

SEATTLE REDISTRICTING COMMISSION

PUBLIC FORUM DISTRICT 7 MINUTES

Thursday, July 21st, 2022

5:30 PM – 7:30 PM

Zoom Meeting

Approved on July 26th, 2022

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

Commissioners Absent: N/A

Commission Staff and Guests: Logan Drummond: Department of Neighborhoods, Elsa Batres-Boni: Department of Neighborhoods, Dennis Higgins: Districting GIS Consultant, Mary Ullrich: Districting GIS Consultant

(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

- This Seattle Redistricting Commission meeting was held virtually through Zoom with an option to meet in person at the Bertha Knight Landes Room (BKL) on the first floor at Seattle City Hall. This meeting was open to the public and was advertised through appropriate channels. The meeting was called to order at 5:32 PM once the Redistricting Commissioners had quorum.

II. Welcome & Housekeeping

- Reading of the agenda, welcome and land acknowledgement

III. Agenda Review and approval

- There were no further questions or concerns from the Commissioners on today’s agenda and outreach for the 7.21.22 public forum meeting and motioned for approval by Commissioner Shah and seconded by Commissioner Malaba. The agenda and outreach materials were passed unanimously with five votes.

IV. Brief overview of Seattle redistricting

- Commissioner Greg Nickels gave a brief overview of the Seattle Redistricting process and the basics around what Redistricting is and what it means for the City of Seattle.

V. Interactive Mapping Tool

- Dennis Higgins, the Commission’s Districting GIS Consultants, gave the public an overview of how to use the Dave’s Redistricting App and where to find more information and step-by-step guides on how to use the app to draw and submit communities of interest.

VI. Public Comment

- **Chris Woodward** - "My name is Chris Woodward I'm the community development director for the alliance for pioneer square I'm providing comments today to highlight pioneer square's priorities for the 2022 redistricting process these comments are in support of a written comment submitted by the alliance to the commission earlier today via email the commission should equally consider the following two priorities when determining how to redistrict the pioneer square neighborhood the first being honoring existing boundaries so pioneer square falls within three significant existing district boundaries including the pioneer square historic preservation district the pioneer square business improvement area and the metropolitan improvement district which stretches all the way to Denny to waterfront i-5 the current council configuration bifurcates the neighborhood which has brought additional challenges and representation during a critical point of economic recovery so the commission should honor the existing district boundaries named above to ensure uh neighborhood stakeholders are equally aligned in representation at the city and the second priority which I have not vocalized in previous public comments to the commission but is equally important as the first is placement of pioneer square within district 7. pioneer square faces a challenging future as the neighborhood recovers from the covid 19 pandemic's impacts on our economy within pioneer square and this demands strong representation at the city council so the commission should fully place pioneer square in district 7 which would align the district with urban neighborhoods with similar challenges to ensure our needs in pioneer square are supported by city leaders we do not believe being attached to outer neighborhoods with different demographics and challenges is the correct placement within this council redistricting effort the pioneer square community believes that the commission can value our priorities and identify areas of compromise to ensure our neighborhood's needs and challenges are represented at the Seattle city council thank you."
- **Andrew Hong** - "Hi this is Andrew Hong I'm a Redistricting Justice for Seattle Coalition and I'll keep my comments pretty short we just recently released our redistricting map plan that we presented to the commission and for district 7 our main concern was trying to keep as much of the downtown communities that are especially however we rent your communities together and tackle district seven and we believe the best way to do that uh while also uh you know accomplishing the challenge of uh redistricting district seven which has changed drastically in population um to you know meet the equal population requirements within one percent deviation is to remove the magnolia neighborhoods or parts of magnolia from district seven so that most of the downtown areas which experience the most growth and where more of the rancher population of district 7 is can stay intact as much as possible in district 7 and also I want to just make a clarifying note that I believe that the alliance for pioneer square previously supported our district proposal and it was a new recent development I think just today of the alliance or pioneer square moving or shifting their positions here wanting to be in district 7 rather than just wanting to be intact in one district so I want to clarify that our coalition was not trying to misrepresent the alliance for pioneer square's position it was simply a position that I was just informed of today yeah thank you."
- **Tija Petrovich** - "Thank you commissioners! I'm a 30-year resident of pioneer square I'm actually a born Seattleite and I'm the president of the pioneer square residence council and Chris stole my lines but I really would like to reiterate his first point of honoring the district boundaries with

the pioneer square historic preservation district the bia and the metropolitan improvement district it would be great to have all those honors so that our community voice is aligned with all of pioneer square I would like to align with district seven I'm one of residents that lives in district two and those are the last two blocks of pioneer square where interestingly the majority of pioneer square residents live and what the pandemic showed us during these past few years and other trying times is that trying to get attention at city hall with two different council members is incredibly rough even trying to get one person's attention but let alone two so that we could have a solid representation for our district so please align with district seven so that we don't have to face the double duty and the double work I feel like these are community priorities and I'd love to ensure that my neighborhoods needs and challenges are completely excuse me comprehensively represented at city council and thanks for this opportunity."

