

Redistricting Committee
March 6, 2012
Minutes

CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE: The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairman William Holden with the following members present: Jane Aiello, Suzanne Burr Monaco, Vicki Tesoro and Tony Scinto. All present joined in the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Mr. Holden moved to amend the Minutes of February 28, 2012 as follows:

Page 1, 5th paragraph, 7th line, referring to District 3 figures - change “7/10th” to “7/100th”.
Page 2, Line 2, referring to cost of phone lines - Change “\$100 per polling place” to “\$100 per phone line”

The Minutes of February 28, 2012 as amended were approved by unanimous consent.

SUBMISSION OF ANY NEW PLANS: No new plans were submitted.

DISCUSSION OF ALL PLANS:

Ms. Aiello, referring to the Minutes of February 28th, disagreed with Mr. Holden’s comments supporting a four district municipal plan. In reference to Mr. Holden’s comments related to parking issues at some of the polling places, she stated that she felt under a four district plan, parking will become more of an issue due to larger districts. She disagreed with his analysis of the cost savings attained by reducing the number of districts from seven to four. She stated that she does not believe his number of poll workers is accurate. She explained that because of the larger districts she believes each polling place will need a double check-in line as well as twice the number of ballot clerks. She stated that while she is in favor of saving money, \$8,000 works out to very little cost per household. Also, she believes his figure for the service contracts on the tabulators is high. She noted that a contract will not be required on the machines that will not be used. In addition, she thinks the cost to program the memory cards is inflated.

Mr. Holden responded to Ms. Aiello’s statements. He replied that he was already factoring in double check-in lines and did not think additional ballot clerks would be necessary. He stated that the individuals handing out the ballots can do this in less time than it would take checkers to validate a name on the voting list. Also, he did not include service contracts on the tabulators that will not be used and anticipated that those machines will be given back to the State to be available for loan if needed. He noted that the Town is unable to sell the tabulators since the machines were purchased from HAVA (Help America Vote Act) funds.

Ms. Aiello disagreed with Mr. Holden’s rationale that more Council candidates per district reduces the chances of a recount. Also, she did not agree that fewer districts provide less of a chance of a State hand-count audit since the State randomly picks districts for recount. She noted that Trumbull has been picked only two or three times with having seven districts. Mr. Holden replied that fewer districts would mean less of a chance to be randomly selected since the State is selecting based on districts and Trumbull would have less districts in the pool to be drawn from.

Ms. Aiello stated that the larger districts will result in more candidates on the ballot which may require a two-page ballot. A multi page ballot would increase the cost as well as the time to complete it. Mr. Holden disagreed, stating that a double-sided ballot can be used.

Ms. Aiello reviewed maps for the Committee members indicating proposed and current district lines. She stated that one of her major concerns is the number of people who will have to change polling places under the four district plan and showed a map indicating these areas.

The Committee discussed the districts, specifically district two and seven. Mr. Scinto questioned why one of the maps produced by Richard White was color coded to show voter party affiliation with Democrats listed in a range of plus numbers and Republicans listed in a range of negative numbers. Mr. Holden wanted to make sure that lines were not drawn to favor any particular party. Ms. Aiello and Ms. Tesoro stated that they were not.

Mr. Holden summarized the projected savings to the Town by changing from a seven to a four district municipal plan. By reducing the number of districts he anticipated eliminating three moderators; six ballot clerks; six assistance registrars; and six tabulator tenders for a total savings of \$4,485. Six less phone lines would be required at \$100 per phone line (activation and one month's usage). A reduction in poll workers reduces the cost of lunch and dinner by approximately \$336. If only 12 tabulators are required compared to 18, the Town would realize a savings of approximately \$1,200. The memory card programming is estimated at \$1,000 compared to approximately \$2,700 under the seven district plan for a total savings of \$7,921 in a general election. He is planning two lines of checkers, although double lines may not be necessary which would result in additional savings. He also noted that there are parking issues at Jane Ryan, Booth Hill and Frenchtown. He noted that individuals who have a problem walking may prefer driving a few minutes longer and having a shorter distance to walk.

Ms. Aiello noted that the Town does offer curbside voting for those individuals who have difficulty walking.

Mr. Holden stated that he believes fewer districts will reduce the chances of a recount. He noted that the votes cast only have to be within 20 votes of another candidate to qualify for a recount. He pointed out that in the last 13 elections there have been 10 recounts. He stated there is less chance of a recount in a four district plan due to having more votes cast, thereby increasing the margin between the lowest successful candidate and the highest unsuccessful candidate.

Mr. Scinto spoke in favor of a four district plan stating that voters will be allowed to vote for more Council representatives thereby giving the voters more of a choice.

Mr. Holden pointed out that the Governor has introduced a bill for Election Day registration. If passed, registration will be much easier under the four district plan if done at the polling place.

Ms. Aiello explained her concern that larger districts lose the community aspect of a smaller district. She explained that in a larger district Council members may be outvoted on issues because they may not have the community support they would have with a smaller district. Mr. Holden disagreed stating that districts will have more Council members representing them.

