

The 2021 Wicomico County Redistricting Committee met on November 10, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. in the Government Office Building, Room 301, Salisbury, Maryland.

Members Present: Wendy Anspacher, Gail Bartkovich, Muir Boda, Bernadette Cannady, Mark Danderson, Julie Giordano, and William "Kel" Nagel, M.D.

Staff Present: Laura Hurley, Recording Secretary; Andrew Illuminati, Esq., County Attorney Representative; and Frank McKenzie, GIS Coordinator.

**Approval of Minutes from October 27, 2021:**

Dr. Nagel said he loved where Ms. Cannady was quoted in the minutes regarding the illustrious Dr. Basehart and said he is political, but she likes him anyway, and he just wants to say that there are several people in this group who are political, some more than others, and he hopes they all like each other anyway.

There being no further discussion, on motion by Dr. Nagel and seconded by Ms. Giordano, the minutes from October 27, 2021 were unanimously approved.

**Review of Redistricting Presentation:**

Ms. Bartkovich said the presentation to the County Council is scheduled for November 16 at 10:00 a.m., and they are looking at possibly having the public hearing on the redistricting plan on December 7 at 6:00 p.m. She said hopefully the Council will make a decision on December 21, which will be their last meeting of the year, which will be at 10:00 a.m.

Ms. Bartkovich said they have an executive summary and they have the redistricting presentation. She suggested discussing the presentation first.

Mr. McKenzie said he would like to go through the presentation, which is in draft form, so the Committee can make comments or corrections as they see fit. He explained, the format is like a PowerPoint as he did not want to have a lot of information that had to be read on screen. He said he felt it was important they discuss the adjusted population requirements, which the State has required since 2010. Mr. McKenzie then reviewed the presentation with the Committee and mentioned some of the key points. He said, after much deliberation, the Committee chose the minimal impact map moving 49 people from District 3 to District 4, and 3 people from District 3 to District 5. He then referred to the maps that showed where the people were moved.

Mr. McKenzie said it is important to note that there were no County Councilmembers or Board of Education members moved out of their districts.

There being no further discussion, on motion by Mr. Boda, seconded by Dr. Nagel, and by roll call vote, Mr. Boda, aye; Dr. Nagel, aye; Mr. Danderson, aye; Ms. Cannady, aye; Ms. Anspacher, aye; Ms. Giordano, aye; and Ms. Bartkovich, aye, the presentation was unanimously approved.

Ms. Bartkovich said the other piece that will go to the Council will be the executive summary, which they have all received a copy of, and it is kind of a generalization of the presentation they are going to give the Council, including the maps. She then asked for any comments, to which there were none.

There being no further discussion, on motion by Ms. Giordano, seconded by Ms. Anspacher, and by roll call vote, Ms. Giordano, aye; Ms. Anspacher, aye; Ms. Cannady, aye; Mr. Danderson, aye; Ms. Bartkovich, aye; Dr. Nagel, aye; and Mr. Boda, aye, the executive summary was unanimously approved.

**Closing Remarks:**

Dr. Basehart came before the Committee and said he did not expect to speak today, but since he was invited, he will say a few words. He said he was on the Redistricting Committee in 2011, so he knows it is a lot of unglamorous work, but important work to be done. He said his only comment is not about this specific plan, but, as he mentioned to the Chair before the meeting, he thinks the County needs to review its process of redistricting. He said this may surprise them since he has been referred to as a political person, but something like Governor Hogan's plan that was issued for congressional plans, and he believes the State Legislative plan where there is more of a truly a bipartisan membership on the committee. He said he believes the Governor has three democrats, three republicans, and three independents, and he also would add that, although all of this Committee voted for the plan, there needs to be more of a consensus voting during the process rather than just a majority. He said he would favor an extraordinary majority with nine members maybe having six members rather than just a simple majority, or maybe even seven to have more of a consensus. He said he also thinks the criteria for the County needs to be more items incorporated into the criteria, and what he has been working with and he proposed to the Charter Review Committee is about five criteria prioritized, so that is what he is more concerned about, the process. He said, since they have a City Councilmember here, he tried to figure out how the City Council draws district lines, and from looking at the Charter, the City Council draws the lines, and he thinks the City needs to look at that and maybe not for this year, but ten years from now, and maybe they can all agree on a good process they want to see used the next time in the County, and he hopes the City would also look at that. He said he agrees with Governor Hogan when he says that a lot of the ways they use redistricting in the nation is politicians pick their voters rather than voters picking their leaders, and he agrees with that. He said he thinks they need to think about the process, and now is a good time to think about the process for the next ten years.