- **Commissioner Question:** May I ask you a question absolutely uh both district 1 and district 2 need to add over 5000 people yes and the only way for that to happen in in any scenario is to move north right your preference is that pioneer square being district 7 yes if it isn't possible for us to do that you would prefer for pioneer square to be whole in whatever district yes I would prefer that pioneer square have whole representation mostly because of our geographical boundaries we are such a small neighborhood okay thank you.
- **Commissioner Question:** Mr. chair I'm sorry I also have a follow-up question; this is a change from what we've heard previously from advocates and is there an opportunity for you to clarify on why the change or if your organization was involved in the change so we can have a better handle on like the justification
- **Tija Petrovich response:** "I am not quite sure about the previous comments I've always been we've been struggling with the bifurcation of our neighborhood, and we also did hear there was possible chance that we went into three districts, and I thought oh please no that's a lot of homework and a lot of rallying thank you so much."
- **Harald Hyllseth** - "Hello my name is Harold Hyllseth and I am the policy and advocacy manager for Chief Seattle club a native led housing and human services agency presently located in district 7 as well and more specifically pioneer square earlier this year we opened all our first low-income housing property, and all is also home to over 80 local native residents all of whom are members and constituents of district 7. I am providing public comments today to help highlight Chief Seattle club's priorities for the 2022 redistricting process relating to our pioneer square neighborhood and as a representative of Chief Seattle club and our members who live in the pioneer square area we have two priorities for you to consider when engaging with redistricting district 7 that very much aligned with previous comments you've just heard with everything from honoring the existing district boundaries where pioneer square falling to three significant existing district boundaries that were said prior to me so I will not reiterate but I do support those same points and these existing boundaries should be honored to ensure Chief Seattle club's residential member voice is aligned with all of pioneer square moving forward especially when it comes to advocacy and additionally pioneer square facing a challenging future as the neighborhood recovers from the covid 19 pandemics economic impact which demands strong representation on the Seattle city council and the commission should fully place pioneer square in district 7 which would align with the district would align the district with urban neighborhoods experiencing similar challenges to ensure our needs are supported by common

city leaders especially those who we have had a chance to work with in the past and develop relationships we do not believe that attached in to outer neighborhoods with different demographics and challenges faced is the correct placement for us within the council's redistricting efforts I believe the Seattle Redistricting Commission can definitely value Chief Seattle's priorities and identify areas of compromise to ensure our neighborhood's needs and challenges are comprehensively represented at the city council level yeah thank you again for your time today."

- **Yvette Dinish** - "Thank you very much it's good to see you back in the uh public uh chairman nickels thank you um Yvette Dinish I live in district 2 however just to improve in my opinion to improve communications and access between the neighborhoods and the city council no matter how it's redistricted I would sure like to see the neighborhood councils come back they were affected when they were around and due to budget cuts they were eliminated what about eight ten years ago but I've got a lot of feedback I've asked about them a lot of people see the neighborhood councils come back as an effective tool for interacting with the council that's all I have to say and thank you very much."
- **Commissioner Question and Exchange with Commenter Yvette Dinish:** May I ask you a question? What do you identify as your neighborhood ranier beach and you're in district two then yeah does district two represent you well? The boundaries and the population will need to increase but do you feel satisfied that the lines are about right for you being represented?
- **Yvette Dinish Response:** "Well personally and quite frankly for me it doesn't have to do so much with how the district is defined but at who's there who represents us because even you know what we just said we've been saying for years we feel underrepresented no matter who our representative is."
- **Matthew Curry** - "I'm Matthew Curry I'm here as a representative of the south lake union neighborhood for those who don't know the south lake union neighborhood is an urban center in Seattle at the south end of lake union I'll be submitting this map of our neighborhood into the record but essentially I'm here today speaking in support of one primary goal which is for the purpose of representation to keep our neighborhood whole we share a lot of interests with the downtown core and other densely populated areas the map that I just showed also is a zoning map and it indicates the height of the construction the intensity of urban development in our neighborhood and indicates that we share interests with the downtown core denny triangle uptown belltown those areas um I'll make one other comment which is just to speak to the question of border features both natural and built as you contemplate the edges of proposed districts and just wanted to put it out there that we hope that you will not allow natural features to be an impediment to a forward thinking approach to redistricting that really acknowledges the change in demographics across the entire city as one simple example you're currently looking at expanding eastward from district 1 across the duwamish into the area to the east of the duwamish that's an example of crossing a waterway we're fully supportive of that on a similar line we would be supportive of particular areas that share shores of the ship canal and uh neighborhoods along those shores that might have shared uh architectural types community types to potentially be combined if that's what's necessary in order to keep south lake union hole within district 7, thank you."
- **Steve Horvath** - "Thanks very much commissioners and you know you've heard from me before thanks for spending all this time on this challenging process and you know I'm pleasantly

