

AUGUSTA-RICHMOND COUNTY
RICHMOND COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS
AD HOC REAPPORTIONMENT PUBLIC MEETING

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PUBLIC MEETING

Before Gina L. Smith, Certified Court Reporter

At the Pine Hill Middle School

2147 McElmurray Road, Augusta, Georgia

On October 17, 2011, Commencing at 6:06 p.m.

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**Richmond County Board of Elections
Ad Hoc Reapportionment Public Meeting**

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APPEARANCES

Board of Elections: Ms. Lynn Bailey
Ad Hoc Reapportionment Rep. Quincy Murphy
Committee Members: Comm. Alvin Mason
Comm. Bill Lockett
Mr. Jack Padgett
Ms. Venus Cain
Presenting Guest: Ms. Linda Meggers
Consultant

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1 PUBLIC MEETING

2 MR. MASON: I'm going to go ahead and call the
3 meeting to order. Good evening. I'm Commissioner
4 Mason. I am the ad hoc committee redistricting
5 chairman for 2011. We appreciate so many folks coming
6 out and being a part of this particular process.

7 I want to go ahead first and introduce our
8 committee members that we have here with us today. To
9 my right we have Jack Padgett who is the school board
10 representative for District 6. We have to my left
11 Commissioner Bill Lockett. He is the commissioner for
12 District 5. And to his left we have Ms. Venus Cain who
13 is the Super 9 District commissioner--I'm trying to put
14 you on the commission. The school board. And we also
15 have our honorable representative Quincy Murphy, State
16 legislator. We have several other Board members in the
17 room and we appreciate having you here tonight. And
18 most importantly, we appreciate the folks coming out
19 and being a part of the process.

20 If you have not done so already, when you came in
21 there was a sign-in sheet. There was also some
22 handouts that was outside and then there was a big map
23 to look at as well. Let me say this because I've
24 already had some questions being asked of me in
25 reference to that particular map. No, that is not the

1 final map. That is a map that we have used for about
2 where we are at this particular point. But we have not
3 voted on anything as a final map nor will we for a few
4 more weeks, I would imagine, at the very least.

5 We have another meeting scheduled for Thursday I
6 believe it is at Sue Reynolds Elementary School and
7 you're welcome to come out there as well. That would
8 be our last public hearing. And let me just kind of
9 explain in terms of public hearing. Tonight we want to
10 hear from you after we have our presentation in terms
11 of any concerns/issues that you may have. This will be
12 your time to let us know as committee members what your
13 concerns are. Also, and just as important, is the fact
14 that we do have a reporter--a recorder, excuse me--here
15 to my right who is recording all the information that
16 is put down so that there will be a record of it and
17 all of this will be a part of the final package that
18 will go up the chain all the way to the Department of
19 Justice. So it's important that here's an opportunity
20 for you, the public, to be a part of the process.

21 I will caution you that tonight is not an
22 opportunity for debate. It's not for feedback, if you
23 will, but it's an opportunity to hear from you. You
24 are welcome to come to any public meeting that we have.
25 The only difference is certain public meetings are for

1 the ad hoc committee to do our business as it relates
2 to the public hearings that we've heard about and any
3 issues or concerns that were brought up, trying to fix
4 them. So again, tonight is your opportunity for us to
5 hear from you so if you have some questions or concerns
6 we have a mic here to the right and to the left. And
7 at the appropriate time you are more than welcome to
8 come up and voice your concern. One of the things that
9 I would ask that you would do is just to please state
10 your name for the record so that we can have a record
11 of that. Do we need anything other than name?

12 MS. BAILEY: Let's do addresses.

13 MR. MASON: Let's do name and address so that we
14 can have that for the record for any concern that you
15 may have. Again, I want to say welcome and I
16 appreciate you coming out tonight. This is not a
17 debate forum.

18 Let me kind of give you just a statement of
19 purpose of why we are here. This committee is built up
20 of twelve committee members: four from the Augusta-
21 Richmond County Commission, four from the school board,
22 and four from the Augusta legislative branch. And
23 between the twelve of us, we have been tasked to be a
24 part of this committee so that we can ensure that what
25 is done is done right and it's done fair and it's in

1 the best interest of the census data that we've
2 received.

3 All the information that we're doing here tonight
4 and giving out tonight was based on the 2010 census
5 data. So at some point last year you received in your
6 mailbox or wherever a census form and it asked you to
7 fill that out and who was in your household. If you
8 chose not to fill that out, you did not get counted and
9 that would be very, very unfortunate as that ties into
10 the monies that we would get from Federal, monies that
11 we would get from State and trying to get a true count
12 of what's here in Richmond County. The reason why I
13 brought that up is several people said to me, well, I
14 know we've got more of this race than what they show; I
15 know we've got more of that race than what we show.
16 The bottom line is if you didn't turn in a form, you
17 can't be counted and so what we have is officially what
18 it is based on the census data. So from that
19 standpoint it is our belief that we have a little over
20 200,000 in Augusta-Richmond County, just a little over
21 200,000. What we have is eight districts, Districts 1
22 through 8. Each district in ideal population size
23 should be about 25,000 people. What we have, though,
24 is several districts that are over the 25,000 and we
25 have several districts that are under 25,000. So our

1 job is to balance those districts without retrogressing
2 in terms of the vote that is protected through the
3 Voting Rights Act of Section V. So we cannot
4 retrogress or get lower than where we were before in
5 that particular district, as it relates to, one, the
6 African-American vote for one.

