

Rancho Santa Fe residents weigh in on county redistricting efforts



The County Board of Supervisors at the County Administration Building on Tuesday, May 18.

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(Eduardo Contreras/The San Diego Union-Tribune

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More than 100 speakers weighed in on new county boundaries at a public hearing by the San Diego County Independent Redistricting Commission on Nov. 1.

At the hearing, held at Chula Vista City Hall and streamed online, commissioners considered the second set of four draft maps created by the demographer FLO Analytics, which showed different strategies for reorganizing county voting districts. They also listened to scores of speakers describe what they liked about potential boundary lines and what they want to change.

“We heard a lot of that (Monday) night saying they’re completely happy with their current lines and would prefer they not change, (and other) people saying there are decades of injustice here and they would like to see lines that correct historical unfairness,” said Commission Chair David Bame, a retired U.S. diplomat.

Because of shifting demographics over the past decade, San Diego County must adjust boundaries to balance the number of constituents in each district while preserving cities, neighborhoods and “communities of interest,” which include areas with common geographic, economic or cultural interests.

At the Nov. 1 hearing, Some described a desire to see Asian Pacific Islander communities grouped together in central county areas that could include Mira Mesa, Sorrento Valley and Rancho Peñasquitos, or Claremont Mesa and Kearny Mesa. Other speakers addressed the shared interests of backcountry communities on issues such as wildfire and water supply. And some stated their desire to retain areas with high populations of retired and active-duty military together.

Each proposed scenario has its own logistical challenges within the legal and mathematical puzzle of redistricting. A North County district comprised of the five cities along the State Route 78 Corridor — Escondido, San Marcos, Vista, Oceanside and Carlsbad — along with northern backcountry communities, would exceed the average size of about 669,000 residents that each district should include. So any map for a north district must exclude either Escondido or Carlsbad or the rural unincorporated communities.

Rancho Santa Fe residents have spoken out about being lumped into a new coastal district that would run from Encinitas, through Solana Beach and La Jolla, to Point Loma, downtown Barrio Logan and Coronado. In that map, Rancho Santa Fe’s supervisor would shift from Jim Desmond to Nathan Fletcher.

“I don’t think we have a whole lot of things in common with those communities,” said resident Beth Nelson. “I don’t know if we would be well-represented in a district like that.”

Rancho Santa Fe Association Manager Christy Whalen shared at the board’s Nov. 4 meeting that the Association is also concerned with this new district configuration: “We firmly believe we are more like North County than we are with other areas of San Diego,” Whalen said.

Jim Ashcraft, president of the RSF Fire Protection District board, and RSF Fire Chief Fred Cox both spoke of keeping similar communities together from a fire protection standpoint.

“The reason I feel it’s vitally important to remain in district five is that we associate very closely with other unincorporated communities in the North such as Fallbrook, Valley Center and Bonsall,” Cox said. “All of our communities have vast areas of open space and share common woodland fire threat and urban woodland intermix.”

The commission has two upcoming hearings scheduled for Saturday, Nov. 13 at 11 a.m. and Thursday, Dec, 2 at 5 p.m.

Commissioners made several requests for additional maps, which the demographer will create before the next meeting. Commissioner Kristina Kruglyak proposed modifying draft map 7 to create a north coastal district of Oceanside, Vista, Carlsbad, San Marcos, Camp Pendleton and Rancho Santa Fe, with a separate north district including Escondido and East County.

The commission is expected to select a draft map for adoption on Dec. 9.

To view maps or learn more about the process, visit sandiegocounty.gov/redistricting

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