

## **Legislative Apportionment Board**

March 25, 2021

Meeting Minutes

\*Remote Meeting\*

**1. Call to Order.** The meeting was called to order at 9:05 am

Members present: Tom Little, Mary Houghton, Rob Roper, Jeanne Albert, Ed Adrian, Jeremy Hansen

Absent: Tom Koch

Others present: Tom Hughes, John Adams, Amy Grover, JP Isabelle, Bill Embick (joined at 9:35), Michael Chernick (joined at 10:35).

Chair Tom Little pointed out ACT 92 as authorization to meet remotely to satisfy the Open Meeting Law and asked that this Zoom meeting be recorded.

**2. Approval of Minutes of January 14, 2021 Meeting.**

Motion by Rob Roper to accept January meeting minutes. Mary Houghton seconded. Passed unanimously, Tom Koch absent.

**3. Public Comment (per 1 V.S.A. sec. 312(h)).**

Amy Grover, town clerk of Bolton was present. She wanted to confirm receipt of a letter from the Bolton Board of Civil Authority to keep the Mount Mansfield Unified Union school district within the boundaries of a single senate district. That is currently not the case (Huntington is in the Addison senate district and the other towns are in the Chittenden senate district).

Tom Little confirmed receipt and noted that all 5 towns within the school district have sent letters. The letter from Richmond town clerk and BCA was read in part. Tom noted that Grand Isle county towns have also provided a letter to the board. Residents expressed support for having a Grand Isle specific representative seat to ensure a resident who lives on the islands serves as a representative. Tom Little clarified that the e-mails were being sent to his state e-mail address

The Board members discussed support for a single board e-mail so that all members receive all communications.

**4. Updates**

**-Timing of U.S Census Results: August 15 and September 30 Dates, Possible Use of August 15, 2021 Data Set in Maptitude**

Little updated that it looks like initial data will be released on Aug 15. There have been discussions between leg counsel and Maptitude that may allow for that initial data to be uploaded into Maptitude.

The Board then discussed the use of Maptitude other redistricting programs/platforms that may be available. Little reminded the Board that the Legislature will be using Maptitude, so any program the

Board uses will need to be able to produce data that can be used in Maptitude. The delay in getting the data does give the Board time to explore other programs and become more familiar with them.

Ed Adrian has explored other programs and will share those resources with the Board.

#### **- Response to Op Ed Piece Released Last Week**

Tom Little let the Board know that the op-ed piece was sent last week to the media. He hadn't seen it published yet but will follow up with the Board on any feedback he receives. The Secretary of State's Office was asked to provide updates to the Board if they received any feedback from the media.

#### **- Public Informational Meetings – To Be Scheduled, Public Education and Outreach, Next Six Months**

Tom Little open a discussion about public outreach that the Board should start to consider for the process. Members talked about reaching out to public libraries, media outlets (including Front Porch Forum), political party meetings, Vermont League of Cities and Towns. The Board will have to educate about the process and educate the public on how the Board arrives at its decisions. All agreed that hosting multiple public meetings, focusing on different areas of the state will be important. It was noted these meetings may need to occur remotely, due to Covid.

#### **- Open meeting and public record compliance**

Tom Little noted to the Board that he had sent along the power point presentation from the Secretary of State entitled 2019 Transparency Tour on open meeting and public records. Deputy Secretary of State Chris Winters can offer the Board members more information if necessary. Many members have experience serving on public boards and experience with the open meeting and public records laws.

#### **- Status of Legislation to Adjust Apportionment Board Deadlines (H. 338)**

Tom updated the board that H. 388 had passed the House and was going to be taken up in the Senate.

#### **5. A Mapping Exercise from Vermont Center for Geographic Information- John E. Adams to Present**

John Adams presented updates to House and Senate maps (<https://lab.mapvt.com/>) using 2019 estimated census data. He can include school district information. Considering the discussion above about using programs other than Maptitude, he can explore other programs and the ability to transfer data between programs and Maptitude. Adams pointed out that the ideal senate district represents about 20,800 and a 1 percent shift is only 208 people, which is not a lot of people.

Jeanne Albert would like to use numbers as close to the final numbers as possible. Maptitude does not have the 2019 data uploaded yet. Using the 2019 data is better than the 2010.

Tom Little noted how difficult it is trying to comply with constitutional requirements while trying to stay as close as possible to the current legislative boundaries.

Jeremy Hansen agreed that sticking with the current boundaries creates lots of issues and we can get to much better balance if we think outside of current construct.

Rob Roper supported that approach.

Ed Adrian concurred and hopes the legislature does not simply discard what the Board comes up with.

Tom Little noted that the Board should make the case to document that we can't meet the constitutional mandates while keeping the current lines. He is open to a "from scratch approach" if it can work.

Jeanne Albert wants to be able to show why changes must be made. There are county structures that make the current boundaries cumbersome for legislators. Some House members are in Senate districts that don't overlap with other governance structures within that same Senate district (like some school districts). She has concerns about house districts that are split among Senate districts.

Ed Adrian said one challenge is the weak county governance structure in VT but strong geographical identity (Northeast Kingdom, Mad River Valley, Central VT, Northwest Kingdom).

Rob Roper wants more testimony from county level groups and those areas that have county-based impacts.

Tom Little agreed it would be good to explore and better understand those existing government structures, geographical identities, and their connections to within the counties. It's important to build the record to show why changes were made and what data and other considerations were included when creating a map.

Rob Roper noted that 10 years ago, each Senate district was able to have 5 house seats when the board did a one-member Senate district map

Ed Adrian is open to others, including members of the public, creating maps, and sharing their results with the Board

Rob Roper welcomes more feedback and maps.

Tom Little noted that it would be helpful but be aware that focusing and solving one district could create issues in other districts. Proposals should not only fix a particular district but look at the impacts those changes may have within the region and address any issues that arise.

## **6. Report-Ins from Members on Their Work**

Tom Little will reach out to Board members to get a sense of what work people can do to bring more proposals to explore. Once we have more proposals, we will pick up momentum.

## **7. Other Business**

No other business came before the Board.

## **9. Adjourn**

Adjourned at 11:01 am