

Redistricting Committee
March 20, 2012
Minutes

CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE: The meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m. by Chairman William Holden with the following members present: Jane Aiello, Suzanne Burr Monaco, Vicki Tesoro and Tony Scinto. All present joined in the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Mr. Holden moved to amend the Minutes of March 6, 2012 as follows:

Page 3, 4th paragraph, 3rd line, change “one-thirds membership” to “two-thirds membership”.

The minutes of March 6, 2012 as amended were approved by unanimous consent.

SELECTION OF A PLAN TO RECOMMEND TO THE TOWN COUNCIL: Mr. Scinto moved to adopt a four-district municipal redistricting plan, Ms. Monaco seconded. Mr. Scinto read the boundary lines as part of his motion as follows:

District 1 Bounded generally by:

Northerly: The Monroe town line.

Easterly: The Shelton town line and Booth Hill Road, each in part.

Southerly: Wisteria Drive, Old Sawmill Road, West Lake Road, Twin Brooks Drive, Beach Memorial Drive, Hedgehog Road, Daniels Farm Road, Route 25 Expressway, Pequonnock River, Daniels Farm Road each in part.

Westerly: Church Hill Road, Main Street (Rte 111), Briarcroft Avenue, Placid Street, a perpendicular line from the end of Placid Street to the Pequonnock River, Pequonnock River, Whitney Avenue, Lower Broadway (adjacent to Long Hill Green), Main Street (Rte 111), Main Street (Rte 25), each in part.

District 2 Bounded generally by:

Northerly: Daniels Farm Road, Pequonnock River, Route 25 Expressway, Daniels Farm Road, Hedgehog Road, Beach Memorial Drive, Twin Brooks Drive, West Lake Road, Old Sawmill Road, Wisteria Drive, the Shelton town line, each in part.

Easterly: The Shelton and Stratford town lines, each in part.

Southerly: The Stratford and Bridgeport town lines, each in part.

Westerly: Reservoir Avenue.

Westerly Again: Booth Hill Road.

District 3 Bounded generally by:

Northerly: The Monroe town line.

Easterly: Main Street (Rte 25), Main St (Rte 111), Lower Broadway (adjacent to Long Hill Green), Whitney Avenue, Pequonnock River to that point perpendicular to Placid Street, Briarcroft Avenue Main Street (Rte 111), each in part.

Southerly: Walker Road, Sterling Road, Mulberry Street/Hampton Road, Elliot Road, Histon Road, Garwood Road, Park Lane, Canoe Brook Road, Wildwood Drive, Lake Avenue, Driftwood Road, Madison Avenue, Kaechelle Street, each in part.

Westerly: The Easton town Line.

District 4 Bounded generally by (all that portion of Trumbull in the 134th Assembly District):

Northerly: Kaechelle Street, Madison Avenue, Driftwood Lane, Lake Avenue, Wildwood Drive, Canoe Brook Road, Park Lane, Garwood Road, Histon Road, Elliott Road, Hampton Road/Mulberry Street, Sterling Road, Walker Road, Main Street, Church Hill Road, White Plains Road, each in part.

Easterly: Reservoir Ave.

Southerly: The Bridgeport town line.

Westerly: The Fairfield town line.

Ms. Aiello spoke against the four district plan and read a statement (attached).

Ms. Aiello concluded by saying that the Committee did not work together on any plans. She stated that larger districts will mean more staffing in the polling places, for example, if 3,000 people vote during the 14 hours the polling place is open, the workers would have to process 3.62 people per minute. She stated that the increased number of candidates will require a two-sided ballot thereby increasing the cost of the ballot and resulting in a longer wait at the privacy booths to vote. The parking lots at the schools will not be able to accommodate over 200 people per hour. She stated that this will be an infringement on the voters' rights.

Mr. Scinto disagreed with Ms. Aiello's statement taking exception to the comment regarding gerrymandering. He stated that the seven district plan creates Republican primaries and is designed to eliminate certain people. He referred to District 6 which boundaries extend down to Trumbull center and questioned why this particular line was

drawn the way it was. He stated that he felt if any plan is gerrymandered it is the seven district plan.

Ms. Tesoro disagreed. Responding to Mr. Scinto's comment regarding forced primaries she pointed out that one Democrat Councilman would also be in the same position. She stated that their plan was to eliminate as many split districts as possible and provide for equal population between the districts thereby maintaining a district balance. After that was done, they asked Mr. White to put the names on the map as a courtesy to the current Council members.

In response to Ms. Aiello's and Ms. Tesoro's statements, Mr. Holden noted that the change that affects the Democrat Councilman had to be done that way as there was no other way to avoid dividing the census block. He stated that no one should have assumed that this Committee was charged with creating a seven district plan. He disagreed that voters are being "bounced" around. He noted that when Trumbull had a RTM (Representative Town Meeting) form of government there were four municipal districts. Trumbull has also had five districts in the past. He stated that voters adjusted to the change and were still able to find their polling place. He agreed that voters will need to be informed and referred to Ms. Monaco's comments in that past that postcards are sent out every year to every household reminding voters of their polling place. In addition, the Town can also use public access television and the Town's Website. He disagreed that voters will be disenfranchised with a two-sided ballot. He noted that many towns in the State currently use a two-sided ballot without a problem. He pointed out that the seven district plan and alternate were dated February 18th, being prior to the Committee's first meeting, and he questioned if the proposals are Ms. Aiello's and Ms. Tesoro's plans or that of someone else. Ms. Tesoro responded that the plans are their plans but were drawn by someone else.

