

New Orleans City Council Holds First Meeting on Redistricting

Redistricting Citywide Meeting Summary – April 14, 2011

The New Orleans City Council held the first of 12 meetings to discuss redistricting of the Council Districts as mandated by City Charter. According to the 2010 U.S. Census Bureau population figures, New Orleans city council districts have seen a shift in population that has districts with far too many or far too few residents in the district.

The first meeting, held on Thursday, April 14th in the Council Chamber, was for all residents and was the first of two citywide meetings. Residents were provided with an overview of the Census population numbers provided to the City of New Orleans, as well as provided information that explains the process by which redistricting would need to occur.

Council Vice President and At-Large Member, Jacquelyn Brechtel Clarkson said Thursday's meeting was an introductory meeting, but that the community meetings would be "where the rubber meets the road." Each council member will hold two meetings in their respective district on the subject of redistricting.

"This is an opportunity for us to listen to the public," said Councilmember Kristin Gisleson Palmer. She encouraged the public to participate in the process and let communities define themselves in the recovery and rebuilding process as they have done since Hurricane Katrina.

Comments from residents at the Citywide meeting ranged from concerns about the process for gathering population numbers, how neighborhoods organizations would be acknowledged as the process goes forward, as well as maintaining neighborhood boundaries. While some residents spoke of their concerns about gerrymandering and diluting the minority voice, others expressed their appreciation for a transparent process that would provide the opportunity to dialogue with Councilmembers about future plans for neighborhoods.

Councilmembers thanked residents for attending the meeting and assured the community that their voices would be heard and included in the process.

"Ultimately what is so crucial to the community and residents is that you have a voice," Councilmember Jon Johnson said. "Don't think that because seven of us have the responsibility (for the redistricting plan) that your voice is minimized, because what you say is documented, sent to the Justice Department and will be reviewed," he said.