September 10, 2013

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Dear Commissioners:

<u>Congratulations.</u> It is my understanding that that the commission has selected a mapping firm. Congratulations.

<u>Conflicting and Incomplete Data.</u> It is easy at this stage to inadvertently create problems. There are many ways in which the use of incomplete or inaccurate data now can create major problems, even litigation, later. These issues have always existed, but redistricting is like peeling an onion. There are repeated layers of complexity. I ask that you make clear to the mapping firm that it address each of the following:

1. Use of accurate 2012 precinct maps of the city **with all annexations**. Many of the election precincts on the edge of the city have only a slice of the city in them. Each slice must be included in a city district in the final plan. It is always easy to overlook these areas[1] especially when they have come through recent annexations. The county registrar has to deal with this issue every time the city annexes an area and an understanding of all such annexations and how voters in these outlier precincts vote are critical.

2. **Confirmation of the accuracy of the database of demographics for the VTDs being used for redistricting.** This is **not** a check of the census, but a check of the conversion of the census data from census geography to voting tabulation districts (VTDs). To create a VTD, the census data must be assigned to the geography of the election precincts. This assignment is **not** done by the census bureau for election precincts created or changed after the census is taken (i.e. 2010). Thus, the assignment must be made manually by some group or organization. Such an assignment of 2010 census data according to 2012 election precincts was done by the Legislative Council and, as discussed below, by the city for its submission for preclearance. At least one of the unsuccessful mapping bidders said he had also prepared such a database. Your mapping expert can utilize this existing work (especially the work already done on behalf of the city). This commission should not pay the mapping expert for the time it takes to make this assignment of census data to election precincts if, as in this case, the database already exists and is available. However, **there is always the possibility of error in such assignments so the results must be**

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[1] Just a historical note, the Texas Legislature once left an entire county (Swisher) out of its final redistricting plan. On another occasion, the Legislative Redistricting Board forgot to assign some census areas in Williamson County. It can happen.

checked. The usual check is by comparing the demographic results of the various databases (i.e. the Legislative Council and the City assignments) and understanding any differences.

Maps and databases are not always comparable in their accuracy. It is easy for mistakes to creep into the process.

The best source of demographic information for the city.   I have never understood why this commission has not had immediate access to reliable demographic information for the city, both in hard and electronic format. The most reliable source of the boundaries of the city and the demographics of city election precincts has existed in plain sight all along in the city's massive submission of Proposition 3 for preclearance. You may recall that the city submitted the election change in May before the Supreme Court invalidated the preclearance requirement. By law, this submission must contain complete, accurate, and very specific boundary and demographic information. I am sure it does. The commission's executive director should be able to arrange for your mapping expert to immediately obtain access to this information. I urge that the commission's mapping expert be directed to contact the persons (probably Syd Falk and Sherry McCall) that prepared the submission and gain access and confidence in the data in the submission.

In the meantime, as promised to this commission, I have asked the Legislative Council to again send by e-mail the demographic information that it earlier left with the commission during its demonstration of mapping software.

Optimism. I remain optimistic that the work of this commission will be completed on schedule, even possibly in time for inclusion of the city districts on the voter registrar cards. The ability to achieve this latter result depends on several factors, such as the use of existing election precincts (instead of census blocks) to minimize or avoid the need for county officials to redraw the election precincts and reregister voters, coordination with the county voter registration office (all county officials are committed to the success of 10-1 and will help) as city districts are drawn and the county's realization that the December 5th date for mailing the registration cards is "directory" and not "mandatory." Ultimately, the answer lies in the same dedication to success by all of us that has marked the work of the members of this commission.

Thank you.

Steve Bickerstaff