

Minutes for Redistricting Reform Regional Public Meeting - Easton
Talbot County Community Center
10028 Ocean Gateway, Easton, MD 21601
October 6, 2015
1:00pm

Call to Order at 1:06 pm

Attending: Carol Ramirez, Walter Olson, Alex Williams, Michael Goff, Chris Summers, Tessa Hill-Aston, Sen. Joan Carter Conway, Sen. Steve Waugh, Del. Alonzo Washington, Del. Jason Buckel

Not Attending: Ashley Oleson

Alex Williams welcomes members to Easton

- Commission tasked with conducting public summits to hear from and allow citizens to offer ideas and input on redistricting reform
- Commission also allows public to submit comments on website
- Commission further charge is to issue report to Governor Hogan, Speaker Busch, and President Miller
- This is the fourth of fifth public hearings
- We were in Waldorf last week
- Delighted to be representing the eastern shore
- Introductions by commission members

Alex Williams invites Congressman Andy Harris to speak

Congressman Andy Harris, 1st Congressional District

- Applauds the governor for starting commission
- In 2002 the state had to overturn the district map
- Not fair to the citizens
- In 2012 I was on the other end of it
- The process was flawed
- In 2012 I got a district that was more republican then the district I was previously
 - This caused other republican districts to be packed into my district
- In other circumstances packing districts is not allowed
- After 2002 election joined with Sen. Brochin to create more objective way to how our constitution wants state districts to be
- In DC district 3 is famous
- The eastern shore of Maryland should have some attention because we need to keep areas of like issue sets together
- At federal level if we don't keep rural districts together we have a real problem
- Tendency to dilute rural votes with non-rural votes

- Pay attention to basic interests of economy
- Federal law before 1929 had compactness and in 1929 congress removed this
- Eight bills before congress right now
- Would not wait on federal government to do anything
- Current bills in front of congress don't address what we are talking about
- Congressman Delaney has filed a bill to set a study in place, means way off in the future
- The final thing to look at is single member districts vs. three member districts
- Found it strange that some people would call senator and could contact two delegates or one
- Everyone should have one state senator and one delegate
- Thanks governor for putting commission together
- Process to reform makes it look more like state process

Questions by Commission Members to Congressman Andy Harris

- Sen. Conway asks Congressman Harris is it about compactness? Delegate O'Donnell talked about single member districts in Waldorf.
 - Congressman Harris responds this is true in state senate and in congress areas where you call for help. Someone with three delegates advocating have greater representation. Make even districts.
- Sen. Conway said districts are based on population, it's not about land mass, it's about the amount of people that live in the area. In 2002, Sen. Conway had Congressman Harris's districts.
 - Congressman Harris responds point is well taken.
- Chris Summers ask Congressman Harris what congress has introduced on redistricting?
 - Congressman Harris responds 7 deal with more or less what is happening in Texas, could involve Arizona or California.
 - Six were proposed by democrats one was proposed by republican
- Michael Goff asks when state engages in redistricting do you think congressman engage legislators on a local level. Is politics limited to a state level?
 - Congressman Harris said he wasn't invited to comment on a state level
 - Congressman Harris benefited from redistricting, but should you give preference to sitting incumbents? And should you pack a district?
 - His district goes from Ocean City to Harford Co., is this right?
- Carol Ramirez asks would you be in favor of an independent commission?
 - Congressman Harris responds yes, sponsored a bill with Jim Brochin when he was in senate
- Sen. Conway said most of my time and my involvement with map drawing we have thought it's unfair. You limit the number of minority majority districts, we didn't like the

7th congressional district, went from Baltimore City to Baltimore County to Howard County.

- Congressman Harris says geographical and land population isn't enough, need linked interests that go beyond compactness
- Del. Washington says you mentioned you are in favor of an independent redistricting commission. Are you in favor of every state to have an independent redistricting commission?
 - Congressman Harris responds yes, I think that would be helpful
- Walter Olson asks would you urge legislators in TX, NC, etc. to have independent commissions?
 - Congressman Harris responds yes
 - He says he wants everyone to feel properly represented

Senator Steve Hershey

- First would like to thank Governor Hogan for putting together commission
- A lot of work involved
- District 36 and 37 have a residency requirement for a specific county
- This is different from legislative districts across the state
- Because land mass and population are so broad
- His districts represent 4 different counties
- Do that 4 different times, possibility of one county being left out
- Haven't had representation for Cecil County for long time, but now have Del. Ghrist
- Whether three member or single member district, the point is we need to be consistent
- In my district three member districts work the best, but not the way that we see districts elsewhere
- In favor of independent counsel to look over maps
- Current process limits conversation
- Need to look at what is going on in other states
- Frustrating to have to wait and take a back seat on good governance, doesn't make sense

Questions by Commission Members to Sen. Hershey

- Walter Olson asked about his district residency
 - Sen. Hershey responds it is in state statute
 - Single member districts wouldn't work in my district

Delegate Johnny Mautz

- Welcome everyone to Easton and Talbot county
- Helpful to share his experiences
- He has four counties and two delegates
- Resides in Talbot Co.
- Also in district that is a piece of Caroline Co.

- Struggle to keep pace with how issues are resolved and who is dealing with them
- Confusion over who to call and what district they are in
- Elliot's Island is in our district and it would take you an hour and a half to get there
- Hardship for constituents
- Should be weighed heavily and taken into consideration

Questions by Commission Members to Del. Mautz

- Alex Williams asks how do we fix your district?
 - Del. Mautz responds by supporting an independent commission. Integrity should be the common standard so constituents are most fairly represented.

