

Minutes

The City Council of the City of Leawood, Kansas, met for a Special Call Meeting at City Hall, 4800 Town Center Drive, at 6:00 P.M., on Monday, June 6, 2011. Mayor Peggy Dunn presided.

Councilmembers present: Julie Cain, James Azeltine, Debra Filla, Carrie Rezac, Gary Bussing, Lou Rasmussen, and Andrew Osman

Councilmembers absent: Councilmember Jim Rawlings

Staff present: Scott Lambers, City Administrator
Joe Johnson, Public Works Director
Deb Harper, City Clerk
Patty Bennett, City Attorney
Pam Gregory, Assistant City Clerk

Others Present: None

Discuss 2010 Census Results

Mayor Dunn called the meeting to order at 6:05 P.M. Introductions were made by those present.

Presentation – City Administrator Scott Lambers

Tonight's discussion is in regard to possible ward boundary realignments due to the 2010 U.S. Census results. The City's current population is approximately 32,000. The population in each ward varies from 6,039 in Ward 1, to 9,724 in Ward 4. Congressional redistricting is currently in progress across the nation in order to be completed in time for the 2012 elections. Kansas will not do their redistricting until 2012, which will not go into effect until 2014. The City cannot realign its ward boundaries in an election year; therefore, any changes will need to be completed this year. The election officer has indicated they would like to have any ward adjustments to them by November. The City would need to have an engineering firm survey the new wards to confirm their appropriate existence, which will take 30 days. The Council will need to decide if they want to make any changes by September. Population is growing to the south because of the developable land while the north is not seeing an increase. Changes would need to be made from north to south. This proposal would bring the wards closer together with a minimum amount of change; however, they would not achieve parity. The courts have ruled that a 5% variance is acceptable due to numbers not being accurate. They can also achieve a deviation due to natural or manmade barriers such as I-435. Ward 1 would be north of I-435. Configuration of Wards 2, 3 and 4 will depend upon the population growth in the balance of the City, which should consist of 8,000–9,000 per ward. All of this occurs under the 14th Amendment under the "One Person, One Vote" rule trying to ensure equal representation. They need to discuss any changes and if the timeframe is reasonable to get it done, or they can leave things as they are and wait until the 2014 Election to make changes. Precincts cannot be broken up.

Councilmember Filla asked what impact State redistricting would have on whether they wait or move forward. Mr. Lambers replied State redistricting would change the legislative districts at both the House and Senate. Johnson County is predicted to pick up between 3-5 house districts and 1-2 senate districts. This will not affect how the wards lay out in the City. The Federal Government is moving forward for 2012 with the State in 2014.

Councilmember Rasmussen thought with the City growing they should consider increasing to 5 wards. He also thought it would be important for them to know when the Election Commission is contemplating changing precinct boundaries. Mr. Lambers replied they are guided by State law.

Councilmember Cain asked if the City's population numbers were unbalanced enough that the Federal Department of Justice would notice. Mr. Lambers replied he couldn't predict this; however, when there is 50% disparity it could get their attention. If the Council decides to wait until 2014, they could set everything up to complete it in 2013. City population is projected to be 40,000 by 2020. The continuing trend is that younger families are moving in to the south and more established families and the elderly are staying in their single-story homes to the north.

Councilmember Filla asked what the pros and cons would be if they increased to 5 wards. She thought the ideal number of Councilmembers is 7-9 in regards to decision making.

Mayor Dunn stated she was not in favor of increasing to 5 wards.

Councilmember Azeltine concurred and thought they were lucky to have one contested race per election cycle as it stands with 8 Councilmembers. This issue would only be magnified with 10.

Mr. Lambers felt because the City is land-locked and primarily developed, it would not be in their best interest to have that many Councilmembers.

Proposal

1. Move Precinct 2-01 (Population 1,161) to Ward 1 increasing the total population of Ward 1 to 7,200
2. Remove Precinct 2-01 (Population 1,161) from Ward 2 reducing the total population of Ward 2 to 5,649
3. Move Precinct 3-01 (Population 767) to Ward 2 increasing the total population of Ward 2 to 6,416
4. Remove Precinct 3-01 (Population 767) from Ward 3 reducing the total population of Ward 3 to 8,527
5. Move Precinct 4-01 (Population 381) to Ward 2 increasing the total population of Ward 2 to 6,797
6. Remove Precinct 4-01 (Population 381) from Ward 4 reducing the total population for Ward 4 to 9,343
7. Move Precinct 4-03 (Population 1,119) to Ward 2 increasing the population of Ward 2 to 7,716
8. Remove Precinct 4-03 (Population 1,119) from Ward 4 reducing the total population of Ward 4 to 8,224

In summary, this option, resulting in the shift of four City precincts (2-01, 3-01, 4-01, and 4-03), would create the following ward populations:

1. Ward 1 = 7,200
2. Ward 2 = 7,716
3. Ward 3 = 8,527
4. Ward 4 = 8,224

Councilmember Osman thought they should ensure Johnson County isn't planning to make any changes to the precincts before they proceed. Mr. Lambers replied the County had not indicated they were planning any changes when they contacted them.

Councilmember Bussing wanted to ensure neighborhoods and homes associations stay together in a single ward. Mr. Lambers replied with this proposal, a portion of Leawood South would be placed in Ward 3.

Mr. Lambers stated if the Council wanted to have this effective in 2014, they could follow the pattern of the legislature. They would need to notify the Federal Department of Justice that the City intends to move Wards 1 and 2 further south in order to bring the numbers closer together.

Mayor Dunn received consensus from the Council to not increase to 5 wards.

Mr. Lambers stated they would check with the Election Commission on whether they plan to realign the precinct boundaries after the legislature does its redistricting. If so, there is no reason to go through this process.

Councilmember Rasmussen agreed they should try to keep the homes associations together when realigning the wards.

Mayor Dunn received consensus from the Council to complete the realignment in ward boundaries in 2013 for the 2014 Election.

There being no further business, the work session was adjourned at 7:15 P.M.

Pam Gregory, Recording Assistant City Clerk