



ALASKA REDISTRICTING BOARD

Alaska Redistricting Board Meeting
April 9, 2022 | 12:00 p.m.
Anchorage Legislative Information Office and Zoom Virtual Meeting
1500 West Benson Blvd, Anchorage, AK 99503

The Alaska Redistricting Board met on April 9, 2022. Present participants are below:

John Binkley
Melanie Bahnke
Bethany Marcum
Budd Simpson
Nicole Borromeo
Peter Torkelson

Chair of the Board
Board Member
Board Member
Board Member
Board Member
Executive Director

Agenda

- Call to Order & Establish Quorum
- Adoption of Agenda
- Public Testimony
- Adjournment

Call to Order

Chairman Binkley called the meeting to order at 12:06 p.m. With all board members present, a quorum was established.

Adoption of Agenda

Member Marcum moved to approve the agenda as presented; Member Bahnke seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

Public Testimony

Public testimony was given as follows:

- Anchorage resident, Katherine McDonald, is an Anchorage resident who has lived in various parts of Anchorage, but now resides in District 9 (Hillside Anchorage). Katherine reviewed a timeline of her public comments:
 - September 18, 2021: Testified on releasing Senate district pairings early for public comment and submitted maps for Anchorage
 - November 7, 2021: Proposed Senate pairings, not including Eagle River districts
 - November 8, 2021: Katherine testified and applauded the board for proposing to pair District 9 with an O'Malley district



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- November 9, 2021: Board voted on Senate pairings for Anchorage with no justification, Districts 9 and 10 paired which was unaligned with the unanimous public testimony from the day prior
- April 5, 2022: Written testimony submitted with rankings of support on proposed maps placing Option 1 first as it pairs Districts 9 and 11. Upon further education, it was realized that Option 1 was non-compliant with court ruling, applauded the board for removing the option for consideration
- April 9, 2022: Testified in support of Option 2

Katherine noted that if she was in the board's shoes, she would be concerned about the appearance of political gerrymandering by adopting Option 3-B which continues to split Eagle River to give more representation.

- Anchorage resident, Denny Wells, testified in support of Option 2 and stated that the board is fortunate to have the Municipality of Anchorage is divided into an exact number of 16 House seats with the addition of Whittier. Further, the Chugiak-Eagle River area now has two House seats, giving the board the maximum opportunity to unite the community. Future boards may not be as fortunate to be in this situation and may need to pair Chugiak-Eagle River with South Anchorage or another district outside of their area. According to the 2020 US Census data, the board does not need to divide Eagle River or South Anchorage. The Superior Court found that the Senate K pair ignored communities of interest in Eagle River and South Muldoon with very little justification. The court reviewed the board's arguments (contiguity through the Chugach, JBER connection to Eagle River) for this pairing and still found little reason. Denny went on to note the following:
 - Downtown Anchorage is split along 4th Avenue and Downtown Anchorage is a community of interest that should be paired with Eagle River.
 - Eagle River is split along the Glenn Highway along with a divide along a residential street in Eagle River, a small neighborhood road where neighbors know one another and should be in the same district. Member Marcum's statement to a member of the public that there is only one Eagle River House seat while the other is a Chugiak/Peters Creek/JBER House seat is factually inaccurate as District 24 has 7,586 residents from Eagle River and Eagle River Valley community councils. The Eagle River Fred Meyer, business boulevard, and Carr's are all in District 24. Thus, this district is most certainly an Eagle River House seat.
 - District 24 includes a small portion of JBER, but it has no population except for one census block that appears to be noise from the bureau's anonymization efforts. The block is bounded by Eagle River, the Inlet, and Otter Lake and has a population of 197 people with no visible infrastructure.
 - The District 23 and 24 pairings have been justified through the military connection between JBER and Chugiak-Eagle River. Through Denny's experience in his photography business, he has seen this connection to be true.
 - Denny has heard concerns that JBER is more like Chugiak-Eagle River than Downtown Anchorage. This argument ignores the 7,200 residents in District 23 who live in Muldoon and Downtown Anchorage, where the Muldoon residents have more in common with Downtown Anchorage than Chugiak-Eagle River. For example, residents live in older houses on smaller lots, use the city water and sewer service, and use the city-maintained roads.