7 And so you say, well, how does all of this work.
8 Just to give you an example, we have a District 1
9 that's some 4,000 votes short of 25,000, 4,000
10 population short. And District 4--3, which is our
11 highest district that's overpopulated needs to lose
12 about four or five thousand. So you say, well, we can
13 just take 4,000 that they have to lose in District 4
14 and we can place them in District 1 and everything is
15 fine. Well, no, we can't do that because the
16 demographics in District 1 are different than in
17 District 3. For instance, District 3 has a
18 predominantly white population; District 1 has a
19 predominantly black population. So therefore you
20 cannot retrogress so you can't take from District 3 and
21 drop it into District 1 and say everything is fine. So
22 District 1 has to then take from an area that they
23 touch; you have to be able to touch a district.
24 District 1, in this particular instance, touches 3, 2
25 and 8. District 4, which is my district, I have to

1 lose about 3,000, almost 4,000 folks. District 1 can't
2 take from District 4 because they don't touch each
3 other geographically. So I'm letting you know some of
4 the knowledge that you need to know about this process
5 and why we're here today. So what we're here to do is
6 to try to balance those districts out as much as
7 possible and we have to do something to every district
8 with the exception right now of District 7 because it
9 meets that quota right now. And we may do some
10 tweaking but they have right at 25,000 or just a little
11 bit over 25,000.

12 So please understand the key to what I'm saying:
13 we've got to get down to 25,000 or up to 25,000
14 depending upon the district. And the only way we can
15 do that is if a district touches another district. You
16 can't cross districts to grab people out of and sit
17 them in. So having said that, I just gave you a quick
18 brief of the purpose of this particular committee and
19 why we're here tonight and why these maps are being
20 with--redrawn. It's done every ten years based on the
21 census data. So in the future it would be wise and it
22 would behoove you, if you did not this time, to make
23 sure that you fill out that census data so Augusta-
24 Richmond County can be tracked appropriately and we
25 have the appropriate numbers to deal with because this

1 is what happens based on the numbers that we turn in.
2 Any questions on the redistricting process? All right,
3 very good.

4 Now, we have--let me talk about the meeting format
5 and process just for a quick second. We will at an
6 appropriate time--and you'll be recognized by the Chair
7 in terms of any questions, concerns or presentations
8 that you have for us tonight. And again, we ask that
9 you come to either mic and give us your name and the
10 address. We don't have--we're not going to try to rush
11 you but we don't have all night and it's not a debate,
12 so if there's something that you want to present to us,
13 please do so and give us that information and we'll
14 have it on the record.

15 Now, the person that's responsible that we've
16 hired for the Board of Elections, Richmond County Board
17 of Elections, under the guidance of Lynn Bailey--Lynn,
18 would you raise your hand there. She is our executive
19 director for the Richmond County Board of Elections.
20 She's done a wonderful job and she's doing a wonderful
21 job and she's helped us to coordinate all of these
22 meetings and the staff as well. And we appreciate her.
23 But we also have Ms. Linda Meggers who we have
24 actually--who has actually come out of retirement and
25 has a lot of experience in drawing and redrawing maps,

1 not only for Augusta-Richmond County but for most of
2 the counties around the state of Georgia. So she has
3 this expertise and we're counting on her, but at the
4 same time we're here to make sure that the process is a
5 fair one. So what I would like to do right now is
6 introduce Linda Meggers to you. She is our
7 redistricting consultant. And you can have the floor
8 at this time. Thank you.

9 MS. MEGGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The
10 chairman has done such a great job laying out the
11 process of what we're doing so that makes my job a
12 little bit easier right now.

13 Let's go back for just a little bit of background.
14 All of you understand that the census comes around and
15 we wait a year and we get the numbers and it seems like
16 we do this--to some of us it seems like it was just a
17 couple years ago that we went through this process, but
18 it's every ten years.

19 This idea of this one person/one vote starts with
20 the Constitution and it was a compromise. When they
21 first wrote the Constitution we had small states and
22 large states, where small, unpopulated states were
23 afraid that as the country grew and the big states got
24 bigger, they were going to get kind of shorted on
25 representation and they would basically have no power.

1 And the large states were afraid that if they did
2 something different, well, they weren't going to get
3 their fair share of representation. So they kind of
4 compromised and said, you know, the U.S. Congress, the
5 U.S. State House--the U.S. House of Representatives
6 would be based on population and then for the Senate,
7 every state regardless of size would get two U.S.
8 senators.

9 So they kind of laid that out with the idea of
10 equal population and that after each decennial census
11 they would look and see where the congressional seats
12 needed to be adjusted. For the first many, many, many
13 decades there just really wasn't a problem because as
14 the country grew by adding states to the Union or just
15 the growth of people moving west, et cetera, and new
16 immigration, they just adjusted the size of Congress.
17 They just added seats to make everything balance.

18 Well, when it got to be 435 seats they felt that
19 was big enough and that they had to do it another way.
20 They took over the formula that allocates congressional
21 seats among the states that minimizes the different--
22 the size of a congressional seat in Georgia so that it
23 is approximately the same size as a congressional seat
24 in Virginia or the state of Washington and the fact
25 that they had to be equal.

1 Well, that started and as time went by and
2 Congress sort of looked closer to home at this scheme,
3 they realized that there was some kind of redistricting
4 scheme or--I know that has sort of a negative
5 connotation. But the way they allocated state
6 legislative seats, it wasn't really one person/one
7 vote. It started in the '60s. In the early '60s they
8 started with the state legislatures and said one man--
9 one person/one vote. Equal population applied to the
10 legislatures. And through a couple of additional
11 lawsuits, they finally brought it down to the cities,
12 the counties. If you live in a big county and they
13 water/sewer boards, those have to be adjusted according
14 to the population, so that it applies to everything now

15 Now, you might ask me, okay, equal population, one
16 person/one vote, does that mean literally. No. For
17 congress, yes. Congress has to be zero deviation, if
18 at all possible. And the reason for that being is that
19 those Congressional are seats throughout the country
20 and if they let us do too much deviation within
21 Georgia, our seats wouldn't be quite as equal as to the
22 seats in Virginia or the state of Washington or
23 whatever. So they say for congressional, because of
24 the large district sizes, et cetera, you have to be
25 close to zero.

