



CITY OF BELLE ISLE, FLORIDA CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: May 4, 2021

To: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

From: B. Francis, City Manager

Subject: Districting Commission

Background: In 2021, Belle Isle will review and, if necessary, redraw its district boundaries and residents are given the opportunity to be part of the change.

The last appointed Districting Commission was in 2001. The commission is composed of eight members whose term is composed of the time they are appointed until dissolution of the commission.

Why do we need to redistrict? Section 6.06 of the City Charter requires that by the first day of the month following official certification of the decennial census of the state, the city council shall appoint eight (8) city electors, determined from the registration for the last statewide general election, who shall comprise the districting commission. Also, the equal protection clause of the United States Constitution requires that where electoral districts are used, they must be substantially equal in population so that each person's vote counts about the same.

Section 6.06 also provides a timeframe for a decision on redistricting. Within one hundred twenty (120) days of appointment, the districting commission shall file with the official designated by the council, a report containing a recommended plan for adjustment of the council district boundaries. The council shall adopt a redistricting ordinance at least ninety (90) days before the next regular city election. If the council fails to do so by such date, the report of the districting commission shall go into effect and have the effect of an ordinance. The next City election is scheduled for March 8, 2022. This does not leave much time between the Commission report and passing an ordinance.

Belle Isle uses election districts and therefore we are legally required to consider redistricting every 10 years following the U.S. decennial census to maintain a population balance among electoral districts. The resulting council district boundaries must be balanced in population in accordance with state and federal rules governing the redistricting process.

ROLE AND FUNCTION of the Commission

The purpose of the Districting Commission is to recommend to the City Council adjustments to the boundaries of those districts, created by the previous Districting Commission, based on Federal Decennial Census information.

Adjustment of the council district boundaries are to comply with these specifications:

- (1) Each district shall be formed of compact, contiguous territory, and its boundary lines shall follow the centerlines of streets whenever possible.
- (2) The districts shall be based upon the principle of equal and effective representation as required by the United States Constitution and as represented in the mathematical preciseness reached in the legislative apportionment of the state.

Additional District boundary criteria may include:

- District boundaries may also follow visible natural and man-made features not necessarily street lines and/or City boundary lines whenever possible.
- District boundaries will respect communities of interest to the extent practicable. A community of interest is defined as a geographic area comprised of residents who share similar interests including, but not limited to, social, cultural, ethnic, geographic or economic interests, or formal government or quasi-governmental relationships, but not including relationships with political parties, incumbents, or candidates.
- District boundaries will be drawn without regard for advantage or disadvantage to incumbents or challengers.
- District boundaries will be drawn without regard for advantage or disadvantage to any political party.

Since the 2010 Census, areas such as Brighton Park and Royal Palm Condominiums, Belle Vista have been added to the City of Belle Isle; therefore, it may be necessary to adjust the District boundaries.

Staff Recommendation: Time is of the essence. Advertise for citizens to apply for this Commission.

Suggested Motion: None at this time but Council should direct staff to advertise for Commission members.

Alternatives: None

Fiscal Impact: TBD (maps, attorney fees, other resources)

Attachments: Charter Reference