

Worksession Agenda Summary

March 22, 2022

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Title:

Consideration of Ward Boundary Modification

Background

The Greeley City Charter describes the manner in which the city is organized for the purpose of electing the Mayor and City Council. As described, there "... shall be six (6) Councilmembers and a Mayor nominated and elected by the qualified electors of the City of Greeley..."

The Charter also requires that the City be "...divided into four (4) wards, bounded and numbered consecutively in a clockwise fashion beginning with the northeast ward, which shall be Ward I. The City Council shall not more often than once in four (4) years, by ordinance, readjust the ward boundaries, so as to comprise compact and contiguous territory, and so as to contain, as nearly as possible, an equal number of inhabitants. The City Council shall provide for adequate polling places in each ward."

And, "Except for the filling of vacancies, the Mayor shall be elected for a term of two (2) years and all councilmembers for a term of four (4) years. The Mayor, two (2) Council ward seats and one (1) Council at-large seat shall be elected at every general municipal election."

It has been the practice of the City to review its ward boundaries following the completion and reporting out of the decennial census and, where it appeared that the wards were approaching an imbalance in population, adjust the boundaries to reflect both existing and anticipated growth for a foreseeable period. Best practices suggest correcting ward boundaries if the disparity in population size nears 7%.

Observations

The last alteration of the ward boundaries took place on May 6, 2012 and since then, as illustrated on Attachment A (Existing Council Ward Boundaries), Wards III and IV have grown faster and are now much larger than Wards I and II. The largest disparity in size measured by the number of residents 18 yrs. of age and older is between Ward II (21.9% of the population) and Ward III (28.2% of the population), a difference of 6.3%.

Ward II is the smallest area geographically at 4.5 square miles, but is the densest in terms of population (4,723 persons/sq. mile). In contrast, Ward III has the largest population with 27,370 persons in that district, but has the second lowest density at 1,610 persons

per square mile. This is not surprising given the amount of undeveloped land in west and north Greeley and also helps explain the geographic center of the city at approximately 16th Street and 59th Avenue, but the population center at about 18th Street and 26th Avenue.

While not all traditionally available census information is yet available there are some other summarized population characteristics of interest:

Ethnicity: Ward I has the highest number and concentration of persons who identify as Hispanic (9,866 persons/44.3% of the ward population). Ward III has the smallest number and concentration of Hispanic residents (7,334 persons/26.8% of the ward population).

Age: As a percentage of its total population, all wards were close in the number of residents aged 18 years and younger, ranging from 31.9% to 34%. In raw numbers, Ward IV has the highest number of persons under 18 years of age (8,990) and Ward II had the smallest number of those under 18 years of age (7,008), though it ranked the second highest in the concentration of young persons as a percentage of its total population.

Current Work

The staff explored several ways to modify the ward boundaries to reflect and adjust ward population size to meet the following objectives:

- The wards should be relatively equal in population size;
- The wards should be reasonably compact and follow logical and easily recognized boundaries;
- The adjusted boundaries should reflect recent population growth shifts;
- The ward dimensions should be configured in a way that anticipates population growth in the next decade; and,
- The adjusted boundaries should be scaled such that the wards will grow closer in size over the next several years to limit the need for another adjustment before the next decennial census.

Using its 2022 annual growth report and mapping planned residential development throughout the city, the staff has prepared two options for Council consideration.

The first option (Scenario B) meets most of the criteria and does accomplish closer parity in ward size; however, at the current pace of new development, the western and eastern wards could stretch beyond the 7% differential benchmark well before 2030, necessitating another adjustment in 4 – 6 years.

In the second option (Scenario C), boundaries are adjusted to enlarge Wards I and II slightly more than Wards III and IV, which allows for the western wards to “grow into” population size parity with expected development, thereby coming closer to the ideal distribution by size of ward representation over the next decade.

Neither of the proposed options would displace any sitting Councilmember representation of their ward.

Strategic Work Program Item or Applicable Council Priority and Goal:

Good Governance

Decision Options:

1. Indicate a preferred alternative to the Ward Boundary configuration; an ordinance reflecting that choice will be developed and presented to Council for formal consideration within the next few months;
2. Indicate if Council desires another alternate to be developed with further direction on objectives;
3. Suspend review of ward boundaries to a future date.