1 But the court cases has been redefined or further
2 defined what we have to do for local. Hence the courts
3 came up with a plus or minus five percent. They're
4 saying that you can be as much as five percent over
5 this 25,000 that the chairman talked about or as much
6 as five percent below that. And the court said we're
7 going to do that for these reasons, the first being
8 that you have to use the census data, the census block
9 data. It's the only game in town when it comes to
10 redistricting; those are the figures that we use. We
11 don't use registered voters; we don't use local chamber
12 of commerce estimates or whatever. We have to use the
13 census. That's why the chairman was saying it's so
14 important. If you don't answer the census form, it
15 really for your area--then you drop out. Particularly
16 at the legislative level it makes a big difference
17 whether you keep your seats or lose one. And then
18 within the county there's a big difference in funding
19 and planning, et cetera. So they're saying you have to
20 use the census data but we know that sometimes a census
21 block is much bigger. All of us when we say block
22 think of little rectangles and squares. Well, with the
23 census bureau when they consider a block, it's whatever
24 is defined on all sides by a visible ground feature.
25 You have to be able to go out there and see it. So

1 subdivisions back up to major roads together and
2 without a dividing line of a creek or a railroad or
3 something through there, all of that is lumped into the
4 same census block and they can get very large. So the
5 Bureau--the court says we're going to allow you extra
6 deviations because you've used the census geography and
7 it may not always be in a format that can get down to
8 zero. Then they said we're also going to allow you
9 this five percent deviation so that you can take into
10 consideration some other good, positive, accepted
11 redistricting principles like, perhaps, keeping your
12 voting precincts intact so that you don't confuse
13 voters so they can more easily identify what school
14 board or county commission district they're in. Or it
15 allows you to keep to the--if you are going to split a
16 precinct that you can say a major thoroughfare, a major
17 street that everybody knows where they live, which side
18 of that. So that voters and the elected officials can
19 easily identify the boundaries of their district rather
20 than go weaving street by street through subdivisions
21 which gets very confusing. So they're saying we're
22 going to allow you to be at this latitude for
23 redistricting principles. So for this local, we're
24 going to say within that plus or minus five percent.

25 The second legal requirement came along just right

1 after all the one person/one vote lawsuits were
2 happening for legislative and local. That is the
3 Voting Rights Act of 1965 and all of us, you know,
4 realize that all of the state of Georgia is covered by
5 that. But for redistricting it means that any change
6 that we make to district lines has to go to the United
7 States Department of Justice and be pre-cleared before
8 we can even implement those plans. We will not hold an
9 election under whatever plan that the committee
10 develops until that plan has been pre-cleared with
11 Justice. And what they're going to look at is, first
12 of all, to be sure that it doesn't violate Section V of
13 the Voting Rights Act which says that you can't
14 retrogress. That if we go in with six districts that a
15 majority is minority population, a majority black
16 population, then the new plan that comes out should
17 have six majority black districts. Section 2 of that
18 law, which is not quite as applicable to just the
19 redistricting plan that we're going to look at, but it
20 is an integral part of it that we do look at it.
21 Section 2 says that a plan cannot have the purpose for
22 the effect of violating minority voting rights. So
23 we're going to look at--the plan that we draw that it's
24 at least as good as the one that's in place right now
25 from the 2000 census numbers for the existing district.

1 So with that in mind the committee had me start with
2 what we call a working proposal. It was put together
3 to fix the population differences to be sure that it
4 met the mandates of the Voting Rights Act; that it
5 maintained of course the existing districts split into
6 as few precincts as possible as a beginning point. And
7 this is a working proposal that the--because I've
8 learned over a period of years doing this if you put a
9 map out there as a beginning point, if you start back
10 and you use everybody's ideas you either get no
11 comments or you get a lot of conflicting ones. If you
12 come out with a working proposal like we're looking at
13 today then you get people's reaction and they tell you
14 what's good about it and what's bad about it and what
15 needs to be fixed. So that's basically what the
16 committee wanted with this working proposal was to be
17 something to--for the citizens of Richmond County to
18 react to.

19 Now, why we're doing District 1. He had mentioned
20 it's short, you know, 4200 people which is minus 17
21 percent. The next smallest district as far as being
22 short was District 2 which was minus 2700 people, which
23 was 11 percent. And you went down to District 3, by
24 far the largest as far as the shift in population and
25 its growth over the ten-year period. It's over 19

1 percent with 4800 people that have to be moved out of
2 District 3. District 4 was also large; it was the
3 next-largest one. It was up close to 13 percent with
4 3200 people. And District 5 was short seven percent,
5 which is not quite so bad; that's 1700 people.
6 District 6 was short 2,000. District 7 is--he said it
7 could be left alone, basically. It is just plus 600
8 people. And then you've got District 8 which is plus
9 2,000 people; that's eight percent. Now, the two
10 superdistricts, just because they cover so much
11 territory, kind of fall into line. They're a little
12 bit short on whatever but they get taken care of when
13 we take care of eight single-member districts. So when
14 you look at that, we were starting with deviations that
15 varied from a minus 16.61 percent to a plus 19.31
16 percent, way more than the five percent. And that gave
17 us an overall deviation range of right at 32 percent,
18 so we really have to do some homework to get it fixed.

19 Trying to maintain of course--you remember
20 changed--the county--the ad hoc committee wanted to as
21 a beginning point to try to keep the deviations as
22 close to two percent, minus/plus two percent, so that
23 after the hearings that gave them more room, a little
24 bit of room to do adjusting, et cetera. So that's what
25 you will see as we go through this.

1 District 1 which I've already said was the largest
2 one that was over--now, you can see this. To use an
3 Augusta golf term, this has this dogleg. This dogleg
4 down here going toward the airport is really not very
5 many people. The heart of the district is what I call
6 the downtown district and to fix it--it was short. We
7 came in and were trying to find neighborhoods in all
8 this that were similar. I picked up these two
9 precincts from District 2. Now, remember 2 is already
10 under so I've made it more short by moving those. And
11 this is where we made the changes here. This heavy,
12 dark lines you see are the existing boundary lines,
13 okay. So you can see more easily where I've made the
14 change so the shaded areas are what I consider the
15 working proposal. This heavy, black line is the
16 existing boundary line. So I picked up these two
17 areas.

18 District 2 which was already short became shorter
19 and it basically picked up the shortfall of this
20 population from District 5 which was one of the--it was
21 also a little bit short with 1700, so it's going to be
22 short, more short. So we've got this area here.

