

LEGISLATIVE APPORTIONMENT BOARD
Title 17, Chapter 34A, Vermont Statutes Annotated
<https://sos.vermont.gov/apportionment-board/>

October 4, 2021
9:00 – 11:00 A.M.

MEETING AGENDA

Meeting at Secretary of State's Office, 128 State Street, Montpelier
(Telephone Conference Call Participation Available)

Join Zoom Meeting

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Members Present: Tom Koch

Members Present Remotely: Tom Little, Jeanne Albert, Mary Houghton, Rob Roper, Jeremy Hansen

Others Present: Chris Winters

Others Present Remotely: Mia Krow, Eric Covey, Michael Chernick, Amerin Aborjaily, Andy McLean

1. Call to Order

Tom Little called the meeting to order at 9:04am.

2. Review and Approval of Minutes of September 27, 2021 Meeting (5 Minutes)(all times approx.)

Jeremy moved to adopt minutes as presented. Rob seconded. Unanimous approval of September 27 Meeting Minutes.

3. Public Comment (per 1 V.S.A. sec. 312(h)) (15 Minutes)

No members of the public present.

4. Updates, Comments on Prior Agenda Items (up to 90 Minutes)

- Board Member Reports on Public Forums and Other Public Interactions
- Board Member Mapping Efforts

Tom L. reported that he participated in a 5 town forum last night for the 5 towns in the Mount Mansfield Unified School District, where there were questions about the Huntington situation, focused mostly on the Senate Districts. There were also questions about Huntington's placement in its current House District.

Tom L. was also in a forum hosted by Rights & Democracy and the Vermont Public Interest Research Group, and was a panelist at Middlebury College sponsored by the Middlebury Chapter of College Geographers, attended by approximately 40+ students at the college, and some number remotely.

Tom L. said he is continuing to get emails directed to his Legislative Apportionment Board (LAB) email address, saying they continue to fall into categories: Huntington districts, the Chittenden County Senate plan as it relates to the Islands, and an email from the Corinth Selectboard Chair.

He also heard testimony from a member of the public who has drawn draft maps addressing the Chittenden Senate districts. He said he has seen member of the public map proposals that contain what Tom L. called localized concerns, as opposed to statewide solutions, which he understands.

Tom L. said there was a professor on the Middlebury panel who discussed a redistricting map software, DistrictR, who the professor has said he found the be useful. Jeremy has heard of it, and read a news article about the lab it came out of. It is open-source.

Tom L. asked board members who have been active in mapping to share updates, and estimates of when an initial draft might be ready for sharing.

Jeremy was happy to share his maps, and was able to get all the districts conforming and the right size, but in violation of some of the guidelines he set for his mapping work, so he said some districts may need tweaking.

Jeremy presented his map. Tom L. clarified and Jeremy confirmed: the methodology for this map was all single member districts, trying not to subdivide any one town more than once. Jeremy discussed the Bennington area of his map, which differs from the way the districts currently exist. Jeremy said he tried to follow river boundaries where possible, and fell back to roads if he needed a finer dividing line.

Tom L. asked if this map shifts any House members out of that area of the state. Jeremy said he does not know. That wasn't a metric considered, and that shifting of members is a construct of the Board's work, saying he "put all the crayons back in the box."

Mary Houghton raised that the boundary between Putney and Brookline is Putney Mountain, which is not passable year round. Mary's map division put Putney with Dummerston, as did Jeanne and Rob's maps.

Jeremy presented the Barre and Montpelier areas of his map.

Tom K. believes that the district with Barre/Berlin looks a lot more friendly to a Progressive member. Jeremy says he doesn't believe that this is the time to start assigning partisan motive or blame, and if Tom wants it to change then change it. Tom K. said he was just joking.

The Waterbury and Stowe areas were discussed, including the connection of Stowe and Cambridge, which Rob also had, despite the connecting road being closed for a portion of the year.

St. Albans Town and City areas were discussed.

Rob said that in his work keeping the town boundaries within a single district was a real challenge, as was the case for Jeremy.

