

Richland County Rules and Resolutions Committee & Ethics Board

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Agenda Item Name: Discussion and possible action on the adoption of redistricting guidelines

Department	County Board	Presented By:	Shaun Murphy-Lopez
Date of Meeting:	8/26/21	Action Needed:	Motion
Disclosure:	Open Session	Authority:	Resolution 21-116
Date submitted:	8/26/21	Referred by:	None

Recommendation and/or action language:

Recommend a motion to establish redistricting guidelines, as determined by the committee using sources listed below.

Background:

Resolution 21-116 adopted by the County Board established a timetable for redistricting. Step two of that timetable requires that guidelines be established in August for redistricting:

Step 1	August 2021	Determine the size of the County Board and appoint a redistricting committee
Step 2	August 2021	Establish guidelines for redistricting
Step 3	August – September 2021	Develop a tentative plan
Step 4	September – October 2021	Create municipal wards
Step 5	October – November 2021	Finalize and adopt redistricting plan

The Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA) County Decennial Redistricting Handbook gives the following guidance for the step of the process:

“The redistricting committee is responsible for establishing the principles that will guide the redistricting process. The primary focus of the consultant will be on establishing a redistricting plan that focuses on substantial equal, contiguous, and compact districts. The redistricting committee should determine the extent to which other traditional concepts of redistricting will be reflected in the plan including preservation of political subdivisions, communities of interest and cores of prior districts, protection of incumbent interests, and consideration of minority interests, when appropriate. Additional considerations include municipal ward size restrictions, development of aldermanic districts, and other municipal redistricting concerns. The redistricting committee will need to guide the consultant in the development of plans to ensure that the guidelines chosen by the redistricting committee will be reflected in the plan.”

Potential redistricting guidelines have been compiled from various sources.

Iowa

Iowa is often referred to as an example of a political division with maps drawn in a fair, non-partisan manner. The Legislative Guide to Redistricting in Iowa (see Attachment A) lists the following four

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redistricting guidelines, referred to as “factors,” on pages 10-12 (excerpts below are highlighted in yellow in the attachment):

1. Respect for political subdivision

- “. . . the number of . . . [municipalities] divided among more than one district in a redistricting plan shall be as small as possible.”
- “. . . when a choice exists as to dividing . . . [municipalities], the most populous . . . (municipality) shall be divided first.”

2. Contiguosity

- “. . . districts shall be composed of convenient contiguous territory.”
- “. . . a district which includes areas which meet only at the points of adjoining corners is not contiguous.”

3. Compactness

- “. . . compact district(s) . . . [are] ‘. . . those which are square, rectangular, or hexagonal in shape, and not irregularly shape, to the extent permitted by natural or political boundaries.’”
- “The compactness of a district based on . . . [the length-width] measure is greatest when the length and width of a district are equal.”
- “The compactness of a district based on . . . [the perimeter] measure is greatest when the distance needed to traverse the boundary is as short as possible.

4. Improper considerations

- “. . . data concerning the addresses of incumbents, the political affiliation of registered voters, previous election results, and demographic data, other than population head counts, not otherwise required by federal law are not to be considered or used in establishing districts.”

Dane County

Dane County, Wisconsin has established guidelines in the form of “criteria,” listed in Ordinance 2016 OA-032, as shown in Attachment B (excerpts below are again highlighted in yellow in the attachment):

1. “Each district should represent the same population size, in accordance with the U.S. Constitution and state statutory requirements that districts be substantially equal in population, contiguous and compact. If difference in population are necessary to complete the maps, any such differences in population must be justified by the other criteria set forth in this section.”
2. “The map shall minimize the number of municipal boundaries crossed in each of the county districts.”
3. “Such districting plan shall be established in a manner that ensures the fair and effective representation of the diverse ethnic and racial populations in Dane County which are protected by the Federal Voting Rights Act.”
4. “The map shall take into consideration geography and natural boundaries such as rivers and lakes.”
5. “District lines shall keep intact neighborhoods and communities with established ties of common interest and association, whether historical, racial, economic, ethnic, religious or other.”
6. “Districts shall be drawn without regard to incumbency.”

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Dale Schultz and Tim Cullen

Former Wisconsin state senators Dale Schultz and Tim Cullen published an opinion piece in the Wisconsin State Journal in 2020 (https://madison.com/wsj/opinion/column/tim-cullen-and-dale-schultz-commission-to-end-gerrymandering-should-look-to-iowa/article_f2c4fe64-ab76-5bf9-96ed-f1b64f924a7c.html) advocating for the following four redistricting criteria:

1. “Refrain from using previous election results or any political demographic data in making the maps.”
2. “Respect political subdivisions and keep cities and counties intact to the fullest extent possible.”
3. “Make districts contiguous and compact, and not irregularly shaped.”
4. “Never take into consideration the addresses of incumbents.”

Attachments and References:

Attachment A: Legislative Guide to Redistricting in Iowa
Attachment B: Dane County Ordinance 2016 OA-032

Financial Review:

(please check one)

<input type="checkbox"/>	In adopted budget	Fund Number	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Apportionment needed	Requested Fund Number	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other funding Source		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No financial impact		

Approval:

Review:

Department Head

Administrator, or Elected Office (if applicable)
