

ALASKA REDISTRICTING BOARD

Verbal Testimony Summaries

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ALASKA REDISTRICTING BOARD COMMUNITY PUBLIC HEARING VERBAL TESTIMONY SUMMARY

Palmer 10/25/21 Verbal Testimony

Summary Date: October 31, 2021

Name: Steve Colligan

Email or Phone Contact: [REDACTED]

Steve Colligan stated that there are several ways to draw the maps. They are represented by 5.85 full house districts and 3 senate seats. If you don't want to split the Knik Bridge, you either have to go all the way up to Nenana, which causes concerns in the Fairbanks districts, or you have to up to Glennallen, but there is no reason to go up to Valdez as many people do not favor this.


Steve Colligan implored the board to take an active role so the future redistricting board and the state take a leadership role in local communities, looks at their growth, new subdivisions, and where new populations are within the old census blocks, as preliminary steps prior to the start of redistricting.

ALASKA REDISTRICTING BOARD COMMUNITY PUBLIC HEARING VERBAL TESTIMONY SUMMARY

Palmer 10/25/21 Verbal Testimony

Summary Date: November 1, 2021

Name: **Mike Brown**

Email or Phone Contact: 

Group Affiliation, if applicable: **Mat-Su Borough Manager**

Mike Brown will not be speaking in favor or opposition of any maps. Mike noted that the Mat-Su Borough Assembly passed a resolution in September 2021 to articulate what the desires and needs were for the Mat-Su Borough:

- 1. The Mat-Su Borough supports a plan that allocates the borough with 6 house and 3 senate districts while adhering as closely as possible to borough boundaries.**
- 2. The borough desires to be partnered with the Denali Borough and not cross into the Anchorage boundary.**
- 3. The borough prefers an eastern district, a Goose Bay/Big Lake district, a Houston northwest district (partnered with the Denali Borough to the north), a Wasilla district, a Palmer district, and a southern district in the core area between Palmer and Wasilla.**

The borough would like to avoid partnering with Valdez. This is about the Mat-Su Borough's gains. The borough would like to avoid taking population from the Mat-Su Borough in order to make other district populations whole.

ALASKA REDISTRICTING BOARD COMMUNITY PUBLIC HEARING VERBAL TESTIMONY SUMMARY

Palmer 10/25/21 Verbal Testimony

Summary Date: November 1, 2021

Name: Carol Carman

Email or Phone Contact: [REDACTED]

Carol Carman testified on behalf of herself today with experience as a Republican representative in District 9. Her district runs from Delta Junction, to Glennallen, to Valdez, across the mountains to Whittier, and then down the Glenn Highway to Palmer. Carol Carman has been District Chair since 2016 and has gotten to know the communities very well through their representatives who attend District Committee meetings.

Carol expressed concern for many maps including Glennallen and Carol has had "nothing but trouble with Glennallen". Glennallen has expressed concern for being apart of an unorganized borough that surrounds them and results in their voices being diluted. Carol stated that Glennallen should not be included with her district if they do not want to be.

Carol also expressed concerns on how senate districts are formed. Currently, different communities are "thrown together and they're not related". In Board Map v.3, Districts 26 and 27 are in the middle and densely populated. The way they are numbered results in them being grouped in different areas. Wasilla and KGB should be one senate district as they are alike, are centered around Wasilla, are very densely populated, and this leaves 2 districts on the east whose communities revolve around Palmer.

Carol lives up Palmer-Fishhook Road, almost halfway up to Hatchers Pass, but her mailing address has Palmer on it, she shops in Palmer, goes to meetings in Palmer, and has friends on the eastside with similar socio-economic groups. Their lifestyles are different from the residents on the Wasilla side of the Mat-Su.


On the west side on the southern end, there is a Big Lake community that wants to be their own city and is very independent. There are road and off-road system homes. If you go north, you will see the same in Houston, Willow, and Talkeetna. These communities are similar in their lifestyles and socio-economic groupings, so they should have one senate district in the west, in the middle, and one on the east.

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Summary Date: October 31, 2021

Name: **Erick Cordero**

Email or Phone Contact: 

Erick Cordero is a Palmer resident who stated that he would like to keep the Palmer and the Palmer core area in the same district. Erick also asked for the Mat-Su districts to be kept within the Mat-Su borders.

