



M E M O R A N D U M

TO: The Honorable Chair and Members of the Board of County Commissioners

FROM: Jewel White, County Attorney *JW*

SUBJECT: Redistricting

DISTRIBUTION: Barry A. Burton, County Administrator

DATE: November 18, 2020

As you are aware, the data collection phase of the decennial census is now complete. Although challenges were presented by COVID-19, the federal government's timeline for providing census data to the states remains April 1, 2021.

Subsequent to delivery of the decennial census data, states and local governments undergo redistricting in order to ensure fair representation at the federal, state and local levels. Counties are required to "fix the boundaries of...districts so as to keep them as nearly equal in proportion to population as possible." See, Section 124.01, Fla. Stat. Additionally, the Pinellas County Charter (Charter) provides in Section 3.01:

"The legislative body of county government shall be the Board of County Commissioners. The Board of County Commissioners shall consist of seven commissioners, with four of the seven commissioners residing one in each of four county commission districts, the districts together covering the entire county and as nearly equal in population as practicable, and each commissioner being nominated and elected only by the qualified electors who reside in the same county commission district as the commissioner, and with three of the seven commissioners being nominated and elected at large. Each of the three at-large commissioners shall reside one in each of three districts, the three districts together covering the entire county and as nearly equal in population as practicable. The election, term of office, and compensation of members shall all be in accordance with general law."

In 2016, the Pinellas County Charter Review Commission recommended, and voters approved, an amendment to the Charter to require a county redistricting board (Board). See, Section 3.04,

Pinellas County Charter. The purpose of the Board is to develop one or more proposals for redistricting the four single-member districts and three at-large districts for presentation to the county commission. These proposals are advisory only and do not bind the county commission.

Certain guiding principles for the Board's redistricting proposals are set forth in the Charter. These include:

- No district shall be drawn to favor or disfavor a political party or incumbent
- Districts shall not be drawn with the intent or result of denying or abridging the equal opportunity of racial or language minorities to participate in the political process or to diminish their ability to elect representatives of their choice
- Districts shall be contiguous and as nearly equal in population as practicable
- Where feasible, municipalities and boundaries shall be utilized
- Where feasible, unincorporated areas of the county shall be maintained intact

Proportionate representation is also a primary objective of redistricting, as discussed above. In the past, the County has considered a population deviation of +/- 3% to be acceptable. Thus, at the time of the last redistricting, the four single-members districts' populations were within 3% of one another, as were the three at-large districts.

The Board is to be composed of 11 members, appointed by the county commission. Seven members shall be nominated by each commissioner from among residents of that commissioner's district. The other four members shall be from the public-at-large. No Board member may be an elected official. The Charter requires the Board to be established within 30 days of receipt by the state of the census data.

Once constituted, the Board is required to present its proposal(s) to the county commission no later than 150 days after its first meeting and the county commission must take action within 60 days of receipt of the proposal. Since general law provides that districts may only be modified in odd-numbered years, the county commission must complete the entire redistricting process during 2021. See, Section 124.01(3), Fla. Stat.