

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: SUE GALLAGHER, CITY ATTORNEY
STEPHANIE WILLIAMS, CITY CLERK
SUBJECT: COUNCIL DISTRICT REDISTRICTING PROCESS AND TIMELINE

AGENDA ACTION: STUDY SESSION

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council hold a study session to (1) review the procedural steps and timelines required for local redistricting, and (2) consider options for next steps. The Council may receive information, ask questions, discuss and provide direction to staff.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Council District boundaries must be reviewed every ten years upon receipt of Federal Census data to ensure continuing compliance with the U.S. Constitution and federal and state law. The ten-year review also gives the City the opportunity to adjust the boundaries of the Council Districts if desired.

The U.S. Census Bureau has announced that the Census data needed for local redistricting efforts will be released by September 30, 2021. The redistricting must be completed by mid-April 2022 to be operative in the November 2022 election.

BACKGROUND

In 2018, the City of Santa Rosa began its transition from at-large to district-based Council member elections. The district boundaries were drawn in close collaboration with a professional demographer and after a lengthy public process. The public was invited to participate in a total of six public hearings. Members of the public were also encouraged to submit written comments and proposed district maps for Council consideration.

Ultimately, seven Council districts were formed, each district with substantially equal population. The district boundaries were drawn in accordance with the following criteria to the greatest extent feasible, in accordance with the state Elections Code:

COUNCIL DISTRICT REDISTRICTING PROCESS AND TIMELINE

PAGE 2 OF 4

- Districts to be geographically contiguous
- Districts to maintain integrity of any local neighborhood or local community of interest
- Boundaries to be easily identifiable and understandable by residents
 - Natural and artificial barriers, by streets or by the boundaries of the city, to be used to extent practicable
- Geographical compactness encouraged
- Not favoring or discriminating against any political party

On April 17, 2018, the Council adopted Ordinance ORD-2018-007, setting forth the final district map and establishing the sequence of district elections.

The district-based Council elections were phased in over two election cycles, with Districts 2, 4 and 6 holding their first elections in 2018, and Districts 1, 3, 5 and 7 electing their first Council members in 2020.

Although the Council district boundaries were drawn just a few years ago, they were drawn based upon population data from the 2010 Federal Census. With the recent completion of the 2020 Federal Census, the City will soon receive updated population data. In light of that new data, the Council district boundaries must be reviewed to ensure continuing compliance with the U.S. Constitution and federal and state law. This required review will also give the City the opportunity to adjust the boundaries of the Council districts if desired.

The U.S. Census Bureau has announced that the 2020 Census data needed for local redistricting efforts will be released by September 30, 2021. The redistricting must be completed by mid-April 2022 to be operative in the November 2022 election.

It should be noted that, absent unusual circumstances, the results of the new redistricting will remain in place (and the district boundaries will not be able to be further adjusted) for a period of ten years, until release of the 2030 Federal Census.

PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

On August 29, 2017, the Council adopted a Resolution of Intention No. RES-2017-173 to initiate proceedings to transition from at-large to district based Council member elections pursuant to the California Voting Rights Act, Elections Code Section 10010 and Government Code Section 34886.

After a brief pause in the process following the wildfires of 2017, on February 6, 2018, Council held a public hearing and adopted Resolution No. RES-2018-20 confirming a new schedule for a series of public hearings regarding district formation pursuant to the provisions of the California Voting Rights Act.

COUNCIL DISTRICT REDISTRICTING PROCESS AND TIMELINE

PAGE 3 OF 4

On April 17, 2018, the Council adopted the final Council district map and established the sequence of district elections by Ordinance ORD-2018-007.

ANALYSIS

By state law, the City must review the boundaries of its Council districts every ten years, upon release of the decennial Federal Census, to ensure continued compliance with the U.S. Constitution and federal and state law.

In this study session, staff will outline (a) the procedural steps required for that review (commonly known as “redistricting”), (b) the substantive standards applicable to that review, and (c) the timelines for completion of that process. Staff will also outline several procedural options available to the City and will seek Council direction.

The Council may receive information, ask questions, discuss and provide direction to staff. No formal action will be taken.

FISCAL IMPACT

The study session will have no fiscal impacts.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The proposed action is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3) and 15378 in that there is no possibility that the implementation of this action may have significant effects on the environment, and that no further environmental review is required.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Not applicable.

NOTIFICATION

Not applicable

ATTACHMENTS

- None

CONTACT

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