

CITY OF SALISBURY  
COUNCIL ELECTION REDISTRICTING FORUM  
MAY 29, 2014

Present

Council President Jacob R. Day  
Councilwoman Terry E. Cohen

Council Vice President Laura Mitchell  
Councilman Timothy K. Spies

Absent

Councilwoman Eugenie P. Shields  
Mayor James Ireton, Jr.

In Attendance

City Clerk Kimberly R. Nichols, CMC, Planning & Zoning Technical and Environmental Planner Frank McKenzie, members of the public and media.  
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The City Council convened at 6:10 p.m. in Council Chambers, Room 301 of the Government Office Building (125 North Division Street, Salisbury, MD) to hold a public forum to hear citizens' remarks regarding the election redistricting process.

Council President Day explained the evening's public forum would conclude the meetings on Election Redistricting to offer the public one more opportunity to view the Mayor's plan and the plan adopted by Council in 2012, and provide feedback on the subject.

President Day invited Planning & Zoning Technical and Environmental Planner Frank McKenzie to the podium. Mr. McKenzie explained the original discussion was based upon going from a two district to a five district representative scenario. Then consideration was given to enlarging District 1 to include the additional minority representative. The goal was to double the size of District 1 and to include two representatives, which would reduce the size of District 2 to three Council members. He referred to the "2015 Election" map which was adopted by City Council in 2012, and was proposed to be used for the 2015 elections.

Mr. McKenzie expounded on Mayor Ireton's 5 District Plan, which divides the City into 5 districts, two being minority districts (Districts 1 and 2). He reported that the State of Maryland established a law stating incarcerated individuals had to be included in the vote count, and the total *adjusted* population for Salisbury was 30,607. In knowing where the populations were, he explained they had to concentrate the population for the minorities but also build a district big enough to give 6,000 persons per district. Receiving guidance from the Mayor as to how he would like to have it divided, Mr. McKenzie created the districts.

Mr. McKenzie stated the target was to have 6,121 people per district with an allowed 5% deviation, and provided the following data from the 5 District Plan based upon the requirements:

- District 1 – total population - 6,025 (3,257 are black) Adjusted black population - 54.6%

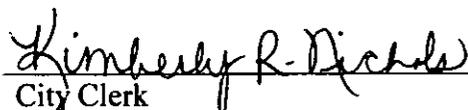
- District 2 – total population - 6,006 (3,077 are black) Adjusted black population - 51.6%
- District 3 – total population - 6,347 The minority population is 13.61%.
- District 4 – total population - 5,895 (1,824 are black) Adjusted black population - 30.94%
- District 5 – total population - 6,334 (1,635 are black) Adjusted black population - 25.81%

The following comments were provided by two City residents and the President of the Wicomico County NAACP:

- The City of Salisbury is a multi-million dollar business necessitating elected officials capable of doing the job of the business of the City, who understand the issues that come before Council and can commit the amount of time necessary. It would be a disservice to chop the City into five districts because of the difficulty in getting people to run for office and the pool of capable candidates would be greatly narrowed. The 2 District Plan does not prevent minorities from running in District 2, and referenced former Councilwoman Rachel Polk's District 2 election several years prior. Diversity on the Council is important and the City should encourage more minorities to run in District 2.
- Speaker has never had a council representative on City Council from his neighborhood in the past 30 years and does not feel slighted. For a town the size of Salisbury it makes sense to have at-large elections for all representatives. The legislative action (Charter Amendment) taken in 2012 by the former Council represented a reasonable compromise, but he prefers at-large representation. A three districts plan would be the "next best, least worst" scenario, but the current two districts plan was a good compromise for everyone.
- The NAACP supports the Mayor's 5 District Plan. That plan offers the two majority-minority districts a roughly 7 point margin in African-American voting age population over the Non-Hispanic, White population. Although the districts will not have an African-American voting age population over 50%, it still would represent a clear plurality, and efforts to move the population size over 50% might increase the Non-Hispanic, White population. The City has approximately 30% African-American voting population; the Mayor's 5 District Plan would allow for clear minority plurality.

Council President Day thanked everyone for attending. The topic would be scheduled again for discussion in Work Session and the public was asked to contact Council with their thoughts on the process.

Thereafter, the public forum adjourned at 6:35 p.m.

  
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 City Clerk

  
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 Council President