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# WHATCOM COUNTY DISTRICTING COMMITTEE

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## February 4, 2021 Meeting Summary

### ***Call to order***

Dana Brown-Davis, Clerk of the Council, called the meeting to order. All members were present:

Charlie Crabtree

Mike Estes

Stephen Jackson

Jeremiah Ramsey

Also present were:

Debbie Adelstein, candidate for fifth member of committee

Diana Bradrick, Whatcom County Auditor

Lisa Bruner, Council office staff

Karen Frakes, Civil Deputy Prosecutor

Gary Jensen, candidate for fifth member of committee

Tjalling Ypma, candidate for Districting Master

### ***Discussion of timeline***

Diana Bradrick, Whatcom County Auditor, reported that County level Census data would not be available until July 31<sup>st</sup> at the earliest. Bradrick stated that re-precincting has to take place after all redistricting in the state is finished and before the filing period of 2022. She also reported that there is proposed state-wide legislation which would change local districting deadlines to November 15<sup>th</sup>. She stated that it is not certain that this will pass, but if it does there would be a hard deadline of November 15<sup>th</sup>.

- Members discussed with Bradrick the process of redrawing the precinct boundaries, how that will affect their work, and what they have done in past years.
- Estes asked if they should abide by the timeline laid out in the County Charter despite not having Census data available. Frakes advised that the Census data would be the driving factor; they cannot do the work laid out in the Charter without the Census data so they should do their best to comply with the spirit of the Charter, which is to have about two months from when the data is received.

### ***Discussion and selection of a fifth committee member, who shall serve as committee chair***

The members discussed picking the fifth member and Districting Master and then recessing until the data is available. Bradrick informed the members on what other counties are doing, including using estimated population data to make general plans for districting. Brown-Davis suggested forming the committee and selecting the Districting Master now so as to abide by the Charter as much as possible. The members agreed.

Crabtree put forth Jensen as a possible fifth member.

- Jensen gave a statement about his background and qualifications.
- Committee Member Mike Estes asked what Jensen's understanding of the role of the 5<sup>th</sup> member is in the context of breaking a tie or resolving a stalemate. Jensen answered that his understanding was that the 5<sup>th</sup> member was a non-voting chair.
- Estes asked Jensen if he had future plans to run for office in the County and Jensen replied no.

Estes nominated Adelstein as a possible fifth member.

- Adelstein gave a statement about her background and said that she would see herself as being a non-voting member at least initially.
- Estes asked if she planned to run for office again and asked about her experience chairing meetings. Adelstein replied that she does not plan to run for office and gave a summary of her experience chairing meetings in the Auditor's office.

Brown-Davis asked how the members would like to proceed with voting. Ramsey suggested that Adelstein and Jensen leave the Zoom before the members discuss and vote. Frakes clarified that they can leave voluntarily, but have the right to view the meeting just like anyone else in the public. Jensen and Adelstein left the meeting.

The members discussed the qualifications of both candidates. Estes and Jackson spoke in favor of Adelstein; Crabtree spoke in favor of Jensen.

Brown-Davis called a roll call vote to select the fifth member. Adelstein received votes from Estes and Jackson; Jensen received votes from Crabtree and Ramsey. The members agreed to decide the vote on a coin flip, which Jensen won.

Estes moved that they appoint Jensen as the fifth member. Motion passed unanimously.

### ***Discussion and selection of a Districting Master, who shall draw the revised districting plan for Whatcom County***

Crabtree asked Ypma to give some information on his background and experience. Ypma said that he had been the Districting Master twice in the past. Estes described his experience working with Ypma in the past, saying he found it easy to work with him and appreciated his insight.

Crabtree moved that Ypma be selected as the Districting Master. Estes seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

### ***Other business***

Ypma asked if there were any current incumbents at risk of being negatively impacted by re-districting. Brown-Davis clarified that if a current councilmember was moved into a different district due to re-districting, they would still be able to finish out their term but would not be able to run for another term in their previous district. Members discussed the matter of extending the courtesy of attempting to not move incumbents into other districts and how that has worked in the past.

Ypma asked if there was still a requirement that Everson and Sumas remain in the “foothills” district. Frakes stated that the criteria is the same now as it was before. Members discussed their recollections of why that suggestion or requirement was made in the past. Estes said that he remembered that the ballot language changing the county to five districts mentioned cities in certain districts and there was debate about how binding that was.

Jensen and Adelstein re-joined the Zoom call. Estes announced to them that Jensen had been appointed on a coin flip.

Frakes made a few comments about public records, open public meetings and public comments:

- Any writings produced in capacity as districting committee members are considered public records and are subject to release unless they fall under a specific exemption.
- Any actions must take place in an open public meeting. Actions include discussions of the subject matter if a quorum is involved.
- All members must have completed open public meeting training.

Members, Brown-Davis, and Bradrick discussed next steps for further meetings. All agreed that Brown-Davis would be in touch with any updates from Bradrick and they would schedule a meeting as needed when there are updates to discuss.