

## SEATTLE REDISTRICTING COMMISSION

### REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, November 8, 2022

12:00 PM – 1:30 PM

Zoom Meeting

Approved on November 15, 2022

**Commissioners Present:** Eliseo EJ Juárez, Commission Chair Patience Malaba, Greg Nickels, Rory O’Sullivan, Neelima Shah

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**Commissioners Absent:**

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**Commission Staff and Guests:** Elsa Batres-Boni: Department of Neighborhoods, Ariel Schneier: Assistant City Attorney, Mary Ullrich: Districting GIS Consultant, Dennis Higgins: Districting GIS Consultant, Logan Drummond: Department of Neighborhoods,

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(Transcriber’s Note: Seattle Redistricting Commission meeting minutes are not an exact transcript and represent key points and the basis of discussion. The recording of the meeting is available upon request.)

#### **Meeting Minutes:**

##### **I. Call to Order**

- To follow the recent amendment by Governor Inslee [House Bill 1329](#), of the Open Public Meeting Act to increase the accessibility of and participation in public meetings. This meeting was held online and in a physical location at the City of Seattle L280 Boards and Commissions Room on floor L2 at 600 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Seattle WA, 98104.
- This meeting was open to the public and was advertised through appropriate channels. The meeting was called to order at 12:00 PM once the Redistricting Commissioners had quorum.

##### **II. Welcome & Housekeeping**

- Reading of the agenda, welcome and land acknowledgement

##### **III. Agenda Review and approval**

- A motion was presented by Commissioner Nickels, to amend the agenda and change the order of items discussed, the motion was seconded by Commissioner Shah and passed unanimously.

##### **IV. Minutes approval**

- The 10.31.2022 were up for approval at today’s meeting. The 10.31.2022 minutes were motioned for approval by Commissioner Nickels and the motion was seconded by Commissioner Shah. The 10.31.2022 minutes were then passed unanimously with five yes votes.

##### **V. Received Public Comment Acknowledgement**

- Commissioners acknowledged that they have reviewed the latest submitted public comments.

##### **VI. Conflict of Interest Disclosure**

- Commission Chair Patience Malaba noted that she spoke to Councilmember Juarez about the proposed final amendment map, noting that the conversation was congratulatory and asking for an overview of the proposed map.

#### VII. **Resolution Review**

- City Staff Ariel Schneier, Assistant City Attorney and Elsa Batres-Boni gave the Redistricting Commission a presentation on the Draft Resolution. There was a motion to review the resolution by Commissioner O’Sullivan, seconded by Commissioner Shah. The motion passed unanimously with five yes votes.

VIII. All agreed upon amendments to the resolution were motioned for approval by Commissioner Juarez and seconded by Commissioner O’Sullivan. The motion passed unanimously with five yes votes.

#### IX. **Map Discussion**

- GIS Consultant Mary Ullrich gave the Redistricting Commission an overview of all boundaries of each district for the final amendment map up for a final vote at today’s meeting.

#### X. **Final Vote**

- **Redistricting Commissioners gave remarks on the final map**
- **Commissioner Greg Nickels** - “thank you madam chair I had asked staff to prepare a couple of screen shares for us today we've worked very hard for a year you outlined the process which I think has been a very good process but sadly the product is one that I cannot support, and I want to explain why. The first map is the existing boundaries the map is before us, I wanted to show what the current boundaries are those are the starting point for our work last year and according to the charter we give some consideration to the existing boundaries as one of the criteria that we use neighborhoods which I assume was done because he has a strong connection to the university community and the University of Washington. Our first task after we picked our fifth member Madam chair was to bring aboard a districting consultant a districting expert, and our first pass that we assigned the districting consultant was the consultant maps for us yes for the public to be considered as a starting point for our deliberation. The map in front of you is draft map number one from our consultant.
- **The commissioners took a 5-minute recess to fix connection issues.**
- **Commissioner Greg Nickels** - Then the second map is the number one from our expert GIS default room, I would like to note that it continues from the original map in that it crosses the Ship Canal just once at District Four and it continues in prediction of having Magnolia and no partitions and Magnolia and Queen Anne in the same district. So the second draft also has District Four as the sole District that crosses the Ship Canal and keeps Magnolia in one piece and Magnolia and Queen Anne in the same district. This map also from our districting consultant has District Four as the sole District that crosses the Ship Canal and keeps Magnolia whole and Magnolia and Queen Anne in District 7. This map has a fatal flaw is the fourth map from the districting master. The fatal flaw here is that it does not meet the one percent that we are required by Charter, but again it keeps District 4 as the only District that crosses the ship canal and keeps Magnolia whole and Magnolia and Queen Anne together. So with those four Maps we went to our meeting on August 2nd and suddenly the district that crossed the Ship Canal was District number six, no real explanation certainly no compelling evidence that we needed to switch from District Four which had already been the district that crossed the ship canal, and clearly had communities like East Lake and Montlake, which are very closely aligned with the

