

SENATE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON REDISTRICTING

Coos County Community Input Session

October 7, 2021

Meeting Minutes

Members of the Senate Committee Present: Senator James Gray, Senator Rebecca Perkins Kwoka

Opening Summary

Senator Gray opened the Senate Special Committee on Redistricting. Representative Steven Smith opened the meeting of the House Special Committee on Redistricting. This session is being video and audio recorded.

Representative Smith explained that while they are in this facility neither the Courts of NH or the County Commissioners of Coos County have anything to do with this Public Input Session or the redistricting process as it is underway in the General Court.

Senator Gray introduced himself, and reviewed Senate rules for proper decorum at a Senate meeting. Senator Rebecca Perkins Kwoka introduced herself. The House members introduced themselves. Present were Rep. Steven Smith, Rep. Carol McGuire, Rep. Marjorie Smith, Rep. Connie Lane, Rep. Lucy Webber, Rep. Matt Wilhelm, Rep. Glenn MacDonald, Rep. Bob Lynn.

Representative Smith explained that information on the redistricting process for the House of Representatives can be found on the general court website. One of the standing committees is the Special Committee on Redistricting. On that page they will find a link that will enable them to email all committee members. It also has a link for the Committee Website which has additional information for the special committee on redistricting. One of the things they can find on that page, among other things, is a link for meeting minutes and recordings. That is where the video that is being taken here tonight will be found. He mentioned that they are doing these sessions because they want to hear local knowledge. Insights about which towns share common interests, or which towns in a district are too far away, are very useful to the committees.

Testimony

Ellen Farnum - Tamworth – This past year citizens in 74 towns and municipalities across the state voted for resolutions that support a nonpartisan, fair, redistricting process. She believes there are four additional steps the

committees need to take after the conclusion of these public sessions. They should make public the criteria they will use for drawing the new maps. Next, they should have a second session in each County so that the public can provide input on the draft maps. Third, she would like remote access for the second round of meetings for people that cannot make it out physically to give comments. Last, community interests should be part of the criteria they consider when redistricting. She participated in the map-a-thon project and feels that the maps drawn were fair.

Representative Hatch – Coos District 6 For years he has heard statements from people in the southern part of the state about Coos County that are not accurate. It is not true that all of the communities in Coos County are the same. They have changed from an area that had been dependent on the forest and paper industry, to one that is dependent on tourism. When he came to the County, there were about 35,000 people working in the paper and logging industry, now they are lucky if there are 200. These changes happened quickly and they are adjusting by trying to protect the resources that tourists are attracted to. In his District, Gorham and Shelburne are very similar and share many public resources. Though it is a numbers focused methodology that they use when they redistrict he asked that they please consider common community interests when they redraw the maps.

Representative Edith Tucker – Coos District 5 They are a long time tourist area. In her district are two major hotels, the Omni Mount Washington, and the Mountain View Grand. Both attract huge crowds of people. Her district has may have two school districts, but all of the communities have commonality in building the economy back on tourism. They all deal with a declining population and maintaining enough education funding. There is a tremendous worry about the future in Coos County. She asked that they think of the common views and worries that Coos County has when they redistrict.

Senator Erin Hennessey – Coos County is different from the rest of the state, in that, it is much more rural and much more spread out than the southern part of the state. People do not understand the differences in the communities, in the geographic area or what the economic and school needs are. She believes it is best for Coos County to continue to have the representation it currently has in the House.

Meeting Adjourned – 6:45 p.m.