

**CITY OF NORWALK  
REAPPORTIONMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
REGULAR MEETING  
SEPTEMBER 12, 2024**

**ATTENDANCE:** Kenneth D'Arinzo, Chair; Diane Cece, Scott Goodwin, Jody Proct, Diana Paladino Christopher; Brenda Penn-Williams, Susan Remson; Khea Gibbs (6:10 p.m.); Stuart Wells (6:30 p.m.)

**OTHERS:** Priti Mathur, ARCBridge; Sam Mathur, ARCBridge

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. D'Arinzo called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Mr. D'Arinzo called the roll. A quorum was present.

**III. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES**

**• September 5, 2024 Regular Meeting**

**\*\* MR. GOODWIN MOVED THE MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 5, 2024.**

**\*\* MS. PROCT SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 5, 2024 AS SUBMITTED PASSED WITH FIVE (5) IN FAVOR (D'ARINZO, CECE, GOODWIN, PROCT AND PENN-WILLIAMS) ONE (1) ABSTENTION (PALADINO).**

**IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no one present who wished to address the Committee at this time.

**V. DISCUSSION**

Mr. D'Arinzo gave a brief overview on the upcoming timeline by explaining that the Committee should formalize their recommendations this evening, as far as what everybody's preferences are, because next week's meeting would be the meeting that the Committee would have to finalize things, and then the public hearing is on September 25th, which is not a Thursday.

He then welcomed Ms. Paladino to the group and said that Ms. Paladino received approval by the Council earlier in the week.

*Ms. Gibbs joined the meeting at 6:10 p.m.*

- a. Redistricting Options**
- b. Common Council Meeting Discussion**
- c. Public Hearing Discussion**
- d. Final recommendations**

Mr. Goodwin then reviewed the key points that he included in an email to the Committee members, which will be available to the public. Mr. Goodwin felt there was a relatively even distribution among the five, districts ( A through E), as well as, racial diversity and they avoided some of weird carve outs or gerrymandering that have been seen on other maps around the country. He noted that Mr. Wells had expressed concerns about some areas that Mr. Wells referred to as “dwarf voting district”. Mr. Goodwin noted that while they can adjust certain areas, they were required to use the census blocks.

Mr. Goodwin reminded everyone that a perfect solution was not likely, but noted that Mr. and Ms. Mathur had come up with a potential fourth solution. Mr. Goodwin said that he felt Option 4 was a very good solution.

Ms. Paladino then addressed the rest of the Committee by saying since she in an official capacity now, she would just like to express some thoughts she had been considering. Since the last meeting, she made a really deep, dive and considered and discussed and emailed Mr. Wells.

First, Ms. Paladino felt it was important to understand the goal of the committee. The goal of the committee is to ensure that Norwalk’s districts are modernized, balanced and better equipped to serve the City's diverse neighborhoods. While this is not legally required, the geographic alignment is the best practice and use nationwide in redistricting to ensure districts are fair and balanced. It respects the Census Blocks and reduces population deviations between the districts. This ensures equitable and proper representation.

Ms. Paladino said she understood the Taxing Districts are important and felt everyone acknowledged that. But in her opinion, there are split districts which make sense and are certainly feasible with minimal costs and reasonable costs and with relatively simple adjustments in terms of elections and the Registrar of Voters office. Ms. Paladino said she had attached the election costs for the Committee members and anyone else who is interested.

Ms. Paladino thought it was important to note that with all the elections, such as primaries, the Registrar of Voters office is subject to audits, so the Registrar of Voters office does have the ability to request additional expenditures and have them fulfill through the City of Norwalk.

Some of these changes won't affect every election cycle, so that's also important to note, but the City does plan for these election expenses.

So while tackling the concerns that were brought up, every effort is made to ensure the Taxing Districts are taken into consideration. It is not necessary to do that. However, if it makes sense, and the pros outweigh the cons, it should be considered.

So the bottom line is that the Constitutional standard is for one person, one vote and this focuses on the Common Council Districts along with the Board of Education Districts. And the purpose of this Committee is to make sure the Districts meet the constitutional requirements.

The Taxing Districts, on the other hand, don't fall into that same category. So this Committee should not be bound by the Taxing Districts. And while the best efforts are outlined in the charter, they should not prevent this Committee from making changes that are logical and necessary to improve the representation and minimize the balance and the deviation. And again, this was seen mostly within District A and District C.

