

## COUNCIL AGENDA

April 13, 2021

**TO:** The Honorable Mayor and City Council

**SUBJECT:** Public Hearing to Receive Input from the Community Regarding the Creation of a District-Based Election System

### INTRODUCTION

On January 12, 2021, the City Council adopted Resolution No. 2021-2 initiating the process to transition from an at-large election system to a district-based election system. By voluntarily proceeding to transition to district-based elections, the City retains its own ability to determine and adopt an appropriate district map instead of having the risk of a court doing so.

### STATEMENT OF FACT

The first step in the transition process is to hold two public hearings to invite public input regarding the composition of the City's voting districts before any draft maps are drawn. After these two public hearings are complete, the City Council must hold at least two additional public hearings on the map(s) of the districts themselves. The maps must be publicly available for at least seven days before the public hearing, and if a change is made to the map after the first public hearing, the revised map must be available at least seven days before the districts are adopted by ordinance.

The purpose of the first two public hearings is to inform the public about the districting process and to hear from the community on what factors should be taken into consideration while creating district boundaries. The public is requested to provide input regarding communities of interest and other local factors that should be considered while drafting district maps. A *community of interest* is a neighborhood or group that would benefit from being in the same district because of shared interests, views, or characteristics. Possible community features include, but are not limited to:

- A. School attendance areas;
- B. Natural dividing lines such as major roads, hills, or highways;
- C. Areas around parks and other neighborhood landmarks;
- D. Common issues, neighborhood activities, or legislative/election concerns; and
- E. Shared demographic characteristics, such as:
  - (1) Similar levels of income, education, or linguistic insolation;
  - (2) Languages spoken at home; and
  - (3) Single-family and multi-family housing unit areas.

In creating the district boundaries, the City must ensure compliance with the following state and federally-mandated criteria:

**Federal Laws:**

1. Each council district shall contain a nearly equal population as required by law; and
2. Each council district shall be drawn in a manner that complies with the Federal Voting Rights Act. No council district shall be drawn with race as the predominate factor in violation of the principles established by the United States Supreme Court in *Shaw v. Reno*, 509 U.S. 630 (1993), and its progeny.

**California Criteria for Cities:**

1. Geographically contiguous
2. Undivided neighborhoods and “communities of interest” (socio-economic geographic areas that should be kept together)
3. Easily identifiable boundaries Compact (do not bypass one group of people to get to a more distant group of people)
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**Other Traditional Districting Principles:**

1. Respect voters’ choices / continuity in office
2. Future population growth

**Next Steps**

At the April 27, 2021, City Council Special Meeting, the City Council will conduct Public Hearing #2 to seek additional public input and provide direction on criteria to be considered while drafting district maps. Following that hearing, draft district maps and proposed election sequencing will be posted to the City website and available at City Hall. The draft maps will be posted at least seven days prior to Public Hearings #3 and #4. The dates for these hearings are yet to be determined because it depends on the release of the delayed U.S. Census data and state prisoner population adjusted counts.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the City Council:

- 1) Receive a report on the districting process and permissible criteria to be considered to create district boundaries; and
- 2) Conduct a public hearing to receive public input on district boundaries.

  
Thaddeus McCormack  
City Manager