



CITY OF SAN MATEO

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Agenda Report

Agenda Number: 1

Section Name: {{section.name}}

File ID: {{item.tracking_number}}

TO: City Council

FROM: Drew Corbett, City Manager

PREPARED BY: City Clerk's Office

MEETING DATE: October 14, 2021

SUBJECT:

Transition to District-Based Elections for Council Members – Public Hearing #4

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive a fourth presentation from staff and the City's consulting demographer regarding the process and criteria for establishing Council district boundaries for by-district elections, hold the second of two public hearings to receive public input regarding the draft maps of five districts, and provide direction for development of a revised final map.

BACKGROUND:

On August 23 and September 13, 2021, the City Council held the first and second of five public hearings required for the City's transition to by-district elections. Public hearings #1 and #2 were held prior to any draft maps being drawn and covered the composition and number of districts, form of government under consideration, charter amendment considerations, and the public input process. At its September 13 hearing, the Council provided direction to begin drawing draft maps for a by-district election system comprised of five districts and a rotational mayor.

In accordance with Elections Code 10010, on September 23 the City published on its website three draft maps submitted by its demographer, along with the potential sequence of elections, and then published the agenda report and additional information on the maps on September 24. The City received numerous comments and additional submittals of suggested map lines as part of this public process, and this information was presented at the third Public Hearing on September 30, 2021. After taking public testimony and answering questions, the Council directed staff and the demographer to continue collecting public input and return with a revised version of Map 3 with the following modifications:

1. Move the Foothill Terrace Neighborhood into District C
2. Move more of the 25th Ave Neighborhood into District B
3. Fix one of the census bocks along the northern boundary of District D

This resulted in a new Map 3b, which was published on the City's website on Friday, October 1. The City continued to receive public input on the maps online and through the last two in-person community workshops held on October 2. Comments included keeping San Mateo Heights with North Central by extending District E from San Mateo Drive to El Camino Real, keeping neighborhoods around the lagoon in one district, and an interest in keeping more of North Shoreview with Shoreview in District A. This feedback resulted in a Map 3c for consideration, which has the following modifications to 3b:

1. Unifying most of San Mateo Heights into District E
2. To accomplish moving most of San Mateo Heights into District E, the Central Business District needed to be moved into District C to balance population.
3. Keep more of North Shoreview in District A to reflect public input and bring it closer to the ideal population.

Map Drawing Criteria

In creating the district boundaries, the City must ensure compliance with the following state and federally mandated criteria:

1. Each council district shall contain a nearly equal population; and
2. Each council district shall be drawn in a manner that complies with the Federal Voting Rights Act, and the Constitutions of the United States and California (e.g., race cannot be the predominant factor).

In addition to the above, under Elections Code Section 21621(c), certain criteria must be used to establish the boundaries of the council districts including the following, in order of priority:

3. Geographic contiguity
4. To the extent practical, maintain neighborhoods and local communities of interest (such as cultural or historical bonds, common issues, neighborhood activities, or legislative/election concerns. Communities of interest do not include relationships with political parties, incumbents or political candidates).
5. Boundaries that are easily identifiable and understandable to residents (e.g., geographical and topographical features such as rivers and creeks, or other physical barriers such as railroads or major streets.)
6. Geographic compactness is encouraged.

Considerations on Drawing the Draft Maps

The demographer has drawn and evaluated these draft maps to ensure compliance with the above criteria. The City is using the latest 2020 Census data provided by the Statewide Database with the state prison population reallocated, as required under the Fair Maps Act. These maps use the underlying Census tract geography to establish the boundaries of individual City Council districts. In drawing these maps, every care was taken to honor neighborhoods and communities of interest. However, please note that sometimes Census blocks do not perfectly align with known neighborhood boundaries or streets. Some census blocks follow natural geographic boundaries, such as a turn in a creek, which may be why some notches or boundary lines do not precisely follow neighborhood borders or roads.

Furthermore, each City Council map plan must be below 10% total deviations between the largest to smallest district by population. Deviation is calculated by first determining the ideal population for each district. In San Mateo's case, the ideal population is 21,161 residents per district. The total deviation is determined by adding together the deviations of the largest and smallest districts from that ideal population size. For example, if your largest district is 5% larger than the ideal population and the smallest district is 3% smaller than the ideal population, then the total deviation is 8%. As achieving near population equality between districts is the first criteria that must be met, some known neighborhoods will be split between districts.

Because of the need to meet the required deviation standard, adjusting any one line may have a ripple effect that results in the need to adjust another boundary elsewhere in the map.

Governance and District Representation

Members of the public have raised questions about what moving to district elections means for their representation on the Council. All San Mateo residents will continue to be represented by the entire City Council, which is the legislative body for the City. The only difference between the at-large and by-district election systems is in how council members are elected to the City Council. Instead of voting for all five council members, voters will only vote for one council member who lives in their district.

Governance of the City will not change due to the transition to district elections. Council members will continue to have equal voting power and will consider the entire City when deciding matters. Council members will also continue to take input from all constituents, not just from members of their district.

The purpose of district elections is to help ensure all residents, particularly underrepresented populations, have a more equal chance of electing someone of their choosing. It may also help reduce financial barriers for potential candidates and encourage more people to run for office, as campaigning in one district instead of the entire City could be less costly.

Next Steps

The Council will consider introduction of an ordinance that approves the final district map during a regular meeting on November 1, 2021. Under State law, the City is required to include the potential sequencing of district elections when publishing draft maps. For the purposes of this legal requirement, the following option is presented. Elections for Districts A, B and C could be held in November 2022, and for Districts D and E, elections could be held in November 2024. Please note this potential sequencing is very preliminary, that in these draft maps the districts have been randomly assigned letters, and the sequencing may change before a district map is approved by the City Council. A final decision on sequencing will be requested during the November 1, 2021 public hearing.

Specific Direction on Maps

The City Council is being asked to provide specific direction at this public hearing on:

- Is there a preferred map?
- Are there any specific boundary adjustments that should be made?
- Direct staff and the demographer to prepare a final preferred map for consideration on November 1, 2021
- Should staff prepare options for sequencing?

BUDGET IMPACT:

At its June 21, 2021 meeting, the City Council appropriated \$150,000 to underwrite costs associated with moving to District elections.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:

This public hearing on map drawing is not a project subject to CEQA, because it is an organizational or administrative activity that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment. (CEQA Guidelines Section 15378(b)(5).)

NOTICE PROVIDED

All meeting noticing requirements were met.

ATTACHMENTS

Att 1 – Draft Map 3b

Att 2 – Draft Map 3c

Att 3 – Hardcopy Map submittals

Att 4 – Public Comment received through 2pm 10/7/2021

Att 5 – Online Map Submittals through DistrictR view here: https://districtr.org/event/San_Mateo_City

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