Chris Winters clarified that all draft maps should be posted to the website, and Tom L. said yes but there should be clear labeling that these are draft and working maps, and do not reflect the proposal by the LAB.

Jeanne explained her mapping work has been done in Microsoft Excel, and shared her draft. She said she still has some unassigned people, but has the right number of districts. Jeanne also said she did reference specific dividers when understanding if she was taking population from a town for a district.

Jeanne discussed areas (Putney, Orleans) where she was able to split two-member districts into single member districts without replacing them elsewhere.

Jeanne discussed the Essex/Milton area. Jeanne also said she may have found a single member district solution for Grand Isle, using a part of North Hero. She then discussed how she divided the Northeast Kingdom districts, and Stowe area districts, which do not cross into Waterbury.

Jeanne's overall deviation was 15.3%. Her next steps figure out where the extra unassigned people she has are, and then transferring her work to Maptitude, and believes she can accomplish this by Thursday or Friday.

Rob started a fresh map because he couldn't get the prior 149 district map to a finished place. His current map he has most everything done except Chittenden and Addison.

He was able to conform Franklin County towns more by heavily dividing Swanton, and believes he has the same solution to Grand Isle as Jeanne. He has also place Cambridge and Stowe together, so wants to reexamine that.

Rob showed his Bennington districts, but wants feedback from the BCA's in that region to understand where is best to draw the lines.

Rob has yet to get to Huntington.

Tom K. shared his map, which started with a focus on Barre Town/Barre City. He explained the Montpelier and Stowe regions. Tom K. said this was as far as he got, and still has work to do.

Mary said she has done work similar to Tom, and is at that point of dividing up certain areas. She hopes to finish her map and send PDFs by the end of the week.

5. Updates on Plans for Sending Initial House Map Proposal to Boards of Civil Authority (10 Minutes)

Tom L. believes they imposed an internal deadline of Oct. 18th to get maps to the Board of Civil Authority, understanding the statutory deadlines are about a week later. Jeanne confirmed that the BCAs need at least 21 days to respond, so it's a question of how long the LAB wants after they respond.

Jeanne asked a clarifying question on statutory obligations to inform towns of district

planning for their input: if the criteria for what would trigger them needing to be notified, but those conditions are already the case for existing district maps, do they still need to be notified?

Tom L. does not believe statute addresses whether ‘no change’ is being proposed to the district, so his reading of statute is that if the conditions are met, regardless of if they were also met historically with the current districting, they should be notified and given the opportunity to provide feedback. Chris Winters will seek an answer on this for the Board.

Chris believes the Board historically did a mailing to every single town with a map and opportunity to provide input. He will research further.

Jeremy wants to ensure that there is a clear deadline towns are provided with to give their input or feedback to the LAB.

Tom L. clarified that their deadline for voting on a map to send to towns is in 1-week, and believes that this includes the need to furnish a description of what the map is, and what towns specifically move been impacted in what ways.

Tom L. wants to be respectful of people’s time, but also wants to ensure the board has the time and flexibility to get maps completed and voted on, with perhaps an opportunity to revise.

Tom L. said one way progress can occur is if people start collapsing down into consolidated maps they can help lend work towards.

Jeanne questioned if they can make the Oct. 11th deadline – Rob believes they can, if they have another meeting before then.

Tom L. encouraged people to join the October 4th working session that has been warned, and will look to schedule another meeting this week, plus warn the October 11th meeting, though the content of the meeting will shift depending on what can be done this week.

Rob said the LAB should plan on having a Friday meeting, or at least another meeting this week.

Chris affirmed the Secretary of State’s office administrative support for any extra meetings, as necessary, to the extent that support can be provided.

6. Updates from Legislative Counsel, Vermont Center for Geographic Information, Secretary of State’s Office (10 Minutes)

No updates were presented.

7. Set Next Meeting Date; Other Business (5 Minutes)

The next meeting date was set for Friday morning. Tom L. will work with the Secretary of State's office on specifics and on issuing a warning.

8. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 11:08am.

Note that the times allocated to each Agenda item are estimates.