



## ALASKA REDISTRICTING BOARD

### Alaska Redistricting Board Meeting

August 23, 2021 | 10:00 a.m.

August 24, 2021 | 9:00 a.m.

Anchorage Legislative Information Office, Denali Conference Room, 1<sup>st</sup>  
Floor, 1500 W. Benson Blvd, Anchorage, AK 99503

The Alaska Redistricting Board met on August 23, 2021. Present participants are below:

John Binkley	Chair of the Board
Melanie Bahnke	Board Member
Bethany Marcum	Board Member
Budd Simpson	Board Member
Nicole Borromeo	Board Member
Peter Torkelson	Executive Director
TJ Presley	Deputy Director

### Agenda

- Call to Order
- Establish a Quorum
- Adoption of Agenda
- Adoption of Revised Travel/Per Diem Policy
- Adoption of Public Testimony Policy
- Public Testimony
- Census Data Overview
  - Overview Report on Alaska Population Changes
  - Legacy Data and Population Change
- Redistricting Timeline and Schedule for Adoption of Draft and Final Maps
  - Understanding Alaska's Constitutional Timeline
  - Discussion: Adoption of Timeline
- Workflow Process
  - Staff Recommendations for Workflow Process: Possibilities & Logistics
  - Regionalization Possibilities
  - Discussion: Workflow Process, Adoption
  - Next Steps: Initial Map Drawing, Task Assignments, Public Input Schedule
- Executive Session: Presentation on Litigation Lessons from Alaska Redistricting Caselaw
- Map Drawing Board Member Comments

### Call to Order

Mr. Binkley called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m. With all board members present, a quorum was established.

### Adoption of Agenda

Ms. Bahnke moved to adopt the agenda as presented. Ms. Borromeo seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

### **Adoption of Revised Travel/Per Diem Policy**

Mr. Torkelson stated that a Travel/Per Diem Policy was adopted on January 26, 2021. The Legislative Affairs Accounting Department suggested capping the lodging rate at the published federal per diem rate used by the Department of Defense. This would bring the policy in line with other legislative policies. Staff presented the board with a revised policy that adds a cap to the hotel lodging expenses at the federal per diem rate.

Ms. Bahnke moved to adopt the revise Travel/Per Diem Policy. Ms. Marcum seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

### **Adoption of Public Testimony Policy**

Mr. Torkelson stated that Public Testimony Policy authorizes the Board Chair to limit spoken public testimony to two minutes per speaker in case there may be a large amount of public testimony speakers.

Ms. Borromeo moved to adopt the Public Testimony Policy. Ms. Bahnke seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

### **Public Testimony**

Public comment was given as follows:

- Former State Representative Kay Brown encouraged the board to use the maximum deviations that are legally allowable to achieve and assist with socio-economic integration and encouraged the board to avoid gerrymandering the map.
- Anchorage Assemblymember Christopher Constant shared that the Municipality of Anchorage is engaging in its own redistricting process and looks forward to close collaboration with the board to ensure that its maps are in close alignment with the state's maps.
- Chair of Alaskans for Fair Redistricting, Joelle Hall, thanked the board for the work that they are doing, encouraged the board to consider deviations in terms of mass and population, and hopes the board will consider the growing diversity, especially in urban centers.
- Anchorage Resident Yarrow Silvers noted that Senate Districts M and N bisect East and South Anchorage and pairs the bisected portions together that creates inaccurate representation for both areas which have largely different issues and concerns.
- Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER) resident Ret. Major Felicia Wilson noted that JBER is not monolithic and that JBER residents tend to do community service around the gates they live near. Major Wilson encouraged the board to reapportion JBER around the gates they are located by.
- Hooper Bay resident William Naneng advocated for Hooper Bay to be part of the Bethel region in this year's redistricting process.
- Doyon Limited shareholder, Sarah Obed, shared that Doyon is partnering with Tanana Chiefs Conference, Fairbanks Native Association, and Sealaska to create maps and district planning documents to assist the board and ensure that the state continues to support Alaska Natives and rural representation in the legislative process.

- Anchorage resident Paul D. Kendall asked for the immediate removal of Juneau as the capitol and for the capitol to be moved to Anchorage. Additionally, Mr. Kendall suggested that the board consider shoreline communities as opposed to interior communities.
- Member of Alaskans for Fair Redistricting, David Dunsmore, suggested that the board look at population statistics by Borough to inform the regionalization process because one of the most objective criteria is respecting local government boundaries.
- Doyon Limited associate, Nathaniel “Tanner” Amdur-Clark urged the board to look at the statewide map and think of various options for different regions or to start with one area of the state, think of the issues and areas of friction in that area, and speak with the public on how to resolve these frictions.
- Gulkana resident James Squyres asked the board to consider decreasing the size of District 9 and as it is a largely diversified district. Additionally, the Delta Junction area should be oriented more toward Fairbanks rather than the Mat-Su Valley.
- Senator Tom Begich cautioned the board on dividing the work into groups and noted that there are no existing districts with a reapportioned map; the districts are built from scratch from the socioeconomic relationships identified in the Alaska Constitution and by the federal guidance. Additionally, Valdez and Delta Junction are not necessary to complete the Mat-Su Valley map as Delta Junction is more oriented toward Fairbanks. The deficits in the Kodiak district can be addressed by adding Valdez into the Prince William Sound district and moving Cordova into a broader district that includes the Doyon region.
- Beaver Village Chief Rhonda Pitka voiced strong support for the board considering the map developed by Doyon Limited, Fairbanks Native Association, Tanana Chiefs Conference, and Sealaska.
- Doyon Limited President, Aaron Schutt, noted that Interior Alaska is one economic and cultural unit, including the urban parts of Fairbanks and the rural parts of Interior Alaska. Additionally, Mr. Schutt shared that Doyon and its partners intend to be resources to the board as they work on the redistricting process.