Ms. Tesoro stated that she had requested a legal opinion from the Town Attorney and has not received it. Mr. Holden replied that he did forward her recent request to the Town Attorney. Ms. Tesoro referred to the minutes of February 21st in which the First Selectman offered the assistance of the Town Attorney without limitation. She stated that she has a question and there has not been an answer. She doesn't know how they can be expected to vote without an answer to her question.

Concurring with Mr. Scinto's previous comments, Mr. Holden stated his objection to the maps of the seven district plan that indicate party affiliation. Ms. Tesoro stated it was a courtesy, they did not look at any political maps, party affiliation or town council people.

Ms. Tesoro stated that they started out with a seven district plan because it has worked well for 28 years. She disagreed that a four district plan will empower the voters, rather, she believes it will only confuse the voters. She stated that in addition to other candidates, there will be 10 council candidates and 10 board of education candidates on the ballot. She stated that it will take more time for people to vote and will be harder for voters to get to know so many candidates in order to make a choice. She spoke against increasing drive time and increasing wait time at the polls.

Mr. Holden stated that four districts will impose less of an inconvenience on the schools, especially during primaries and special elections when the schools are in session. He referred to a previous special election held in March when the school system was doing the CAP testing on the same day which caused problems. He noted that this year a

primary will be held on April 24th and Hillcrest has already scheduled a health fair and has vendors lined up. Voters will be voting in a different location at Hillcrest. In reference to Ms. Tesoro's comments about voters having to know more candidates, Mr. Holden stated that voters will only need to know a few more candidates.

Ms. Aiello stated that she feels it is a burden on the schools because under the four district plan there will be double the people and double the cars.

Mr. Holden noted that the schools are reserved from 5:00 a.m. until 10:00 p.m. He explained that half the voters in Town are registered unaffiliated, therefore, a one-party primary would result in approximately only a quarter of the voters being eligible to vote. Should both parties have a primary the number of eligible voters would be about 50%. Primary turnout typically is low. He disagreed with the comments in regard to the seven district plan preserving the neighborhoods citing as an example, people living on Winslow and people living on Cottage Street are not in the same neighborhood.

Mr. Scinto concurred with Mr. Holden. He explained that when he first moved to Trumbull he didn't know anyone. He met people through the school system.

Ms. Tesoro stated that she and Ms. Aiello had requested certain items be on the agenda and the Chairman denied her request. She wanted a public hearing on the plans. She noted that the First Selectman had stated that redistricting affects every resident and every voter and that is why they wanted a public hearing. She wanted to make a motion that the Town Council hold a public hearing at the subcommittee level or at the full Town Council meeting. She made this request to the Chairman of the Council but has not heard back from him. She stated that there is precedent for a public hearing.

Ms. Tesoro stated most of the changes in the seven district plan stem from eliminating split districts and balancing population between the districts. She stated that there is a 20% disparity between the largest district and the smallest district in the proposed four district plan and felt this plan does not satisfy the criteria of balanced districts. In addition, she stated it moves half the population to new districts. She stated the seven district plan satisfies all criteria with less change and less confusion while preserving minority representation.

Ms. Tesoro moved to amend the motion to consider a seven district redistricting plan. The Chair asked for the boundaries of each district in the seven district plan noting that the resolution passed by the Town Council calls for general boundaries. Ms. Aiello questioned if the Committee can vote on the motion and include language to indicate that subsequent information related to boundaries will be attached to the minutes.

Ms. Tesoro requested a recess. The Committee recessed at 8:05 p.m. and reconvened at 8:12 p.m.

Ms. Tesoro moved to amend the motion to substitute the seven district plan as presented in place of the four district plan, Ms. Aiello seconded.

Vote: Motion failed 2-3 (Ms. Tesoro & Ms. Aiello in favor)

Ms. Tesoro moved to amend the motion to send both the seven district and the four district plans to the Town Council without recommendation, Ms. Aiello seconded.

Ms. Monaco stated that she was under the impression that both plans would go to the Council because of the ability to submit a minority report.

Vote: Motion failed 2-3 (Ms. Tesoro & Ms. Aiello in favor)

Ms. Tesoro moved to request a public hearing on both proposed redistricting plans at the Legislation & Administration Committee of the Town Council and the full Town Council meeting that will deal with the redistricting, Ms. Aiello seconded.

Mr. Holden stated that while the Committee can request that the Council hold a public hearing, it is unusual that a public hearing would be held at both the subcommittee and the Town Council level.

Ms. Tesoro and Ms. Aiello withdrew their motion and second.

Ms. Tesoro moved to request a public hearing on both proposed redistricting plans at either the Legislation & Administration Committee of the Town Council or the full Town Council meeting that will deal with the redistricting, Ms. Aiello seconded.

Mr. Scinto stated that he will be voting against the motion since he does not feel that the Council Chairman was given enough time to respond to the request for a public hearing.

Vote: Motion failed 2-3 (Ms. Tesoro & Ms. Aiello in favor)

The Chair summarized the motion on the floor which is to adopt a four-district municipal redistricting plan.

Vote: Motion to recommend a four district plan was approved 3-2 (Mr. Holden, Ms. Monaco & Mr. Scinto in favor).

Ms. Tesoro stated her objection to sending a recommendation to the Town Council when she had requested a legal opinion and never received it.

Mr. Scinto moved to adjourn, Ms. Monaco seconded. There being no further business to conduct the meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gail J. Hanna
Clerk