



City Council Agenda Report

Meeting Date: July 13, 2024

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Approved By: Gariel Engeland

Subject: Hold a Public Hearing and receive public input regarding the process and criteria for establishing boundaries for district-based elections of the City Council.

COUNCIL PRIORITY AREA

- Business Communities
- Circulation Safety and Efficiency
- Environmental Sustainability
- Housing
- Neighborhood Safety Infrastructure
- General Government

RECOMMENDATION

Receive the second presentation from City staff, the City's Special Counsel, and the City's consulting demographer, Redistricting Partners, regarding the process and criteria for establishing boundaries for district-based elections of the City Council, and take public input at this – second of two required public hearings – regarding:

- (a) the communities of interest within the City that should define the boundaries and composition of districts before any maps of any proposed district boundaries are drawn; and
- (b) whether the City should implement a directly elected Mayor with four districts, or retain a City Council-selected rotational Mayor with five districts.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact to hold this meeting as the City has already retained the services of outside legal counsel and a demographer to assist in the transition to district-based elections.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Not applicable

PREVIOUS COUNCIL CONSIDERATION

On May 28, 2024, the City Council adopted a resolution of intent to transition to a district-based elections system. On June 11, 2024, the City held its first required public hearing related to the transition to district-based elections. On July 9, 2024, the City Council approved the calendar for the public hearings which will be held related to the transition to district-based elections.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

On April 18, 2024, the City received a Notice of Violation of the California Voting Rights Act ("CVRA"). The letter asserts that the City is violating the CVRA because the City's Councilmember elections are characterized by racially polarized voting in an at-large elections system. The letter demands that the City immediately transition from an at-large electoral system to a by-district system. On May 28, 2024, the City Council adopted a resolution declaring its intent to transition to district-based elections.

The City has engaged a demographer, Redistricting Partners, to support the transition effort to district-based elections. During this process, the City must hold at least five public meetings to receive public input and to consider draft maps. The first two hearings are held prior to the drafting of any maps and are for the purpose of allowing the public to provide input on the communities of interest within the City. The first of these hearings was held on June 11, 2024. At this first required public hearing for the transition to by-district elections, the City Council received a presentation from staff and its consulting demographer Paul Mitchell of Redistricting Partners. The presentation covered the public input process, as well as the rules and considerations that apply to the process drawing district maps and decision of the City Council in approving final maps of district boundaries.

The July 13, 2024 hearing is the second of five public hearings. After receiving a presentation on communities of interest, the public will then be invited to ask questions about the process and to provide input on communities of interest in the City. This will allow Redistricting Partners to better understand the jurisdiction and allow the drawing of maps based on sound demographic and legal principles. The public is also invited to provide input as to whether the City should move to a directly elected mayor with four districts or to maintain the current system where the five City Councilmembers select a mayor. At the end of this hearing, and after full consideration of the input offered by the public, the City Council will provide direction to City staff and Redistricting Partners regarding the criteria to be considered, including the communities of interest, consistent with the required legal parameters, to create proposed district maps. The City Council will also be asked to provide direction on the number of districts to be created, as well as whether the City would like to establish a directly elected mayor.

Following the hearing on July 13th, the demographer will prepare draft maps for consideration by the community and City Council. In preparation for these three upcoming hearings, maps created by the Redistricting Partners will be posted on the City's website and otherwise available at least one week before the hearings. After taking public comment at these hearings, the City Council will provide further direction to Redistricting Partners as to how to change and/or finalize a proposed map. These draft maps will be presented to the City Council and community at Public Hearing No.

3, currently scheduled for August 28, 2024 at 4 p.m. The City will conduct an extensive community outreach effort to solicit feedback and input on the draft maps. The results of this community outreach effort will be presented to the City Council on September 24, 2024 at Public Hearing No. 4. Public Hearing No. 5 is scheduled for October 8, 2024, which is when the City Council will select a final map to be incorporated into an ordinance to be considered by the City Council.

Public Outreach

Throughout the process of transitioning to district elections, the City is implementing a robust effort to encourage participation and inclusivity as a part of the process. The City is also providing multiple ways for the public to submit feedback through in-person and online formats such as map drawing, fillable Communities of Interest forms, submission of public comment. Members of the public are encouraged to regularly visit the City's districting webpage at: <https://www.losaltosca.gov/cityclerk/page/district-based-elections>.

Members of the public can access all meeting materials as well as provide input on the districting process and draft maps.

ATTACHMENTS

1. July 13, 2024 Communities of Interest Presentation
2. June 11, 2024 Staff Report
3. Frequently Asked Questions regarding District-based Elections