

Commissioners,

Prior to your September 21st mapping session, I am in favor of a “Far South” Austin District that is a “layer cake” approach, providing a district oriented east-west along and south of Slaughter Lane leaving the VRA compliant districts proposed by AGR intact. Accommodating this approach would have afforded a second proposed east-west district along Hwy 71 for OHAN. Accepting both the OHAN map and the AGR map would result in what is now called District 5 becoming squeezed into a narrow, gerrymandered district stretching from the Hays/Travis County line to Lady Bird lake. Your initial map on 9/21 reflected that you agreed with our suggested approach.

Even with the summary changes in favor of OHAN you made on September 28th, the resulting District 5 was still compact and viable. Ironically your numerous and seemingly unnecessary actions in remapping South Austin on November 4th now leave a District 5 map that does just what we meant in our original map presentation. District 5 is at this point no longer compact nor homogeneous. All of us who were content with your effort are now no doubt unhappy and residents of Barton Hills, Zilker environs et. al., are likely equally dismayed.

From your September 28th Preliminary map until November 4th, District 5 was drawn as a reasonably compact “Far South Austin” District that was within 3,050 of target population, *easily fixed* by adding back Precinct 315, uniting Shady Hollow and unifying south Boggy Creek. District 5, as you had drawn it in response to public input, contained many neighborhoods of common interest. Numerous public speakers and written communications confirmed to you that citizens of the preliminary District 5 were uniformly satisfied especially with the district boundaries that included Ben White (Hwy 71) on the north and Brodie Lane on the west.

On Saturday, Nov. 2, and on Tuesday evening, however, you made what might have been the fine tuning you described into a series of wholesale changes, each rippling into more changes just to rebalance the former. In the north, one or two commissioners drove countless changes to Districts 6 and 10, rotating both counter-clockwise. Instead of tradeoffs between draft Districts 6 and 10 to make both more compact, it resulted in dumping population into District 9. Further changes to Travis Heights precincts changed population in District 3 and further inflated 9. As you recall, that started a whole clockwise rotation in the Southern districts. Merely changing Travis Heights' southern precinct and solving District 3 for “packing” concerns could seemingly have been done with far less unrest to Districts that was largely on target and nearly done. Simple tradeoffs between 2 and 3 and 7 and 9 and “tweaks” elsewhere might have originally been possible.

Inexplicably, at your last meeting someone revisited the District 5 map from Nov. 2nd and unnecessarily reversed Shady Hollow precincts 302 and 315, reassigning them to District 8. Understandably, that created a population shortage for 5 that they compensated for by adding back precinct 352. Later your District 2 focus team wound up chopped heavily into the east precincts of District 5, with a number of precincts being split as well creating another

population shortage. Those actions made the district far less compact due to the self inflicted population shortage driving the district boundary north of Hwy 71 even further breaking up the identity of district 5 as a "Far South" district and splitting western 78704 into an unnatural combination with the most southern Travis County precincts. Districts 5 and 2 are now both very elongated with many areas such as 447 and the surrounding area, Shady Hollow and Barton Hills/Zilker, being re-divided.

Late in your Tuesday evening meeting, a number of you expressed real concern that the changes had been far too numerous than necessary and had been made without fully vetting the impact on what you had meticulously built in response to public input. Accommodating some groups had impacted others who caught the end of the domino effect. District 5, then, is a byproduct of the ripple effects that transpired. The concerns several of you expressed were seemingly set aside in favor of the expediency of rebalancing population numbers. Given the lasting effect of your decisions please don't acquiesce in the interest of time.

To restore compactness and logic to the District 5 design, on behalf of those of us in the South, please revisit the following changes you have made this week:

- work on paring back the Barton Hills/Zilker precincts 340, 332 and 342 just added. -restore Precinct 315 (Shady Hollow) to District 5
- do not split 302
- wait for future annexation adjustment to give Mopac population to 8 and the rest to 5. -do not reverse 315 assignment to 5.
- work to restore to 5 some of the eastern area you carved out for District 2.

Respectfully,  
Bud Welch 78748