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- Parts of Downtown and Muldoon in District 23 are 43% white, District 17 is 51% white, and District 24 is 73% white. The Downtown and Muldoon parts of District 23 are more like the population of District 17 Downtown than in District 24. The JBER part of District 23 is 59% white, closer to District 17's 51% white population. District 23 is 52% white; taking a minority population and combining it with a 73% white district when there are other available options is a sign of racial gerrymandering.
- The pairing of Districts 22 and 9 has been justified because both districts have rural road services, share the same roads, and use septic systems. These justifications also apply to the pairing of Districts 22 and 24. Several houses have wells and septic systems, a long contiguous border with the Chugach, and the same road service area.
- Denny has heard that the pairings in Option 3-B are justified through the Ship Creek hunting area in District 22. If you rely on the constitutional verbiage about drainages justifying Senate pairings, the Ship Creek drainage would support Districts 22 and 23, not Districts 23 and 24, making both pairs well due to the Eagle River drainage.
- Anchorage resident, Jason Warfield, testified in support of Option 3-B which joins Districts 9 and 22. The Hillside Community has generally spoke against this pairing. In the municipal reapportionment process, part of Hillside was combined with municipal District 2. Putting a portion of District 6 (about 12,000 people) into municipal District 2 would result in underrepresentation due to population disparity. The Option 3-B pairings, while not optimal, also represent the fairest map. The two districts share a 35-mile border and are demographically similar; an argument made during municipal reapportionment when trying to pair municipal Districts 6 and 2. Both communities have a similar population and would be equally represented by their state senators. The map also pairs JBER with Eagle River instead of pairing it with Downtown Anchorage. Through Jason's experience working at an auto shop in Downtown Anchorage, several military clients lived in Eagle River, not Downtown Anchorage.
- Sterling resident, Queen Parker, testified in support of Option 3-B because it would be fair for all residents.
- Anchorage resident, Laura Bonner, testified in support of pairing the two Eagle River districts, keeping Girdwood with South Anchorage, and pairing Downtown Anchorage districts together. Laura believed these pairings to be reflected in Option 2.
- Anchorage resident, Yarrow Silvers, addressed various comments and characterizations heard over the last week:
 - It was heard that Option 2 is partisan, a map arrived at by the East Anchorage plaintiffs with legal guidance who advised that pairing Muldoon with Eagle River, and then pairing districts that were left unpaired, was the method that most closely followed the court remand. No incumbent or partisan data was used to develop these maps. Yarrow is unaware of where incumbents reside.
 - Both makers of Option 3-B, Members Marcum and Randy Ruedrich, have viewed incumbent information during the mapping process. In contrast, Option 2 pairings were based on logic, reason, similarity between communities, the constitution, and the remand requirements.
 - Cathy Giessel has stated preference on Option 2 to be a "very elegant solution" that she prefers.
 - Most of the testimony backs up the non-partisan and inherently fair nature of Option 2 which has broad bipartisan support. Several testimonies have been heard on the irrationality of Option 3-B from organizations and individuals who are not left-wing.



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- Despite the quick timeline of the process and there being a significant number of public testimonies during the municipal reapportionment process, Chairman Binkley has indicated that those testimonies do not count because the numbers and considerations are different. The only difference is that the lowest deviations were sacrificed to have meaningful contiguity in municipal districts resulting in a municipal map with deviations of 5%. While it was originally believed by the mapmakers that South Anchorage and Eagle River had socioeconomic similarities, both community's residents stated that it was not and the Anchorage Assembly listened to that feedback.
- Option 2 reflects a map that gives effective local representation to unique communities regardless of political affiliation. If the board adopts a map that uses second-rate or false contiguity for pairings, then the burden of proof falls on the board to show why a constitutional map is not possible.
- It has been heard that District 23 does not include Eagle River, but it includes the northern part of Eagle River including parts of the business district.
- It has been heard that Eagle River and South Anchorage share the longest border. Member Simpson's statements about another part of the map as "basically affixion" is true in the case of Eagle River and South Anchorage being referred to as "sharing the longest border". It is irrational to pair Districts 9 and 22.
- Regarding statements about JBER and Eagle River being paired together, this pairing would ignore the communities of Downtown Anchorage, Government Hill, and South Anchorage. These communities would be split to accommodate this pairing. JBER is integrated into the municipality, including Government Hill and Downtown Anchorage where a JBER access gate is located and used by most service members. Additionally, service members who reside off-base are represented by the communities in which they reside. Service members who live on JBER are connected to the communities surrounding their respective gates. Even if the Eagle River and JBER pairings were historically done, it does not mean they should be paired presently.
- Senator Roger Holland testified in support of Option 2 and noted that South Anchorage (District 28) and the Muldoon curve (District 27) have different family types with additional needs. During the tax proposals that Senator Holland worked on recently, Muldoon projects had high-ticket intersection issues with much concrete work, and South Anchorage projects were much smaller. Senator Holland understands that the Chugach Mountains makes Eagle River and South Anchorage contiguous, but this link is impassable. The constitution states contiguity as a factor, but contiguity also means access and flow, and there is no flow of trade or commerce between Eagle River and South Anchorage. As a senator, representing Eagle River and South Anchorage is challenging if a senator's intentions are to be present and representative of the communities. Option 2 has pairings that solve many complications that Senator Holland has seen in District N (Districts 27 and 28).
- Anchorage resident, Lora Reinbold, was a 10-year Huffman resident, 15-year Eagle River resident, and has spent time in Girdwood with family members who have cabins there. Through Lora's knowledge of these areas, she testified against Option 3-B for the appearance of political gerrymandering and testified in support of Option 2 that pairs House Districts 22 and 24 together. Lora encouraged the board to keep Eagle River communities together.
- Anchorage resident, Lance Pruitt, testified in support of Option 3-B because it considers the military community, a key group that has not had a strong presence in public testimonies. Lance stated that Eagle River High School would not exist without military families present to populate the high school. Also, the board must consider military personnel on voting ballots. There is



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usually a higher turnout at the ballots during presidential elections. Lance spoke against arguments on Senators having long-distance travels from Eagle River to South Anchorage and stated that a senator will likely spend more time in far districts as they want to ensure that communities know they are being heard and considered.

