

November 13, 2013

Good day Commissioners and Mr. Tounget,

Please let me begin by stating again that I do not claim to be an official representative of any group and any testimony or requests I submit are based only on personal observation and numerous conversations with neighbors and community members.

I respectfully request that the Commission revisit the boundaries of District 5 as reconfigured during the work sessions on November 4 and 6. For the many weeks of the districting process the Commission had expressed recognition of, and action toward, certain principles in regard to what was to be essentially a far south-central district, which became designated District 5. Chief among those was a relatively compact district encompassing an area that recognized commonalities of interest. By the September 28 iteration of the district maps commissioners publicly-and repeatedly-acknowledged the importance of maintaining the integrity of the South Austin Combined Neighborhood and, to a somewhat lesser extent, a northern boundary of, or near, Ben White Blvd.

In the early November meetings, after commissioners had stated they were pleased with the look of District 5, Districts 2 and 3 were revisited, not because the voting age populations did not comply with VRA standards, but to "see if we can make them a little better." The resulting cutting of precincts and blocks-notably removing precincts 446, 425, and 447 from District 5-split the South Austin Combined Neighborhood into not two, but three districts. Further, because of the resultant population shifts, it was deemed necessary to extend the northern boundary of District 5 to Lady Bird Lake (later amended to Barton Springs Rd.). District 5 became a narrow strip which snakes from Barton Creek near Lady Bird Lake in the center of the city, all the way to Onion Creek at the southern city limits.

I am asking that the Commission, at the very least, look into restoring precincts 446, 425, and 447 to District 5 and make the SACN wholly within one district. This point has been a stated priority for our community throughout the process, and the reasons have been presented repeatedly by many residents and neighborhood leaders. I would also ask the Commission to take up Commissioner Costello's suggestion at the November 6 meeting to at least entertain the idea of moving precincts 342, 332, and 340 back into District 9 with the possibility of adjustments being made on that district's northern boundary (Pct. 461 seems to be acceptable to those in the SACN who have expressed an opinion).

I understand these actions would run contrary to statements that only administrative changes will be made at this point, but we have seen other significant revisions made after maps were declared to be essentially set. I also appreciate the time and effort each commissioner has put into this process and sympathize with fatigue and the occasional frustration. Therefore, I, among others, beg your indulgence during this last public input phase, and ask you to summon the endurance to make one last attempt to reconstitute that which you spent so many weeks crafting. As always, I offer my unwavering gratitude for your service and dedication to our city.

Sincerely,

Ken Craig

Pct. 447