

Meeting of the Hispanic Affairs Advisory Board of Collier County, Florida

Topic: Redistricting

Date: 10/25/01

Time: 7 p.m.

Place: Collier County Government Center
3301 East Tamiami Trail, Naples
County Commissioners Meeting Room

Attendance:

Hispanic Affairs Advisory Board

- , HAAB Chairperson
- , HAAB Member
- , HAAB Member
- , HAAB Member
- , HAAB Member
- , HAAB Member

Staff:

Ramiro Manalich, Chief Assistant County Attorney
 David Weeks, AICP, Chief Planner, Collier County Comprehensive Planning Section
 Michael Kirk, Director, Department of Facilities Planning and Construction, District School Board of Collier County
 Tim Durham, Assistant County Attorney, Office of the Collier County Attorney

Public:

- Mr. Chuck Mohlke, Democratic Party Chairman of Collier County
 - Ms. Liza McClenaghan
 - Mr. Frank Rodriguez
 - Mr. _____ Norman
 - Mr. _____ Valdez
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The presentation by David Weeks included the following:

1. Explanation of the need for redistricting due to disproportionate growth between districts since 1995.
2. Identification of the Board of County Commissioners' redistricting criteria: (1) the population of each district should be as similar as possible; (2) All districts should be as compact and regularly shaped as feasible; and (3) The incumbent Commissioner's residence must remain in his or her current district.
3. Discussion of the following additional redistricting criteria: (1) to create districts that do not exceed a 5% deviation from the ideal district population; (2) to create compact and contiguous districts that observe well-defined and easily recognizable boundaries; (3) to protect incumbent commissioners by building each district around the residency of its commissioner; (4) to minimize disruption to former districts in order to provide continuity; (5) to avoid retrogression of minority voting strength; (6) to maintain communities of interest; and (7) to devise plans whereby uniformity can be achieved between the School Board and the Board of County Commissioners.
4. Provision of the 2000 Census data on the Black and Hispanic populations in Collier County and the importance of District 5 regarding minority populations.

5. Discussion of the methodology for constructing each district for the 5 proposed maps: (1) identify the residency of each commissioner, (2) build around the residence of each commissioner while respecting the integrity of each district as it is presently configured until population equity is achieved.
6. Brief discussion of the pre-clearance requirement.
7. Explanation of the neutrality of the process; i.e., avoiding any consideration of political party preferences, and not attempting to engage in racial gerrymandering in drawing the five plans. In other words, emphasis on the neutral criteria mentioned earlier without any preferences.
8. Identification of the most common criticisms/concerns about the proposed maps, expressed at the three night meetings held October 22, 23, 24: (a) pertaining to proposed Map #3, the population in the Everglades City area is different than District 1 and more similar to District 5 – that area should be left in District 5; (b) the neighborhoods and population on the north side of Immokalee Road, west of Collier Blvd., are different than the rest of District 5 (gated golf course communities with population that is older, more affluent, predominantly non-Hispanic White) and should be removed from District 5.

Comments by Board members included:

- Inadequate time to review and digest the maps and materials presented;
- Agree with public comment about the different character of the Immokalee Road corridor.

Mr. Chuck Mohlke spoke about the area north of Immokalee Road, west of Collier Blvd.; and, spoke about, and provided information about, registered voters in the existing 5 districts. He expressed concern about a reduction in percentage of registered voters; and, he suggested the Board consider endorsing proposed Maps #1, 2, and 4.

Mr. Frank Rodriguez spoke about Hispanic population growth but noted many Hispanics are not eligible to vote due to their residency status; he expressed concern about dilution of Hispanic population; and, stated that proposed Map #4 will result in reduction in number of registered voters in District 3.

There was discussion by the Board; questions were asked and answered; comments were made.

A motion was made, seconded, and passed (5/0), stating the HAAB does not want to see the minority vote diluted, therefore endorses proposed Maps #1 and #2; and, does not want the area lying north of Immokalee Road and west of Collier Blvd. to remain in District 5.