

MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE ON REDISTRICTING
JUNE 29 , 2021

The meeting was called to order by Committee Chairman Barbara Griffin at 10:02 AM in Rooms 210 and 211 of the Legislative Office Building. Chairman Griffin asked that those in attendance join her in the pledge of allegiance.

Chairman Griffin then asked each member of the committee to introduce themselves and they proceeded to do so. All members of the committee were present, except for Rep. Israel Piedra, for whom Rep. Alexis Simpson was sitting in, Rep. Leonard Turcotte and Rep. David Cote. Rep. Marjorie Smith reported to the committee that Rep. Cote had wanted to participate by way of Zoom, but his request had been denied by the Speaker's Office. Rep. Cote will be watching the meeting on the livestream. Rep. Smith expressed disappointment that Rep. Cote was not being allowed to participate remotely. Chairman Griffin said that such concerns should be expressed to the Chair in private and not at a public meeting. Rep. Lucy Weber pointed out that there were problems with the audio on the livestream. Chairman Griffin announced that there would be a brief recess, in an effort to correct the problem.

The meeting reconvened at 10:21 AM. Chairman Griffin introduced Lindsay Oestreich, who will be serving as our committee assistant. Chairman Griffin explained that remote participation and access via Zoom will no longer be available and is no longer required, because the state of emergency has ended.

Chairman Griffin reviewed the items that were on the agenda. The committee's website went live at 8:00 AM today, June 29th. Chairman Griffin also reviewed all of the materials, which had been sent to the members of the committee. Rep. Steven Smith, the Deputy Speaker of the House and the Vice Chairman of the Committee, explained the amount of deviation that would be allowed in population numbers and the deviation process, as it pertained to House districts. Rep. Carol McGuire asked that an effort be made to establish more single-town districts. We should allow ourselves a variance beyond the ten percent deviation. General discussion followed about the availability of software to help the committee with its work in the complexity of redistricting.

The census data is expected to be released on Monday, August 16th. It will be in the same format as it was ten years ago. At the end of September, the data will be released in a more user-friendly format. The total population of New Hampshire that we will be dealing with is 1,359,711 people, which will break down to 3,399 citizens per state representative.

Cities and their process were discussed. Rep. Paul Bergeron be coordinating our efforts with the cities, since he is a former Nashua city clerk. Two other committee members will be needed to assist him. Rep. Bergeron distributed a handout to the members of the committee, which he had prepared for this part of the committee's work. City charters play an important role in their redistricting process.

Public hearings were also discussed. A list was reviewed as to where and when the hearings had been held ten years ago. Between three and five members of the committee went to each county for the hearings. The hearings may have been done prior to the census data being received ten years ago.

(At this point in the meeting, the audio returned. The time was 11:07 AM. Chairman Griffin made the announcement.)

Chairman Griffin said that it made sense that there be a hearing in each county. Rep. McGuire suggested that there be a couple of district maps available at the hearings. Rep. Weber asked if the public could use the redistricting software on the website. Rep. Steven Smith responded that it would depend on the licensing agreement.

Rep. Steven Smith also pointed out that the work of the redistricting committee had to be completed by November 18, 2021. All six of the redistricting bills had been introduced and were in retained status. All retained bills had to be completed by the November 18th date. Rep. Connie Lane said that it would be good, if we could have Zoom access for the members of the public. Rep. Marjorie Smith expressed the hope that the November 18th deadline could be extended. Rep. Matthew Wilhelm asked about the possibility of having at least a couple of evenings for public input via Zoom. Chairman Griffin responded that it was unlikely Zoom would be used for public input, especially in the rural counties. Rep. Wilhelm asked if testimony could be limited to New Hampshire residents. Chairman Griffin said that would be difficult to do, but agreed it was desirable. Rep. Steven Smith recommended that members of the committee meet with their constituents and listen to their redistricting concerns and ideas. He will be doing so.

Chairman Griffin said that the committee would probably not meet again until August, but it might be before the August 16th release of data. Chairman Griffin said that she would try to develop a schedule for future meetings.

At this point in the meeting, Chairman Griffin presented longtime legislative assistant Pam Smarling with an arrangement of flowers. Ms. Smarling is retiring after many years of State service.

The meeting adjourned at 11:35 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Rep. Wayne D. MacDonald
Clerk
Redistricting Committee