

March 15, 2011

The Honorable James Bouley
Mayor of Concord
124 East Side Drive
Concord, NH 03301

Dear Mayor Bouley,

By April 1, the U.S. Department of Commerce will be releasing state population data for the purpose of redistricting. While we already know the overall state population, this new data will provide us with city, town and ward population breakdowns so we may begin the redistricting process. As you know, every ten years we must redraw lines for the districts for State Representatives, State Senators, our two Congressmen, as well as County Commissioners and Executive Councilors. We must maintain the principle of “one man/one vote” in all of our work.

Due to the passage of a constitutional amendment in 2006, there’s one change this time around. Every city, town, or ward that has enough population for a representative (it appears 3,291 will be the ideal number) must in fact be given a representative. That means that for all cities with wards in excess of 3,291 people, we may no longer allow representatives to be chosen at-large citywide. It appears this mandate will apply to all cities except Berlin, Somersworth, and Franklin.

The Speaker of the New Hampshire House of Representatives has appointed a committee to develop new voting districts for state representatives and certain other state offices. The House Special Committee on Redistricting is also charged with coordinating the redistricting process with the cities and towns.

Our work will proceed under the assumption that all cities will realign their wards so as to be as equal in population as possible. After all, if you elect local officials on a ward basis, you fall under the “one man/one vote” mandate as well. If you do not plan to create an equal realignment, please contact us as soon as possible. If you do, please let us know of your new ward lines and populations when you complete the process. We will certainly need to group certain wards together for the purpose of floterials after each ward is provided its requisite number of stand alone representatives.

While we do not need to know the exact street lines you use as demarcations, we will need to know which wards are contiguous since wards included in any floterial must be contiguous. We will make every effort to keep districts within cities, but as in the

past, it is likely that in a limited number of instances, some city wards will have to be combined with surrounding towns, especially in floterial districts.

It is our intention to work on the plan for the new House districts this year so that we will be able to have legislation drafted in the fall for introduction in January 2012. Your cooperation is certainly appreciated.

City charters must be reviewed to determine if any revisions will be necessary to account for any shifts in ward populations. According to Secretary of State William Gardner, cities must complete any changes to their charter pursuant to RSA 49-B. Revisions relative to redistricting must be adopted this year. The charter revision process, including notice and public hearing requirements, must be completed 60 days prior to the date of the fall municipal election. In order to make the state redistricting process as smooth as possible, it is important for us to know the timeline that you anticipate for revisions to your city charter. Can you please forward this information to us as soon as the timeline has been determined?

It is also important to note that there is a state law that addresses the establishment of ward lines. This law, RSA 44:4-a, requires all ward boundaries to follow easily identifiable physical features.

44:4-a Boundaries of Wards. – All boundaries of wards, other than those boundaries which are coterminous with the boundaries of municipalities, shall follow easily identifiable physical features. For the purposes of this section, physical features include public and private ways, public utility lines, railroad tracks, and surface waters. Ward lines shall be clearly shown on a map of suitable scale. Those portions of physical features with names and used as ward boundaries shall be clearly labeled on the ward map.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please feel free to contact Pam Smarling of the House Committee Research Office (271-3387), if you have any questions about the House redistricting process. Information can be e-mailed to pam.smarling@leg.state.nh.us or mailed to Room 409, House Committee Research, Legislative Office Building, 33 North State Street, Concord, NH 03301.

Sincerely,

Rep. Paul Mirski, Chairman
House Special Committee on Redistricting

cc. Janice Bonenfant, City Clerk