

AD HOC COMMITTEE ON REDISTRICTING MEETING MINUTES  
February 24, 2011

The Ad Hoc Committee on Redistricting of the Broome County Legislature met on Thursday, February 24, 2011 in the Legislative Conference Room, Sixth Floor, Edwin L. Crawford County Office Building, Binghamton, New York.

Members Present: R. Keibel (Chair), R. Locker, D. J. Reynolds, M. Whalen, D. D. Reynolds, J. Laughney, V. Pasquale, M. Turna

Members Absent: M. Johnson

Others Present: J. Marinich, M. Pasquale, M. Diffendorf, J. Lewis, J. Black, J. Hutchings, J. Garnar, J. Merrill, A. Martin, J. Baumgartner, L. Rogers, R. O'Donnell, Legislature; P. Brennan, County Exec's Office; M. Gerchman, OMB; D. English, GIS; J. Campbell, Press & Sun-Bulletin

The Ad Hoc Committee meeting was called to order by the Chairman at 4:03 PM.

First order of business: Chairman Keibel started the meeting by introducing the members.

1. Representing the Majority party of the Legislature, Mr. D. J. Reynolds and Mr. Locker;
2. Representing the Minority party of the Legislature, Mr. Whalen and Mr. D. D. Reynolds,
3. Representing various publics: Mr. Joseph Laughney, Mr. Vincent Pasquale, Ms. Turna, Association of Towns and Villages, Ms. Johnson, League of Women Voters.

2. The County Planning Department had prepared 2 maps for Committee review. The first map is of the current County Legislative Districts and second map is of the proposed Election Districts. Copies were distributed everyone in attendance. Chairman Keibel noted that the Election District map contains the population of each district from the 2000 census. The population from the 2010 Census is expected in March 2011 and the County Planning Department will update the Election District map at that time. Significant changes in the population in any election district may cause the boundaries of that district to be modified to conform to election law. The Planning Department will alert the Committee of changes.

Chairman Keibel asked the Committee members and others present to please refrain from requesting maps relating to redistricting directly from the Planning Department. Please forward all requests for maps to either the Chairman or staff (Mr. Baumgartner). Otherwise with so many interested parties, the map making workload could quickly get out of hand.

Chairman Keibel then requested the members of the committee discuss with other Legislators and their respective parties which incumbents would not be seeking re-election in 2012. The Legislature is going to lose four districts in the 2012 general election (15 Legislative Districts).

Mr. Whalen then stated that though many incumbent Legislators bring valuable experience and serve their constituents well, the Committee should focus on respecting the voters and not protecting incumbents.

Mr. Whalen asked when the 2010 Census data is available how will the Election District boundaries be modified. Mr. English stated that GIS would take suggestions from the Committee after the data is compiled. Mr. Keibel stated that Mr. English will adjust the proposed Election Districts first to ensure that the Election Districts have roughly equal population.

Mr. V. Pasquale asked how the number of 138 proposed Election Districts was chosen. Mr. English stated that the current number of 190 is not aggregated by Census geography and that the 138 has been based on census block data to create approximately equal population.

Mr. Laughney requested that the Committee also be given larger maps of the proposed Election Districts for the City of Binghamton, Town of Union and the Town of Vestal.

3. Chairman Keibel then asked for copies of “standards” to be used in redistricting to be distributed. The “standards” have been gathered from a wide variety of sources including:

1. New York State Municipal Home Rule Law,
2. New York State Constitution,
3. Voting Rights Act,
4. League of Women Voters, and the
5. United States Supreme Court.

Chairman Keibel noted that in performing redistricting that some standards conflict with each other. He tasked the committee members to review the standards and to be prepared to discuss and prioritize various standards at the next meeting.

Mr. V. Pasquale asked what the estimated population should be for the new Legislative Districts. Mr. Keibel stated the estimate of 13,000 people plus or minus 5%. He also stated that the Committee will have a better understanding when the 2010 Census data is released.

4. Communication and information: Mr. Baumgartner stated that under the Legislature page on Broome County’s website there is going to be a section for the Committee which will include links to the maps, agendas for future meetings and the minutes from previous meetings.

5. Timeline: Mr. Keibel stated that he would like the Committee to complete its objectives by the end of May.

He also stated that due to the fact the 2010 Census data is not released until mid-March the next meeting of the committee will take place on March 16, 2011, date of March Legislative Session, at 4:00pm in the Legislative Conference Room.

Mr. D. D. Reynolds stated that he has not seen and would like to see the Committee formation notice. He also stated that he believes that there should a representative from Binghamton University and Broome Community College on the Committee to add an educational and non-partisan viewpoint. Mr. Keibel stated that while the Committee makeup has been determined, the Committee would welcome feedback and information from both institutions.

Mr. Whalen asked about having a Public Hearing. Mr. D. J. Reynolds stated that a public comment period would be more suitable. Mr. Keibel stated that a Public Hearing is not required and that members of the Committee should strongly urge the public to view all of the maps and proposals online. He also stated that the meetings of the Ad Hoc Committee are open to the public and he would gladly afford anyone the opportunity to speak at the meetings.

6. Next meeting: March 16, 2011 at 4pm in the Legislature Conference Room.

There being no further business to come before the Committee at this time, a motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Whalen, seconded by Mr. D. J. Reynolds. The meeting adjourned at 4:23 PM.