Districting in Oceanside: How it works and How to participate

May 2017

What is Districting?

- In a district-based electoral system, representatives are elected from districts.

- Districting is the process of drawing the boundaries that divide the City's population into four districts.

- The City has implemented a transparent public process to draw districts.

- If passed by the City Council, these districts will go into effect with the November 2018 election.

How will this process work?

- **Hold Community meetings:**
  - 2 public meetings on May 13 and 16 to gather public input
  - 1 City Council hearing on May 17 to present input and gather more
  - 3 more public meetings on May 20, 23, 30 to gather input, feedback and work on draft map
- **Collect data through Community Input:**
  - at hearings, through mailed and emailed submissions
- **Release Draft Districting Plan**
  - On June 14, 2017 or sooner
- **Present Draft to City Council and modify in public if changes are needed.**
  - At the June 21 meeting
- **Reading of Ordinance and Vote on Ordinance:**
  - On July 25 and August 1 respectively

When & where are the meetings?

- Saturday May 13, 12 p.m.-2 p.m. Balderrama Rec Center

- Tuesday May 16, 6-8 p.m El Corazon Senior Center

- Saturday May 20, 2-4 p.m. Bishop Rec Center

- Tuesday May 23, 6-8 p.m. Lake Elementary School

- Tuesday May 30, 6-8 p.m. Library Community Rooms

- City Council hearings are in City Hall on:
  - Wed, May 17; Wed, June 21; Tue, July 25; Tue, Aug 1

What are the mapping criteria?

- There are 5 Criteria used for drawing districts

- Equal population
- Compliance with the Federal Voting Rights Act (FVRA)
- Contiguity
- Compactness
- Respect for Communities of Interest

- Also: disregard Incumbents, Candidates and Political Parties

Criteria 1 & 2 – Equal Population; The Federal Voting Rights Act

- 14th Amendment (Equal Protection)
  - Interpreted to require reasonably equal district populations, e.g., "one person, one vote"
  - prohibits intentional discrimination because it is a violation of equal protection (the jurisdiction is treating residents differently because of race, and thus not according them equal protection under the law).
- 15th Amendment
  - Bans racial discrimination in voting

What is the Ideal Population per district?

- Ideal population for each type of district:
- Total population ÷ # of districts = Ideal POP
- Oceanside total Population from 2010 Census: 167,340
- Ideal population for Oceanside City Council Districts?
  - Total Population ÷ four districts = Ideal POP
  - 167,340 ÷ 4 = 41,835

How equal is equal?

- Different standards for different jurisdictions
  - Congressional Districts held to 'strict scrutiny'
  - Lower level districts have more flexibility
- Districts must be <u>reasonably</u> equal
  - Some deviation above and/or below the ideal population is allowed
  - Generally up to ±5% is used in FVRA compliance
  - Ideal population: 41,835 ± 2092 people

Federal Voting Rights Act (FVRA), Section 2

- Prohibits the denial or abridgement of voting rights on the basis of *race or language minority status*. (42 USC § 1973)
  - FVRA defines "language minority" as Asian, Native American, Alaskan Native or Spanish heritage. Does not apply to other language groups.
- Prohibits practices that have the purpose or effect of discriminating on the basis of race or language minority status.
- Applies nationwide, to ALL jurisdictions that conduct elections.

FVRA and districting: Vote Dilution

- Electoral systems can limit the "ability to elect a candidate of choice" by a protected class of voters in various ways:

    - Example: at-large election systems can make it impossible for even a large minority group to elect a candidate of choice, when the majority votes against them.

    - Example: single-member districts can be drawn in ways that minimize voters' ability to elect a candidate of choice.

- Systems that limit ability to elect in this way are said to "dilute" minority voting strength.

Section 2 and Districting: Methods of Vote Dilution

- A districting plan can dilute minority voting strength through two main ways:
- "Cracking"
  - Dividing up a politically viable population concentration so it doesn't constitute a majority in any district.
- "Packing"
  - Drawing high proportion minority population into one district when it could be politically viable in more than one district

Race and Districting

- Supreme Court opinions have limited the role that race can play in districting

- Race cannot be the <u>predominant</u> criterion in line drawing

- Race should not subjugate "traditional districting principles" (Compactness, Contiguity, Communities of Interest)

- District appearance has been important in some cases.

Criterion 3: Compactness

- Addresses the geography of the district
- Many different ways to measure
- Assumed to "guard against all types of gerrymandering" "drastic departures from compactness are a signal that something may be amiss"
  - (Karcher v Daggett)
- Most common complaints come from appearances:
  - Does a district look funny?
- "eyeball approach" "appearances do matter"
  - (Shaw v Reno)

Criterion 4: Contiguity

- Definition: A contiguous district is one in which all parts are connected to each other

    in other words:

- A district in which one may travel from any location to any other location without crossing the district boundary

Criterion 5: Communities of Interest

- "Council districts shall respect communities of interest as much as practicable. Communities of interest generally refers to a contiguous population which shares common social and economic interests"

- There are no datasets available to define Communities of Interest (COIs)

- Who defines a Community of Interest? <u>You do</u>!

COI: Defined by Those Familiar with the Community

- Law does not limit the kinds of interests that may bind a community.

- It is up to those who live in or work with communities to identify and establish the interests that unite it.

- Interests need not be limited to current situation, but can also include common goals.

- The City will need your input to define Communities of Interest in Oceanside!

Common Interests, Examples

- Economic interests:
  - Current situation -- common employment or economic opportunities (or lack thereof).
  - Goals -- expanding opportunities, development, bringing in businesses and jobs, etc.
- Social interests:
  - Current -- schools, culture, transportation, parks
  - Goals -- improving recreational opportunities or public safety, preserving historic resources, etc.

How to document a Community of Interest

Please answer the following questions:

- What bonds your community?
  - Outline what defines the COI:
  - What is your mission or commonality?
  - Explain what is different outside of the boundaries of your Community of Interest
- Where is your community located in the City?
  - Create a map of the boundaries (use Google maps, GIS/mapping program, paper, etc.) or
  - Write down the boundaries

Ignore Politics

- *"disregard the location of incumbents and candidates, as well as the interests of political parties"*

- Disregard where incumbents or candidates live
- Disregard political parties

- Prohibits intentional benefit/harm

Why should you participate?

- To make sure we know about your Community of Interest.
- To give your community a voice and make sure it has equal access to the political process.
- To encourage citizens to register, vote, and remain politically engaged.
- To help shape a districting plan that provides communities a meaningful opportunity to elect candidates who represent their interests on issues that are important to their lives.

How to get involved – How to learn more

To participate in the process: testify, submit written testimony, send supporting information to the City

Please provide information about your Community of Interest, or other topics the City needs to know about as soon as possible. The final deadline for comments to be considered for the Draft maps is May 30.

- Submit information at a hearing, by mail, or drop off at the City Clerk's office at City Hall
- Via email: DistrictElections@ci.oceanside.ca.us
- Get information online: www.ci.oceanside.ca.us/gov/clerk/elections/districtelections.asp

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING!!!