



CRIMINAL DEFENSE
DIVORCE & FAMILY LAW
EDUCATION LAW
CIVIL LITIGATION
APPEALS

February 28, 2022

TO: Wake County Board of Education
FROM: Adam Mitchell, Tharrington Smith, LLP and Blake Esselstyn, Mapfigure Consulting
RE: Report from Public Engagement Sessions

At its February 1, 2022, work session, the Wake County Board of Education received three alternative redistricting plans from its redistricting consultants. After discussing the plans, the Board directed the consultants and staff to embark on a public engagement process to include two in-person sessions, one virtual session, and a web landing page with the ability to submit comments.

In-Person Sessions

Following the February 1, 2022, work session, WCPSS Communications staff distributed information regarding the sessions to citizen and interest groups across the county.

The first session was held on Wednesday, February 16, 2022, at 6:30 p.m. at the Crossroads III facility. The redistricting consultants as well as staff were in attendance. One Board member was present. Paper comment cards were available to attendees as well as QR codes that would allow an attendee to submit a comment via the website. Spanish translation was available. There were no additional attendees.

The second session was held on Tuesday, February 22, 2022, at 6:30 p.m. in the media center at Southeast Raleigh High School. The redistricting consultants as well as staff were in attendance. Three Board members were present. Paper comment cards were available to attendees as well as QR codes that would allow an attendee to submit a comment via the website. Spanish translation was available. There was one additional attendee. The consultants provided an overview of the redistricting process and reviewed the three alternative plans. After the presentation, the consultants held a Q and A session with the attendee.

Virtual Session

The virtual session was held via WebEx at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, February 23. The redistricting consultants as well as staff were in attendance. Four Board members were present (a fifth member was present for a brief period of time but dropped off the meeting to avoid any question about whether the meeting constituted an official meeting of the Board). There were nine additional participants. The consultants provided an overview of the redistricting process and reviewed the three alternative plans. After the presentation, the consultants held a Q and A session with the participants. Of those nine participants, two asked questions and one made a comment.

Web-Based Comments

Communications staff created a redistricting landing page accessible from wcpss.net (<https://www.wcpss.net/Page/50946>). The landing page contained a link to a comment card (<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSckKsxVyssJY3Tvjzly0pGAjWv-fWn-J1LYyqEQUwiCyewIUw/viewform>). Two comments have been received via the web landing page as of 12:00 p.m. on February 28, 2022.

Email Comments

One Board member forwarded an email received by a member of the public to the consultants.

Feedback Regarding the Plans

Virtual attendee comment (one):

One virtual attendee stated she did not like Option C because District 5 was non-compact and looked like a river.

Email Comment (one):

- 1) I have looked at all three maps and watched most of the 2/1 Work Session. Based on that:

I do not like Option C. I am torn between A and B and have reasons to prefer either one. I have a slight preference for A, although I prefer the move of D8 to D7 in B (I am not crazy about D9 being in between D7 and D8 in A since it creates 3 districts in the Western Wake/Cary area).

I am happy to see split precincts being eliminated!

I would love to see attendance areas line up better with the districts, but I think it is a quixotic quest, especially with the knowledge that they will continue to change. Therefore, I think the elimination of split precincts and the compactness of districts combined with municipal boundaries are much more important with the better balance of schools per district being the next criteria.

Maybe they say the same thing (I don't think so), but the number of Area Supt. per district seems like it should be replaced with the number of districts per Area Supt. I am thinking of things like BAC meetings and interaction with Board members would want you to try to limit the number of Districts each Area Supt. covers.

Is there a reason Area Supt. are not simply overlaid onto Districts? I know districts can change with each Census, but it seems like the same balance in Board members would be similar needs for an Area Supt. If the number of schools per district is better balanced, then the only exception I am thinking is that possibly the Area Supt. are better aligned with ES-MS-HS feeder patterns??

Web-Based Comments (two):

- 1) As a parent, professional and representative for a number of organizations working for and supporting WCPSS in Southern Wake County for more than 17 years, I am adamantly opposed to Option C moving Fuquay Varina High School specifically to District 5. District 8 and District 2 have the majority of the feeder Middle schools going into this high school and the two board members who are in Districts 8 and 2 currently have always worked closely together and advocated well for Fuquay

Varina High School. You will see that allowing this high school to move to District 2 will not create a drastic change in the "number of high schools within the district". Allowing the high school to remain in District 8 is another alternative. If you speak to the current representation, (who are both amazing) they will tell you that it would make more sense, logically because of representation and feeding schools, for this school to be located within District 2. Our area and location is growing and changing in ways different than the mid to upper portions of District 5. We need representation that understands those changes and influences and is working in them daily - this means District 2 or 8. I am happy to discuss my opposition or opinion further with any of your staff and have served Fuquay Varina High School and the administration and staff and students there for the past 3 years. I am not able to attend the virtual session this evening as I live in a "split household" where one of my children attends Fuquay Varina High School and the other will attend Willow Spring High School next year due to reassignment. Willow Spring High School is hosting their curriculum fair this evening from 5-7pm which is within the same time frame as your session. The other two in person sessions were also no where close to our Fuquay Varina High School. Many parents are unaware of these potential changes.

- 2) Option C completely obliterates the concept of "community" for District 5. It looks like a "catch-all" district or merely an afterthought. Further, after all the complexity we've been through the last two years (especially our children) do we really need to add more upheaval but choosing the most complex and disruptive redistricting plan? I urge the board to keep things simple with minimal disruption.

Questions

One in-person attendee asked general questions about the school district and redistricting. This attendee indicated that she was new to the area and wanted to learn more.

One virtual attendee asked the consultants to review the criteria used in drawing the maps again.

One virtual attendee asked several questions, including about racially polarized voting, minority opportunity districts, and prison gerrymandering.

Requests

One virtual attendee requested the home precincts of incumbents be indicated on the maps. The consultants forwarded this request to the Board. As of 11:00 a.m. on Monday, February 28, 2022, this information has been added to the interactive map.