

Hello Commissioners,

I was at the Saturday meeting for public input, and want to thank you for your efforts.

But the primary reason I'm reaching out is the deadline in the City Charter (Nov 1) and what that implies given our lack of census data due to Covid delays.

At the meeting, I had some discussions with a few of you about the dismal turnout and lack of public engagement, and I think it's clear that people will not pay much attention until preliminary maps are issued, and then people will mobilize and have opinions, but this will take time, and I'm worried about how legitimate the process will feel to people if there is so little time between the preliminary map and the final approved map. If I recall correctly, the first time we did this, the process from first map to final map took nearly 3 months, and there were easily a half dozen proposed alternate maps in between from various groups which slowly shaped the process. While you do not need to start from scratch this time, I would not underestimate the pushback of neighborhoods being reshuffled.

The committee's own timeline shows that it does not anticipate having appropriate census data and online tools until the end of SEPTEMBER .

This pretty much means that the entire process of crunching the data, creating preliminary maps, distributing them, collecting feedback and forums, revising the maps, having another round of public comment, and then revising them again to a final proposal, and voting on it has to happen in the nearly unfathomable timeframe of about five weeks by an all-volunteer staff. As someone who was involved in the first round of creating maps, the technical aspects alone of this endeavor make this seem like a disaster waiting to happen, and the accusations of a "rushed approval process" are just almost inevitable.

Given this possibility, I looked at the actual charter text, which includes this:

If the commission does not adopt a final plan by the dates in this section, the city attorney for the City of Austin shall immediately petition state court for an order prescribing the boundary lines of the single-member districts in accordance with the redistricting criteria and requirements set forth in this section. The plan prescribed by the court shall be used for all subsequent city council elections **until a final plan is adopted by the commission to replace it.**

So, the last line to me reads like it gives us some latitude. It does not preclude the panel from being a month late and still use their map for the next election. Does it? Sure, it requires the City Attorney to "immediately" petition for a court solution, but that doesn't mean we will ever be bound by it if the commission finishes its work in a reasonably timely manner.

By this I mean to suggest that a conversation begin to discuss what the options are for a more reasonable timeline to create the districts. Such a conversation might necessarily include soliciting legal opinions from the City Attorney and advising Council. It would seem prudent to create this Plan B with enough lead time so that it can maybe become Plan A, and have a less stressful, less time compressed

process. We have to live with these districts for a decade, so taking a few extra weeks seems like a worthy investment.

Thanks for listening. I apologize if I am stating the obvious.

Javier Bonafont
Writer - Director - Prod Designer

CineFont

