

Coast News
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Oceanside potential voting district maps begin to take shape

OCEANSIDE — Oceanside City Council held its second hearing on election districts on Wednesday. Ideas on what defines communities of interest, and where district boundaries should be drawn, were further fine-tuned.

South Oceanside resident Richard Fox brought in a proposed district map that divides the city into four equally populated districts. Three districts are oriented from east to west on either side of Route 76 and Route 78. The fourth district consists of northeast farmland.

Fox said the proposed map, which uses road boundaries and keeps the Morro Hills agriculture area within one district, achieves district populations within 2 percent of each other. It also splits the coastline between three districts.

“The coast is our biggest asset, we need to have more (council) representatives on the coast,” Fox said.

The input from many residents was they want to keep neighborhoods together. Identified communities of interest are the Eastside neighborhood and Morro Hills agriculture area.

The MiraCosta College neighborhood was named in two communities of interest, as input began to overlap.

The Rancho Del Oro and MiraCosta College neighborhoods were seen a community of interest that has worked to keep truck traffic off its residential streets.

The South Oceanside, Fire Mountain, MiraCosta College, Loma Alta and Oceana neighborhoods were named as a community of interest that has shared goals.

City Council members encouraged residents to stay involved in the 90-day process of mapping district boundaries, so best ideas can be implemented.

They also shared their differing points of view on the impact of districts.

Councilman Jack Feller said he does not support the idea of district elections, which the council majority recommended May 3.

“It all points back to one vote in the area you’re interested in,” Feller said. “We’ll be compromising on some things like agritourism, Ocean Hills doesn’t know where Morro Hills is.”

Councilman Jerry Kern said without election districts, he believes Oceanside would lose the pending lawsuit that accuses the city of not representing diversity on its City Council. Kern said moving forward with district elections protects city funds.

He added he does not think districts will bring better city governing, and agrees with Feller that council members will have little reason to consider the entire city in decision making.

“It’s a horrible form of government we’re going to,” Kern said. “It will protect assets of the city. It will not be to the benefit of voters of the city of Oceanside.”

Councilwoman Esther Sanchez said she supports district elections. She said she will still serve the entire city, and be more accountable to residents in her district.

Deputy Mayor Chuck Lowery agreed with Sanchez, and said districts would not pit communities against each other.

“We all know what the issues are,” Lowery said.

Final districts will be based on population, comply with the constitution, be a continuous territory, follow visible boundaries and respect communities of interest. They will not take into consideration the number of voters within a district.

The city will continue to operate under one budget, and decisions will be voted on by all council members and the mayor, who will continue to be elected at large.

City Council will have two more hearings on district boundaries. The next hearing will be June 21. An official draft district map will be made by June 14.

The city will also hold three more community meetings at locations throughout the city to explain the districting process and collect further community input.

More information on the districting process and upcoming meetings is on the [city website](#).