Ms. Bartkovich said the Charter Review Committee is still looking at the Charter, and she has seen some of Dr. Basehart's comments to them. She said she thinks the way it was done ten years ago, once the Charter Review Committee is finished with their meetings, they will make recommendations to the Council, and then in November 2022 it will be on the ballot for the public to vote on whether they want to approve those changes or not. She said it is the perfect time to do this because this Committee had to do things the way the Charter is currently written, to which Dr. Basehart agreed. He said the Charter Review Committee did not seem particularly interested, but a few members did, but he may talk with the County Council. He said he laid out a pretty specific plan and variations of redistricting reforms that could be looked at. He clarified, it will take a little time, and it would be nice if this Committee fresh from this experience had time to think about how this could be different. He said it is not easy for anybody to give up political power, and to some extent, that is what he would be asking the Council to do, although they would have final approval. He said he thinks in the long run for representation for republicans in the State of Maryland and democrats in Wicomico County and minority groups anywhere that they need to look at the process again.

Dr. Nagel said he has a couple of final comments before they adjourn. He said he would really like to thank the staff who helped the Committee through this process – Mrs. Hurley and Mr. Illuminati, and specifically Mr. McKenzie. He said he knows just looking at what the Committee did, they basically did

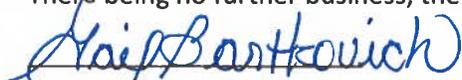
the bare minimum of moving 49 people, and it looks like they did nothing, but they really did a lot, and he thinks that came through in Mr. McKenzie's review of the charts. He said they looked at ways to try to make this County better by redistricting if they could, and basically one thing that came up multiple times was the issue of equity in voting and appropriate representation or all of the voters of the County, and some of them felt that it is not quite appropriate right now, and some of them felt that it is not the Redistricting Committee's purview, their purview was concise, contiguous, and 5 percent.

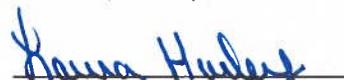
Dr. Nagel said he would like to say that if equity is not a concern of the Redistricting Committee, they do not need districts. He said the only reason they have districts in this County is because they were found by a federal court to have unfair elections. He said basically almost no minority people were ever elected to the at-large positions and now it turns out that no minority people are currently being elected to the at-large positions on the County Council. He said they have a 30 percent African American population in the County, and they have one district where a lot of them are packed in, and that gives them 14 percent of the County Council. He clarified, he is not criticizing any of the fine at-large elected Council people, either the two they have now, or many other really strong people who did the best they could, but, in his opinion, unless they get rid of the at-large districts and go to a seven-member Council with no at-large, he does not think they are going to address equity, and he will bring this to the attention of the Charter Review Committee because changing it is not this Committee's business, but revealing that they have thought about it is their business. He said they did think about the pros and the cons, but they did not vote on it because it is not their purview, but it is the County Council's purview to recommend Charter changes. He said he does not think they would want it to come to the point, which it could, that another federal lawsuit is filed, and he is not a lawyer, but he does not think the County wants to be involved in that kind of litigation, and he thinks it would make sense for the Charter Review Committee to take a hard look at the composition of the Council and bring those types of conclusions to the Council itself.

Ms. Bartkovich asked, just for clarification, since they have approved this presentation tonight, will this go on the County website under the Redistricting Committee tab, to which Mrs. Hurley responded, that is up to the Committee. Ms. Bartkovich then asked if the Committee wants this posted, to which there was consensus. Ms. Bartkovich said they will have the map and the executive summary posted so it is all out there since the Council has to hold a public hearing.

Dr. Nagel asked if Ms. Bartkovich will be presenting this to the Council, to which Ms. Bartkovich responded, as the Chair, yes, but she invites anybody else on the Committee to come to the meeting. Dr. Nagel said he thinks it should be understood that only Ms. Bartkovich will speak for the group, and if any of the rest of the Committee speaks, it is as individuals.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

  
Gail Bartkovich, Chair

  
Laura Hurley, Recording Secretary

