



City Council  
Agenda Report

**DATE:** May 25, 2021  
**TO:** Honorable Mayor and City Councilmembers  
**FROM:** Dave Richards, Senior Management Analyst  
**SUBJECT:** Redistricting Process Update

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

That the City Council receives the report.

**BACKGROUND:**

This agenda report provides an update regarding the redistricting process in anticipation of the release of the 2020 U.S. Census data. Specifically, this report provides an overview of redistricting, information about the need and selection of a consultant, redistricting laws and principles, timeline, and next steps.

***Redistricting Overview***

Redistricting is the process of adjusting City Council voting districts so that each district has substantially the same number of voting-aged residents. Cities with voting districts are required to update district maps following the release of the centennial US Census data.

El Cajon transitioned from an at-large to a by-district election process for Councilmembers with the passage of Measure S in November 2016. The Mayor remains elected at-large.

Following the passage of Measure S, the City retained National Demographic Corporation (NDC) to develop the voting district maps and facilitate public hearings. The City also retained the Institute for Local Government to assist with community outreach.

To involve the community in the map's development, the City hosted four public workshops. During the workshops, 125 people participated and the City received 160 maps or map drawings. In June 2017, the City Council approved the current District Election Map. It is important to note that the map was developed using the 2010 US Census data with 2017 demographic estimates.

The transition to City Council districts means that the City must evaluate and potentially adjust its voting districts based on the 2020 US Census. The US Census Bureau plans to release the 2020 Census data on **September 30, 2021**. Ordinarily, this data would be available to cities in March, but due to the pandemic, this date has been delayed several times. To comply with the Voting Rights Act, the City must approve a District Map no later than 205 days ahead of the November 8, 2022, General Election, or **April 17, 2022**.

### ***Redistricting Consultant***

The City can take a few steps ahead of the September census release to help with the compacted timeline. For instance, the City can begin outreach and education about the redistricting process as well as host pre-draft map hearings before the census data is received.

The City began an extensive search for demographer vendors in February 2021 and has since received six quotes. Of the quotes received, NDC was the lowest responsive qualified bidder. The City is in the process of executing an agreement with NDC. The agreement will include in-person public hearing facilitation, demographer or line drawing services, and a public online mapping tool.

The quote provides prices for two scenarios: 1) if the district populations are still balanced and no redistricting work is required by law; or, 2) if full redistricting services are needed. The cost for the first scenario is \$4,500, and the cost for the full redistricting process is \$51,000. It is important to note that even if the districts remain balanced, the City Council can always choose to proceed with the full redistricting process.

### ***Redistricting Laws and Principles***

There are numerous federal, state, and local redistricting laws with which cities must comply. The City's consultant will address these laws in future presentations, but a general overview is provided here.

The federal Voting Rights Act prohibits "gerrymandering" based on race. "Gerrymandering" is the process of manipulating district boundaries in order to favor one party or class. The Act also allows district maps to be legally challenged by a protected class if the district racially deludes voters. Federal law also requires districts to have substantially equal populations which courts have defined as 10 percent or less deviation between the lowest and highest voting populations.

The courts have also upheld several redistricting principles. For instance, election district maps must keep districts compact, contiguous, defined by visible (natural and man-made) boundaries, and include communities of interests—or groups with similarities other than race. These principles will be discussed further during the redistricting process by the consultant.

Most recently, the California legislature passed AB 849 known as the "Fair and Inclusive Redistrict for Municipalities and Political Subdivisions (FAIR MAPS) Act in 2019", and AB 1276 in 2020. AB 1276 provided cleanup language and clarifications of the FAIR MAPS Act. The FAIR MAPS Act requires cities to take additional steps to increase public engagement in the redistricting process. It increases the number of required public hearings to four, provides for translated materials and live translation services when requested in advance, mandates a redistricting website, and establishes noticing, record keeping, and hearing specifications.

### ***Redistricting Timeline***

The expected project timeline is:

- May 2021: Finalize execution of agreement with demographer;
- May – September 2021: Begin community outreach and hold pre-draft map hearings;
- October 2021 – January 2022: Census data received on September 30. Prepare draft maps and hold post-draft map hearings;
- January – April 2022: Approve and adopt election district map and Implement new districts

for November 2022 election.

***Next Step***

Once an agreement is fully executed with NDC, staff will begin developing an outreach plan, determine the public hearing dates, and create a redistricting website with multi-lingual resources. Staff anticipates launching the public outreach component once an outreach plan has been formalized in conjunction with the public hearing schedule.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

The redistricting agreement is anticipated to cost between \$4,500 and \$51,000.

Prepared By: David Richards

Reviewed By: Vince DiMaggio, Assistant City Manager

Approved By: Graham Mitchell, City Manager

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