



Department Source: Law
To: City Council
From: City Manager & Staff
Council Meeting Date: June 7, 2021
Re: Establishing a Ward Reapportionment Committee

Executive Summary

A resolution has been prepared to establish a Ward Reapportionment Committee. The Committee would make its recommendation on new ward boundaries to the City Council as soon as practicable following the release of 2020 Census data by the Census Bureau.

Discussion

Section 4 of the City Charter requires that the City be divided into six (6) wards comprised of compact and contiguous territory. Ward boundaries are required to be reviewed from time to time, as may be necessary to maintain as nearly as possible an equal number of inhabitants in each ward. The courts have mandated a one person one vote standard under the equal protection clause of the Federal Constitution. As a practical matter, the ward boundary review and adjustment process occurs after each federal decennial census because the census contains the data necessary to determine whether or not ward reapportionment is advisable.

The City Charter and state statutes provide that the Council shall establish ward boundaries by ordinance. No special procedures are specified for drawing up municipal ward boundaries and there is no mandated timeline for completion of the work. In 1981, 1991, 2001, and 2011 the City Council appointed citizen advisory committees to recommend new ward boundaries.

A resolution has been prepared that would establish a seven (7) member Ward Reapportionment Committee. Each Council member would submit to the Mayor the name of one individual residing in the member's ward to serve as the ward's representative. The Mayor would appoint these individuals plus one other City resident to serve on the Committee. The resolution provides for the Mayor to appoint a chairperson and vice-chairperson.

The Census Bureau has made a commitment to provide tabulated data necessary for redistricting by September 30, 2021. The Committee would need to make its final report to the Council as soon as practicable following the release of 2020 Census data by the Census Bureau. The report would consist of recommendations on new ward boundaries with comparative population figures. The Committee is authorized to submit alternate plans.

In drawing proposed boundaries, the Committee must adhere to the following principles:

1. The wards of the City should be as equal in population as the data available permits;



2. The reapportionment of the wards should be brought about in such a manner as to best serve the needs of existing neighborhoods, neighborhood associations, business districts, and other recognizable demographic features wherever possible; and

3. The wards should be compact units drawn in such a manner so as to be readily understood by the voters and to contain contiguous existing neighborhoods, neighborhood associations, business districts and other demographic features with an identifiable community of interest.

After more information becomes available regarding release of the 2020 Census data, the Council will need to make a determination as to whether or not reapportionment will apply to the April 2022 municipal election. By City Charter, a candidate for City Council may file nominating petitions beginning on the last Tuesday in October, which will be October 26, 2021. Nominating petitions are required to be signed by registered voters entitled to vote for the candidate nominated, so the ward boundaries must be definite in order to identify in which ward a petition signer is eligible to vote and whether or not a submitted petition is valid. An ordinance establishing new ward boundaries would need to be introduced at the October 4th Council meeting and acted upon no later than the October 18th Council meeting in order to go into effect prior to the opening of the filing period.

Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: None.
Long-Term Impact: None.

Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impact

Strategic Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Operational Excellence, Secondary Impact: Social Equity, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

Comprehensive Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Not Applicable, Secondary Impact: Not applicable, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

Legislative History

Date	Action
05/02/2011	R66-11A – Established a Ward Reapportionment Committee to make recommendations on new ward boundaries.

Suggested Council Action

Adoption of the resolution.