



May 18, 2021

Board of Supervisors
County of Ventura
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

Ruben Barrera, Director
Building and Safety Division

Doug Leeper, Director
Code Compliance Division

Charles R. Genkel, Director
Environmental Health Division

Jennifer Orozco, Director
Operations Division

Dave Ward, Director
Planning Division

Subject: Review and provide direction to staff regarding the Proposed 2021 Supervisorial Redistricting Process and Work Program

Recommendation:

Review and approve the proposed 2021 Supervisorial Redistricting Process, and Work Program.

Discussion:

The United States Constitution requires a count every ten (10) years of everyone residing in the United States. Information from the census is used to help determine where to locate schools, daycare centers, roads/public transportation, hospitals, and other facilities, and is used in making decisions regarding business growth and housing needs. Census data is also used for geographically defining federal and state legislative districts, which initiates a "redistricting" process that begins in the year following a census. Additionally, census data allows county officials to realign supervisorial districts in their counties, taking into account shifts in population growth since the last census and assuring equal representation for their constituents in compliance with the Voting Rights Act.

The County's redistricting process must be conducted in compliance with the requirements of the California Elections Code. As discussed briefly below, state law has changed since 2011 and the County must meet a number of additional requirements, including basing redistricting decisions on mandatory criteria that are applied in a specified order of priority. The requirements are relatively straightforward, and they address both the process and the outcome. The state requirements fall into three general categories: criteria, community involvement, and schedule. Each is discussed in detail below, followed by a discussion of staff's recommended methodology and schedule for completing supervisorial redistricting in Ventura County.

This decennial redistricting effort is unlike prior redistricting efforts due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Normally, census data is released in March of the year following the census. However, this year, due to delays resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, census data is not scheduled to be released until September, and may not be released in a form proper for a redistricting effort until October. As a result, there will be a very short timeframe between receiving census information and the December 15th deadline for final approval of the supervisorial districts map by your Board. Most importantly, if your Board does not adopt the maps by this date, your Board will lose the authority to do so and the maps will have to be submitted to the court for adoption. While there are discussions taking place in Sacramento regarding a change to the December 15th deadline, it is prudent at this time to move forward assuming that date remains in place. Staff believes the short timeframes will be a challenge but that the County can complete its redistricting process and meet the current deadlines. Staff's proposed Supervisorial Redistricting Process and Work Program is attached as Exhibit 1.

Criteria

The California Elections Code provides basic criteria and process requirements that the Board is required to consider in redistricting supervisorial districts. In addition to complying with the United States and California Constitutions and the Voting Rights Act, consideration must be given to the following factors in order of priority: (1) geographic continuity of the districts; (2) geographic integrity of any local neighborhoods or local communities of interest; (3) geographic integrity of cities and census designated places in a manner that minimizes their division; (4) district boundaries that are easily identifiable and understandable by residents and, to the extent practicable, the bounding of districts by natural and artificial barriers, including streets and boundaries of the county; and (5) to the extent practicable and where it does not conflict with the preceding criteria, districts shall be drawn to encourage geographical compactness in a manner that nearby areas of population are not bypassed in favor of more distant populations.

Community Involvement

The development of new supervisorial district boundaries may be done by the Board itself, an independent redistricting commission, an advisory redistricting commission, or a hybrid of the two commissions. The terms and requirements for possible commissions are set forth in Elections Code sections 23000 to 23004. Per the Elections Code, an independent commission must be open to all eligible residents, cannot be appointed by the Board, and commissioners cannot be affiliated with or a contributor to any members of the Board. Its decision on the districts is binding and largely excludes Board input. Conversely, an advisory redistricting commission is composed of County residents unaffiliated with the Board that would provide recommendations to the Board. A hybrid redistricting commission blends the two types of commissions and would result in the commission recommending to the Board two or more boundary maps, with the Board being required to adopt one of the maps without modification.

Historically, within Ventura County the redistricting process has been completed under the direction of the Board itself, with technical support from County staff. A redistricting commission or advisory board has not previously been utilized by the Board of Supervisors. Given the constrained timeline and reduced capacity of the county due to its robust COVID-19 response, staff recommends the continuation of its past practice and have your Board directly oversee the redistricting process.

For the 2001 and 2011 redistricting processes, the Board directed County staff to prepare proposed district boundary maps for its consideration. Prior processes included multiple public hearings to review maps and provide the public an opportunity to review and comment. Since the last redistricting effort, state law has changed and a more rigorous process is required under what is now referred to as the "Fair Map Act". For example, a minimum of four public hearings are now required, one of which must occur before the Board draws a draft map of the district boundaries, and two of which must occur after the Board has drawn a draft map of the boundaries. In addition, one of the hearings must take place either on a weekend or on a weekday evening after 6PM.