### **Census Data Overview**

Mr. Torkelson introduced Eric Sandberg, demographer with the Department of Labor, who presented to the board on what the 2020 census data shows about Alaska’s population changes.

Mr. Torkelson gave an overview on when and how census data was received (August 12, 2021), processed and validated. Mr. Torkelson concluded that after the data was processed and validated, he is confident that the data the board is working with is correct. The Census Bureau will ship fixed media that cannot be overridden and upon receipt of this item on September 30, 2021, Mr. Torkelson will re-verify that the data is correct.

### **Executive Session**

Matt Singer, legal counsel to the board, explained that the board will meet in executive session to review his legal memorandum and opinion. Under Alaska law, legal opinions are privileged and the reason for an attorney-client privilege is to allow for private and confidential discussions for Mr. Singer to provide the best legal advice.

Ms. Borrromeo moved to transition into executive session under Alaska Statute (AS) 44.62.310 (c)(4) for matters involving consideration of government records that are not subject to public disclosure. No action will be taken in executive session. Ms. Marcum seconded the motion.

The board entered executive session at 12:28 p.m.

The board exited executive session at 1:50 p.m.

## **Redistricting Timeline and Schedule for Adoption of Draft and Final Maps**

Mr. Torkelson noted that because the Alaska Constitution states that one or more draft plans must be adopted after the official reporting date, which staff originally had been told was September 30<sup>th</sup>, staff believed that the earliest date a draft plan could be adopted was on October 1<sup>st</sup>. However, after staff noticed the word “official” next to the August 12<sup>th</sup> date while compiling the packet for this board meeting, staff contacted the Census Bureau to confirm the official reporting date. The Census Bureau gave an informal response that the August 12<sup>th</sup> and September 30<sup>th</sup> dates are official. After speaking with legal counsel, Mr. Torkelson recommended that the board adopt at least one initial draft plan by September 11<sup>th</sup>, which is the 30<sup>th</sup> day after August 12<sup>th</sup>. Staff have also outlined a redistricting timeline proposal in case the board chooses to adopt it.

Mr. Singer added that in all prior decades, the release of the census has occurred in March. However, this year, the timeline has been delayed. The Alaska Constitution sets a 90-day deadline (30 days to [adopt one or more proposed redistricting, also known as “draft”, plans] , 90 days to adopt a [final redistricting plan and issue a proclamation of redistricting]) which are intended for the process to move expeditiously. Treating August 12<sup>th</sup> as the official date for the census release for is most consistent with the Alaska Constitution.

Mr. Torkelson noted that a single final plan must be adopted by November 10<sup>th</sup> and recommended to the board that a draft plan be adopted by September 11<sup>th</sup> and to allow any third parties that may wish to bring plans an additional week to work on their plans, giving them a delivery date of September 17<sup>th</sup>. On or around that date, a public hearing would be held and, if a third party brings a full plan (including 40 districts), the board will hold 30 minutes of public hearing time to deliver their plan.

Ms. Bahnke noted that the board is still waiting on an official letter from the U.S. Census Bureau and that the board is operating with the best information they have.

Ms. Borromeo moved that the board adopt at least one draft plan by September 11<sup>th</sup> and welcome third party plans on or before September 17<sup>th</sup> at which time a public hearing will be held, and a public plan will be adopted by November 10<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Simpson seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

## **Workflow Process**

Considering the legal issues that arose in the last redistricting process where the board assigned different areas of the state to one individual member who would draw and bring the map back to the board for explanation, staff suggests having subcommittees of the board consisting of two board members to prevent legal issues from happening. The board may also choose to draw the whole map together if they please. If the board chooses to break the work down, staff suggests that the board consider drawing the state into regions, a process called regionalization.

In the regionalization process, two board members could work with one staff member or one staff member could be assigned to a district with floating board members; this would allow for every board member to work on different districts. Work sessions would be open to the public. To facilitate this process, staff has set up their offices with a large screen for the public to view live work sessions and for board members and staff to collaborate comfortably. Subcommittees would report back to the board on key questions, recommendations, and rationale for recommendations.

