



City Council Agenda Report

Agenda Item 11.

DATE: October 26, 2021
TO: Honorable Mayor and City Councilmembers
FROM: Dave Richards, Assistant to the City Manager
SUBJECT: Redistricting Process and Census Update

RECOMMENDATION:

That the City Council:

1. Receives a report about:
 - a. The City's redistricting process,
 - b. A summary of the second Redistricting Hearing, and
 - c. A summary of the State's adjusted U.S. Census data.
2. Provides direction to staff whether to:
 - a. Proceed with the existing district map, or
 - b. Draft and accept alternative election district maps for consideration, and
 - c. Purchase Maptitude, an online redistricting software.

BACKGROUND:

Redistricting is the process of adjusting City Council voting districts so that each district has substantially the same number of residents. Cities with voting districts are required to update their district election map following the release of the U.S. Census data. Cities that experience little or no change in district populations have the option to maintain existing district boundaries.

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 voting district maps and facilitate public hearings. 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 U.S. Census data with 2017 demographic estimates.

The transition to City Council districts means that the City must evaluate its voting districts based on the 2020 state-adjusted Census data. On September 27, 2021, the State of California posted the 2020 U.S. Census data. For California cities, these figures are the final numbers needed to determine if district boundaries need to be adjusted.

NDC processed these numbers for the current El Cajon election districts (Attachment 1). NDC found that the City's current population deviation – the difference between the most populous and least populous districts – is 5.35%. This value is within the 10% threshold where a map is considered “presumptively constitutional,” and thus the districts do not need to be redrawn to comply with the federal equal population requirement. The final election district map must be approved by April 17, 2022, to comply with election laws.

In October 2019, the California legislature approved AB 849, the Fair And Inclusive Redistricting for Municipal and Political Subdivisions (FAIR MAPS) Act, which requires cities to ensure maps comply with set redistricting criteria. The act further outlines the specified steps a jurisdiction must take to encourage public participation of its residents and the deadlines for the adoption of new boundaries by a governing body. If the City Council finds the current districts meet the requirements of the Act, then the election district lines may be retained at the conclusion of the required public hearings and outreach.

Based on the 2020 Census data and California's FAIR MAPS Act requirements, El Cajon's existing election districts remain balanced. Based on this determination, the City Council must determine whether it would like to proceed with only the existing redistricting map and whether to authorize the acquisition of software to develop alternative draft maps.

Redistricting Hearings

The FAIR MAPS Act requires cities to host four Redistricting Hearings. The first two were held on July 14, 2021 and September 8, 2021. During the first Public Hearing, speakers provided feedback about communities of interest and generally advocated for more public hearings, the ability to provide testimony by phone and online, streaming meetings online, and additional translation services.

During the second hearing, participants geographically identified the middle-eastern community of interest as:

- Broadway to the North,
- Jamacha Road and 2nd Street to the East,
- Washington Avenue to the South, and
- Magnolia Avenue to the West.

NDC also provided a demonstration during the second hearing on how to use DistrictR, an online mapping tool currently available on the City's website. In addition, paper maps with colored pencils were provided during the meeting to allow participants to draw proposed election district maps. To date, only one map has been received online.

The third Redistricting Hearing is scheduled on Thursday, November 4, 2021, at 7 p.m. at the Kennedy Recreation Center. During this hearing, staff will provide a report and update on the status of the redistricting process and potential impacts of the final California-adjusted 2020 census data. Staff will also provide an overview of redistricting criteria and the census data for El Cajon.

The fourth and final hearing is scheduled on Saturday, January 22, 2022, at 10:30 a.m. at El Cajon Valley High School. It is anticipated that during this hearing, the City Council will select a final District Election Map.

Next Steps:

Because the census results showed that the existing districts remain balanced, the City Council has the option to simply retain the existing map without preparing and holding hearings on alternative maps. Staff recommends that the City Council continues with the four Redistricting Hearings and continues gathering public input. At the conclusion of the four public hearings, the City Council can take the appropriate action.

Staff asks that the Council provide staff with direction regarding whether to:

- a. Proceed with only the existing district map, or
- b. Draft and accept alternative election district maps for consideration, and
- c. Proceed with the purchase of Maptitude online redistricting software.

Prepared By: David Richards, Assistant to the City Manager

Reviewed By: Vince DiMaggio, Assistant City Manager

Approved By: Graham Mitchell, City Manager

Attachments

2020 Census Data for Current Election District Map

Current Election District Map