflicted with the redlining concern

Ms. Cooper noted that the redlining was actually in District 2

Vice Chair Carrillo asked to clarify if Ms. Cooper had a strong position

Ms. Cooper said only on 3, 5, 6, and 7 on east side

## 6 Discussion: Identify Items for Future Agendas

Chair Bartlett asked if there was still a desire to workshop maps today or if should be pushed to the next meeting next week

Commissioner Renteria asked if Commissioners would like to move the work session to March 16 to give them a week to look at the new maps

Ms. Brasgalla recommended a conversation on the plan to reduce the number of maps moving forward

Chair Bartlett agreed with Ms. Brasgalla, noted a finite number of ways to move forward

Commissioner Esparza agreed with Chair Bartlett, commented that he'd seen new maps today and could not support a motion to move anything forward without time to look at and discuss them, as he had not had time to assess them.

Ms. Brasgalla commented that staff would not recommend taking action today, noted staff delays and technical issues with Commissioner Renteria

Vice Chair Carrillo noted that she had the same technical issues as Commissioner Renteria, also that the Commission is not yet prepared to move forward.

Ms. Brasgalla recommended a discussion on how to approach the maps moving forward, reminded the Commission of the federal and state legal requirements and City policy and criteria (and which are flexible). Recommended that they consider how to frame a recommendation to city council and be sure that recommendations are explicitly linked to aforementioned criteria. Commissioner Renteria asked if the Commission would set a goal of no more than 6 maps by the end of the work session meeting.

Ms. Brasgalla noted 6 at the absolute highest, 5 may be better.

Commissioner Renteria asked for no more than 5 or 6 maps by the end of the March 16 meeting Colonel Burns agreed with Commissioner Renteria. Added that Ms. Brasgalla had outlined evaluation criteria, noted a legal sufficiency checklist. Felt that that component was missing. Asked to outline the criteria before proceeding.

Commissioner Renteria noted that a chart had previously been handed out

Ms. Brasgalla confirmed that staff had been doing analysis

Colonel Burns confirmed that he had used it, along with desires from constituents

Commissioner Anchondo commented that they know what the criteria are, could vote on those that do not and get them out of the way

Ms. Brasgalla noted that staff could provide printouts of criteria again

Vice Chair Carrillo agreed with what had been said so far, noted that some criteria have more ambiguous language and they would need to decide as a commission the weight of each one. Also expressed concern on maps that had been uploaded

Ms. Brasgalla noted that they could present maps exactly as they had been on Dave's

Redistricting, and that the request was whole voter precincts. Asked for direction

Vice Chair Carrillo asked about the differences in deviation

Ms. Brasgalla noted that it was due to a change in voter precincts – does the Commission want whole voting precincts or how they look in Dave's?

Commissioner Renteria noted that she did not split precincts but still had numbers jump

Ms. Brasgalla responded

Commissioner Anchondo asked if there was a minimum number of maps to move forward to City Council

Chair Bartlett said yes, the Commission needed to set guides for themselves, 5 or 6 maximum

Commissioner Anchondo asked if they could do fewer maps than that

Ms. Brasgalla said yes, clarified that there were two questions here: what does the Commission want to leave the meeting on the 16<sup>th</sup> with, and what do they want to present to City Council?

Chair Bartlett agreed

Commissioner Renteria clarified that the 16<sup>th</sup> would narrow it down for the meeting on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, then bring it down to 2 maps to present to City Council

Colonel Burns agreed, but asked to take it down to three on the 16<sup>th</sup>, maybe 4. Noted that they may be very diverse

Commissioner Renteria asked for between 3 and 5 by the end of the meeting on the 16<sup>th</sup>

Commissioner Burns agreed

Commissioner Anchondo asked for a decision to make it 3 today, with the understanding that it could go up

Ms. Brasgalla clarified that there did not have to be action, just agreed upon

Commissioner Anchondo asked if they could then agree on it



Chair Bartlett reiterated that they would aim to leave the meeting on the 16<sup>th</sup> with 3 maps to keep refining going forward

Colonel Burns commented

Chair Bartlett asked if everyone was comfortable with that approach

Commissioner Esparza agreed, asked that all new maps would be uploaded immediately so they could be looked at between now and next Wednesday

Chair Bartlett asked how feasible all maps could be uploaded by tomorrow

Ms. Brasgalla said yes, and large printouts by Friday. Asked for those who want them to let her know

Chair Bartlett asked if any more maps had not been uploaded

Ms. Brasgalla said no

Commissioner Esparza noted limitations on paper maps and concern that they would be limiting

Ms. Brasgalla confirmed that they would have both

Vice Chair Carrillo mentioned the benefit of printout, also clarified that the three maps they would choose were not necessarily ones that already existed, the Commission could still refine them

Chair Bartlett confirmed yes

Commissioner Renteria asked to clarify that those three did not have to be the three that they had already moved forward

Ms. Brasgalla confirmed

Chair Bartlett asked if everyone was comfortable with this plan going forward.

Ms. Brasgalla reiterated the resources staff would make available for the next meeting

Chair Bartlett noted that the discussion had moved on to Item 6, asked Mr. Abeln if anything needed to be done.

Mr. Abeln said it was fine to continue

Chair Bartlett noted that they could move on to Item 7

## 7 Adjournment

**COMMISSIONER RENTERIA MADE A MOTION TO ADJOURN, COMMISSIONER FEMATT SECONDED, MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**MEETING ADJOURNED 6:59 PM**