

Good morning. My name is Tracy Nelson and I am the Canvassing Clerk for the City of Newport. I am joined today by the members of the Newport Canvassing Authority: Chairwoman Sharon Connors, member Donato D'Andrea, and member Maxine Shavers. I will give a brief presentation and then we will answer any questions.

Today's public information session is intended to provide an overview of the process of redistricting at the state and local level. According to the Constitution, redistricting is to take place every ten years, after the U.S. Census<sup>1</sup> has been conducted.

The census was conducted in 2020. Due to the COVID pandemic, there were delays in the collection and dissemination of data. The census data which would have typically been released in April 2021, was released by the census bureau in August, 2021.

Rhode Island's overall population from the 2010 census was 1,052,567. In 2020, the census population increased by 44,812 to 1,097,379; or 4.26%.<sup>2</sup> Of note, is that the population of the state shifted north in 2020, which is the opposite of 2010, when the population shifted south of providence.

Rhode Island presently has two Congressional districts, 75 House of Representative Districts, and 38 Senatorial Districts. The census data is used to redraw the lines of these districts so that they are equitable.

A Reapportionment Commission<sup>3</sup>, comprised of six RI Senators, six RI Representatives, and six members of the public were appointed and tasked with redrawing of the Congressional, Representative, and Senatorial District lines. The Commission was assisted by Election Data Services, a consulting firm experienced with redistricting.

The Reapportionment Commission held their first orientation meeting at the State House on September 9, 2021. After two educational meetings, the Reapportionment Commission went on the road and held a series of public hearings in each Rhode Island county, beginning with Newport County on September 30, 2021 at CCRI. The public was invited to submit "communities of interest" or "district plans" through their redistricting website. Following the public hearings, the commission returned to the State House for special presentations on prisoner allocation and racial bloc voting.

The Reapportionment Commission unveiled preliminary re-districting plans (A and B) at a meeting held December 2, 2021 at the State House. The plans were then presented at public meetings held in

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<sup>1</sup> United States Census Bureau Redistricting information:

<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/about/rdo/summary-files.html>

<sup>2</sup> Rhode Island Department of State Census Data Explorer:

<https://ridos-censusdata-ristate.hub.arcgis.com/>

<sup>3</sup> Special Legislative Commission on Reapportionment

<https://www.rilegislature.gov/commissions/reap/pages/members.aspx>

Smithfield, Tiverton, and South Kingstown. All meetings of the Reapportionment Commission were recorded and are viewable on their website.<sup>4</sup>

As a result of feedback and testimony received from various groups and individuals, third and fourth sets of House and Senate District Plans (C & D) were developed.

On January 12, 2022 the Reapportionment Commission voted to approve House District Plan D, Senate District Plan D, and Congressional District Plan B. The plans will be reduced to written meets and bounds and introduced as legislation in the General Assembly. The proposed legislation can be amended by the General Assembly. Once enacted, the new Senate and Representative lines are determined and the municipalities can begin the work of redrawing their ward and precinct lines.

Newport is currently served by two House Districts (District 73 & District 75) and two Senate Districts (District 12 and District 13). The House and Senate plans, as approved and submitted to the General Assembly, do not alter the composition of the legislative representation of Newport. In fact, the map illustrations show little to no shift in Newport's legislative boundary lines.

Section 3-7 of the Newport City Charter states *“the city shall be divided into three wards for the purposes of election of City Councilors and the School Committee. Under the direction of the City Council, the ward lines shall be drawn by the Canvassing Authority in such a manner as to preserve as nearly as may be convenient, consistent with well-defined boundaries, with an equal number of residents in each ward. This shall be done in each year when the General Assembly shall re-determine the state representative districts and senatorial districts”*

The population of the City of Newport, according to the census, increased from 24,672 in 2010 to 25,163 in 2020; an increase of 491 or 1.99%. Based on a total city population of 25,163 the ideal number of residents in each ward would be 8,387.67. The acceptable margin of variation is 5% in either direction, meaning that the number of residents in each ward should range from 7,969 to 8,807. The ward populations, using the existing ward lines, were tallied by the city's GIS coordinator using the 2020 census data. They are as follows:

Ward 1: 8,378

Ward 2: 8,484

Ward 3: 8,301

On December 13, 2021 the Canvassing Department issued a request for proposals for consulting firms to redraw the ward and precinct lines of the city. On January 26, 2022 the Newport City Council awarded the contract to ARCBridge Consulting & Training Inc. ARCBridge is the same firm hired by the city in 2012, following the 2010 census. ARCBridge will be responsible for the following tasks:

- Review existing ward and precinct boundaries
- Compile and analyze the 2020 census data
- Compute ideal ward population and maximum deviation

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<sup>4</sup> Rhode Island Redistricting Project:

<https://www.riredistricting.org/>

- Create ward plans using the following standard redistricting criteria
  - population equality
  - contiguous and compact using recognizable geographic features
  - fair representation of minority populations
  - consideration of identified communities of interest
  
- Solicit input
- Create district boundaries using the following reprecincting criteria
  - ensure precincts are completely within city wards and other boundaries
  - number of registered voters per precinct is no more than 3,000 and not less than 500
- Prepare draft maps and reports and present them at two public meetings
- Upon approval of a final plan by the City Council, ARCBridge will prepare a detailed map showing all boundaries and prepare a statistical analysis of the newly adopted wards and precincts
- Prepare final street files to be submitted to the Secretary of State Elections Division

Additional information about ARCBridge Consulting and the services they will provide can be found on the city's dedicated redistricting page.<sup>5</sup>

After draft plans have been presented to the public, the Canvassing Authority will vote on a recommendation to forward to the City Council for approval. Once the ward and precinct lines have been adopted, the street files must be prepared and submitted to the Secretary of State Elections Division no later than April 15, 2022.

Our next public session, to include presentation of preliminary draft plans, is tentatively scheduled for March 3. The meeting notice and draft plans will be available on the city's dedicated redistricting webpage in advance of the meeting.

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<sup>5</sup> City of Newport redistricting page:

<https://www.cityofnewport.com/en-us/city-hall/departments/canvassing/redistricting>