



Via Electronic Mail

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Pinellas County Redistricting Board
FROM: Kurt Spitzer
DATE: August 30, 2021
RE: Redistricting Overview

The purpose of this Memorandum is to review the redistricting process and criteria that are typically used by local governments, and to review the initial 2020 census data for Pinellas County.

Overview

Redistricting is the process by which differences in the population of Commission districts are equalized by adjusting district boundaries, and furthers the principal of “one person, one vote.” Commission districts are required by the Florida Constitution, Florida Statutes, the County’s Charter and case law to be “as nearly equal in population” as practicable or possible.

Florida Statutes and the Constitution require that counties determine the need for redistricting after each decennial census and provide that a county may adjust the commission district boundaries during any odd-numbered year. The County Charter specifically requires that the County conduct the redistricting process after each decennial census.

The legislative body of the jurisdiction (in this case, the Pinellas Board of County Commissioners) is the entity designated by law to adjust the district boundaries of the jurisdiction. Additionally, Pinellas is one of three counties whose charter provides for an advisory redistricting board or committee which prepares redistricting proposals for the consideration of the County Commission. Such proposals are not binding on the County Commission.

Redistricting Criteria

A document discussing common criteria and answering “frequently asked questions” concerning the redistricting process is attached for your review and information. Generally, the objectives of

a redistricting process should be to adjust the district populations so that they are nearly equal to one-another, the plans not dilute minority voting strength, and result in district shapes that are relatively compact and are easily understood by the electorate.

Census Data

The Bureau of the Census counts the population of the United States every 10 years. The 2020 Census reflects the population of the country on “census day” which was April 1, 2020. Census data is required to be released to the states one year after census day; however, the Bureau of the Census failed to meet that deadline in 2021, primarily due to the effects of the COVID pandemic, which cause field operations to be shut down for more than two months in 2020.

Thereafter, the Bureau had stated that the data would be released on or before September 30, 2021. However, “legacy” data was released on August 12, 2021, and is what will be used in the Pinellas redistricting process. Legacy data is final data but requires some reformatting of the electronic file base before it is usable in a redistricting process.

Existing Districts Maps

The first step in the redistricting process is to determine if there is a need to adjust district boundaries because of a significant imbalance between district populations. This is done by “layering” or applying the 2020 to the (current) district boundaries that were approved in 2011.

Note that the Bureau of the Census may change the shape of census blocks from time to time. Such changes are typically of no significance unless they abut a 2011 district boundary and thus make it difficult to calculate the population of the current districts based on 2020 data.

There were a few instances of that occurring in Pinellas County and those areas are highlighted in the attached Existing Districts maps. In those instances, we assigned population of the split census block to the adjacent district based on best professional judgement. In no case was the population shift significant.

Applying the 2020 data to the 2011 district boundaries shows that the existing districts are well within acceptable tolerances in terms of population deviations from the ideal district size. Whether the Redistricting Board or the County Commission wish to consider changes to any of the districts beyond those “housekeeping” revisions necessitated by changes in block shapes is a matter of discretion and public policy. Maps and a spreadsheet showing more detailed data are attached.

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Workplan

Attached please find an initial plan of work which was part of the initial Proposal and Agreement between KSA and Pinellas County. It was based on the requirements of the Charter and assumed that the 2020 census data would not be received until September 30, 2021.

Since that time, there have been a few changes to the plan of work: The initial start date of the Project has been accelerated per agreement between County staff and KSA, beginning in June rather than August; the 2020 census data was released about six weeks earlier than expected; and the boundaries of the existing districts do not show a need to be revised based solely on population deviations.

The Redistricting Board may will to consider revisions to the Plan of Work.

Pinellas County Redistricting Board
Redistricting the County Commission Districts

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Redistricting?

- Districts from which commissioners are elected are required to be “as nearly equal in population” as practicable or possible. Redistricting is the process by which differences in the population of individual Commission districts are equalized by adjusting district boundaries, and furthers the principal of “one person, one vote” and the provisions of the Voting Rights Act.

Who performs Redistricting?

- The legislative body of the jurisdiction (county commission, school board, city council, etc.) adjusts the district boundaries of the jurisdiction. In the case of Pinellas County, the voters have amended the County Charter to provide for an advisory Redistricting Board that makes recommendations for redistricting plans to the County Commission.

Why is the County Redistricting?

- The Florida Constitution and Statutes require counties to determine the need for redistricting after each decennial census and provide that a county may adjust the commission district boundaries in any odd-numbered year. Additionally, the Pinellas County Charter provides that a county redistricting board composed of eleven members shall be established after each decennial census. The underlying goal of redistricting is to ensure that the population of the districts are roughly equal in population.

What are some common Criteria used when Redistricting?

There are several criteria commonly used in the redistricting process. It is impossible to develop a redistricting plan that perfectly attains all criteria. Criteria are considered in total and balanced in concert with each other. However, the dominant criterion is that of equal population.

- Nearly equal population. Individual districts should be as nearly equal in population as is possible or practicable. “Population” refers to residents, not registered voters. “Nearly equal” means that the population of individual districts should be as close to the average size as is possible. Typically, a reasonable goal to pursue in the redistricting process is to attain district populations that are not greater than 3% over or under the ideal (average) district size. Further, district plans where the difference between population of the largest and smallest districts are greater than 10 percentage points (e.g., the largest district is 7% over the ideal and smallest is 4% under) may raise a “red flag” in the courts.

