



Office of
**INDIAN RIVER COUNTY
ATTORNEY**

Dylan Reingold, County Attorney
William K. DeBral, Deputy County Attorney
Susan J. Prado, Assistant County Attorney

MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of County Commissioners

FROM: Dylan Reingold, County Attorney

DATE: November 2, 2021

SUBJECT: Public Hearing and Discussion of 2021 Redistricting of County Commissioner Districts

BACKGROUND.

The United States Census Bureau has completed the 2020 decennial census, and has released the new census information. This has triggered a responsibility of the Indian River County Board of County Commissioners (“Board”) to review the commissioner districts in light of the census data, and to make changes required by law. Specifically, (1) article VIII, section (1)(e) of the Florida Constitution provides that “after each decennial census the board of county commissioners shall divide the county into districts of contiguous territory as nearly equal in population as practicable,” and (2) section 124.01, Florida Statutes provides that “there shall be five county commissioners” districts in each county, which shall be numbered one to five, inclusive, and shall be as nearly equal in proportion to population as possible.” Section 124.01 goes on to say that changes in county commissioner districts “shall be made only in odd-numbered years.”

At the July 13, 2021 meeting, the Board held its first discussion of the redistricting process. A schedule was adopted which called for additional public hearings, tentatively scheduled for August 17, October 19, and December 7 (for final adoption). On August 17, 2021, the Board adopted a 2021 Redistricting Plan which set forth criteria to be followed by staff in preparing redistricting proposals, and incorporated the public hearing schedule.

The following criteria were adopted by the Board:

- 1) Districts shall be as nearly equal in population as possible with final population figures not exceeding a deviation of 6% between the largest and the smallest district, and not exceeding a deviation of 3% between any district and the “ideal population” (defined as the total population of the County divided by five).
- 2) Districts shall be compact, rather than sprawling.
- 3) Districts shall be contiguous – that is, no portion of a district shall be geographically separate and apart from the rest of the district.
- 4) Respect for Existing Districts, with current commissioners being maintained in their current districts.
- 5) Neighborhoods and other communities of interest shall be included within a single district, rather than split among two or more districts.
- 6) Districts shall follow major natural or man-made boundaries – e.g., major roads, rivers, bridges, canals, etc.
- 7) Districts shall follow United States Census Bureau blocks.
- 8) No district shall be drawn to split or minimize the political influence of any group of residents.

The County GIS Division, primarily through the efforts of Paige Lester, GIS Analyst, using the criteria set forth in the 2021 Redistricting Plan, developed three redistricting proposals. On October 19, 2021, after taking public comment, the Board voted to direct County staff to make revisions to the first redistricting map proposal, including reducing the deviation between Commission districts without creating awkward boundaries between Commission districts, maintaining the City of Sebastian and the City of Vero Beach in two Commission districts, and maintaining McAnsh Park in one Commission district. The GIS Division has revised the proposed map which is attached as 1B. Copies of the revised redistricting map has been provided to the Supervisor of Elections, the five municipalities within the County, the School Board and to Senator Debbie Mayfield and Representative Erin Grall. The County Attorney believes that the proposed redistricting map meets the requirements of the law and the criteria established by the Board.

Per the Board’s direction, County staff conducted a workshop in the Gifford community on November 1, 2021 at 6 pm. The workshop was held at the Gifford Youth Achievement Center. At the workshop, the residents raised several issues about redistricting. Please be aware that these comments do not necessarily reflect the opinions of all of the speakers. The comments included the following:

- 1) Desire to have barrier island as one district and in a separate district from Gifford in order to avoid having a wide income gap in District 2
- 2) Desire to have the City of Vero Beach in three commission districts
- 3) Concern that the Gifford community has decreased in size
- 4) Concern that Gifford has not received its share of funding from the County
- 5) Desire to include Grand Harbor with Gifford community
- 6) Concern with connection between the Gifford Neighborhood Plan and the Gifford community as a designated area for purposes of redistricting

- 7) Concern about representation from Hispanic, African-American and Asian-American communities
- 8) Desire for more options and town hall meetings

FUNDING.

There are no funding requirements.

RECOMMENDATION.

County staff recommends that the Chairman open the public hearing, take public input, and close the public hearing, and that the Board then discuss the proposal and provide initial feedback to staff, so that staff can move forward toward the preparation and submittal of a final proposal for adoption on December 7th.

ATTACHMENTS.

Proposed Redistricting Map