


Presentation to the Bridgewater Town Council on Re-Precincting

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Bridgewater Re-Precincting Facts and Examples

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Facts to Remember # 1: Precincts & Census Blocks

1. A *precinct* may have no more than 4,000 residents; all town precincts must be population-proportional
 - a. The Commonwealth defines voting locales by precincts (not districts or wards)
 - b. All precincts must be within -.5% or +.5% population of each other
 - c. Precincts are made up of federally designated Census Blocks which may not, without some difficulty, be changed in size or dimension
 - i. BSU is a Census Block consisting of 2,486 residents
 - ii. BSU's Census Block's large size dictates all precincts' sizes must be within -.5% to +.5% of 2,486 residents

Facts to Remember #'s 2 & 3:
Districts & Bridgewater Town Charter

2. A *district* may contain one or multiple precincts; all districts, like the precincts they contain, must be population-proportional
3. The Town Charter calls for 7 District Councilors and 2 At-Large Councilors = 9 Councilors

Facts to Remember: #'s 4 & 5

Population

4. Bridgewater currently has 7 **precincts** and 7 **districts** --- precinct and district boundary-designations are identical
5. All 7 **precincts** are nearing the maximum, allowable **population** (4,000)
 - a. 2020 census data is estimated to be at least 28,000 residents
 - b. 2020 **population** will exceed the limit for 7 **precincts**;
 $28,000/7 = 4,000$

Facts to Remember: #'s 6 & 7

Needs and Support

6. Bridgewater **needs** a re-precincting plan with at least one more **precinct** by 10/30/2021
7. The Commonwealth, through the **Donahue Institute and the Secretary of the Commonwealth's office**, provides Bridgewater GIS **support** to create a **precinct** map, from which the legislature will determine *legislative* **district** lines.
 - a. Our Office's requests to re-arranging maps must be scheduled, and **time shared** with others throughout the Commonwealth. (Bridgewater owns GIS equipment but has no personnel to operate it.)
 - b. When moving areas to re-arrange the **precinct** map, entire **census blocks** must be moved. Divisions smaller than a **census block** may not be moved.

Facts to Remember: # 8

Timeline

8. Timeline:

- a. Now-9/30/2021 Review/evaluate current precinct lines
- b. 9/30/2021 Official Census Numbers released
- c. 10/30/2021* Deadline for Town Council vote to approve new precinct boundaries & submit to LEDRC*
- d. 12/31/2021 Citizens receive notice of voter registration change with local census

◇ *If LEDRC notifies the Town of a deficiency, the town shall have 7 days to correct

WHAT CAN *NOT* BE DONE

Add one **Precinct** then join it to another **Precinct** as a **District** without having an equal number of **Precincts** in each **District**. (Total population in **District 1** = Total population in **District 2** & ditto for **Precincts**)

In my opinion: It is impossible to re-precinct Bridgewater without making **Charter** changes

Examples of What **CAN** be Done

Two examples of possible changes to meet the requirements of equally apportioned **precincts** and **districts**.

- ◆ These are not the **only** options.
- ◆ They are **examples** of what might be done to maintain at least 9 Town Council seats.
 - ◆ The first example adds two councilors: 1 **District** councilor and 1 at-large councilor
 - ◆ The second maintains 9 total councilors with 6 **District** Councilors and 3 at-large.

Example 1: **Charter** Change to 8 **District** Councilors; total 11 Councilors

A. **CHARTER** CHANGE (Example 1)

1. Add one **precinct** which becomes **District** 8:
 - a. **Charter** change to “8 **District** Councilors”
2. To ensure an un-even number of Councilors reduce by 2 or add a third at-large Councilor making (9 or 11 total councilors).
 - b. **Charter** change either “3 at-large Councilors” or “1 councilor at-large”

Charter Change Example #1, slide #2

a. Pros:

- i. Three (3) at-large councilors ensure one on the ballot at every Annual Town election. Benefit: draws voters to the polls
- ii. No additional polling location needed
- iii. Storage for 1 new voting machine is possible at the current Academy Building location

Charter Change Example #1, slide #3

a. Cons:

- i. Eliminating 2 at-large councilors will negatively affect voter turn-out
- ii. Will require Bridgewater to do more extensive re-districting in 2030
- iii. Residents in precincts bordering Precinct 8 will experience a change of voter registration location
- iv. Councilor(s) residing on street(s) incorporated in the new Precinct 8, will lose their seat(s)

