



Chatham County, NC

Legislation Text

File #: 23-4904, **Version:** 1

Receive public comment on the reapportionment alternative plans for Chatham County Board of Commissioner residency districts and vote to set a public hearing for September 18, 2023, during the Chatham County Board of Commissioners' regular meeting beginning at 6:00 p.m., to receive comments on the reapportionment preferred plan for Chatham County Board of Commissioner residency districts.

Introduction & Background: During its regular meeting on May 15, 2023, the Board of Commissioners received a presentation overviewing the various and relevant aspects of residency redistricting processes and requirements for the Board's consideration and direction to staff.

Information, such as the following, was offered the Board through the noted presentation:

- Jurisdictions, like Chatham, with "residency districts", are not required to conduct a study and redefine district boundaries following the federal census.
- Through Session Law, the State General Assembly has authorized the Chatham County Board of Commissioners to change the boundaries of its residency districts if it finds that there is "substantial inequality of population among the districts."
- The Session Law specifies that the test for compliance in the County's redistricting is to accomplish a "reduction in the relative overall range of deviation" among the residency districts.
- The Board may adopt a resolution adjusting the districts following a public hearing on the proposed redistricting plan.
- The resolution fixing the boundaries must be adopted at least 150 days before the day of the following primary.
 - The primary election is scheduled for March 5, 2024
 - 150 days before the primary election is October 7, 2023

The Board offered direction to staff establishing parameters for developing alternative redistricting plans. These parameters include the following:

- Contiguity
- Recognizing communities of interest (i.e., precincts, municipal boundaries, physical features like roads and waterways, and/or other historical, cultural, or economic communities)
- Compactness
- Preserving the core of existing districts
- Avoiding pairing incumbents (known as "double bunking" to promote stability)
- Take into consideration future population growth projections

With direction from the Board to explore redistricting alternatives with the foregoing parameters, the County's GIS Department has developed three alternative redistricting plans for Board review and

consideration.

Following this presentation, and any discussion and further direction arising from it, the Board may set a public hearing to receive comments from the public regarding the alternative redistricting plans. While this public hearing is not prescribed by statute, it does offer the public an additional opportunity to be heard, beyond what is required by law.

Discussion & Analysis: Per the direction of the Board of Commissioners, Chatham County GIS utilized Esri's redistricting software to create three district plans to reapportion the population in each of the Board of Commissioner Districts using 2020 Census Data.

Esri's software incorporates US Census population data from the 2020 Census allowing users to interactively select specific census geography areas to distribute population more evenly across district boundaries. Chatham County GIS staff utilized the software and worked as a group to create three new proposed district boundary plans, keeping in mind the parameters given by the Board in the introduction & background of this abstract.

The methodology for each of the options was slightly different, but the key parameters the GIS staff focused on were to keep population within a variance of plus or minus 5% of evenly distributed population, grouping municipal & community geographies, considering future population growth, & avoiding pairing of incumbents. Each option weighed the totality of the parameters differently because changing one factor based on certain parameters would inevitably take away from the others.

Each of the three plans presented has individual merits while keeping the overarching direction from the Board in mind. The GIS staff sought to provide unique options to the Board for consideration and we feel these three options accomplish that goal.

How does this relate to the Comprehensive Plan:

Budgetary Impact: Beyond the costs associated with noticing the proposed public hearing, no budgetary impact is anticipated.

Recommendation/Motion: Motion to set a public hearing for September 18, 2023, during the Chatham County Board of Commissioners' regular meeting beginning at 6:00 p.m., to receive comments on the reapportionment preferred plan for Chatham County Board of Commissioner residency districts.