surprised by the number of like minds that have commented tonight my focus in in speaking with you is as a resident of bell town and downtown and you know I've submitted dave's redistricting map and some other feedback in previously and uh the gentleman who just spoke mentioned you know a concern about allowing natural features to be an impediment to a forward-thinking approach and of course we know that the we know what the language and the charter is and it talks about following waterways and natural boundaries and things but I do think that there is sort of uh it seems like there's almost a foregone conclusion and I know that you haven't all made your minds up yet and that's why you're having these sessions but that you know we have articles like one that came out 10 weeks ago in the Seattle times that says literally downtown will likely be carved between districts as district 7 loses territory district 7's population grew an astounding 42 percent over the last decade thanks in large part to a residential construction boom and denny triangle and slu and not just any triangle in slu but also in the rest of downtown and now so thanks for your comments you are not technically part of downtown but that's also what I wanted to mention in that it seems like the charter so you know uh that nobody intentionally drew the four maps we started with to break apart downtown but it just seems like there is there's almost a foregone conclusion that to and if comment was made a little earlier that you know district one has to go somewhere where does it go and you know it can go east it doesn't necessarily have to just go north and uh so I think there's just some interesting opportunities and we obviously think the comprehensive plan of seattle is an incredibly important giant document that the city council and city uh you know employees spend a ton of time on and it just seems like that's somehow in conflict with because the comprehensive plan talks about downtown we have the downtown all kinds of different alliances we have the downtown seattle association whom I'm surprised actually isn't here representing maybe keeping downtown together but that's my whole point to you uh is please if there's any way keep downtown together we're recognized as an incredibly important economic center and an urban center in the city and it just shouldn't be a foregone conclusion that downtown gets carved up into three or four other districts in this process like we wouldn't expect it to in any other process so really appreciate it thanks again."

- **Commissioner Response to Steve Horvath** - "So I don't necessarily I know for me carving up downtown is not a foreground conclusion I don't think that's anything we've said as a commission you mentioned that district one could potentially go east my question to you is where would you suggest it goes east and I think this is such a critical time for this conversation because we are in the final stages of putting together our individual maps and even if we take district 1 all the ways over to i5 and up north until pioneer square we still have to capture about 2000 people so if you have any suggestion on where east you would suggest as that that moment where we should consider I would love to hear that."
- **Steve Horvath** - "I'll be brief because I don't want to take up a lot of other people's time I did submit I might have been the first one just because I was so eager to submit a dave's map to all of you on the commission and you know and that map I didn't explain it I didn't spend a lot of time explaining the past literally is the only goal I had in mind was to keep downtown together I did not spend a lot of time looking at exactly how changing the boundaries of the other six districts other than seven and seven changes quite considerably in what I drew and it's unlike anything of the four other maps um but that is what I would tell you is my best approach to you to how to balance the seven districts and keep downtown it and that includes the CID by the

way keep there are five neighborhoods so that anyway that's hopefully that's helpful I'll definitely go back and take a look thank you for allowing that comment.”

