



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

Memorandum

DATE: 10/14/2020

MEMO TO: Board of Directors

THROUGH: Ana Ruiz, General Manager *AR*

FROM: Jamie Hawk, GIS Program Administrator

SUBJECT: Update on the Ward Boundary Redistricting Project

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) is required by California Elections Code Section 22000 to adjust its Board of Directors (Board) Ward boundaries following each federal decennial census using the results of that census as the basis for boundary adjustments.

Redistricting is the process of dividing a jurisdiction into districts for representation. This process ensures voting power and representation is distributed equally, based on population. In California, redistricting occurs in state, county, and local jurisdictions, as well as many school districts and special districts.

Before adjusting the Ward boundaries, the Board is required to hold at least one public hearing on the proposal to adjust the boundaries, and a second public hearing at which the Board votes to approve or disapprove the proposal (Cal. Elec. Code § 22001).

2020 Census: Upcoming Redistricting Project

The District plans to hire an experienced consultant to assist with the upcoming Ward Boundary Redistricting Project. Primary tasks will include working with the Board to develop new redistricting criteria, providing recommendations on a public outreach strategy, leading and presenting information during public study sessions, gathering and synthesizing feedback, conducting spatial and demographic analyses, developing redistricting plan scenarios and maps, and providing expert guidance on demographic and legal matters.

A request for proposals and qualifications (RFPQ) was released on August 31, 2020 and closed on September 25, 2020. Staff received a total of five proposals that are currently under review by the project team, which includes staff from Information Systems & Technology (IST), Public Affairs, Legal, and the General Manager's Office. Staff are rating consultants on the following qualifications: project approach, previous redistricting experience, technical expertise, voting rights and legal knowledge, and geographic familiarity. The award of contract amount is not anticipated to exceed \$50,000 and the agreement will likely be executed under the General Manager's authority. The FY21 Budget includes \$42,000 in available funding through June 30, 2021. Additional funds will be requested as part of the FY22 Budget to complete the project.

General timeline and potential Census delays

By law, California special districts cannot modify district (ward) boundaries 180 days prior to the election of any director. The next biennial election is November 8, 2022; therefore, the District must finalize adjustments to ward boundaries, adopt a resolution, and transmit final boundary maps/data to the Registrar of Voters offices prior to May 6, 2022. Staff anticipates the Ward Boundary Redistricting Project to start in January 2021 and finalize by April 2022. A detailed timeline and project plan will be developed with the consultant with this timeline in mind.

Due to COVID-19, the census data release date may be potentially delayed by four months from its statutory release date of March 31, 2021. While this will significantly compress the overall project timeline, there will still be ample time to meet the May 6, 2022 deadline and conduct a thorough analysis, receive public input, and develop a thoughtful redistricting plan that satisfies all legal requirements.

Background on Previous Redistricting Project (2010 Census)

In 2011 during the first public hearing (R-11-88), staff introduced the redistricting process, provided draft redistricting plan scenarios and maps, and presented proposed redistricting criteria. The following seven (7) redistricting criteria were subsequently adopted by the Board (R-11-104). Four criteria are required by law and three are considered optional and District-specific:

1) Comply with all applicable laws (required)

State law requires that the District use the federal census as a basis to adjust Ward boundaries so that the divisions are equal in population and in compliance with the Voting Rights Act (discussed below). In adjusting the boundaries of the District, the Board may consider the following factors: (1) topography, (2) geography, (3) cohesiveness, contiguity, integrity and compactness of territory, and (4) community of interests of the District.

2) Ensure that minority voting strength does not diminish as a result of redistricting (required)

The Voting Rights Act prohibits actions that dilute minority voting rights by denying minorities an equal opportunity to nominate and elect candidates of their choice. The 2011 redistricting plan successfully brought dissected neighborhood associations back together, particularly in Redwood City. Minority populations per Ward did not significantly decrease as a result of this redistricting plan, ensuring that voting strength of minority communities was kept intact.

3) Keep city representation intact and maintain cohesive neighborhoods and communities, where possible (required)

To the greatest extent possible, the 2011 redistricting plan was drawn to respect local government boundaries, neighborhood association boundaries, and communities. The adopted plan ensured all boundary realignments occurred in areas where city representation was already shared and that no additional cities were dissected.

4) Equalize the population count in each Ward to +/- 2.5%, but strive to minimize the variance as much as possible (population equalization is required, but the +/- 2.5% variance value is not required)

The population equalization in 2011 met the maximum deviation of +/- 2.5% per ward (actual variance was approximately +/-2.0%). The 2010 populations within each ward ranged from 98,780 to 102,838.

5) Strive to keep wards as similar to the current configuration (not required)

To avoid confusion among voters, the 2011 redistricting plan reassigned the least amount of people to new wards (16,309 total) while still keeping communities intact.

6) Avoid altering ward boundaries in the Coastside Protection Area (not required)

In 2004, the District underwent a significant public process to determine ward boundary locations in the Coastside Protection Area and successfully avoided altering these boundaries in the 2011 redistricting plan.

7) Keep incumbents in their current ward (not required)

To avoid confusion among voters, the 2011 redistricting plan kept all incumbents in their current ward.

The redistricting plan that was adopted by the Board on October 9, 2011 met all of the requirements listed above. To date, the adopted ward boundary alignments have remained unaltered.

As part of the 2020 Redistricting Project, the Board will have an opportunity in an open public meeting to reevaluate and adopt any changes to the criteria, which would then be used to analyze the 2020 Census data and prepare draft redistricting plan scenarios and maps for Board consideration.

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