23 District 3--

24 MR. MURPHY: Ms. Meggers.

25 MS. MEGGERS: Yes.

1 MR. MURPHY: Would you please refer to the
2 precinct that you're picking up so we can follow it on
3 our maps, please.

4 MS. MEGGERS: Yes, I will. Thank you. Going back
5 to District 1--

6 MR. MURPHY: You can continue with 2.

7 MS. MEGGERS: I picked up precincts 206 and 205.
8 So 205 and 206 were taken from District 2 to balance 1.

9 MR. MASON: In its entirety?

10 MS. MEGGERS: Yes. Both. This working plan only
11 splits two precincts. One precinct you'll see affected
12 in District 3 is probably one of the larger precincts
13 in the county. It has 8,000 people in it so it got
14 split. And another one is split because of census
15 geography and it's sort of a good split. It's going to
16 allow elections to probably clean up a line and make it
17 more understandable and easier to administer if that
18 line follows through to the final plan.

19 So District 2 had lost that one so they're short.
20 This is the area where there's--it looks like an entire
21 precinct but it's that census geography, what we got to
22 use from the census. It really does not follow the
23 lines that are actually being used by the elections
24 office. Here and in this, that's precinct 509. And
25 this large area down here is precinct 503 so that's

1 where--it's this very large precinct. It has--

2 MR. LOCKETT: Ms. Meggers.

3 MS. MEGGERS: Yes.

4 MR. LOCKETT: You said from District 5, 503 and
5 five-what?

6 MS. MEGGERS: I'm sorry. I got the wrong areas.
7 I moved precincts 507 and 504 and 508.

8 MR. LOCKETT: 507, 504 and 508.

9 MS. CAIN: 507, 504 and 508.

10 MR. LOCKETT: From 5 to 2.

11 MS. MEGGERS: From 5 to 2.

12 MS. MEGGERS: District 3 is the one that was the
13 largest and on the working plan I took two precincts
14 from that. I took precincts 310 and 309, these two
15 precincts right here, from 3 into 5. This one is very
16 large, the largest precinct that I believe we had 8,000
17 population in, so I can put probably almost half of it
18 in this direction.

19 In District 5 I picked up those from 3 and it
20 picks up 403 from District 4 under this plan.

21 MR. LOCKETT: Will you say it one more time,
22 please.

23 MS. MEGGERS: Yes. For District 5, it picks up
24 309 and about half of the population in precinct 310,
25 and it also picks up precinct 403 from District 4. We

1 talked about 5.

2 Let's look at it here and talk about 6. 6
3 was slightly short. It was short about the same--
4 almost the exact same number as 8 was over, so I moved
5 one precinct from 8 to 6 to balance it. I took
6 precinct 805 from 8 and moved that into 6.

7 District 7, the one that's up here in the corner,
8 it's kind of landlocked but it's the only district that
9 fell within the plus or minus five percent. It was up
10 a little over two percent, 2.4. So I have left that
11 alone, waiting to see what kind of direction the
12 committee wanted to take with this area. Right now it
13 meets all the guidelines of one person/one vote, et
14 cetera, so I've left it as it stands. And then we've
15 talked about District 8.

16 MR. MASON: Ms. Meggers, just for clarity,
17 District 4 lost--under that current plan District 4
18 lost precinct 403 in its entirety?

19 MS. MEGGERS: Entirely, yes. The whole precinct
20 right now.

21 MS. MEGGERS: And you can see the star here. That
22 is the superdistrict member for the school. But the
23 superdistrict goes over four districts and it--so I
24 have not moved that person. It's still the same
25 superdistrict. Now, with that said, the deviations now

1 range from a minus 573 people to a plus 603, which is a
2 minus 2.29 to a plus 2.41, and it gives us an overall
3 4.69. So it's half of what the court was saying we
4 could go to. The court was saying we could go all the
5 way up to ten, plus five/minus five. Add them together
6 and you get ten. We have kept this plan under five
7 percent with the total deviation range from largest to
8 smallest. From the Justice Department standpoint this
9 district is a maintenance--this plan is a maintenance
10 plan. It keeps the numbers just about exactly where
11 they are now. District 1 in the current plan, based on
12 the 2000 census is 64.89. In the working proposal it's
13 66.41. District 2 under the current plan is 77.02;
14 under the working plan it is 74.82 total black
15 percentage. District 3 was 42.30; it drops slightly,
16 about four points, to 37.83. And remember that's the
17 district that was over by 19 percent. District 4
18 currently is 78.76 and the working plan has it 78.52.
19 District 5 is currently 75.78 total black and District--
20 --the working proposal would have that at 77.03.
21 District 6 is presently at 52.97; the working plan has
22 it at 52.99. District 7 remained unchanged at 29.07
23 percent total black. District 8 had been at 32.94;
24 it's 31.51 here. And you've got your superdistricts,
25 so superdistrict 9 is of course 74.24 and superdistrict

1 10 is at 34.43. But the county as a whole is under the
2 2010 census at 56.84 percent total black population.
3 If you took 56 percent of 10 districts, you get 6. And
4 basically that's what this plan is. It has District 1
5 majority black, District 2, District 4, District 5,
6 District 6 and District 9. So it's six out and--

7 MR. MURPHY: Ms. Meggers, excuse me. District 10,
8 I think you said 34-point-something.

9 MS. MEGGERS: It's 37.76.

10 MR. MURPHY: Okay.

11 MS. MEGGERS: Total--under the working proposal.

12 MR. MURPHY: No. I thought I heard you say 34-
13 point-something. Okay. We're on the same page.

14 MS. MEGGERS: I may have dropped down.

15 MR. MURPHY: Okay, thank you, ma'am.

16 MS. MEGGERS: So as you see, this pretty much
17 maintains what's already there. The deviations are in
18 line.

19 MR. MASON: All right. That kind of gives you a
20 quick summation of how or what it was that we were
21 tasked to do and then how we got there. As you can
22 clearly see we've had to start borrowing from other
23 districts and it became a snowball effect. So there
24 was a lot of work that had to be done to try to get it
25 to where it is right now. Is it a perfect plan. No,