- **Commissioner Malaba question:** “One for comment for you Steve and inviting just the level of collaboration that's going to be necessary here as we listen to the different voices I mean with district 7 we have eighteen thousand plus in terms of the number that has to go down in contracting the district and while I share your concern and value around downtown and the fact that we have a larger rental population there one big question that I will continue to raise is where else do we as we keep this district to get these areas together in one district where do we shift the population to other areas because one that's catching me off guard in particular as we think of district 7 is the change around pioneer square and now having to consider to have pioneer square in district 7. initially I think it was clearer that district 1 was the place where we could have uh pioneer square feet well in terms of drawing the maps and now we're having to rethink if we're keeping pioneer square and all the other neighborhoods in district 7 how do we shift this 18,000 number to get to a point where it's distributed enough to have equal numbers per district so it's more for comments and inviting community members to collectively think with us on how we really can crunch the numbers to a point where it's in alignment with each other thank you.”
- **Commissioner Shah comment:** “Thank you mine is also more of a comment that when I'm stuck on the same thing about keeping moving pioneer square into district 7 as well because I think we get into a conflict between what we've heard from district 2 residents about how far west they'd like to see district one go and keeping the CID whole um so I think those two pieces for me come into a bit of conflict while I would like to do all of it so it's certainly not a foregone conclusion to me either that we're you know we're purposely going to try to break up neighborhoods and just because some things in the Seattle times doesn't make it true but that has to happen so we're doing our best but I do see this you know kind of I don't want to call it a trade-off because that under my it's not a great word to use but a challenging spot right there thank you.”
- **John Pearson** - “I'm John Pearson I live in south lake union and these are my comments but they also reflect the comments of the south lake union chamber I didn't see clearly the principles you were using in doing this job but I'm going to talk about two one is I assume you want in a district areas that have common interest opportunities and challenges and my second principle is I would expect you would want to keep a neighborhood intact and in one district particularly if it has hard borders and different environments across those borders south lake union has a shared urban environment and interest challenge and opportunities with belltown, denny triangle and the downtown keep them together in one council district those share a similar density and zoning and commissioner nickels you should know this as most of the zoning of that happened in your administration, that shared environment includes unfortunately urban type crime and homelessness but also positive things like a need for a downtown school managing challenging urban sparks shared opportunities for commerce business parts and entertainment well the second thing is south lake union keeps out lake union as a whole south lake union has borders on three sides with neighborhoods with characters very different on the west is us-99 or aurora and you would call that a hard boundary across that boundary is a queen anne with zoning and an environment of one to three-story buildings and in south lake union it is a 240 to 400 foot towers to the east is i-5 and I think we'll all agree that's a hard boundary and across

that is capitol hill and the area of capitol hill across there is generally residential with small neighborhood streets so the north is lake union and across the border is water south of our border is denny way and that's a reasonably challenging uh interface but the environment across that border and anyway is very similar to south lake union if we have to reduce the population in district 7 and we do it would seem to me that neighborhoods like magnolia queen anne and interbay have less in common with this downtown environment than south lake union denny triangle and belltown thank you."

- **Commissioner Question** for John Pearson to clarify the north border was is that mercer street as the border for south lake union on the north side.
- **John Pearson** - "It is beyond the mercer on-ramp and there's a couple of streets north of the mercer rest that are in south lake union but the border is water okay on the south side of the water."
- **Linda Yu** - "I just want to reiterate what I just heard from the gentleman before uh John and also Steve I live also in the downtown core by westlake park and I think it's important for all of us have that common interest to be put together in the same district many of the times we work very closely with all the downtown residents condos and um we seldom really you know react or interact with the you know magnolia you know it's a different it's like a different place out there so really it's important when we do this or to really think about again keeping the like for like kind of people together in terms of renters or condo owners we have a lot of challenges this past two years and you know public safety was one of them and I think all of us share some of the you know how did we revive downtown again as well so thank you very much."
- **Paula Mueller** - "I would just like to sort of counter a little bit of what John said because while part of queen anne appears to be heavily single family residential I think if you look at the actual census data you'll find that the majority of queen anne is now renters and those homes that appear to be single-family many of them are actually occupied by multiple unrelated residents who do rent those facilities also I would be very concerned if there was an effort made to somehow bifurcate parts of queen anne the uptown neighborhood of course has its own distinct identity and is recognized as a particular community on its own it's definitely a more dense residential area with some major institutions and though the rest of queen anne may not quite be there I suspect that we are headed more toward that higher density as well just by way of example a project right now that will be literally right on top of queen anne um that will come online in a couple of years and that will have 400 apartment units right at the corner of queen anne and boston so we're quickly becoming much more dense and many of our residents actually work in south lake union and the neighboring areas so we'd like to see queen anne kept as a single community and not divided up thank you."

VII. Next meetings

- The next Seattle Redistricting Commission meeting will be on Tuesday July 26th, 2022, from 12:00 PM – 1:30 PM.
- There will be a Draft Mapping Retreat at the Bertha Knight Landes (BKL) Room at City Hall on the 1st floor at 600 4th Avenue, Seattle, WA 98104 on August 2nd, 2022, from 5:00PM-9:00PM. Please note that only written public comments will be accepted for this meeting.

VIII. Adjourn

- Commission Chair Greg Nickels asked if there was a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Malaba motioned for adjournment, and Commissioner O'Sullivan seconded. The motion for adjournment was approved unanimously with five yes votes.
- The next Seattle Redistricting Commission meeting will be on Tuesday July 26th, 2022, from 12:00 PM – 1:30 PM.
- Questions and comments, please send them to Elsa.Batres-Boni@seattle.gov