Charter Change Example #1, Slide #4

- ◆ Expenses: possibly 2 new desks for the council chamber; 1 new ballot tabulator & ballot box, 4-5 additional poll workers at each election, 2-3 additional signs, 1 additional Warden's box, 2 ballot bins, 2 long and 1 short table, 8 chairs; guaranteed permanent assistance to set-up, take-down and store voting equipment

Example #2, CHARTER CHANGE to 12 Precincts and 3 At-Large Councilors

◇ Commonwealth support staff have warned this example may not be feasible.
However, it may be a possible option to maintain 9 Councilors

1. Divide the Town into 12 precincts; apportion 2 precincts to each District (12 Precincts = 6 Districts) ---Precincts 1a & 1b= District 1; Precincts 2a & 2b=District 2, etc.
 - a. Add one at-large Councilor position (9 councilors: 6 District / 3 at large) to ensure an uneven number of Councilors
 - b. Charter change to 6 District and 3 at-large Councilors

Example #2, CHARTER CHANGE to 12 Precincts and 3 At-Large Councilors, slide #2

Pros:

- i. Three at-large councilors ensure one at each Annual Town election to draw more voters
- ii. Maintains the # of currently existing councilors (9)
Some voters and streets in formerly numbered precincts will change
- iii. Allows for additional growth within the precincts.
Rigorous re-precincting would not likely be necessary before 2050

Example #2, CHARTER CHANGE to 12 Precincts and 3 At-Large Councilors, slide #3

a. Cons:

- i. Many residents will have District/Precinct changes
- ii. Existing Councilors may find their Precinct changed
- ◆ iii. District 7 will be eliminated

Example #2, **CHARTER** CHANGE to 12 **Precincts** and 3 At-Large Councilors, slide #4

- ◆ Expenses: 5 additional ballot boxes & voting tabulators; 25 additional poll workers at each election, 10-15 additional signs, 5 Warden's boxes, 5-10 bins for ballots, 10 long and 5 short tables, 25-30 chairs; expansion to 3 polling locations, guaranteed permanent assistance to set-up, take-down and store voting equipment

Other Examples to Maintain 9 Councilors

1. 9 Precincts/ 9 District Councilors; No At-Large
2. 5 District Councilors and 4 At-Large Councilors (10 Precincts)
3. 4 District Councilors and 5 At-Large Councilors (8 Precincts)

A suggestion to make simplify future reprecincting

Change the **Charter** to allow more flexibility, e.g.:

“.....citizens shall be represented by one councilor from their District and at least one at-large councilor. The number of at –large councilors shall be sufficient to ensure an uneven number of councilors.....”

The following information is provided by
the Office of the Secretary of the
Commonwealth and is quoted from the
Reprecincting in Massachusetts

April 14, 2021

Local Election Districts Review Commission (LEDRC)

- ◆ LEDRC is an independent commission charged with overseeing, supervising and approving the divisions of cities and towns into **precincts**.
- ◆ The LEDRC has 3 members: the Attorney General, Secretary of the Commonwealth and a 3rd member appointed by the Governor
- ◆ The LEDRC has authority to reject submitted plans and to require local authorities to reconfigure their wards and **precincts**
- ◆ If a locality fails to submit a plan or fails to comply with a directive of the LEDRC following its review, then the LEDRC (or a master appointed by the LEDRC) is mandated to make local divisions itself.

LEDRC, slide #2

◆ LEDRC Procedures

- ◆ The LEDRC will review the submission and vote to accept or reject
- ◆ Meetings of the LEDRC are public
- ◆ If the Plan is accepted, the city or town will be so notified
- ◆ If the LEDRC determines there are problems with the submitted plan, the LEDRC must give specific written notice to the select board of town council in a town or the mayor or city manager of a city

LEDRC, slide #3

◆ **Correcting Deficiencies**

- ◆ In cities, upon receipt of notice of deficiencies, the mayor or the city manager must present their recommendations to the city council to revise the plan to bring it into compliance in a timely fashion after receiving notice from the LEDRC.
- ◆ If the city council fails to timely adopt a plan, the mayor or city manager may give an executive order making the changes.
- ◆ If corrections are not made and a new/revised plan submitted, the LEDRC can either make the division itself or appoint a master to make the division
- ◆ **If the LEDRC is required to appoint a master, all costs associated with the appointment will be the obligation of the municipality.**

The End of the Beginning.....

The Town Clerk's Office looks forward to continued, collaborative work with the Secretary of the Commonwealth's Office, the Donahue Institute, the Town Manager, Town Attorney and the Director of the Department of Public Works to ensure Bridgewater's citizens fairly apportioned precincts.