- Alaskans for Fair Redistricting (AFFR) member, Joelle Hall, testified on behalf of AFFR in support of Option 2 because it has side-by-side districts with no contortions required. The court has found that Eagle River is a community of interest whose needs can be considered with context to the larger Municipality of Anchorage. This leads to the debate on one of contiguity: the dividing line of Districts 22 and 24 is the majority of Eagle River Road, the heart of Eagle River that runs 13 miles. The neighborhoods on both sides attend the same elementary schools, recreate at the same parks, and shop at the same places. The contiguity of Option 2 is better than Option 3-B.
- Girdwood resident, Mike Edgington, testified in support of Option 2 because it is the most rational option. Mike reviewed his location history for the last 4.5 years which indicates he rarely visited Eagle River but visited South Anchorage often more than once per week – this is likely the same for his neighbors in Girdwood. Mike referred to a discussion on second-rate contiguity between Judge Matthews and the board's legal counsel, Matt Singer. In this discussion, the sea and unpopulated mountains are used as contiguity, and this type of second-rate contiguity has been used to justify Option 3-B. This does not make sense as there is no practical way of traveling along the Chugach Mountains between districts. Also, several testifiers supporting Option 3-B have mentioned objections to a proposal in the reapportionment process to combine some of Hillside Anchorage with Eagle River; this was true later in the process, but at the beginning, the city's contractor proposed other maps. One of the maps combines South Anchorage, Girdwood, and Turnagain Arm with Eagle River. Mike heard several objections from his community to this combination as they felt the two communities were not connected.
- Anchorage resident, Judy Eledge, testified in favor of Option 3-B and requested that public testifiers not be accused of their reasons for testifying. Anchorage and Eagle River residents share similar socioeconomic backgrounds. Judy noted that she has consulted with a friend who is an attorney that confirmed the constitution does not state that there must be a transportation corridor, but there must be a geographical link shared.
- Anchorage resident, Leighan Gonzales, testified in favor of Option 2. Leighan expressed concern about the board asking questions about the constitution to public testifiers who are not subject matter experts on the constitution. Leighan asked the board to follow the public's request to keep East Anchorage together, keep Downtown Anchorage together, and keep Eagle River together.
- Girdwood resident, Margarite Leeds, testified in support of Option 2 which pairs Girdwood with South Anchorage – two communities that share common interests and allows fair representation. Margarite testified against Option 3-B because the map pairs communities together with differing concerns. For example, Eagle River has well-developed infrastructure while Girdwood has underdeveloped infrastructure. This option also violates the Supreme Court ruling that splitting Eagle River would result in political gerrymandering.
- Girdwood resident, Erik Steinfort, testified in support of Option 2 and testified against Option 3-B. Erik stated that there seems to be intent to dilute Girdwood's voting representation and an attempt at gerrymandering.
- Eagle River resident, Lisa Gentemann, testified in support of Option 2 because it keeps Eagle River districts together. Lisa testified against Option 3-B because it would make door-knocking during campaigns a challenge. The houses in Eagle River are already far apart.



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- Anchorage resident, Shelley Chafin, testified in favor of Option 2 and asked the board to follow the guidelines set forth by Judge Matthews.
- Anchorage resident, Robert Hockema, stated that there is an automatic assumption that JBER belongs to Eagle River and vice versa since many JBER families reside in Eagle River. This is false – JBER belongs to all of Anchorage because JBER residents live and play in Anchorage. JBER residents on the airport side are most associated with Downtown Anchorage while residents on the Fort Richardson side are most associated with Muldoon and Eagle River. However, all JBER residents still travel to Anchorage.
- Anchorage resident, Corwyn Wilkey, testified in favor of Option 2 because it is the constitutional choice that keeps communities together. Corwyn testified against Option 3-B as it seems to be an attempt at political gerrymandering.
- Anchorage resident, Miles Baker, testified in support of Option 2 because it pairs Districts 17 and 24. Miles owns a home in Government Hill, a sizeable community that does not work, live, or have access to JBER. There is no intent in Miles's part to disenfranchise military members and veterans. The results of the September 11th tragedy have significantly limited the public's access to JBER, thus making it unrealistic to use a "purely geographic bird's eye view to develop district boundaries."
- Eagle River resident, Dan Saddler, testified in support of Option 3-B because it pairs Districts 9 and 22 together. Both districts encompass a semi-rural area characterized by people living in the Chugach Mountains. While the argument has been made on this pairing creating barriers for Senators, they also have access to constituents by phone, mail, teleconference, email, and internet. Dan testified against Option 2 which would pair Districts 17 and 23. Dan has represented District 18 in the State House, which linked these two areas. During this time, Dan learned both communities were different from one another. Dan cautioned against characterizing the motive of board members and against inferring any partisanship on the part of testifiers.

Adjournment

Member Bahnke moved to adjourn the meeting; Member Borromeo seconded.

The meeting adjourned at 2:13 p.m.