ALASKA REDISTRICTING BOARD COMMUNITY PUBLIC HEARING VERBAL TESTIMONY SUMMARY

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Summary Date: October 31, 2021

Name: **Nathaniel Amdur-Clark**
Group Affiliation, if applicable: **Doyon Coalition**

Email or Phone Contact: 

Nathaniel noted that the coalition focuses on fair representation for Rural Alaska. Nathaniel presented some mapping changes to the Doyon Coalition's proposed map and also talked about some concerns of the constitutionality of Board Map v.3.

They began mapping by consulting within the coalition and with stakeholders statewide. They've also had the benefit of listening to and reading testimony from the community. Based on the testimony and other discussions held with stakeholders, an updated proposed map was introduced that integrates mapping changes in the Mat-Su Valley, Anchorage, and the Kenai Peninsula. These updated maps were attached to Nathaniel's written submitted testimony.

Regarding Mat-Su, it was brought to their attention that they inadvertently split some census blocks from the City of Palmer between Districts 26 and 30; this was unintentional and the error was corrected. Additionally, they've refined the proposed map, specifically Districts 24-30 which retain a low population deviation across the whole region while keeping the local gov't boundaries within the borough whole, maintaining community cohesiveness whenever possible.

Proposed District 24 contains populations from the Mat-Su Borough and the Municipality of Anchorage and this is legally permissible and constitutional. This was necessary as the courts have been clear that reducing population deviations that would otherwise necessarily result from the Mat-Su Borough's excess population, when you put everything else together, is a valid and non-discriminatory reason for districts that span the borough boundaries.

Regarding Kenai, they were made aware that they inadvertently mapped 2 census blocks within the City of Kenai with District 8 rather than 7. Their updated map fixes this small error.

In Anchorage, in response to testimony and commentary for mapping Anchorage, they've extensively reworked Anchorage. Their updated map maintains low population deviations across the city, improves compactness of the proposed districts, and adheres to the community council regions. Where practical, major and natural features were followed in significant road corridors.

Lastly, regarding the Fairbanks districts in Board Map v.3, they are unconstitutional. Proposed Districts 31-35 are upwardly deviated between 4.26 and 4.43%. The Alaska Constitution requires that each district contain a population as near practicable to the ideal population of 18,835. This means the total population within each district must be as near as practicable to 0. Large total deviations within a borough, area, or region may be a sign of other issues, but having a low total deviation does not absolve the board from its constitutional requirement of making each district as close to 0 deviation as possible.

The Doyon Coalition has provided a map that is practicable and shows that you can map the interior, which is socio-economically integrated, with the Fairbanks North Star Borough, taking the most rural parts of the borough to combine them with the rural interior, creating low population deviations.

There is nothing “impracticable” about drawing Fairbanks in a way that does not devalue the vote of each and every Borough resident. Therefore, as proposed the Board’s proposed V3 Fairbanks districts would be unconstitutional if adopted by the Board in a final map.

ALASKA REDISTRICTING BOARD COMMUNITY PUBLIC HEARING VERBAL TESTIMONY SUMMARY

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Summary Date: November 1, 2021

Name: **Beth Fread**

Email or Phone Contact: [REDACTED]

Beth wanted to ensure that the board knew that she is a part of the State Roads and Highways Advisory Board, but is representing herself today. Beth lives in the Mat-Su Borough voting district for representative District 12, senate District F.

Beth expressed concern for the plan boundary for District 16-8 on Map v. 2741 should be moved east away from the Matanuska River and Palmer and drawn through the Lazy Mountain foothills, maintaining that area and the Butte in the Mat-Su Borough. It should end in the Knik shoreline on the northside and would not take Butte into the Eklutna/Chugiak/Peters Creek area. Those areas are generally compatible in their voting and it would serve the Butte best to remain where they currently are.

Butte is located in the Mat-Su Borough boundaries and should not be limited to voting in the Anchorage municipal area boundaries. The governance of the Mat-Su impacts Butte residents much sooner than Anchorage's expansion into the area would require. There is also very little in common between Eklutna/Chugiak/Eagle River.

