

From the Mayor...

May 6, 2022

Earlier this week, the Warsaw Common Council held a specially scheduled public meeting to discuss the redistricting of municipal council districts. As mentioned in a previous column, one of the consequences of the decennial census is the requirement to rebalance the population in all legislative districts, if necessary. In 2021, federal, state, and county redistricting was completed in preparation for their 2022 primary and general elections. Municipal redistricting must be completed by November 8, 2022, in anticipation of 2023 city and town elections.

The redistricting process is the responsibility of the common council and is guided by Indiana Code 36-4-6-4. The rules for redistricting are straightforward. The districts themselves must be “composed of contiguous territory, are reasonably compact, do not cross precinct boundary lines, and contain, as nearly as possible, equal population”.

A committee of three council members, the Mayor, the City Planner, the Community and Economic Development Director, and the GIS coordinator convened to evaluate the current map and propose a draft solution for the community.

We’ve talked about the significant growth that has occurred in our city from the 2020 Census. The majority of which has occurred in the northern District 5. A significant decline occurred in the west side District 4. As a result, the disparity in population between those two districts is currently a whopping 49%.

Resolving the disparities so that all five districts are as equal as possible, is the goal of redistricting. Statutory restrictions also prohibit census blocks from being split and precinct boundaries from being crossed. It should also be noted that while not definitive, a disparity under 10% has been shown, through court challenges, to be generally permissible.

Utilizing digital technology, an initial draft of suggested changes was prepared and presented to the common council committee for their consideration. Their goal was to develop and present two options for the full council to arrive at consensus for a preferred option, which was done at this week’s public meeting. That plan has been put on the city website ([www.warsaw.in.gov](http://www.warsaw.in.gov)) for public review. The next step will be a review by the County Clerk and, if no changes are required, the final hearing dates for the council adoption process will be set. That process includes a first reading to consider the proposed redistricting plan, followed by formal adoption of the plan at a second separate meeting. Those dates will be publicized on the city website and City of Warsaw Facebook page.

While digital technology simplified the process of realigning council districts, the process was much more involved than just moving district lines to mathematically balance the numbers. Council Districts One and Four had to expand to the north to absorb the overpopulated and underrepresented Fifth District. Significant attention was given to avoid splitting neighborhoods, where possible, and to compensate for anticipated growth over the next ten years. Also, the impact of a US 30 freeway running right through our city was a very important

consideration. The council spent considerable time developing a strategic solution. The current draft plan, being recommended by the Council, ended up with only a 6% disparity between districts.

Please avail yourself of the maps. Plan to attend the redistricting hearings at the council meetings. The adopted plan will impact who you vote for in the next three municipal elections.