

**City of Carpinteria
Ad Hoc District Elections Committee
Special Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, September 8, 2021 at 4:00 p.m.
Virtual Meeting**

Acting City Clerk Barrett noted for the record that this meeting would be conducted pursuant to the provisions of the Governor's Executive Orders N-29-20 and N-33-20 and Santa Barbara County Health Officer's Order in response to the spread of the COVID-19 virus and provided the protocols by which the public would be participating and stated that members of the Committee, staff and any presenters would be participating by video conference.

1. Call to Order/Roll Call.

Councilmember Alarcon called the meeting to order at 4:01 pm.

Committee Members present: Councilmember Natalia Alarcon
Vice Mayor Al Clark

Staff members present: Olivia Uribe Mutal, Program Manager
Brian C. Barrett, Acting City Clerk

Others present: Chris Chaffee with Redistricting Partners
Gail Marshall
Russell Ruiz
Roger (no last name given)

2. Public Comment:

Acting City Clerk Barrett noted that written public comment from Russell Ruiz was received and distributed to the Committee.

3. Approval of meeting minutes of August 25, 2021.

Motion by Vice Mayor Clark, seconded by Councilmember Alarcon, to approve the meeting minutes of August 25, 2021 as presented. The vote was as follows:

AYES: Councilmember Alarcon, Vice Mayor Clark
NOES: None
ABSENT: None
ABSTAIN: None

The motion carried unanimously.

4. Discuss website updates.

Program Manager Uribe Mutal asked if the emails about district elections need to be posted on the district elections website. Mr. Chaffee replied that the City should archive all communities of interest testimony as a best practice even though the City is currently not districted and technically not required to under the Fair Maps Act.

Program Manager Uribe Mutal provided an overview of the new district elections website including how to sign up to receive notification of updates, schedule of public meetings, agendas, minutes, resolutions, meeting recordings, and staff reports relating to district elections, mapping tools such as the DistrictR program to draw communities of interest and districts, how to provide public feedback, and contacts. She asked for feedback from the Committee.

Vice Mayor Clark expressed concern when using the DistrictR program which did not allow him to draw the communities of interest he wanted because of the census blocks. Mr. Chaffee responded that the census block geography which is the smallest building blocks allowed from the U.S. Census Bureau, can't be broken up nor changed. He reported that the Census Bureau this decade combined a number of lower population census blocks and created larger census blocks all over California. He said DistrictR is based on the census blocks.

Vice Mayor Clark observed that citizens should know about having to work with census blocks when drawing communities of interest. Mr. Chaffee replied that additional language about the census geography could be added to the district elections website.

Vice Mayor Clark noted that a previous consultant had mentioned that a district could not cross a big boundary such as a freeway. Mr. Chaffee answered that the district process can be looked at as set criteria in order of importance where the first criteria is equal-sized populations for districts within the 10% deviation, the second criteria is that a district needs to be contiguous, and the third criteria is to follow communities of interest testimony. He added that a district has to be functionally contiguous where people can move from one place to another within the district. He stated that if a district was drawn on both sides of the freeway as long as there was a connection (overpass, underpass, tunnel, etc.) to connect both sides, then the district would be functionally contiguous.

Councilmember Alarcon asked if the district elections website listed the due date for accepting district maps. Program Manager Uribe Mutal explained that there is no drop-deadline for accepting district maps because the schedule has not been finalized. Mr. Chaffee reported that under the California Voting Rights Act, the City needs to allow the public seven days to view considered district maps before the public hearing is held on those maps. He anticipated district maps could be turned in by December 2021 or January 2022 so in February 2022 the Council could make minor revisions and approve the final district map in March 2022.

Councilmember Alarcon encouraged staff to specify a district map deadline date on the district elections website.

Vice Mayor Clark inquired if an individual can submit more than one map on DistrictR. Mr. Chaffee replied affirmatively and noted that until the district lines version is turned on, DistrictR would be used for drawing communities of interest. He explained that the census date will come out on September 20th and Redistricting Partners will take about ten days to incorporate the data into DistrictR. He anticipated by October 1st people can start drawing district boundaries in DistrictR.

Councilmember Alarcon opened public comment.

Mr. Ruiz perceived that census blocks were determinative, that they could not be changed, and that the census block policy was stronger than the California Voting Rights Act policy. He also asked about how census blocks are determined and defined. Mr. Chaffee responded that federal law trumps state law and that this is a federal notion from the Supreme Court on equal population and using census blocks as a basis for definition of population. He stated that the census blocks are determined by the 2020 TIGER lines developed by the U.S. Census Bureau and used throughout the United States to draw district lines and they are the lowest population number available by geography.

Mr. Ruiz asked if DistrictR could be programmed to ignore census blocks. Mr. Chaffee replied that the program is built from census geography and can't use other geographic sets to draw the basic lines.

Mr. Chaffee rephrased his prior statement in that the City could split census blocks from a policy standpoint; however, the City would put itself in legal jeopardy since one can't define the actual population in a district that is drawn from split census blocks. He observed that the simplest way to challenge an agency's districting plan is to claim that the districts are not of equal population and violate the 10% total deviation. He recommended that the City not split census blocks.

Councilmember Alarcon asked for a follow-up on why Redistricting Partners is recommending the City not split census blocks when drawing district maps. Mr. Chaffee affirmed he would prepare a memo within two weeks summarizing where Redistricting Partners is coming from on this issue and the court cases and statutes on this issue.

5. Discussion about September workshops and outreach planned.

Program Manager Uribe Mutal identified the following September district workshop dates which will be held in-person at City Hall and virtually via Zoom:

Monday, September 20th at 5:30 pm

Wednesday, September 22nd at noon
Sunday, September 26th at 2 pm

She noted that Redistricting Partners will be available for all the workshops and the meetings will be recorded by SBTU.

She provided an update on the outreach efforts which included running an ad in the Coastal View Newspaper, distributing a flyer to the community in English/Spanish, a press release is being prepared, adding the workshops to the calendar of events in the Coastal View News and other publications, sharing the district elections process in the Current (City's newsletter) and on social media in English/Spanish.

Vice Mayor Clark asked about the object of the workshops. Program Manager Uribe Mutal said the object of the workshops is to get people aware of the districting process and the district elections website. She noted the community needs to be educated and engaged through this process.

Councilmember Alarcon inquired if the workshops were the only community outreach events. Program Manager Uribe Mutal commented that the September workshops focused on drawing communities of interest while after October 1st, additional workshops will be held to focus on drawing districts using DistrictR.

There was no public comment.

6. Scheduling of next meeting.

The Committee set the next Committee meeting on September 29, 2021 at 4 pm.

7. Adjournment.

Councilmember Alarcon adjourned the meeting at 4:50 pm.



Brian C. Barrett, Acting City Clerk