Delegate Jeff Ghrist

- Thanks everyone for coming
- Important issue
- Did research
- Back in 2012 the redistricting committee had figured out ideal members for each district
- The more people you represent the more challenging it is for the representatives and constituents
- The first district is 42B, shows population representing 1,900 more people compared to what was deemed ideal
- Sorted numbers off of MDP website
- Look at back of page of delegates that represent fewer than what is ideal
- Land mass matters when it comes to representing constituents
- Fewer people in county than what is ideal
- Represent folks in Cecil co.
- How do we fix this?
- Makes things more challenging if trying to represent someone in Elkton

Questions by Commission Members to Del. Ghrist

- Walter Olson asks would you say the odds were fixed? Judging from numbers.
 - Del. Ghrist says didn't want to be biased or to partisan
 - Followed through with district lines
 - Want to make sure land area truly matters
 - Wants number as matter of fairness to cut deficit in half
- Michael Goff thanks for data. To play devil's advocate is it good to have legislators from outside of area from the standpoint of good government? Need more diverse legislators instead of homogeneous.
 - Del. Ghrist said he agrees, but hopes we can and will work together. More issue of sheer distance. His constituents don't really know who he is. For our district three member is the way to go. Single member districts are not fair. Three member are the most fair.

David Ladd

- Turns 73 this year and can look at what is happening to country
- Advocacy and ill feeling in congress due to whole issue of gerrymandering
- Want to look at what we can do in Maryland and what would be best for the country
- What will be the best for our state and for our country?
- Look at compactness and having districts that geographically make sense
- Work together to compromise

Catherine Poel

- Agrees with Andy Harris
- Need to have nonpartisan commission to study gerrymandering
- Not as bad as Texas, but also don't want fish hook
- Needs to be more fair
- Upper shore belongs closer to Harford, knows this is a ridiculous sized district
- Needs diversity

John Joyce

- Have had a big picture about what this is about
- Going back to Boston history, not unique
- Still don't have a solution
- Different regions of the state that have unique associations
- Financial incentives for us to come up with new way for us to have representation
- As citizen of Talbot County works in Columbia
- Need to look at things such as town, county, region, and a state
- Need to rethink whole map as far as what the state represents
- Asks Del. Washington if DC could become part of the population?
 - Del. Washington responds far-fetched idea, bit is out there

Walter Olson makes presentation, reviewing Bruce Cain's article *Redistricting Commissions: A Better Political Buffer?*

- Part of charge from governor is to look at how redistricting has worked in other states
- Professor Cain starts out with overview of other types of commissions
- Back up commissions, advisory commissions, civilian commissions
- In Iowa legislature has to turn down advisory commission three times
- Arizona and California has authority by itself
- Professor Cain goes into detail that Iowa is an easy state to work for
- Almost a rectangle, very flat
- Unusual features
- California had a ballot initiative, republicans were upset
- He asked what went right and what went wrong
- How to staff commission made a big difference
- Most redistricting commissions have familiarly worked with a certain party
- Have to make sure you are choosing the right outside consultant
- In Arizona the governor tried to fire the head of the panel
- There are a lot of hopeful techniques

- Greater role for public openness
- Open source software said it's going to improve the commission's work
- Doesn't agree with all of the points, but thought provoking
- Alex Williams ask Walter question, what does nonpartisan commission mean?
 - Walter says each state differs. The political pressure is sometimes almost unbearable. Better plan is to have more than one independent or non-affiliated on a commission.

Dan Watson

- From Talbot County
- Thanks for service
- Strongly endorses an independent and empowered commission
- Question is how do you create a non-partisan commission
- To create a commission that is independent in name, not partisan
- It slips so easily into inside baseball
- One delegate talked about inconvenience of driving from one district to another
- Building districts to run for office, not the other way around
- Not with standing there intention
- Endorse proposition raised by Mr. Goff.
- Be useful to have more diversity within a district to serve their constituency

Question by Commission Members to Dan Watson

- Sen. Conway asked what was so revealing about conversation between Andy Harris and myself?
 - Dan responds it appears there is a direct impact on individual politicians that is self-evident. Reference to Congressman Harris that people who are inside ball park have hard time decisions. Mean to suggest that compactness and geographic issues ought to drive the bus, then political representatives come from that framework and not the other way around.
- Sen. Conway says need integrity and fairness. Need to follow one man one vote and Voting Rights Act. It wouldn't matter in terms of district for me because I have worked all over Baltimore. People realize I work hard and have integrity, but even bigger I care about the state of Maryland.
- Carol Ramirez asks if he has ideas on how to come up with independent people to come up with this commission?
 - Dan responds that he would like to think about it and offer his comments on the website.
- Michael Goff responds Madison said, "No man should be a judge in his own cause."

Libby Darkus

- Disappointed in turnout, we complain, but when it comes to a meeting where we might have some influence we don't attend
- At a point in life when you have family and responsibility it is hard to attend
- My overall statement is there is obviously gerrymandering occurring
- Went on to get certain people elected to power
- And that is not what the founders wanted
- Obvious and blatant, makes your blood boil
- The needs in various sections of the state of Maryland are totally different compared to the attitudes and way of life
- We've got to do something
- In Talbot county have two distinct groups
- Have to be fair
- Have a greater perspective from up here

Kevin Waterman

- Agree with other speakers that we need reform
- Figure out top priorities for redistricting
- Create maps using software
- Put limitations in place on how far the lines can divert
- Put limits on how much the lines can change

Joe Brown

- From Queen Anne's Co.
- A non-partisan commission sounds like a good idea to me
- Need to look at the numbers and go from there

Motion to approve Minutes

Second all minutes approved

Adjourned at 2:43pm