Ms. Tesoro concurred with Ms. Aiello on losing the community aspect. She stated that in a small district you are more likely to know the people representing you. She explained that she

believes a smaller district provides for better representation of the people as a Council member who now represents 5,000 constituents would be representing roughly 10,000 in a larger district. She stated that she believes smaller is better and has worked for the last 28 years. Ms. Monaco disagreed about losing the community aspect stating that she has lived in Town under a four, five and seven district plan and views the entire Town of Trumbull as our community.

Ms. Tesoro submitted a request for a legal opinion via the Chair. She read her request for the Committee members. She further explained that the opinion received from the Town Attorney did not address her concerns regarding a 20% disparity between the largest district and the smallest district in the proposed four district plan. She stated that she believes there is case law from 1982 regarding this question and would like the Town Attorney to address it.

Ms. Tesoro stated that the seven district plan has served the Town well. She submitted hand-outs (attached) detailing the advantages and disadvantages of a seven district and a four district plan. She noted that a seven district plan provides for equal population between the districts thereby maintaining a district balance. She stated that there is minor voter impact moving only 4,900 people of which 3,100 are voters into another district whereas the four district plan relocates 18,000 people of which 10,900 are voters. She believes there will be less voter confusion by keeping as many voters as possible at the same polling place. In addition, smaller districts will result in smaller lines at the polling places thereby encouraging voter participation. She spoke about preserving the current minority representation. She noted that under the proposed four district plan as many as 17 Council members can be from the same political party thereby having only four members from the minority party. She stated that minority representation is a major issue and she feels strongly about its preservation. In addition, she noted that the minority party must serve on more committees and do the work of more people due to the reduced membership.

Mr. Holden noted that State Statutes do not provide for minority representation of legislative bodies. Our Charter provides for a majority limitation and the four district plan does not change that. A seven district plan limits one party to a one-thirds membership. The seven district plan provides more power for a First Selectman by diminishing a Charter check and balance thereby making it more difficult to attain a 2/3 vote to override a veto.

Mr. Scinto spoke in favor of a four district plan noting that additional Council members in the district can only help accomplish more for the district. He disagreed with losing the community aspect by increasing the district size noting that families tend to gravitate towards the school system for community involvement.

Ms. Monaco, addressing the comments regarding voter confusion, noted that the Registrars' Office sends reminder cards of polling locations. Also, she noted that the Town has several resources available, such as public access television and the Town's website.

Ms. Tesoro stated that she is always open to saving money; however, the amount of money saved is minimal compared to the inconvenience and confusion to the voters. In addition, she stated that changing polling places to privately owned buildings will result in additional cost. Also, more candidates on the ballot will increase voter confusion as well as result in an increased cost for the ballot.

Ms. Aiello stated that there is also consideration for eliminating the stipulations for voting absentee which would allow those who have difficulty walking to vote by absentee ballot.

Ms. Tesoro requested a change in next week's meeting date because she wanted to attend the Board of Finance voting session. Wednesday and Thursday were discussed but rejected because other members had previous commitments. The next meeting was scheduled for Monday, March 12th at 7:00 p.m.

Ms. Tesoro and Ms. Monaco moved to adjourn. There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gail J. Hanna
Clerk

Trumbull Redistricting

Four (4) District Plan

Advantages

Reduces split districts from four to one (Same as 7 District Plan)

Potential minimal cost savings by reducing polling places (Less than \$8,000)

Disadvantages

Substantially larger districts

Unequal population between some districts (“Super District”)

Unequal district representation, (6,5,5,5) v. (3,3,3,3,3,3)

Large voter impact: moves approximately 20,000 people and 12,000 voters v. approximately 6,200 people and 4,000 voters under 7 district plan

Large voter impact will inconvenience and confuse people and may disenfranchise voters due to:

- More candidates on ballot - “Super District” would have 10

- Fewer polling places

- Change in voting locations

- Longer driving time to polls

- Longer waiting lines at polls

Minimizes the “neighborhood” concept

Dilutes relationship of the representative and the constituent

Increase costs to inform more people about district changes

Increase costs to move polling place(s) from a public building(s) to a privately owned location(s)

Diminishes minority representation

Displaces current Council members from current districts

Mathematically increases the chance of recounts v. 7 district plan

Trumbull Redistricting

Seven (7) District Plan

Advantages

Reduces split districts from 4 to 1

Aligns Town Council voting districts within less than 1% of population

Equal population between districts

Maintains district balance, NO "SUPER" DISTRICTS

All districts have "EQUAL NUMBER" of representatives.

Minor voter impact, moves approximately 6,200 people and 4,000 voters v. 20,000 people and 12,000 voters under 4 district plan

Follows natural Town features and transportation infrastructure

Voter impact is lessened and voter participation is encouraged by:

- Less voter confusion
- Same voting locations
- Smaller lines at polling places

Enhances the "neighborhood concept"

Preserves current minority representation

Minimizes disruption regarding Council members and their districts

Mathematically reduces the chance of recounts v 4 district plan

Disadvantages

Loss of potential savings (less than \$8,000)

Greater workload for registrars