Mr. Eric Sandberg, demographer with the Department of Labor, suggested regionalization to

address having leftover areas and a way to break up the work more easily. Mr. Sandberg noted that a process where regions were drawn and subdivided would avoid a process where the board draws “38 or 39 districts as you like, and the remainder trips you up.” Mr. Sandberg presented on new population trends and gave a demonstration on drawing new regions with this data which resulted in six regions. The board discussed various regionalization configurations with Mr. Sandberg and Mr. Torkelson.

Ms. Borrromeo expressed her preference to draft together as a board, but this may be a challenge to complete with the compressed timeline. If the board cannot draft together, Ms. Borrromeo proposed for board members to choose a couple different combinations to work with more than one board member on different regions.

The board agreed to begin working on initial map drawing before going into recess and to adopt the workflow plan and solidify task assignments and public input schedule after the recess.

The board began the initial map drawing process. Districts were sorted by deviations and the board began working on the district that had the most deviations, District 4. Mr. Torkelson noted that a decision the board will have in the coming days is whether to share the extra population in the greater Mat-Su area with the interior region of the state or with the northwestern region of the state. Mr. Binkley noted that shifting the Mat-Su down to Anchorage seems to be more socioeconomically connected.

The board entered recess at 4:38 p.m. and agreed to continue public session the next day, August 24, 2021, at 9:00 a.m.

The board entered back into public session on August 24, 2021, at 9:03 a.m. With all board members present, a quorum was established.

Mr. Torkelson noted that as of August 22, 2021, the public map drawing tool is live, and the legacy data has been successfully loaded. This tool works best on a web browser and gives a member of the public the same level of precision and control that the board has in their professional software when drawing a district. This tool provides the public with the ability to build a map and submit it to the board for review. Mr. Torkelson gave a demonstration of the public map drawing tool.

Mr. Torkelson shared the following guidance and quotes from the Alaska Constitution for the board to consider:

- “A doughnut district may be contiguous.”
- “Each house district shall be formed of contiguous and compact territory containing as nearly as practicable a relatively integrated socio-economic area. Each shall contain a population as near as practicable to the quotient obtained by dividing the population of the state by forty.”
- “Consideration may be given to local government boundaries.”
- “Drainage and other geographic features shall be used in describing boundaries wherever possible.”

Mr. Presley proposed a workflow for the current session based on the discussions in the prior work session: Because of Anchorage’s large size, one option is to remove Anchorage from the six areas to work on, leaving five work groups which could be equally divided by all board members. Anchorage would be worked on by all board members and staff. The first two hours of the work session could be used to work on the draft Anchorage map together and then break into work groups after lunch.

The board discussed the following regarding Mr. Presley's proposal:

- Mr. Binkley suggested that the board and staff also work on Districts 3 and 4 together.
- Ms. Marcum noted that it was challenging to follow along while the whole board worked on Anchorage and suggested dividing Anchorage into smaller groups to ensure all board members can be involved while making the process manageable.
- Ms. Bahnke suggested that before working together as a group, the board should first individually become familiar with the areas and tools.
- Ms. Borromeo suggested beginning with a smaller region before working on the Anchorage map.
- Mr. Simpson did not oppose the suggested approaches.
- Ms. Bahnke requested to have a staff member assigned to her to drive the map while board members are in work groups.

The board began working on the initial map drawing process again using the public map drawing tool. During the process, Doyon Limited associate, Marna Sanford, noted that if Cordova is included in Southeast Alaska, then the quotient [deviation] would be too high. The population of Cordova is such that the quotient would be significantly over 1 percent, therefore the board will need to decide on whether the quotient in Southeast Alaska will be too high or too low.

After the initial map drawing process, Mr. Torkelson noted that one way to move forward in the workflow process is to allow board members to work on any district at any time with any staff member to develop as many ideas as they'd like. The various map ideas would then be brought to the full board during the week of September 7<sup>th</sup> through September 10<sup>th</sup> which would allow the board to view more refined ideas in public sessions. If the board is amiable to this concept, staff will individually work with board members to schedule work sessions either in person or virtually via screenshare. Then, the board would decide on a draft [proposed redistricting] plan by close of business on September 10<sup>th</sup>. On September 17<sup>th</sup>, members of the public shall present their plans to the board and the board will provide initial comments on the plans. Mr. Torkelson encouraged third party plans to be submitted a few days in advance of September 17<sup>th</sup> to allow staff time to upload, review, and educate themselves on the plans prior to presenting them to the board.

The board had no objections to this process. Ms. Bahnke asked that the plans presented from the public be reviewed by staff for completion prior to being added into the packet for board review. The board agreed that plans must be submitted prior to September 17<sup>th</sup>.

The board agreed to scheduling a meeting in Anchorage on September 21<sup>st</sup> or 22<sup>nd</sup> to finalize the plans they would like to present to the state. Additionally, public testimony will be available at the beginning of every meeting. At the end of these meetings, the board can then adopt additional draft plans. After September 22<sup>nd</sup>, the board will transition from the initial drafting phase into the community outreach phase. Ms. Bahnke requested that virtual outreach be planned in case travel is not possible.

The board entered into work session at 1:18 p.m.

The board exited out of work session at 4:09 p.m.

Ms. Marcum moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Borromeo seconded the motion.

The board adjourned at 4:11 p.m.