The Old Glenn Highway from Eklutna to Butte can be icy and dangerous in the winter while also being the alternate route out of the Butte area that runs south of the Knik River. Therefore, the access to Palmer is more important than access to Anchorage.

Butte residents predominantly live, work, and play in the Mat-Su Borough and would prefer not to fall under the jurisdiction of Anchorage in any way, shape, or form.

While Valdez is currently in District 9, that district is hard on their representative. It would make more sense for Valdez, Cordova, Whittier, and other fishing areas in the Prince William Sound to be combined as they have oil from Valdez coming in which helps their economy. Cordova and Whittier have tourism and commercial fishing in common which the Mat-Su Borough does not share as a similarity.

ALASKA REDISTRICTING BOARD COMMUNITY PUBLIC HEARING VERBAL TESTIMONY SUMMARY

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Summary Date: October 31, 2021

Name: **Tim Hale**

Group Affiliation, if applicable: **Borough Assembly (District 1), but representing self**

Email or Phone Contact: [REDACTED]

Tim Hale is a Butte resident and stated that House District 12 shares a representative with Anchorage and House District 9 shares a representative with Valdez and Delta Junction. Tim and most of his neighbors would not like this to continue as they would like a district that encompasses the socio-economic feature of the Matanuska River. The Matanuska-Susitna Borough has made it clear that they do not want to be connected with Anchorage, Valdez, or Delta Junction. The Butte Community Council has written the board a letter expressing their desire to stay with South Knik River Road and possibly Lazy Mountain, Sutton, or Palmer with no connection to Anchorage.

Tim Hale also pointed out that as the Mat-Su area stands, there are residents at the top of Lazy Mountain who are in District 9 and not District 11, which is what most of the Lazy Mountain area is. As a result, they have to travel far just to get to their precinct voting place.

ALASKA REDISTRICTING BOARD COMMUNITY PUBLIC HEARING VERBAL TESTIMONY SUMMARY

Palmer 10/25/21 Verbal Testimony

Summary Date: October 28, 2021

First Name: **Steven Johnson**

Email or Phone Contact: [REDACTED]

Steven Johnson spoke in favor of the AFFER map's proposed District 15-H as it best represents historic and current socio-economic realities of the greater Palmer area. The map includes the complete city water district extending to the Mat-Su Regional Hospital and Colony High School. The map also includes the Palmer core area where most residents work and spend their money. Most businesses and institutions in this area look to Palmer for services. For example, Mat Su Regional Hospital started in Palmer and remains one of the largest utility customers of the City of Palmer.

Steven Johnson is not in support of Board Map v.3 and v.4 as they do not represent the Palmer core area. Many Palmer communities and several Palmer institutions would be adversely affected by the maps. Steven Johnson noted that Board Map v.3 is superior to v.4 if the southwestern boundary was realigned with New Trunk Road, as currently drawn, v.3 wanders back and forth over Trunk Road, cutting several neighborhoods, the Mat Su College property, and UAF experimental farm property all in half and moving Mat Su Regional into the Fairview and Wasilla water district. Trunk Road has always been the traditional and historic boundary between Palmer and Wasilla. A realignment along Trunk Road would resolve these issues and impact very few households.

Board Map v.3 and v.4 make it likely that New Palmer district could be paired with non-Valley districts for senate seats, possibly with Valdez. This would dilute the Valley's vote and be a disservice to Valdez which has its own unique needs.

ALASKA REDISTRICTING BOARD

WEBSITE RESPONSE

Date: October 26, 2021, 4:55 pm

Name: **Cheryl Kajdan** Email or Phone Contact: [REDACTED] Your ZIP Code: **99645**

Issue of Concern (Please provide map name if applicable): **Testimony at Palmer 10.25.2021 with additional info**

Public Comment: **My name is Cheryl Kajdan and I have been a resident of the Palmer area since 1995. I lived in Gakona from 1977-1995, in which I still have property. Comments are included concerning both these areas. I support the A.F.F.E.R. plan, Alaskans for Fair and Equitable Redistricting Palmer area, redistricting map D-15. This map includes the economic areas that have been supported and developed by the citizens of this area.**

-Most notably, Mat-Su Hospital, The UAF Agricultural Farm and Mat-Su College. Mat-Su Hospital stays in the Palmer water district from which it is served.

