

Supervisors consider redistricting options

November 13, 2021



The Del Norte County Board of Supervisors received input from the public and provided a sense of their own preference of redistricting options proposed by the Advisory Redistricting Commission.

The four draft maps - of which one must be approved by December 15 - show different district boundaries based on the 2020 Census.

The supervisors discussed the possibility of eliminating two of the four options during its meeting Nov. 9, but changed course to allow for additional public comment to occur at their December 14 meeting, and possibly schedule an additional workshop in either late November or early December.

“I would mention that if there are concerns being presented by some of our sovereign nations in our backyard here, then I’d be a little bit more proactive and try to reach out to try to engage them,” said Supervisor Darrin Short.

Assistant County Counsel Autumn Luna began the discussion by pointing out that though redistricting is mandated every 10 years, the county’s boundaries weren’t really changed in 2010, and “haven’t changed in 20 years, maybe longer,” she said.

However, many of the supervisors and members of the public who spoke at the meeting seemed to want to continue the minimal change trend by choosing to go with map one.

“My preference is map one,” said Supervisor Valerie Starkey, “because it is the most consistent with the current districts and I like that consistency.”

"I agree with Supervisor Starkey," said Supervisor Bob Berkowitz. "This looks like the least change and yet it has a very good impact."

"I have nothing to add to that, I couldn't agree more," added Supervisor Darrin Short. "It seems like the most common-sense option for us."

At which point Luna cautioned supervisors to keep in mind one of the election code requirements.

"If I may, I will bring up one criteria under 21500 of the Elections Code that has to do with keeping incorporated areas together, if possible," Luna said. "So, you'll notice that the other three maps actually do that, necessitating some larger changes elsewhere, but I do think that's something that should be considered and discussed moving forward."

The four maps include three options, though the second option has different variables. In summary, and according to staff reports, they include:

- Alternative One: This is the draft map that most closely adheres to the current supervisorial districts. Identical supervisorial districts are impossible because the census blocks have changed since the 2010 census.
- Alternative Two (A): In this draft map the residents of the incorporated city of Crescent City are all in one district; residents of the harbor are in the same district as the city of Crescent City.
- Alternative Two (B): In this draft map the residents of the incorporated city of Crescent City are all in one district; residents of the harbor are in the same district as the Bertsch- Oceanview residents.
- Alternative Three: In this draft map the communities of Klamath, Gasquet and Hiouchi, along with Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation, the Yurok Tribe, Resighini Rancheria, and Elk Valley Rancheria, are all in one district; the residents of the incorporated city of Crescent City are all in one district; the dividing line between districts in the community of Smith River is Highway 101.

Kevin Hendrick, who is chair of the Del Norte Democratic Central Committee (DNDCC) and served as director of the Del Norte Solid Waste Management Authority for about 20 years, endorsed the first map, though he expressed "grave" concern about each of the maps because they would move him from the fifth to the fourth district - eliminating his eligibility on the DNDCC. Supervisor Gerry Hemmingsen, who represents the 4th District, had a similar concern about the first map.

"That particular map would district me out of my district," he said. "I would no longer be in district four. So, that's why I was looking to try to get rid of that, but that was just a personal thing."

"I think we addressed this once, though it was many, many months ago," responded Luna. "If somebody gets redistricted out of their district, at least at the board of supervisors level, you finish out your term and then you run again in whatever district you're in."

Hemmingsen pointed out that he is on a different term cycle than Supervisor Starkey, who he may have to run against if map one is adopted.

“So, if I was to run again, I wouldn’t be able to run for another two years,” Hemmingsen said.

“The truth is, people get redistricted out of their districts,” responded Luna. “It’s not something that legally we say to consider whether somebody is being redistricted out of their district.”

Later in the discussion and just prior to moving onto the next item on the agenda, Starkey also pointed out that one of the election codes states: “Communities of interest do not include relationships with political parties, incumbents or for the candidates,” she said. “So, even though he brings up that point, that’s not a consideration.”

“She’s trying to push me out,” responded Hemmingsen with a laugh.

“I would say that having one person pushed out is not an example of gerrymandering,” responded Luna.