Ms. Paladino felt that that neighborhood continuity matters, and that best example was neighborhoods like Spring Hill and East Norwalk, which have very different concerns in terms of infrastructure and traffic. She added that it was important that the representation reflects that, which is a big deal. While the Committee is reviewing this along with modernizing and updating the Districts, then that should be something that's strongly taken into consideration.

Ms. Paladino said that the last point she really wanted to drive home is the potential cost of adding those small or split precinct precincts are outweighed by the benefits of better representation. The costs are reasonable, cost efficient and they are not \$100,000.

Ms. Paladino said that the Committee should take a look at those financial documents, which may not be available to the public. But for best example, she noted, showed the primaries typically run around seven to \$12,000. She explained she was assuming, based on the research that she had done, they should expect that split precincts would emulate that amount minus the cost of a police officer, because split precincts would share that one police officer. Then the overall supplies would be shared as well, such as pens, pencils and things of that nature. The individual costs would be ballots.

In terms of tabulators, Ms. Paladino said she learned that those are indeed paid for by the Secretary of State's office. To date, those tabulators will be a one-time purchase. The last time that tabulators were purchased was 24 years ago. The maximum cost for three or four tabulators is feasible, and again, it will be paid by the Secretary of State. It's been 60 years since the Districts had a new significant changes. It's long overdue.

Ms. Paladino said she believes in the work that the consultants are doing and they bring a wealth of expertise. By applying the nationwide standard should be Norwalk strives for. So their knowledge and the recommendations should be carefully considered.

In her opinion, the Committee should risk updating rather than not updating the district boundary boundaries which will keep them outdated. Eventually the old districts will be ineffective. Ms. Paladino said that the Committee owes it to voters to have proper representation. That is everything she supports. Whatever the Committee decides, Ms. Paladino said as the incoming Registrar of Voters, she will be committed to and make sure there are seamless and efficient elections and that the voters receive accurately communications.

Ms. Paladino Christopher was asked if she had selected one of the four options. Ms. Paladino Christopher said that she was in favor of Option 4.

Ms. Cece then said based on the dollar analysis that Ms. Paladino provided, she wondered if the Committee can move off the cost mark now that they know it would not be any kind of a barrier to this along with moving off the question of the Taxing Districts, because they're not going to change. A lot of analysis has already been done to show that nothing's really going to align with those.

Ms. Cece said that honestly, in each of these scenarios that the Committee was looking at, she did not see anything that's really significant. It's not like a major shift from some alignment that makes sense in terms of what the census data is showing the Committee and what the City stats are showing the Committee.

There's still maybe some question as to the validity and how fluid the numbers are, and whether they really capture some of the real socio economic dynamics of some of the pockets n the city. Ms. Cece said she would probably still have questions on that. But Ms. Cece felt that if the Committee can move as a group and go forward in the discussion.

Mr. D'Arinzo then requested that the four options be displayed. Ms. Mathur displayed the updated maps and indicated where the changes were made. She noted that they had included pushpins that were red to indicate where Council Members lived and green pushpins to show where the Board of Education Members live. There is only one BOE member who might be affected, but that member is an "At Large" member.

Ms. Paladino expressed concerns about the residents who live on Felix Lane and in that West Norwalk neighborhood and how that change would affect them.

*Mr. Wells joined the meeting at 6:30 p.m.*

Discussion about the details followed. Ms. Mathur displayed a screen that showed the four options with the changes side by side and gave an overview of those changes.

Mr. D'Arinzo noted that it was imperative to ask their questions so they can make a decision.

Ms. Cece had a number of questions about the figures. Ms. Mathur explained that the population was based on the census, not those of voting age. A discussion followed about the percentage of registered voters that actually vote. Mr. Wells said that voter turnout was usually around 20%.

Ms. Cece asked if one of the goals was to make these districts equitable, and in all of the factors that were being talked about in the beginning should the Committee have been taking a closer look at District B, not just based on numbers, but based on the based on the demographics. She asked if the ballots in the population was not strictly just based on the numbers, or if it was also based on the demographics, in terms of race and income and or age or any of the other factors. Ms. Mathur said that race is considered but they do not consider income or other factors.

