

CITY OF PALM DESERT STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: September 28, 2023

PREPARED BY: Anthony J. Mejia, City Clerk

REQUEST: PALM DESERT REDISTRICTING 2023 – PUBLIC HEARING #2 TO RECEIVE INPUT FROM THE COMMUNITY REGARDING THE REDRAWING OF ELECTION DISTRICT BOUNDARIES

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Receive and file a report on the redistricting process and permissible criteria to be considered to redraw district boundaries.
2. Conduct a public hearing to receive public input on district boundaries.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS:

On June 22, 2023, the City Council unanimously directed staff to take the necessary steps to transition to five single-member districts prior to the November 2024 Election and to eliminate use of Ranked Choice Voting in future elections. On August 24, 2023, the City Council adopted the Redistricting Public Education and Outreach Plan.

The City is initiating a redistricting process to shift from the current two-district system to a new five-district system. The redistricting process will determine where the new City Council district lines will be drawn. The new districts will impact how voters elect City Council Members until the next redistricting process following the 2030 Census. The districts must be drawn using the 2020 census data and in compliance with the FAIR MAPS Act, which was adopted by the California legislature as Assembly Bill 849 and took effect January 1, 2020.

Under the Act, the City Council shall draw and adopt boundaries using the following criteria in the listed order of priority (Elections Code 21621(c)):

1. Comply with the federal requirements of equal population and the Voting Rights Act;
2. Geographically contiguous;
3. Undivided neighborhoods and “communities of interest” (socio-economic geographic areas that should be kept together);
4. Easily identifiable boundaries;
5. Geographical compactness (do not bypass one group of people to get to a more distant group of people); and
6. Shall not favor or discriminate against a political party.

Once the prioritized criteria are met, other traditional districting principles can be considered, such as:

1. Respect voters’ choices / continuity in office; and
2. Future population growth.

The purpose of this public hearing is to inform the public about the districting process and to hear from the community on what factors should be taken into consideration while creating district boundaries. The public is requested to provide input regarding communities of interest and other local factors that should be considered while drafting district maps. A community of interest under Elections Code Section 21621(c) is “a population that shares common social or economic interests that should be included within a single district for purposes of its effective and fair representation.”

Possible features defining community of interest might include, but are not limited to:

1. School attendance areas;
2. Natural dividing lines such as major roads, hills, or highways;
3. Areas around parks and other neighborhood landmarks;
4. Common issues, neighborhood activities, or legislative/election concerns; and
5. Shared demographic characteristics, such as:
 - a) Similar levels of income, education, or linguistic insolation;
 - b) Languages spoken at home; and
 - c) Single-family and multi-family housing unit areas.

Public Participation

The public is encouraged to participate and provide input at the community workshops and public hearings. The public may provide input during the public comment period of these meetings or by contacting the City Clerk’s Office via email or phone:

City of Palm Desert
Attn: Anthony Mejia, City Clerk
73-510 Fred Waring Drive
Palm Desert, CA 92260
cityclerk@palmdesert.gov
(760) 346-0611

The public may also subscribe to a mailing list to stay informed about upcoming redistricting meetings by contacting the City Clerk’s Office as noted above.

The online map drawing system and paper map kits are available early and can be accessed at <https://redistrictpd.org/> under the “draw a map” tab. Map drawing workshops will be held on October 4 and 16 in which the City’s demographer will demonstrate the online mapping tool and answer questions. The deadline to submit a map for City Council consideration is Wednesday, November 1, 2023. All submitted maps will be evaluated and presented to the City Council at its meeting on November 16, 2023.

Additionally, City staff is available to present on the redistricting process and how to participate at any interested civic or community group meetings. Please contact the City Clerk’s Office to schedule a presentation.

Community Workshop #1

On September 6, 2023, at 6 p.m., the City conducted a Redistricting Community Workshop at the Palm Desert City Hall, Administrative Conference Room, and via Zoom. City staff facilitated a brief presentation and a robust question-and-answer period. However, no attendees desired to offer public comment. The workshop video was posted to the redistricting website, under the schedule tab: <https://redistrictpd.org/>

Public Hearing #1

On September 14, 2023, at 4:30 p.m., the City Council conducted a pre-map Public Hearing with in-person and virtual access. City staff facilitated a brief presentation and responded to questions submitted by the public. However, no attendees desired to offer public comment. Links to the meeting agenda, staff report, video, presentation, and public comment are posted on the City redistricting webpage, under the schedule tab: <https://redistrictpd.org/>.

Next Steps

On September 28, 2023, the City Council will conduct Public Hearing #2 to seek additional public input and provide direction on criteria to be considered while drafting district maps. Following that hearing, early draft maps will be posted to the redistricting website and available at City Hall. The dates for all community workshops, map drawing workshops, and public hearings are available at <https://redistrictpd.org/>

Sequencing of Elections: Prior to adoption of a final map, the City’s demographer will propose the sequencing of elections. The demographer and City Council must take into consideration public testimony related to the sequencing of elections including whether a particular area has a history of being under-represented and should be assigned a 2024 election cycle. Secondly, it is standard practice to match the district election years to the year of the resident officeholder. The sequencing of elections will not result in a shortened term for any officeholder.

Legal Review:

This report has been reviewed by William Priest and the City Attorney’s Office.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with the conduct of this public hearing.

ATTACHMENT:

PowerPoint Presentation