1 but it is a plan. And so what we want to do at this
2 particular point is give the public an opportunity to
3 speak to any issues, ask any questions that they may
4 have in reference to the information that we've given
5 out here so far. And again, if you would come to
6 either mic, either the right or left, you can even
7 begin to line up even now as we speak if you have a
8 concern or an issue and we'll be happy to address that.
9 And that's pretty much where we are right now. It was
10 imperative that we gave you a good, clear understanding
11 of what our mission is and what this board has been
12 tasked to do to meet all the standards and the
13 guidelines. And this is simply an initial plan. We've
14 already had the one public hearing down at the Board of
15 Education and some information and some concerns came
16 out from that particular board and we're going to take
17 those back when we meet in committee and we'll discuss
18 those. Anything that comes out tonight we will also do
19 the same thing. We will take those back when we have
20 our committee meeting which, oh by the way, will be
21 public in terms of the public can come. It won't be a
22 time for input but the public is more than welcome to
23 come to any meeting that we have. And then of course
24 on Thursday we have our final public hearing for this
25 phase of it at Sue Reynolds, and we'll take that

1 information that comes out of there and we'll go back
2 and talk about it as well. So we've had--we will have
3 three opportunities by the time that we're through with
4 this first plan to have heard public input. And then
5 based on what you have said, we will go back and we
6 will see if it's feasible up underneath the guidelines
7 and criteria that we have in keeping with the Voters
8 Rights Act and the whole shebang and try to see if some
9 of it can be implemented or if some of it cannot. And
10 we'll work through that and then we'll come out with a
11 map to show the public what we think we have right now
12 at that particular point. So now is your opportunity
13 to step forward and ask any questions or address any
14 issues that you may have based on the presentation
15 that's been given or just based on any common knowledge
16 that you have. Don't all jump at once.

17 MR. SIAS: Good evening, Mr. Chairman.

18 MR. MASON: Good evening.

19 MR. SIAS: My name is Sammy Sias, 3839 Crest
20 Drive. I represent the Sand Ridge Community
21 Association in the Sand Ridge neighborhood. And, Mr.
22 Chair, at this time I would like to make a request, if
23 I can, please.

24 MR. MASON: Sure.

25 MR. SIAS: Could we ask to have Ms. Meggers

1 highlight District 807 and District 406, just so that
2 folks will be able to understand and see the areas
3 we're talking about.

4 MR. MASON: Absolutely. 807 and 406.

5 MS. MEGGERS: This is 406 beside this blue dashed
6 line and this is 807 beside this dashed line. Is that
7 what you needed?

8 MR. SIAS: Yes, ma'am. Thank you.

9 MR. MASON: You--and I'm pretty sure you've
10 researched it. Can you kind of give some boundaries of
11 what that entails.

12 MR. SIAS: Yes. If you look at--if you look at
13 the left at the top of that pointer that--yes, right
14 there. That is Tobacco Road. And if you go to the
15 left, that is Deans Bridge Road coming down there, all
16 right. And if you go back to Tobacco Road and come
17 down, that is Crest Drive--well, that's Crest Drive
18 right--if you'll come back. Yes. The first little--
19 yes. Coming down that dark red line in the middle, at
20 the first little crook there you come down, that is
21 Crest Drive coming down to the next corner. And you
22 would turn--this is Tobacco Road here. This is Crest
23 Drive coming here. This is Harwood coming down there.
24 That is Harwood. Now we're at--this is Sand Ridge
25 Court. This is Arrowood. This is a creek. So we come

1 from Tobacco Road down Crest, down Harwood and come
2 down this creek on out to Willis Foreman Road. From
3 here, this is Deans Bridge Road coming down and coming
4 out here on down. And down here we have--down here a
5 little bit is Willis Foreman Road where you come across
6 there. The main part in question that we have here,
7 Mr. Chairman and board members, this is Sand Ridge
8 right here. This is one-third of Sand Ridge and this
9 is two-thirds of Sand Ridge here. This is the original
10 Sand Ridge and the added Sand Ridge all together. This
11 is a street right here that splits our district. This
12 is District 8 and that is District 4. And, Mr. Chair,
13 I know y'all know this, so for the people here from
14 Sand Ridge. So right here on this corner here we're
15 talking about original Sand Ridge that has been split
16 in half. So, Mr. Chair, at this time I would also like
17 to request that we submit a packet and this packet is
18 information concerning the process that happened
19 beginning in 2002 when Sand Ridge was split. We're
20 asking if that could be entered into the record.
21 There's nothing derogatory in it; it's just facts and
22 information. And I've provided a copy to Ms. Bailey.
23 Can that be entered in the record, Mr. Chair?

24 MR. MASON: Oh, absolutely.

25 MR. SIAS: At this time, too, I'll go ahead and

1 get said what needs to be said, Mr. Chairman and board
2 members. I will begin by saying that in 1986 Sand
3 Ridge was created and from 1986 to 2002 Sand Ridge was
4 one non-contiguous neighborhood. In other words, in
5 the redistricting process we've heard this word
6 contiguous quite a bit, which means an area goes into
7 another or it must touch another. Sand Ridge touches
8 no other neighborhood; it is a neighborhood that is
9 unto itself. The streets that begin in Sand Ridge end
10 in Sand Ridge. Sand Ridge does not touch any other
11 neighborhood by railroad track, street or path. So we
12 want to say that--and that has been one of the unique
13 things about Sand Ridge.