Mr. Wells asked to move back to the A-4 section. He suggested that they consider incorporating into A-3. He said that once the map is drawn, the Registrars will determine where the residents vote. There were some Taxing Districts issued to consider. The change would be having the residents vote at a different voting location than before.

Ms. Cece said that she was curious about what the public notice for this would look like and people could avail themselves to do a little due diligence and see how this would actually be communicated.

Mr. D'Arinzo said that he felt that the four options Mr. and Ms. Mathur had shown would be available. Ms. Mathur said that they would have several large maps and the information should be available on the website before the public hearing. Ms. Paladino said that she was very concerned that the public would be informed and it was their responsibility to insure they inform the residents. Since she has worked a number of elections, she noticed that there was definitely a lack of information. Mr. Wells said that the Registrars do not have the emails for the voters. Discussion followed.

Ms. Mathur said that the first step would be to select a new plan and then they can start contacting the public so the residents will have something to review. Mr. Wells said that he was already working 6 days a week gathering the information from the tax maps. Ms. Mathur reminded everyone that these changes would not happen until 2025. Ms. Cece said that once a decision is made, the administration can help, as can the local neighborhood associations.

Ms. Paladino said as an upcoming Registrar of Voters, she knew they typically mail notices to voters that are affected by change, but she would really like to see the Office moved 20 steps beyond that if there are changes. One thing that she learned from working polls and being

involved in elections throughout Norwalk, is a lot of people still aren't well informed, and feel there's some communication lacking. It will be important to ensure community outreach beyond mailing notices and public announcements that people may or may not see.

Mr. Wells explained that the Office does not have emails for the voters. State Law does not allow the Registrars to keep email addresses. Ms. Cece said that she would like have the proposed changes communicated directly to the people who will be impacted before the public hearing. Ms. Cece said she did not understand why the City wouldn't be able to get out a postcard mailer from the city to 2800 people to say there's proposed changes and your street or your parcel is impacted, and here's the link to go to on the city website and etc. Discussion followed about the details.

Mr. D'Arinzo asked the Committee Members for a consensus.

Ms. Penn-Williams said her concern about Sections A & B. Mr. D'Arinzo explained that District A was over populated and they switched some voters to C.

Ms. Gibbs was in favor of Option 3 or 4.

Ms. Cece said she shares Ms. Penn-Williams concerns about Districts A and B, but felt that Option 3 or 4 would be fine. She had some detailed questions about moving the District A line to just north of Interstate 95. A detailed discussion of shifting some households in 143 and 13.

This was followed by a discussion on the concerns that some of the inner city changes could result in people of color feeling disenfranchised. Mr. Goodwin pointed out that District B was a minority majority district with over 50% minority population and that most of the shifts were in Districts A and C.

Ms. Proct said that she was fine with Ms. Cece's changes.

*Ms. Proct left the meeting at 7:35 p.m.*

Mr. D'Arinzo asked Ms. Mathur to adjust the maps according to the changes discussed and agreed upon.

**\*\* MR. GOODWIN MOVED TO APPROVE OPTION 4 WITH THE CHANGES AS DISCUSSED.**

**\*\* MR. D'ARINZO SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

## **VI. NEXT STEPS**

Ms. Cece had a number of questions regarding the details of the Public Hearing. She said that the Public Hearing had been posted at 6:00. She suggested that they change it to 6:30 so that people will have a chance to get to the meeting.

She asked if there was a sample legal notice available. Mr. D'Arinzo said that the legal notice was sent out on Wednesday. It just includes the date and the time for the hearing. Ms. Cece asked if it gave directions to where the hearing would be held. Mr. D'Arinzo then read the public notice aloud.

Ms. Cece said that she was concerned that people would not know where to find the information. She said that the legal notice was woefully inadequate and said that now that the legal notice has been published, the hearing must be held at 6:00 p.m.

Ms. Cece then asked if the PowerPoints would be published on the City website. Mr. Goodwin said that the East Norwalk Association had run into this before when the material was not published on the website until just before the meetings started. Mr. D'Arinzo said that he would look into having the PowerPoint on the website.

## **VII. ADJOURNMENT**

**\*\* MR. GOODWIN MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**\*\* MR. D'ARINZO SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

S. L. Soltes  
Telesco Secretarial Services