
WHATCOM COUNTY DISTRICTING COMMITTEE

January 28, 2021 Meeting Summary

Welcome and Introductions

Dana Brown-Davis introduced staff members present:

- Dana Brown-Davis, Clerk of the Council
- Karen Frakes, Chief Civil Deputy Prosecuting Attorney
- Lisa Bruner, Legislative Coordinator

Committee members each introduced themselves with their name and background:

- Charlie Crabtree
- Mike Estes
- Jeremiah Ramsey
- Stephen Jackson

Also present was Gary Jensen.

1. Discussion and possible selection of a fifth committee member, who shall serve as committee chair

The members discussed nominating a fifth member of the committee who would act as chair of the committee. They weighed whether to have the fifth member be a voting or non-voting member.

- Frakes acknowledged that traditionally the fifth member had been non-voting, however the County Charter did not stipulate that. She recommended that the fifth member be a voting member to avoid any stalemates between the four members.
- Estes recalled that in 2016 there was a lot of back and forth on whether the chair would be a voting member. When nominated, the chair self-declared that they would not vote, causing some concern that they did not know how to proceed in the event of a tie.
- Crabtree stated that the state-wide tradition was to have two members from the Democratic party and two members from the Republican party. He also stated that having a partisan fifth member had drawn legal challenges.
- Frakes and Crabtree discussed the systems in place to resolve stalemates at the statewide and County levels. The Council would have to decide in that event, which has been an unpopular option in the past, according to Frakes. Crabtree stated that he did not believe that they should change the system of four voting members that they having been using for decades without major issues historically.

- Estes agreed that four members should work to come to an agreement and also suggested that they interview potential fifth members to find out their intention regarding voting or not and then the four members would make a decision.
- Ramsey suggested that Gary Jensen was a recommended candidate for a fifth member and so was Erika Buse.
- Brown-Davis suggested setting a deadline for any additional names to be submitted and setting a regular time and day of the week to meet. All members agreed that afternoons generally worked well.
- Estes requested an overview of the timeline and deadlines. Brown-Davis explained that they have until February 11th to appoint the Districting Master and that it is unknown when the Census data would be available, but they would likely have to abide by the May 1st deadline if the data does arrive by April.
- The members discussed having Tjalling Ypma as the Districting Master and all agreed to invite him to the next meeting to further discuss.

2. Other Business

- Brown-Davis brought up Open Public Meeting training and reminded members that they cannot discuss committee business among themselves via e-mail, though they can pass information via e-mail prior to the meetings.
- Crabtree suggested that Frakes give a briefing on public records at the next meeting, to which Frakes agreed.
- Ramsey asked what the agenda would be at the next meeting and how potential fifth members would need to prepare. Brown-Davis said that she would contact potential fifth members to ask if they are interested and invite them. Brown-Davis asked the current members to submit any potential interview questions to her. Ramsey asked for clarification on the commitment and asked if the role would be over after the May 1st deadline. Brown-Davis confirmed that was correct unless the deadline is extended.