

## Laura Hurley

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**From:** Robert Benson <rbenson@shore-lawyers.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, July 5, 2021 7:18 PM  
**To:** Laura Hurley  
**Cc:** Mike Dunn  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Fwd: County Council Redistricting Proposal  
**Attachments:** RedistProposal 7-5-21.docx

[Sent from an email account outside of the Wicomico County network. Use caution when clicking on links or opening attachments.]

Laura can you forward Dr Basehart's email to the committee and make sure posted for public.

Bob Benson

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Harry Basehart <hhbasehart@gmail.com>  
**Date:** July 5, 2021 at 2:20:29 PM EDT  
**To:** Mike Dunn <Mdunn@greatersalisbury.org>, Robert Benson <rbenson@shore-lawyers.com>  
**Subject: County Council Redistricting Proposal**

Mr. Dunn and Mr. Benson,

As you recall, I sent an email back in April noting shortcomings in the current Charter's provisions for the redistricting of County Council boundaries after each decennial census. This is a followup to that email.

Attached is a proposal for consideration by the Wicomico County Charter Review Commission that would substantially revise current redistricting procedures and, if approved, would be used for the first time in 2031. The goal of the proposal is to have a process that is open and transparent, encourages public involvement, follows a definite timeline, has clearly stated criteria for drawing district lines, and makes decisions by consensus.

Governor Hogan was 100% correct when he said, "The voters of Maryland should pick their elected representatives---not the other way around." This is equally true for congressional, state and local redistricting.

Thanks to each of you and all Commission members for considering this proposal.

Harry Basehart

Proposed Revision of Charter of Wicomico County, Article II,  
County Council, Section 201B, Districting procedure.\*

B. Districting. Boundary lines of County Council districts shall be redrawn in the calendar year of the delivery of redistricting data from the Decennial Census of the United States Bureau of the Census to the states. These district lines are to be used in all County elections until the next decennial census and redistricting. The County shall allocate necessary funds and staff assistance from appropriate County offices for the Commission so it can expeditiously complete its task as outlined below.

1. Redistricting Commission. The County Council shall appoint a nine-member Redistricting Commission with each member approved by at least four members of the seven-member Council. The Commission selects its chairperson with the approval of at least six members.
2. Membership. Members will be selected from a pool of applicants to the Redistricting Commission that are Wicomico County registered voters. Party affiliation of Commission members shall be as follows: three members registered with the largest political party in the county, three members registered with the second largest political party, as measured by number of registered voters, and three members registered as unaffiliated or independent. The Commission shall reflect as nearly as is practicable the racial, ethnic, geographic, and gender diversity of the county.

Applicants are ineligible for consideration if they changed their party registration during the previous two years, are an elected federal, state, or local government official or their immediate family members, or are a county government employee or their immediate family members. Commission members serve until new district boundaries are approved by the council or until any legal dispute involving the new boundaries is completed.

In the event of a vacancy, the Council shall appoint a new member of the same party registration as the person who created the vacancy.

3. **Timeline.** The County Council shall publish an announcement at least 60 days in advance of receiving redistricting data inviting registered voters in the County to apply for membership on the Commission. Within 45 days of receiving census data Commission members will be selected and will hold its first meeting.

The Commission's redistricting plan shall be submitted to the County Council no later than September 1. The Council has until the end of the calendar year to complete its consideration.

In extraordinary circumstances, the County Council may allow minor adjustments to the timeline.

4. **Criteria.** The Commission's redistricting plan shall have the following characteristics, listed in order of priority: equality in population among districts, meaning that no district can be more than five percent above or below the average population for all five districts; opportunity for racial minorities to elect candidates of their choice; fairness in electoral competition by not increasing or decreasing the election chances of an incumbent or a candidate of a specific political party; respect for the boundaries of municipal governments; and be geographically connected, to the extent practicable.
5. **Public Involvement.** At least one Commission meeting for public input will be held before the redrawing of district lines begins. A second public hearing will be held after the Commission produces a draft report, a map of new council districts and a narrative description of each district and the overall plan. Two weeks before the second public hearing the draft report and data used to draw the new boundaries will be uploaded to the County website for public examination.

All meetings of the Commission will comply with state and local laws governing open meetings.

The County Council shall hold at least one public hearing after it receives the Commission's plan.

6. Approval. Approval of the Commission's plan requires at least six votes of Commission members, including the votes of at least two Democrats, two Republicans, and two unaffiliated or independent members.

Approval by the Council requires five votes. If the Council disapproves of the plan, its written objections will be communicated to the Commission within 45 days of receiving the plan. The Commission shall make such modifications as it deems appropriate and return a revised plan to the Council within 30 days.

The County Council shall decide between the original plan and the revised plan.

\*Redistricting proposal written by Dr. Harry Basehart, Professor Emeritus, Salisbury University.

## Appendix A

Sample timeline with census data received on April 1, 2031, which has been the normal month and year except for 2021:

February 1 --- Announcement of commission formation and request for citizens to apply. (Sixty days in advance of receiving data.)

April 1 --- County receives redistricting data from the Bureau of the Census.

May 15 --- Council completes selecting and appointing members and Commission holds its first meeting. (Within 45 days of receiving data.)

May through August --- Commission develops redistricting plan and holds hearings.

### Recommended Dates:

Late May, early June – 1<sup>st</sup> public hearing

Late July – draft report and maps uploaded to website

Early August – 2<sup>nd</sup> public hearing

September 1 --- Commission submits redistricting plan to the County Council.

September through December --- County Council consideration of the plan.

### Recommended Dates:

Late September – County Council holds a public hearing.

Mid-October -- If council disapproves of the plan, recommendations are communicated to the Commission.

Mid-November – Commission decides to accept all, some or none of the Council’s recommendations and returns plan to the Council.

December 31 --- Final plan is approved by the County Council no later than this date.