-The core area of Palmer is also included without splitting the communities between districts.

-Maps 3 and 4 both separate functional communities without apparent reason.

-Plan 3 deviates from using the traditional demarkation of Trunk Road between Palmer and Wasilla. Mat-Su Hospital is transferred to the Wasilla area with part of the Mat-Su College and Agricultural Station being divided between districts.(both)

- Copper River Basin: prefer AFFER map D-16 includes areas that are strongly related culturally and economically, Gakona to the north and Kenny Lake to the south.

A suggested consideration would be to include Chitna ,which has socio-economic connections to Kenny Lake. Please consider extending the inclusion of the Tok Road through mile 20 to keep voting residents in an area of traditional activities, including voting.

Map 3 D30 doesn't include the Copper Basin at all, which is a concern as it is currently included in this common socio-economic area. Glennallen, Gakona to the north and Chitna to the south should be included for consideration.

Map 4 D25 does include Glennallen, but not Gakona to the north or Chitna to the south.

*****The geographically large District 36 in plan 4 links communities that are not traditionally and/or economically related.**

Thank you for considering my comments and concerns.

This large area (D36) of Map 3 is compact and has the population needed for the purpose of redistricting. The Affer proposed map accepted by the redistricting board also has a similar large compact area denoted as district 5-C. My observation is the socio-economic lives of towns who are available only by air year-round does not have connection to those areas on the road system, ie Glennallen Fort Greeley etc. This is my opinion from having traveled and throughout Alaska and living along the road system in south-central Alaska.

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Summary Date: October 31, 2021

Name: David Miller

Email or Phone Contact: [REDACTED]

David Miller noted that on Board Map v.4, it brings in Valdez which David strongly opposes. Board Map v.3 is "more coherent" but could bring the Butte area into a more compact, compatible, and socio-economic cohesiveness. Overall, David prefers Board Map v.3, but he would prefer to keep Butte and Palmer more connected. If necessary, he has felt good interacting with as far south as Chugiak and possibly Birch Creek. David strongly opposes any map that does have Valdez tied into the Butte area and he would fund a lawsuit against this decision.

ALASKA REDISTRICTING BOARD COMMUNITY PUBLIC HEARING VERBAL TESTIMONY SUMMARY

Palmer 10/25/21 Verbal Testimony

Summary Date: October 31, 2021

Name: Jim Sykes

Email or Phone Contact: [REDACTED]

Public Comment: **Jim Sykes expressed support for maps that stay within the boundaries of the Matsu Borough to provide 3 senators and 6 representatives. It is extremely important that all of the communities on the east side of the Matanuska River be re-combined into one legislative district in order to meet constitutional requirements for compactness, economic and residential continuity.**

In the previous redistricting cycle, continuous communities were cut from South Knik River, Butte and Lazy Mountain into 3 pieces. Unbelievably about 120 voters were hacked off the north end of Lazy Mountain and shoveled into House District 9 with Whittier, Valdez, Glennallen, Delta, and to communities across the Matanuska River to the west and north. If they wanted to vote at the polls, they had to drive right by the usual polling place on Lazy Mountain and then another 7 or 8 miles to Farm Loop.

Lazy Mountain was cut once again at Smith Road that divided House District 11 from 12. People in this section of Lazy mountain were added to large numbers of Palmer residents west of the Matanuska River-leaving roughly 1,000 voters east of the river in District 11. Travelling south, Butte and South Knik River were joined to Chugiak in the Municipality of Anchorage and out to southwest Matsu to Fairview in District 12. The east river residents in District 12 number about 3,000. Bottom line, the East River communities need to be kept whole and within one legislative district in the Mat-Su Borough. It looks like at least 3 maps accomplish this.

Jim visited South Knik River Community Council last Thursday where the maps were discussed. When people learned one of these might attach them all the way to Anchorage, the reaction was loud and disapproving. Jim asked for the board to restore the communities on the east side of the Matanuska River and south side of the Knik River into one that sticks to the the constitutional requirements for compactness, economic and residential continuity.

Jim also asked for the board to ensure that Mat-Su is fairly allocated six house seats and three senate seats within its borders, or very close to it.