



Virginia Redistricting Commission

May 10, 2021, at 10:00 a.m.

Electronic Meeting

<https://redistricting.dls.virginia.gov/>

The Virginia Redistricting Commission (the Commission) met virtually with Mackenzie Babichenko, co-chair, presiding.¹ The meeting began with opening remarks from Ms. Babichenko followed by approval by the Commission of the meeting's agenda. Materials presented at the meeting are accessible through the [Commission's meetings webpage](#).

Introduction to the Mechanics of Redistricting; Question and Answer

Julie Smith, Senior GIS Analyst, Division of Legislative Services

Prior to the meeting, members viewed a publicly available training session presented by Ms. Julie Smith on the mechanics of redistricting. The presentation introduced the basics of using the redistricting software to allow the commissioners to understand the process that will take place when the census data is delivered. Members discussed the training as follows.

- Mr. James Abrenio asked if the software used in the training presentation is the same software that will be utilized by the commissioners for map drawing. Ms. Smith confirmed that it is the same system.
- Delegate Marcus Simon asked if it will be possible for communities of interest to be created as building blocks in the system to be viewed on maps in the software. Ms. Smith explained that a community of interest can be created as a shape file that is placed as an overlay on a map and that specific communities of interest can then be selected and viewed by layer.
- Delegate Simon asked if the commissioners would be drawing the lines themselves or whether there is a possibility of designating criteria that would tell the system what to draw. Ms. Smith offered to reach out to the developer to ask what the Commission's options are.
- Ms. Babichenko asked if the Commission can begin training with Ms. Smith to use the redistricting system prior to receiving census data. Ms. Meg Lamb explained that the staff plans to set up individual training labs that will allow commissioners to have hands-on training with Ms. Smith.
- Mr. Abrenio asked if the maps would be created from scratch or if the Commission would start by updating existing maps. Ms. Smith explained that in past years the legislators have updated existing maps. Delegate Simon suggested that the Commission create a formal process to solicit different maps from the public. Delegate Delores McQuinn added that such a process should provide for such submission to include an explanation of the criteria that was used to develop the map so the Commission can better understand each map's

¹ **Members Present:** Mackenzie Babichenko, co-chair, James Abrenio, Jose Feliciano, Marvin Gilliam, Rick Harrell, Brandon Hutchins, Delegate Les R. Adams, Delegate Delores L. McQuinn, Delegate Margaret B. Ransone, Senator Mamie E. Locke, Delegate Marcus B. Simon, Senator George L. Barker, and Senator Ryan T. McDougle.

Members Absent: Greta Harris, co-chair, Sean Kumar, Senator Stephen D. Newman

intended purpose. Senator Mamie Locke noted that the Commission will need to establish a timeframe for map submissions to ensure clear expectations for public participation. Ms. Babichenko said that the Citizen Engagement Subcommittee will address the questions raised by Delegate McQuinn and Senator Locke.

- Delegate Simon asked how quickly the software will be ready for use with the new census data once the data is received. Ms. Smith answered that it will be ready approximately one week after the data is delivered.

Overview: Citizen Redistricting Commissions

Brooks Braun, Staff Attorney, Division of Legislative Services

Brooks Braun presented an overview of citizen redistricting commissions that have been created in other states and compared the states' budgets, use of consultants, procurement and expenditures for legal services, deadlines for completion of map drawing, and overall timelines for the current redistricting cycle. The presentation provided context for the Commission as it begins to work through its two established subcommittees.

- Ms. Babichenko asked if there are any examples of other states working on compressed timelines for redistricting that are similar to Virginia's current timeline. Mr. Braun explained that Virginia's situation is different from most states regarding timelines, with the exception of New Jersey and Kentucky, which both have odd-year elections that necessitate compressed timelines similar to Virginia's. Senator George L. Barker indicated that Virginia is actually unique in its compressed timeline because New Jersey recently amended its constitution to provide more time for redistricting, and Kentucky's odd-year elections are limited to statewide elections that are not affected by redistricting.
- Delegate Simon inquired if Mr. Braun could give a general assessment of whether the Commission is on track with its timeline based on what Mr. Braun has observed in other states. Mr. Braun emphasized that the reading materials he studied advise that commissions begin as early as possible. Ms. Lamb noted that this is the reason for the aggressive subcommittee schedule over the course of May.
- Delegate Simon asked if there was a difference between the American Community Survey (ACS) data and the census data. Ms. Lamb explained that state law requires the Commission to use the redistricting data that is received from the U.S. Census Bureau. She further noted that the ACS data points are estimates and are not actual population. Therefore, while the ACS data may be used for practice, the Commission must use census data when drawing the actual maps.

Subcommittee Meeting Schedule

Mackenzie Babichenko, Co-chair, Virginia Redistricting Commission

The Commission has established two subcommittees to assist in accomplishing its work. These subcommittees will develop recommendations to bring back to the full Commission for a final decision. Each subcommittee is co-chaired by two citizen members with a total membership of eight commissioners. Ms. Babichenko provided an overview of the schedule and membership for each subcommittee.

The Budget and Finance Subcommittee will meet virtually on Wednesday, May 19 at 2:00 p.m.; Tuesday, May 25 at 10:00 a.m.; and Thursday, May 27 at 10:00 a.m. The co-chairs of this



subcommittee are Mr. Marvin Gilliam, Jr., and Mr. Sean Kumar. Members of the subcommittee are Ms. Mackenzie Babichenko, Senator George Barker, Ms. Greta Harris, Senator Stephen D. Newman, Delegate Margaret B. Ransone, and Delegate Marcus B. Simon.

The Citizen Engagement Subcommittee will meet virtually on Monday, May 17 at 2:00 p.m.; Thursday, May 20 at 10:00 a.m.; and Wednesday, May 25 at 10:00 a.m. The co-chairs of this subcommittee are Mr. James Abrenio and Mr. Richard Harrell. Members of the subcommittee are Delegate Les R. Adams, Mr. Jose Feliciano, Mr. Brandon Hutchins, Senator Mamie E. Locke, Senator Ryan T. McDougle, and Delegate Delores L. McQuinn.

Public Comment

Prior to commencing the meeting's public comment period, Ms. Babichenko announced four individuals signed up to provide public comment. Public comments were limited to two minutes each for all public commenters. The public comments covered the following topics: the importance of excluding the addresses of incumbents, an offer of a redistricting strategy, and an invitation from OneVirginia2021 and the League of Women Voters of Virginia to attend a Redistricting Deep Dive webinar. In addition, one commenter asked what the Commission intended to do if the maps are not completed in time.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Commission is scheduled for May 24, 2021, at 10:00 a.m.

For more information, see the [Commission's website](#) or contact the Division of Legislative Services staff:

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