university, they no longer were going to be able to be connected because District 4 did not cross the ship canal. Now I think this was a fatal flaw and I think it led to the situation where we find ourselves today. I find that the current plan has three fatal flaws the first of which I've just outlined for you, the second of which is the partitioning of Magnolia I just think that that community is absolutely as a community has been historically recognized as such and has a community of interest that's very strong and ought to be acknowledged and respected in our plan, and then the third fatal flaw is the separating of Queen Anna and Magnolia as I've said before I've been involved in local politics for 50 years, and over those 50 years Magnolia and Queen Anne have always been together in the 36th legislative district and also in the Fourth King County Council District, and I see no compelling reason for that not to be the case in our plan. As we saw at the beginning, we had a map we are directed by the charter to respect where we can those boundaries and not to really go much further than that. I mentioned before a couple weeks ago that I was very concerned with some of the character of the comments that were coming to us through social media and even at our meetings where retribution to Magnolia because it is an older, wealthier, and whiter Community is I think that's not something again the redistricting commission ought to be engaged in. I don't think that individual Commissioners are engaging in that, but I want to make it clear that I think that that's just an inappropriate social policy for redistricting to take on, and in a larger sense as we talked about race and social justice, I think that reconciliation is going to be a much more successful strategy than retribution, so Madam chair, I'm going to be voting no today as I said I think we've had a good process and I think that we have come to a conclusion that I cannot support, thank you."

- **Commissioner Rory O'Sullivan** - "I want to just make a few comments quickly because I know we don't have too much time. This is the first time that I've been in a position of receiving public comment as opposed to offering public comment, and so I know in giving a public comments it would be difficult to know if you're if your comments are well received or if your suggestions are being taken into consideration, especially when your requests and your proposals and your comments are not the direction that the legislative body ends up, we attempted to be responsive and listen to public comments, and in fact on multiple occasions I've submitted suggestions to consider maps that have been recommended through the public comment process and each of those maps has received I think a great deal of feedback from the public, and I've attempted to be as transparent as possible through this process. I'm going to be voting in favor of the final adoption because I believe based on the comments and inputs that we've received that this is the map that is going to best represent the city of Seattle, so thank you very much."
- **Commissioner Neelima Shah** - "I wanted to start by thanking the public for the immeasurable amount and truly significant numbers of hours of engagement. I'm proud that this process engaged so many new voices of people that have not participated in the past, we had a great diversity of voices representing different ages, races, geography, parts of the city, income levels and the student submissions, I especially enjoyed. For those of you who testified for the first time, I hope you found the commission to be in an inviting environment for all and you continue to engage in our democracy. It's critical and foundational for all aspects of our life, many thanks to those of you who have attended nearly every public meeting and you're on today, I know I

see many familiar names on there. That takes dedication and is a big-time commitment through this process, we listened to the public and we tried many different options. I know I had many sessions with the King County GIS team, I read all the public comments, looked for trends then worked with the gis team to incorporate feedback from the community that's how I came up with a draft map that was adopted by the commission on August 9th after that we continued to listen and read public comments and we created a few different map options to see if we could make improvements some of the options worked well and that they kept communities together if not in their preferred neighborhood, like Pioneer Square in Eastlake and many of the options did not work and there was a lot of public comment that didn't support them nevertheless, we did look at all those. I know that this map is not perfect for all neighborhoods, and I regret that, but I think it is a good map for the city as a whole and we reconnected many historically disenfranchised neighborhoods and communities that are now reunited. I'd like to assure the public that these decisions were not made for any political reason the decisions were made to make the population numbers work while keeping as many neighborhoods together throughout the entire city and maintain a fair and open process. All in all, I believe the commission led a fair and transparent process. We included one and sometimes two opportunities for public comment nearly at every meeting, we created different ways to contact the commission that would meet individual needs in person on zoom in writing with map submissions the specific map submissions I think over 30 of them were said were very helpful and I know that they were time consuming to produce and I hope there were enough options for those who were very tech savvy and those who aren't. I want to thank Mary Dennis and the entire GIS team you were terrific to work with and showed a deep commitment to the process I want to thank my fellow Commissioners for sharing responsibility for sharing and leading this work and for their collegiality when we didn't agree and they had a but we had a consistent goal of listening to community and trying different options until the clock literally ran out on us, and finally a big thanks to Elsa Logan and Ariel for their commitment to public engagement, attention to detail, and a desire to lead the best possible redistricting process in our region. I plan to vote for this map um and thank you for letting me have that time."