14 So from 1986 to 2002 Sand Ridge thrived. We were
15 a politically-involved community. We worked hard to
16 keep our streets safe and keep our residents informed.
17 And then in 2002 we got a big surprise. Technically,
18 we were told by our new voter registration cards that
19 came out. But that was something that we did not
20 completely grasp of what it meant. But the first thing
21 that happened that we were able to grasp--and that is
22 why I've submitted this packet--we could no longer vote
23 at the only polling place that we had ever known in
24 Sand Ridge and that was the Jamestown Community Center.
25 We were then required to travel to Willis Foreman to

1 vote at the Faith Outreach Center which is now the
2 voting/polling place for Diamond Lakes. We strongly
3 resisted that and we fought back with that and we got
4 with our local Board of Elections and the executive
5 director Ms. Lynn Bailey who is here tonight. And she
6 knows very well how hard we worked on that. We didn't
7 necessarily agree but we worked together. And also Ms.
8 Linda Meggers here was also then executive director of
9 the Georgia Legislative Reapportionment Office. So
10 after talking and working with Ms. Bailey and the local
11 board, we took our case to Ms. Meggers at the Georgia
12 Legislative Redistricting office. And with that help
13 and a letter of recommendation from Ms. Meggers once
14 she reviewed our case, and Ms. Bailey also walked out
15 in the woods with us as we were trying to find a
16 solution to that problem. So in 2005 after we worked
17 from 2004 to 2005, Sand Ridge residents once again were
18 able to go back and vote at the Jamestown Community
19 Center.

20 That was the first problem with this split
21 neighborhood and it was the first resolution we had.
22 But the problem that gave us was voter dissatisfaction,
23 voter disenfranchisement and just confusion. To give
24 you an example, the first two houses in Sand Ridge come
25 in on Crest Drive, 3705 Crest and 3806 Crest. Built at

1 the same time, bought at the same time, from 1986 to
2 2006 these neighbors could walk back and forth and talk
3 about their local election, talk about what politics.
4 But in 2002 they got their notice, you can't do that
5 anymore. Well, when do I vote. Oh, are you going to
6 vote tomorrow. Yeah, come on. When you get there, you
7 can't vote. We're not illiterate but the political
8 process can be extremely confusing.

9 So the bottom line is we no longer thrive at the
10 level that we had enjoyed and worked with in Sand Ridge
11 because we were a progressing neighborhood. We still
12 are and that's why we're here tonight. So, Mr.
13 Chairman, not necessarily a count but for the record
14 with your permission I would like to ask everyone here
15 from Sand Ridge to stand, please.

16 [Citizens in audience stand.]

17 MR. LOCKETT: Hey, is anybody at home?

18 MR. MASON: Really. Who's at home?

19 MR. SIAS: Thank you.

20 [Citizens in audience are seated.]

21 MR. MASON: Thank you.

22 MR. SIAS: And, Mr. Chairman, it's a long way to
23 Pine Hill. This is more people than came to the
24 meeting we had on September the 11th with several
25 members here from the panel that were present. Sand

1 Ridge is interested in what happens to Sand Ridge and
2 what happens to Richmond County. That's why we're here
3 tonight, Mr. Chairman and board members.

4 In getting our voting place back, that is a voting
5 place where our neighborhood has taken an interest in.
6 We since 1999 operate that community center on a
7 volunteer basis. We keep it up; we've made
8 improvements. Capital improvements, by the way, in the
9 government term of over \$200,000. We didn't pay it
10 ourselves but we got part of it and part of it was
11 SPLOST funds. We worked very hard at it to--what do
12 they call that. Not stretch the dollars but whatever
13 it is when you take a dollar and make two dollars'
14 worth of profit. We did pretty well with that, Mr.
15 Chairman. So, Mr. Chairman, once our voting place was
16 given back and Ms. Bailey did a request and sent it to
17 the Justice Department. And I'd like to say the
18 Justice Department agreed with her request and our
19 request, so we need the same thing but not necessarily
20 to go in that same process this time, Mr. Chairman.
21 But we have an opportunity here now to correct
22 something that happened ten years ago that we were not
23 aware of at the time.

24 For 16 years Sand Ridge thrived as a non-
25 contiguous neighborhood, a group of people involved in

1 the process. For the last ten years we have struggled.
2 Why have we struggled. When candidates come through
3 our neighborhood they don't know where to go. And
4 that's not to pick on anybody, because you start
5 talking to people and sometimes we don't know who to
6 talk to. We have four commissioners that we have to
7 work out with to get things. And as a group,
8 commissioners and elected officials like to confer with
9 whoever else that has an interest in that area. So if
10 we're talking a District 4 issue, Mr. Chair, we have to
11 find Commissioner Mason. If we're talking a District 8
12 issue, we have to find Commissioner Guilfoyle. But I
13 know all commissioners represent the whole city so we
14 don't say that as something that you can't talk to
15 anybody, but everybody is on the commission or the
16 school board. But everybody does not necessarily
17 understand that to great detail.

18 So the thing is, Mr. Chair and board members, we
19 want our community back. We want to be in one
20 location, one group, and work through our issues and
21 raise our children in a united community that we
22 experienced and enjoyed from 1986 until 2002. And we
23 can't erase the last ten years but, Mr. Chairman and
24 committee, y'all can change that now.

25 And that is why we're here. We've had to wait ten

1 years. The redistricting process only appears every
2 ten years and in 2012 that will be ten plus two, so we
3 do not want to start off another decade in the same
4 manner that we started off the previous decade. So,
5 Mr. Chair and committee, I really want to thank you for
6 appreciating and listening to Sand Ridge and hearing
7 our issues. I want to thank you for allowing the
8 packet that we submitted to go into the record. And
9 the majority of that packet explains the effort that we
10 put into getting our voting place back.

11 So that means, Mr. Chair and committee members, we
12 are involved. We are active and we want to be fairly
13 represented. We don't--our elected officials represent
14 the folks. We don't have anything or any axe to grind
15 with any elected official. We want to be a continuous,
16 non-contiguous neighborhood. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

17 MR. PRUITT: Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman.

18 MR. MASON: Good afternoon.

19 MR. PRUITT: To the board of elections officials
20 that are here, to all of the elected officials that are
21 here, my name--

22 MR. MASON: Can we get your name--oh, okay.

23 MR. PRUITT: Pardon me.

24 MR. MASON: I think you were going there, but your
25 name and your address.

1 MR. PRUITT: Yes. My name is George Pruitt. I'm
2 from Sand Ridge. I live at 3744 Crest Drive and I've
3 been there since June 1987, a voting member. I've
4 voted in every election since 1987, since I moved here.
5 My question for the group tonight is it looks like when
6 Ms. Bailey was explaining the guidelines that she
7 received in the redistricting process there were some
8 rules put in place which allowed for some additional
9 considerations, based on what she explained. Meaning
10 that if you came up with a plus or minus percentage and
11 that percentage was still far below the extremes on the
12 limitations that you had to work with. So I think what
13 the committee at Sand Ridge is asking tonight is as you
14 go back and you consider this input, consider that you
15 have enough latitude already in your guidelines, the
16 plus/minus, to take into consideration and to accept
17 and approve the redistricting process for Sand Ridge
18 Neighborhood Association.