In addition to the required public hearings in front of your Board, a number of community meetings are expected to be held. At this time, it is anticipated there will be at least one community meeting within each of the current supervisorial districts. However, given the need to ensure access to the process by segments of the community with internet, language, transportation or other challenges, it may be necessary for additional community meetings.

Finally, the "Fair Map Act" also calls for an online presence, and staff will therefore be developing a Redistricting Website which will include an online mapping tool for community members to use in evaluating and creating maps. In all, the process recommended by staff will ensure that these and other Fair Map Act requirements are met.

All of the community involvement efforts associated with the Redistricting effort will be more thoroughly evaluated and described in a comprehensive Outreach Plan that will be developed by County staff with assistance from the consultant, *Redistricting Partners* over the next six to eight weeks. The Outreach Plan will identify the outreach methods (e.g., press releases, web site content, e-mail blasts), potential community partners (e.g., community and non-profit organizations, business associations, media), and public hearing and community meeting schedules.

Schedule

2020 census data will be received in September which is much later than in past years due to extended census response deadlines resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Rather than waiting for the 2020 census data, staff intends to begin the process by initiating outreach and developing the technical mapping tools in advance of receiving the census data. This effort is intended to prepare your Board, County staff, and interested

residents and community organizations so that they will be ready and able to review and provide input as soon as the initial draft redistricting maps are available.

Staff and contracted subject matter experts will proceed with outreach and mapping efforts in keeping with the requisite factors noted above. Initial alternative district scenarios will be developed for Board consideration, and refined through a community review process for further Board action/approval, as outlined in the proposed tentative timeline below:

2021 Supervisorial Redistricting Program Calendar

ESTIMATED DATE	EVENT
May 18, 2021	Board approval of 2021 Supervisorial Redistricting Process
May - June 2021	Create website and public outreach plan
July 2021	Board hearing to describe the mapping process, present the Outreach Plan and solicit community input
August – September 2021	Community Outreach Meetings
September	Board Hearing to hear report on status of effort and take additional community input
<i>October 1, 2021*</i>	<i>Release of census data in a form sufficient for mapping work to be initiated and draft maps prepared</i>
October - November 2021	Board hearings to review draft and final boundary maps
December 2021	Preparation of final maps for County Registrar
<i>December 15, 2021*</i>	<i>Current legal deadline to adopt maps</i>

**Key Milestones - non-County actions added for context; census data release date subject to change.*

Costs/Contracting

The estimated total cost associated with this effort is \$250,000. Providing a detailed cost estimate at this time is challenging in large part because a significant amount of the budget is associated with the public outreach element of the program. It is difficult to gauge the level of community interest and involvement in the redistricting process, especially in light of the compressed time-frame. In addition, unlike previous efforts, there will be a number of Ventura County cities that will be going through their council redistricting efforts at the same time. These city efforts may divert a significant amount of attention away from the supervisorial redistricting effort.

The cost elements included in this estimate include consultant support and internal County costs associated with this seven-month effort. Included in this estimate is consideration of the uncertain amount and nature of technical work, including responses to public comments and input, which may be required of staff in various departments including the County Executive Office, Resource Management Agency (RMA), County

Counsel, Information Technology Services, and the Clerk-Recorder-Elections Office. If necessary, staff will return to the Board to make necessary budget adjustments to address any unforeseen or additional costs associated with the redistricting program.

Staff has identified two key resources to assist in this effort. The first is *Redistricting Partners* (a consulting firm which has worked for the last 10 years with California public entities on redistricting, community outreach, meeting facilitation, GIS mapping, and California Voting Rights Act implementation). The second is Chris Stephens, former RMA Director, who will serve as the project manager for the CEO's Office. *Redistricting Partners* technical experience and knowledge of the laws governing the redistricting process will be relied upon as they lead the mapping/demography work and the receipt and consideration of comments received from residents and community groups. Given County staff's continued focus on its COVID programs, they will utilize the services of Chris Stephens in this effort. Based on his experience managing the 2011 redistricting effort for Ventura County, and his familiarity with County staff and the community, Mr. Stephens will oversee the consultant's work and serve as project manager for County staff activities.

This letter has been reviewed by County Counsel.

If you have any questions regarding this item, please call Kim Prillhart, RMA Director at 805-654-2661 or Scott Powers, CEO Sr. Deputy Executive Officer at 805-677-8761.



Kim Prillhart
Director, Resource Management Agency



Scott Powers
Sr. Deputy Executive Officer

Attachment(s)

Exhibit 1 – Recommended Supervisorial Redistricting Process and Work Program