- **Commissioner Eliseo EJ Juárez** - "Thank you I'll be quick, first and foremost I want to thank my colleagues on the commission. It's been a pleasure to work with all of you and I think take commissioner Shah's comment just a little bit further, you know I think how we disagreed with each other was one of the best parts of this in that we were able to maintain a really level head and just a form of like we are in this together, and I think that that is something that I've really enjoyed. The second thing is I want to thank the staff and KC GIS you guys are incredible the requests and the amount of work commission as we've worked with you individually and as you've worked with the public and responding to those questions as well, you are incredible and any government or organization would be incredibly well served by you on their staffs and I hope that whatever projects you take on after this they get just as good if not better than we got because I am excited for the next processes that you get to take on. I'd like to thank the public obviously you all have shown up some of you have shown up at every meeting and it makes me proud to be in this city that people care so much about something that is so technical, so unsexy to many people and ultimately very very important. The last thing I'll say is that you know we have an obligation to make recommendations for this process in the future, and I hope

that as we do that we can make improvements on a process that I feel was incredibly Fair incredibly Equitable and ultimately very transparent. I'm proud of the fact that we learned lessons from processes that did not go well and we were able to do this on time in the view of the public with maximum transparency about what we were here to do, and follow the letter of the law, so all that to say I'll be supporting this map, I'm very proud of this map, and while not everybody can be happy, I think that we have done a good thing here today and I think that we have dedicated a year in civic duty to produce a map that keeps the most amount of people together and that represents the most amount of people fairly so I'll be voting yes today, thank you all."

- **Commission Chair Patience Malaba** - "It's hard to follow the speakers having laid your thoughts but thank you Commissioners I know we are out of time, and we want to get to voting, but let me just say how deeply grateful I have been to work with all of you. I'll just double down on the collegiality that I've seen the amount of collaboration and the extensive commitment to listening to community, because to me that was one of the most important commitments that I see as palpable from all of you throughout this process. I also want to thank staff as all have said already you have just been exceptional people to work with and your support has helped us throughout the process. Going back to the map, I do intend to vote yes on this map. I am proud of the work we've done on this map, I think ultimately where we are is we do have an equitable map, while it does not make all communities happy, it has been intentionally drawn. We knew that coming to this world our responsibility was to implement the requirements of the charter and implementing the requirements of the charter with our draft map. Earlier in August, we spent more time as we heard from the community on the concerns, they had on district 6 and district 7 boundaries, and we knew that District six had to expand and district 7 had to contract, and a lot of that was really the technical work of balancing the numbers while we're meeting the legal requirements, and we considered all alternatives. You will recall that we were in front of you with a proposal from the community considering it, we learned from the community of the concerns of further splitting more neighborhoods and it was never the intent of the commission to split neighborhoods we wanted to as minimally as possible keep neighborhoods together and what we have in this final map gets us to that place where. while the community of Magnolia may be in two districts, we have worked intentionally to keep the business district together and the surrounding residential areas together in two districts and I do believe that the responsibility of democracies on all of us as neighborhoods it's going to take all of us to always take the responsibility of ultimately giving their voices to all of our community members and this map that we have before us does just that."
- **Commission Chair Patience Malaba asked if there was a motion for the final vote. Commissioner O'Sullivan motioned for the vote and Commissioner Shah seconded the motion. The final vote for the map passed with four yes votes and one no vote from Commissioner Nickels. There were no abstentions for this vote.**

#### **XI. Next Steps**

- Next steps will be for DON Staff to transmit the final map submission to the Office of the County Clerk, who will deliver the final map to the King County Clerk and the Director of Elections at King County. There will also be plans made for the post-education process that will be determined at the November 15, 2022 meeting of the Seattle Redistricting Commission.

**XII. Next Meetings – November 15<sup>th</sup>, December 6<sup>th</sup> (or other dates)**

- The Redistricting Commission's next meeting will be on Tuesday, November 15, 2022 from 12:00pm-1:30pm with an option to attend in-person at the L280 Boards and Commissions Room, or online via zoom.
- The Redistricting Commission will determine if more meetings are necessary at the November 15<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**XIII. Adjourn**

- Commission Chair Malaba asked if there was a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner O'Sullivan motioned for adjournment, and Commissioner Shah seconded. The motion for adjournment was then passed.
- Questions and comments, please send them to [Elsa.Batres-Boni@Seattle.gov](mailto:Elsa.Batres-Boni@Seattle.gov)