19 MR. MASON: Thank you. Yes, ma'am.

20 MS. REYNOLDS: My name is Martha Reynolds, 4083
21 Burning Tree Lane. That's in Goshen. My concern is
22 that we don't--we're not going to be talking to you ten
23 years from now on this. We want to ensure that Goshen
24 is not divided and is kept as a single entity. And the
25 one that I have not seen on the map tonight, but what I

1 saw last week that part of Goshen and Spirit Creek was
2 being put into another district. Gentlemen and ladies,
3 we do not want that to happen.

4 MR. MASON: Duly noted.

5 MS. REYNOLDS: Is there anything we can do? And
6 it wasn't that many houses. It wasn't but about ten
7 homes and I don't see any reason, because obviously
8 these maps--and I know the State has done a fine job
9 but these are not great lines that we could not make
10 sure that Goshen is retained as a community as a whole.

11 MR. MASON: Okay. This--like I mentioned earlier,
12 this is not a debate issue. We do have it recorded.
13 When we go back to our committee meetings we'll address
14 all the issues that will be brought up and try to see
15 if it works in--within the guidelines that we have. I
16 will say this, though. And I appreciate everyone
17 coming forward with their concerns and they will
18 definitely be taken into consideration. At the end of
19 the day, though, I will say this. And this doesn't
20 make people happy but it's the truth of the matter.
21 Somebody is going to be disappointed because there's
22 just too much stuff that we had to do and too many
23 people that had to move and too many rules that we had
24 to follow for it to be a perfect fit where everybody is
25 going to be satisfied. So I'm going to throw that out

1 there right now. No, I'm not saying that that won't
2 get you what you need. I'm not saying that that won't
3 get Mr. Sias and the Sand Ridge Association what they
4 need. But what I'm saying is I want to put that up-
5 front and make sure that we're very clear. 36 percent
6 deviation is huge for anybody to try to manipulate and
7 get to where we need to be. I had to lose 4,000 folks.
8 There's others that had to lose or gain as many. With
9 all the requirements that we've had, yes, we could look
10 at certain things and then something else gets broke or
11 something else gets broke or something else gets broke.
12 So I just want to make sure that we understand that,
13 yes, we can look and will look at these situations that
14 are brought up. But also the bottom line is how does
15 that create a ripple effect among the entire situation.
16 Given the fact that I believe Goshen had to lose--I
17 mean not Goshen but District 8 had to lose 1800 or so,
18 1900. And if you look at this map and who they touch,
19 they touch 4, just as an example. But I've got to lose
20 almost 4,000 myself, so to take theirs, you know, it
21 now causes another ripple effect on a different end.
22 Or if we leave yours in place then we've got to find
23 somewhere to get rid of theirs to give to 6. So then
24 we might split Pepperidge, as an example, and
25 Pepperidge becomes split. So I'm just using that as an

1 example. There's a number of different ways we're
2 going to go back and look at it. But tonight if you're
3 wanting confirmation that we can make it happen, I
4 can't give that to you. I'm just being as honest as I
5 can possibly be.

6 MS. REYNOLDS: And I understand that.

7 MR. MASON: But for the record, though, we are
8 going to look at it. And remember this: each meeting
9 that we have is open to the public so that way you can
10 clearly see what we're doing or what we're not doing.
11 Nobody is trying to hide anything in this process.
12 Those processes will be open for you to come to, even
13 though you won't have public input at the committee
14 meeting you'll see us in action, doing--trying to
15 figure out, you know, where do we go from here and how
16 we can address those. Do any board members have--

17 MR. PADGETT: Yeah. I do.

18 MR. MASON: I'm sorry. I'll just go over here and
19 I'll come on down, Jack.

20 MS. REYNOLDS: I appreciate it. But again, we do
21 need to keep our neighborhoods intact.

22 MR. MASON: Thank you.

23 MR. LOCKETT: May I? I wanted to ask a question
24 to her.

25 MR. MASON: Well, while she's here--just a second.

1 MR. LOCKETT: I believe you said there was only 8,
2 maybe 10 houses involved.

3 MS. REYNOLDS: I believe. That's according to the
4 map that I saw the other day--

5 MR. LOCKETT: Do you have a street address?

6 MS. REYNOLDS: I live right off 56 going in Goshen
7 Road.

8 MR. MASON: Jack, we have--

9 MR. PADGETT: Just a comment, then. This is one
10 of the things since I represent District 6 and can help
11 in this area. One of the issues that came up in
12 putting this into District 6 that's already been
13 explained is that District 6 was short almost 2,000
14 voters and District 8 was over 2,000 voters. It is a
15 distinct area where both of these--District 6 had a
16 voting poll at Southside Baptist Church and District 8
17 had a polling place at Southside Baptist Church. And
18 the numbers were almost exact to make the transfer and
19 that of course it did have specific lines there to do
20 that. And there again, one of the things that's a
21 little difficult to explain is that the census tract is
22 805 and, you know, if you're one--at one side there,
23 you're in a different census tract which I believe is
24 802. It's the rest of Goshen.

25 MS. REYNOLDS: Spirit Creek is the--

1 MR. PADGETT: Yeah.

2 MR. REYNOLDS: --natural boundary.

3 MR. PADGETT: The creek is a natural boundary.
4 That was the thought process that I had and certainly
5 Ms. Meggers had. When you're making simple solutions,
6 when you've got swap folks without bringing them all
7 the way across the county.

