

MEETING DATE: March 2, 2022

ITEM # 19

**SUBJECT:**

**PUBLIC HEARING TO RECEIVE RESIDENT AND COUNCIL INPUT ON COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST RELATED TO THE CITY'S TRANSITION TO DISTRICT-BASED ELECTIONS**

**INITIATED OR REQUESTED BY:**

Council     Staff  
 Other

**REPORT COORDINATED OR PREPARED BY:**

Jon Robinson, Deputy City Manager  
**City Manager's Office**

**ATTACHMENT**     Yes     No     Information     Direction     Action

**OBJECTIVE**

The purpose of this report is to present the Council with the initial feedback from residents regarding their communities of interest, and to solicit additional input from residents and the Council in order to inform the development of the initial set of draft district maps consistent with the California Voting Rights Act (CVRA).

**RECOMMENDED ACTION**

Staff respectfully recommends that the Council hear the presentation from Redistricting Partners, receive public comment, and provide feedback about communities of interest in West Sacramento.

**BACKGROUND**

At the Council's meeting of February 2, the Council heard a presentation from the City's consultant, Redistricting Partners, which provided background on the districting process. As noted in that presentation, state and federal law contain requirements for voting districts, including that they are:

- Relatively equal in size
- Geographically and functionally contiguous
- Compact
- Follow existing neighborhood lines
- Easily identifiable and understandable by residents
- Generally consistent with existing communities of interest

The first four items noted above are functions of geometry that can be applied by Redistricting Partners to any draft maps. The last three items are largely based on subjective resident perceptions, so public input on these issues is necessary to inform the initial draft maps themselves. For example, residents might perceive their "community of interest" as an area inhabited by residents who share language or cultural ties, served by the same bus line or school, or featuring similar housing types.

Following the Council meeting of February 2, staff and Redistricting Partners have collaborated to present two public outreach sessions via Zoom, one at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday February 22, and another on Saturday February 26. Residents were notified of these meetings via e-mail, social media, and utility bill inserts (to the cycles that were due during the period preceding the meetings – about 8,000 residents). Additionally, staff e-mailed flyers to local churches, requested the assistance of the Bryte/Broderick Community Action Network (BBCAN) to post flyers, placed ads on Russian language social media, ask the Chamber and school district to share on their social media channels, used the Public Works roadside message signs to advertise the meetings, and asked City staff to spread the word to their community contacts.

Despite these efforts, only eight residents attended the meeting of February 22. Redistricting Partners notes that low attendance at districting and re-districting outreach meetings is a trend that they're seeing in various jurisdictions around the state. However, staff will continue to promote these meetings through every means available in an effort to increase turnout at future events. To this end, a separate report on tonight's agenda requests additional appropriations for Russian-language and non-electronic outreach.

At the meetings of February 22, Redistricting Partners staff explained the districting process to the group, showed meeting participants how to use the Districtr software online, and solicited feedback on communities of interest. The primary comment from this audience was that there is a significant Hispanic population in Bryte and Broderick that should be considered during the process. The meeting of February 26 will have the same agenda

but will include a Spanish translation option. This meeting will occur after this report is finalized, so staff and Redistricting Partners will more fully debrief both of these events at the Council meeting of March 2.

The online format of these meetings unavoidably makes it more difficult for residents without internet access to participate. To facilitate input from those residents at future meetings, blank paper maps and multi-lingual instructions will be placed at the Arthur F. Turner Library, and the availability of those maps announced at upcoming public meetings. Staff will continue to use digital and non-digital means to inform residents that they can go to the Arthur F. Turner Library to provide districting ideas on paper, or to receive assistance sending their ideas to Redistricting Partners via the Districtr software, which library staff have been trained to use.

### **ANALYSIS**

Staff and Redistricting Partners will provide an overview of community input to date at the Council's meeting of March 2.

Besides being responsible for ultimately choosing a set of districts that comply with applicable law and reflect the community's wishes, City Council members have probably spent more time thinking about West Sacramento's constituencies than any other resident and are therefore uniquely situated to comment on the appropriate boundaries for the communities of interest that will influence the first draft maps. Staff requests that the Council review this report, the presentation from Redistricting Partners, and the public testimony provided at tonight's meeting, and provide feedback.

### **Next Steps**

Redistricting Partners will use the feedback provided at the first two meetings, along with the Council's and community's comments this evening, as a starting point from which to create draft district maps, which will be presented for the Council's comment at your meeting of March 16. State law requires that the maps be made public a week prior to the meeting of the 16<sup>th</sup>, so staff will place them on the City's website and publicize their availability at that time.

The preliminary draft maps that get released one week prior to the meeting of March 16 will include a labeling system to define the various districts, as well as possible sequencing for the upcoming districted elections. Neither the labeling system nor the potential sequencing are staff recommendations; both are provided purely for convenience, and to comply with Elections Code Section 10010(a)(2), which requires the Council to discuss a potential sequence of elections along with the draft maps. The Council retains the full prerogative to make a final decision on district boundaries and election sequencing later in the process, in accordance with the CVRA.

### **Environmental Considerations**

This action is not a project that is subject to CEQA because it is not an activity that may cause either a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment. (Pub. Resources Code, § 21065; CEQA Guidelines §§ 15060(c), 15378(a).)

### **Commission Recommendation**

N/A

### **Strategic Plan Integration**

N/A

### **Alternatives**

As an alternative to staff's recommended action, the Council could decline to hear the presentation and/or provide feedback. Staff does not recommend this approach because it would delay the City's progress towards districted elections, which is on a tight schedule in order to be complete in time for the November, 2022 election.

### **Coordination and Review**

This report was prepared by the City Manager's Office, in collaboration with the City Attorney.

### **Budget/Cost Impact**

N/A

### **ATTACHMENT(S)**

None