- Don't dilute minority voting strength. If there is a location where a significant racial or ethnic minority resides, their ability to vote as a block should not be diluted by either dividing that population into two or more districts (termed "cracking") or, if there is a significant minority population in two districts, moving that population into a single district (termed "packing").
- Use census blocks. Data from the Bureau of the Census is updated every 10 years by surveying the population of the United States. Census "blocks" are the smallest unit within which that information is tabulated. Among other things, block data from the Census contains information on population, race, ethnicity and age. Census data is presumed to be correct.
- Compact and contiguous. Districts should be relatively compact. Unusual, "bizarre" or "serpentine" district shapes that are created without furthering a valid underlying public policy purpose must be avoided. Districts must be contiguous; contiguity may be achieved by crossing a waterbody.
- Significant natural and man-made boundaries. Where possible, district boundaries should follow easily recognized or understood boundaries, like major roads, waterbodies or parklands.
- Recognize existing district boundaries. The boundaries of the new districts may seek to retain their existing boundaries to the extent possible.
- Avoid splitting communities of interest. District boundaries should seek to avoid splitting communities that have similar interests (e.g., neighborhoods or cities) where possible.
- Special Criteria in County Charter. Some provisions of the Pinellas County Charter (parts of which are similar to the 2010 "Fair Districts" amendments to the Constitution that concern redistricting policy of the Florida Legislature) apply to the work of the Redistricting Board:

"In developing the county redistricting board's proposals, no district shall be drawn with the intent to favor or disfavor a political party or an incumbent, districts shall not be drawn with the intent or result of denying or abridging the equal opportunity of racial or language minorities to participate in the political process or to diminish their ability to elect representatives of their choice, and districts shall be contiguous and as nearly equal in population as practicable. Further, in developing its proposals, the county redistricting board shall consider, where feasible, utilizing municipal boundaries and keeping together unincorporated areas of the county."

Pinellas County Redistricting Board

Existing Districts using 2020 Population

At Large

| DISTRICT | 2020 Population IDEAL | 2020 Population ACTUAL | Population Deviation | Percent Deviation | Population White | Percent White | Population Black | Percent Black | Population Other | Percent Other | Population Hispanic | Percent Hispanic |
|---------------|-----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|---------------|---------------------|------------------|
| District 1 | 319702 | 321435 | 1733 | 0.54% | 248954 | 77.5% | 15060 | 4.7% | 56481 | 17.6% | 36353 | 11.3% |
| District 2 | 319702 | 314563 | -5139 | -1.61% | 244530 | 77.7% | 20611 | 6.6% | 50362 | 16.0% | 36507 | 11.6% |
| District 3 | 319702 | 323109 | 3407 | 1.07% | 215552 | 66.7% | 58483 | 18.1% | 49074 | 15.2% | 29579 | 9.2% |
| Totals | 959107 | 959107 | | | 709036 | | 94154 | | 155917 | | 102439 | |

Single Member

| DISTRICT | 2020 Population IDEAL | 2020 Population ACTUAL | Population Deviation | Percent Deviation | Population White | Percent White | Population Black | Percent Black | Population Other | Percent Other | Population Hispanic | Percent Hispanic |
|---------------|-----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|---------------|---------------------|------------------|
| District 4 | 239777 | 235211 | -4565.75 | -1.90% | 195923 | 83.3% | 7209 | 3.1% | 32079 | 13.6% | 21099 | 9.0% |
| District 5 | 239777 | 242663 | 2886.25 | 1.20% | 173315 | 71.4% | 22130 | 9.1% | 47218 | 19.5% | 36320 | 15.0% |
| District 6 | 239777 | 243194 | 3417.25 | 1.43% | 190707 | 78.4% | 11233 | 4.6% | 41254 | 17.0% | 23478 | 9.7% |
| District 7 | 239777 | 238039 | -1737.75 | -0.72% | 149091 | 62.6% | 53582 | 22.5% | 35366 | 14.9% | 21542 | 9.0% |
| Totals | 959107 | 959107 | | | 709036 | | 94154 | | 155917 | | 102439 | |

Initial Approach and Work Plan

| Date | Event |
|-----------------|---|
| August 1 | Consultant Engaged |
| August 1 | Redistricting Board appointed by BCC |
| August 1 – 25 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consultant acquires necessary files from County for mapping ▪ Consultant meets with individual Commissioners to discuss criteria |
| September 1 | Redistricting Board – Organizational Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Elect Chair and Vice Chair ▪ Presentation on Process and Criteria ▪ Presentation on Sunshine Law ▪ Review/Approve Schedule and Plan of Work |
| September 30 | Census Data received by consultant |
| October 6 | Redistricting Board Meeting (zoom) – Review Data and Initial Maps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Existing” Districting Plan ▪ Alternative 1 ▪ Alternative 2 ▪ Alternative 3 |
| October 13 & 14 | Community Meetings – Single Member District areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ One meeting early evening and one mid-morning ▪ Review Alternative Maps ▪ Receive Input |
| October 20 & 21 | Community Meetings – Single Member District areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ One meeting early evening and one mid-morning ▪ Review Alternative Maps ▪ Receive Input |
| October 27 | Redistricting Board Meeting (zoom) – Review Revised Maps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Up to four alternative maps may be prepared and presented ▪ Receive Input |
| November 3 | Redistricting Board Meeting (zoom) – Final <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review and approve one or more Maps for recommendation to BCC |
| November 9 | Consultant meets with individual Commissioners to discuss final Maps |
| November 10 | BCC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Present final Map(s) and Report to Board of County Commissioners |
| December 7 | BCC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Final Adoption of Maps |
| December 15 | Consultant delivers all Project data, files and draft legal descriptions to County Administrators Office |