

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL HOUSE COMMITTEE ON REDISTRICTING
VIA ZOOM
MARCH 9, 2021

The meeting was called to order by Committee Chairman, Rep. Barbara Griffin, at 10:02 AM. She asked Rep. Wayne MacDonald to call the roll. All fifteen members were in attendance. Rep. Griffin explained that we are not expected to have the census data necessary to do our work until September. She has, however, filed the six pieces of legislation that will address the redistricting effort. Rep. Steven Smith, the Vice Chairman of the Committee, listed the bills, which included the redistricting of the New Hampshire House, the New Hampshire Senate, the Executive Council, the two Congressional Districts, county commissioner districts and the districts for delegates to political party conventions. Rep. Griffin said that no one had signed up to speak to any of these pieces of legislation and recommended that all of the bills be retained, until the census data is available to the committee.

A couple of members of the public did ask to speak. Olivia Zink, the Executive Director of Open Democracy, said that she had tried to sign up before the meeting, but the link wasn't working. Ms. Zink stated that thirty towns were considering warrant articles today, which was town election day in many communities, which called for an open and transparent redistricting process and no gerrymandering. Ms. Zink urged the committee to make the redistricting process a fair one. Rep. Connie Lane asked Ms. Zink for a copy of the warrant article. Ms. Zink said that she would provide that and a list of the communities in which it was being considered. Ms. Zink said that her home community of Franklin had already approved the warrant article.

Liz Tentarelli, the President of the League of Women Voters, also offered testimony. Ms. Tentarelli emphasized the importance of the redistricting process being open and transparent and expressed confidence that it would be that way. She said that the League of Women Voters was willing to assist in any way they could to make that happen.

Rep. Carol McGuire expressed the concern that every town which is eligible for its own state representative gets it. She said that didn't happen ten years ago.

Rep. Lucy Weber pointed out that she serves in a four-member, four-town district. Her district had grown larger geographically and not smaller after the last redistricting was done.

Rep. Griffin explained that districts will definitely change, because the population has changed since the redistricting was last done. She said that the public hearing schedule was uncertain at this point. The next meeting of the committee might occur in mid-April.

Rep. Weber indicated that any scheduling was difficult at the present time, because there were no other dedicated committee meeting days. Rep. Griffin said that we would be using the Zoom platform for now.

Rep. Paul Bergeron said that the census data hadn't followed the ward lines in cities, such as in Nashua, in 2001 and in 2011. The lines had to be redrawn.

Rep. Robert Lynn asked why the committee would need to meet as soon as April, if the census data wasn't going to be available. Rep. Griffin explained that the purpose of such a meeting would be to decide on the process we would be following, once the data did become available.

Rep. Marjorie Smith observed there were two members on the committee with the same last name, herself and Rep. Steven Smith and any references to them should include their first name. She also emphasized that the committee needed to be ready for when the data became available and seek meaningful public input with an open process.

At this point, the committee went into executive session. Rep. Wayne MacDonald read the roll for motions to retain HB50, HB 51, HB 52, HB 53, HB 54 and HB 55. In each case, the motion to retain passed unanimously, 15 – 0.

Rep. David Cote explained that he usually didn't like to take up bills in executive session on the same day they were introduced.

Rep. Weber recommended that Rep. Griffin check with the chairmen of other committees, before she scheduled the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:47 AM.