8 MR. MASON: Ms. Cain.

9 MS. CAIN: Ms. Meggers, one thing that I'd like
10 you to look at. One of the things we set as a
11 criteria--one of the things we set as a criteria when
12 we first started doing this.

13 MS. MEGGERS: I can't hear you.

14 MS. CAIN: Can you hear this one, okay. One of
15 the things we said when we first started this is
16 communities alike, that are alike. I don't like the
17 splitting of neighborhoods. I think it does start--
18 it's a lot of confusion. So the neighborhoods and the
19 communities are more or less the communities that are
20 split. If there's any way we can go back and try to
21 adjust as much as possible so we can keep our
22 communities intact. I think we really need to look at
23 keeping our communities intact to the best of our
24 abilities.

25 MS. MEGGERS: If I can explain here right now.

1 Let me make sure I'm pointing to the right area. She
2 said if you take this area right here that I just lit
3 up that that would take those ten or twelve houses and
4 put it back over here in District 8 to solve that. And
5 that would be a very simple change. It would mean that
6 Ms. Bailey would have to probably adjust the precinct
7 line but it has good visible features and it would be
8 possible.

9 MR. MASON: What's the population?

10 MS. MEGGERS: 17 people, so if--that one change
11 would still keep us well within the deviation. That
12 would not be a problem; it's just that it splits that
13 one particular precinct. Now, I'm not sure if we can't
14 take much more. I mean, you know, we can look at that.
15 But if you're specifically talking Goshen Road down to
16 Mike Padgett Highway then that is something we can do.

17 MR. MASON: Okay. So now that you've gone there
18 now we've got to be fair. Now you've got to go to Sand
19 Ridge side.

20 MS. MEGGERS: So first of all then we'll do this
21 so you will understand when I get to the Sand Ridge
22 areas. Okay. If I changed this, District 6 would be a
23 minus .82. Wait a minute. Let me do it a little
24 differently than I did. Let me put this back to 8.
25 District 8 would be a plus .58 and District 6 would be

1 minus .82, so less than a percentage. So that kind of
2 change works and if it would put that community back
3 together. That would be, you know--

4 MR. MASON: So we didn't retrogress at all with
5 this particular move here?

6 MS. MEGGERS: No. It would not. I don't believe
7 it would hurt anything.

8 AUDIENCE MEMBER: It's not but so many people
9 there.

10 MR. MASON: I understand that but so--

11 MS. MEGGERS: It would--

12 MR. MASON: Why didn't we do that in the first
13 place?

14 MS. MEGGERS: Because it splits the precinct. I'm
15 going in and--

16 MR. MASON: Oh, the precinct.

17 MS. MEGGERS: --try to get a sliver out. See,
18 it's just 17 people. I'm just taking a sliver out of
19 that precinct.

20 MR. MASON: All right.

21 AUDIENCE MEMBER: We want it back.

22 MR. MASON: That's pretty clear.

23 MS. MEGGERS: Now, let's go over here. Because,
24 see, that's just handful of people. It's a little
25 different situation than when I get to--okay. Now,

1 Sand Ridge, if I take that, the major part of it which
2 I understand is right in through here, and do the same
3 thing. That would take District 4 to a plus 5.56
4 percent, which is slightly over so we'd have to make
5 other adjustments somewhere along the lines. We'd have
6 to find--you know, District 8 would be okay. It takes
7 it down to a minus 3.8 which is, you know, a little bit
8 larger deviation but that District 8 is a growth area.
9 But it's going to mean shifting something else
10 somewhere along the lines.

11 MR. MASON: Is that--that area that's highlighted,
12 does that cover all of Sand Ridge, the area that's
13 highlighted?

14 AUDIENCE MEMBER: That completely solves the whole
15 issue.

16 MR. MASON: Now, what does that do for the
17 population, the deviation that we talked about?

18 MS. MEGGERS: Under this working proposal District
19 8 would be a minus 3.8 but it takes District 4 to a
20 plus 5.56 percent.

21 MR. MASON: Which by law we have to be under that
22 in order to--

23 MS. MEGGERS: So it would require more changes.

24 MR. MASON: All right. So that's something to
25 look at. Anyone else? Going once. Please come on up.

1 MS. STANTON: Hello. I'm Brenda Stanton. I'm not
2 really familiar with the parliamentary procedure, but I
3 will say--say my name.

4 MR. MASON: Yes, please.

5 MS. STANTON: My name and my address. My name is
6 Brenda Stanton. I reside at 3827 Crest Drive. And I
7 would just like to make a general observation and
8 basically understand that, you know, it was said that
9 the State Department basically has to approve any
10 changes or whatever and that this was not really--you
11 know, it's not really a decision based so much on what
12 would happen as far as the racial makeup of the area.
13 However, I just want to make an observation that
14 because if Sand Ridge remains split then it will go
15 directly to people feeling disenfranchised, and that
16 would of course lead to apathy. So, you know, it's
17 just a general observation but it's something for you
18 to consider when you go back and make your decision.

19 MR. MASON: Thank you. Anyone else? Well, I
20 think that concludes our meeting. Linda, do you have
21 anything add? Ms. Meggers, anything?

22 MS. MEGGERS: No.

23 MR. MASON: Any Board members?

24 MS. CAIN: No.

25 MR. MASON: All right. We are adjourned. Thank

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1 you.

2 [Public meeting concludes at 7:10 p.m.]

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CERTIFICATE OF COURT REPORTER

I hereby certify that the foregoing transcript consisting of pages numbered 1 through 44 is a true and correct transcript of the proceeding held before me; that said hearing was reported by the method of Stenomask.

I further certify that I am not kin or counsel to the parties in the case, am not in the regular employ of counsel or said parties, nor am I otherwise interested in the result of said case.

This the 24th day of October, 2011.

GINA L. SMITH, CCR, CVR
CERTIFIED COURT REPORTER
GEORGIA CERTIFICATE # B-2151

**Richmond County Board of Elections
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