

Redistricting/Representation Proposal

March 16, 2016

Pinellas Charter Review Commission

Issue

Currently, the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC), in conjunction with the Planning Department, draws the boundaries of the four single-member district seats and the residency areas for the three at-large district seats. There are two issues with this: there is no check to prevent the districts from being tailored for incumbent advantage and that similar communities of interest may be divided between two adjacent districts. Additionally, there is no forum for public input beyond attending a BOCC meeting.

Proposal

A charter amendment creating the County Redistricting Advisory Board to be convened at an opportune time after the decennial census is taken and reported but in advance of the qualifying period for candidates. The board would be composed of 12 members, 11 citizens and the Pinellas Supervisor of Elections or designee. The Supervisor of elections or designee would serve on a non-voting basis. The board would work with the information from the County Planning Department to draw fair and equal districts for the county commission.

County Commission districts or districting plans may not be drawn to favor or disfavor an incumbent or political party. Districts should not be drawn to deny racial minorities the equal opportunity to participate and elect representatives of their choice. Districts must be contiguous and must be as equal in population as feasible, and where feasible must make use of municipal boundaries and seek to maintain similar communities of interest, i.e. beach communities. Special consideration shall be given to keep unincorporated areas in as few districts as possible.