

House Special Committee on Redistricting

Cheshire County Public Hearing
Keene Public Library Auditorium
October 18, 2011
7:00 p.m.

Committee Members Present: Rep. David Bates (Chairman), Rep. Steve Vaillancourt (Clerk), Rep. Lucy Weber and Rep. Edwin Smith.

There were approximately 40 people in the audience.

Materials made available to the public:

1. Map of Cheshire County with 2010 populations
2. State and federal constitutional provisions and state laws addressing redistricting
3. The algebraic formulas for calculating deviation with the aggregate method and the component method
4. Instructions for finding the House Special Committee on Redistricting website
5. The schedule for all of the county public hearings.

Rep. Bates called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Introductory Remarks

Rep. David Bates, Vice Chairman – Every 10 years we redraw lines. Seventeen members of the committee will create plans for “equal representation.” Constitutional Requirements: U.S. House, Executive Council, State Representatives, County Commissioners. (Senate will do its own.) Public input in each of 10 counties. No plans yet created. No proposals, no speculation. Here to collect information, not to answer questions.

Rep. Steve Vaillancourt – Explained 3291 number. “One man one vote.” Communities of interest.

Rep. Edwin Smith – 1 seat Merrimack/Litchfield district last time. Those in Cheshire know about these, avoid that.

Testimony

Hon. John Pratt, former state representative (Walpole) and Chairman of Cheshire Board of Commissioners – (Bill Roberts and Pratt were on this committee 10 years ago – bipartisan plan accepted.) Has plan for 3 county

commissioner seats (see Attachment A). Deviation less than ½ percent (25,706 ideal). Submitted Rep plan (see Attachment B) – 11 districts deserve own rep. Not easy and sometimes not pretty.

Mary Louise Chamberlain, Jaffrey – Consider keeping Susan Emerson in Jaffrey. Jaffrey and Rindge prefer to float together.

Linda Cates, Nelson – passes.

Rep. Tara Sad, Walpole (Cheshire 2) – Currently 3 reps in 7 towns. Forty-five minutes to go from one end to the other. Demographic differences make it virtually impossible to represent all constituents. Three different school districts. Would like to go to Alstead or Westmoreland with floterial.

Paul Berch, Westmoreland – Concerned with process. Census data has been out for 10 months. Westmoreland makes sense in connecting with Keene. No commonality with Surry and Gilsum. Mathematically correct but makes no sense.

Jennifer Marie Bellan, Winchester – Worked for census. Big problems with census. Encourages us to contact Boston Regional office. Hope they double-checked. North Hinsdale has little in common with people of South Hinsdale.

Rep. Vaillancourt – We cannot split up Hinsdale.

Rep. Lucy Weber – We must keep towns intact (unlike Vermont).

Rep. Bates – Towns may divide themselves up into wards and legislature could accept it.

Ms. Bellan – Prefer to go toward Swanzey/Richmond rather than Chesterfield.

Terry Clark, Keene City Council – Algebraic calculation sheet complex. Keene has 7 reps. Sent resolution to House to keep Keene alone. Roxbury makes sense – share water system. Don't go to school district. Roxbury goes to Monadnock School District.

Rep. Susan Emerson, Rindge, Jaffrey and Dublin (Cheshire 7) – Would like to see district left alone. Jaffrey, Rindge and Fitzwilliam would be okay.

Emily Preston, Jaffrey – Susan represents Republican, Democrats and Independents better than anyone in our area. “We are very fond of her.” Politics – leadership of House determined to move people around. Very aware of that.

People taken off committees. Hope it doesn't happen. Prefer to stay with Dublin. Fitzwilliam okay.

Rep. Bates, Vice Chair - Confer with leadership. Nothing like that going on. No retaliation. Dismiss that rumor. As a committee, have not developed plan. Guided by Constitution and mathematics. We wouldn't allow that to happen.

Harriet Charland, Winchester – Winchester, Hinsdale and Chesterfield go together. Close community. Positively prefer Westmoreland rather than Richmond.

Mike Hoefler, Keene – Question what Senate does. Feels current Senate district is good. School districts are a major factor. Gilsum, Sullivan and Roxbury go to Monadnock in Swanzey. Surry now goes to Keene. Winchester to Keene. Chesterfield and Westmoreland go to Keene High School. Hinsdale is on its own.

Mike Goudzwaard, Keene – Process. Invite back here. Would like to see the result of our comments -- map.

Rep. Bates – Explained how cities were notified in March – how to rebalance wards. Some cities haven't done that yet. Keene is okay. Public hearing notice – press conference in calendar.

Jack Pratt (second time) – Article 9A monumental change. Mandates – any town over 3291 to have its own rep. Jaffrey must have single rep, Rindge single rep. Enormous change – exceedingly difficult problem.

William May, Keene – Like Keene City council proposal.

Aaron Patt, Troy, County Commissioner -- Marlborough, Troy, Jaffrey, Dublin share Mt. Monadnock. Geographic concerns. Disagrees with Commissioner Pratt's plan.

Keith Malloran, Rindge – There is a bond between Rindge and Jaffrey - unified. "Makes no sense to be enslaved by mathematical concoction." Concerned about political influence. Be vigilant about what is going on here -- he's a progressive democrat. Rt. 12 busy corridor Rindge – Fitzwilliam. Rt. 202 – Jaffrey and Rindge together. Be careful about using equations.

Zandra Rice Hawkins, Goffstown, Director of Granite State Progress - Spoke last Thursday. Software? Rumor it's with legal counsel. Encourage release to public. "Certain state reps have been targeted for their votes." Scuttlebutt.

Rep. Bates – Will not be complete until we have final numbers for city wards.

Joe Cartwright, Alstead – No way on redistrict – taking school districts into consideration. Big towns will swallow up small towns. Agree with “one man one vote” primary.

Public hearing adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rep. Steve Vaillancourt, Clerk



Attachments

Handwritten Comments Submitted

Daniel Carr, Ashuelot – There are no especially onerous problems in Cheshire County. I believe there that there is no particularly strong reason to make changes. The current districts largely represent well the aggregation and independence of communities that have confluent commerce and communication.

Jennifer Marie Bellan, Ashuelot – To elaborate on what I said about the census – an example: Richmond was very resistant to the census. When you look at the census map figures, it looks like Richmond has a very small population. This is probably true, BUT it's possible at the same time that it was undercounted. Also, there is a new SAU for towns in the southern edge.

Linda Cates, Nelson - 1) Districts which increased the ease of political involvement would be helpful. A few years ago we decided to hold a “candidates night” in our small town. We thought we could do this with a nearby town. But, not Harrisville – we don't share the same state representative. Not, Stoddard, we don't share the same state senator. It would be helpful to have the same state rep and state senator as neighboring towns. 2) Nelson and Harrisville have an affinity. Nelson doesn't have a post office. We go to Harrisville. Nelson doesn't have a store. We go to Harrisville. Many of us are incorporators of historic Harrisville. The two communities are next door to each other and have many common interests. It seems unnatural not to share a state representative. 3) We also share Granite Lake and Munsonville, with Stoddard and feel a similar affinity for Stoddard.