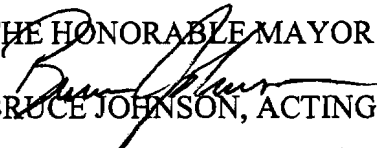


City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JUNE 10, 2011

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM:  BRUCE JOHNSON, ACTING CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: SCHOOL BOARD ELECTORAL DISTRICT BOUNDARIES

ISSUE: Whether to modify the boundaries of the School Board electoral districts.

RECOMMENDATION: That Council accept the recommendation of the Alexandria School Board, and retain current boundaries for the three school board electoral districts.

DISCUSSION: On April 12, staff gave City Council an overview of actions that must or may be taken as a result of redistricting related to the 2010 U.S. Census. Among the changes that were discussed were modifications to the City's three school board electoral districts.

Following every U.S. Census, states and localities must review their demographic data and determine where changes to electoral districts must be made to comply with the constitutionally-mandated "one man, one vote" standard. The only electoral districts within Alexandria (other than General Assembly districts, the boundaries of which are not the responsibility of City Council) are the three multi-member school board electoral districts.

The courts have generally interpreted the "one man, one vote" standard to require that any electoral districts within a jurisdiction must not vary more than five per cent from the ideal population of the district (i.e., the population each district would have if all districts had the exact same population). The ideal population of an Alexandria school board electoral district is 46,655 people (one-third of the City's 2010 population of 139,966).

District A (eastern Alexandria) now has 45,431 people; District B (central Alexandria) has 45,876 people; and District C (western Alexandria) has 48,659 people. All of these districts come within the legal requirement of being within five percent of the ideal population. The City is therefore not required to alter district boundaries.

SCHOOL BOARD RECOMMENDATION: At its June 9, 2011, meeting, the Alexandria School Board's Legislative Committee recommended not to realign the School Board electoral districts. The full School Board concurred with this recommendation.

ATTACHMENT: June 6, 2011, School Board Memorandum

STAFF:

Bernard Caton, Legislative Director

Attachment

June 6, 2011

MEMORANDUM

To: Yvonne A. Folkerts, Chair

From: Arthur E. Peabody, Jr.
Charles H. Wilson
Members, Legislative Committee
Alexandria City School Board

Re: **Redistricting of School Board electoral districts**

Recommendation

We recommend no redistricting. Current school board electoral districts, A, B, and C, are within the population variance permitted by law.

Background

Constitutional standards and state law require state and local governing bodies to adjust their electoral district boundaries every ten years to reflect population shifts and to conform to the "one-person, one-vote" mandate of the Constitution. Since the city elects the Council on an at large basis, the only local districts within the purview of the City Council are the school board electoral districts. Boundary adjustments for state office are addressed by the General Assembly.

Although the law requires Congressional districts to be "equal" or nearly identical in population, local districts are granted some leeway. The City of Alexandria's memorandum posted on its web-site indicates that the population differences between the "smallest" and "largest" districts should be "less than 10%, which equates to a plus/minus 5% variance from the 'ideal' district." The table below depicts the relevant population information based on the 2010 census.¹

Elected Body	Ideal Population	District Designation	Current Population	Variance
School Board	46,655	District A	45,431	-2.62%
		District B	45,876	-1.67%
		District C	48,659	+4.29%

¹ Statistics utilized in this memorandum were obtained from the City's website and the Alexandria Registrar of Voters.

You will note that there is a population difference of 2,004 voters between the current population and the “ideal” population in District C or, as the chart depicts, a positive variance of 4.29%. This means that the C district has more voters than the ideal population. Nonetheless, the variance falls within the “leeway” granted by law and practice.

Alexandria’s school board district boundaries were last adjusted in 2002 for the 2003 city elections based on the population figures ascertained in the 2000 census. A March 7, 2002 Memorandum from the City Manager to the Mayor reported the data displayed in the table below.

Elected Body	Ideal Population	District Designation	Current Population	Variance
School Board	42,761	District A	40,626	-4.99%
		District B	36,326	-15.05%
		District C	51,331	20.04%

The record reflects that 8 different plans or options were proposed for redistricting of school board electoral districts in 2002; seven by city staff; one by a School Board member. Following a series of meetings between members of the School Board, the City Council and staff, and various community groups, “Plan 1” was adopted. Plan 1 adjusted the school board district boundaries by removing the Polk Elementary School precinct from District C and adding it to District B. As you can see from the above table, the removal of this precinct from District C and its addition to District B served to reduce the large variances reflected in the table. More specifically, following the adoption of Plan 1 the population figures and variances changed to those designated below.

Elected Body	Ideal Population	District Designation	Current Population	Variance
School Board	42,761	District A	40,626	-4.99%
		District B	43,568	1.89%
		District C	44,089	3.11%

This result indicates that the redistricting in 2002 addressed large variances from the “ideal” population and accepted variances within the permissible plus/minus 5% standard – even when the variance approximated 5%, *i.e.*, nearly the variance then reflected for District A. The current variances derived from the 2010 census do not differ substantially from those accepted in 2002.

In addition, the 2002 redistricting process was guided by several principles. As the aforementioned March 2002 memorandum states, the districts:

- a) Must maintain +/- 5% of total population between districts;
- b) Should be compact and contiguous

- c) Should follow clearly observable boundaries or census blocks
- d) Should protect communities of interest
- e) May protect incumbency
- f) Must not split precincts

Current school board district boundaries – even with the current variances -- are not inconsistent with these principles. In addition, although School Board members are elected by district, once elected all members “represent” the entire population of the city, all of its residents, and each of its children attending our public schools.

Although a precise, detailed analysis of Alexandria’s precincts is beyond the scope of this recommendation, it appears that the contiguous precincts are too large to “tweak” or reduce the existing variances, if adjacent precincts were shifted from one district to another. In other words, it is unclear how redistricting in 2011 could improve the current variances since precincts cannot be split and districts should be “compact and contiguous. Likewise, it is not clear that a wholesale “reshuffling” of precincts would reduce the variances – a method that appears unmerited in light of the small variances resulting from the current district boundaries.

In sum, the present populations of each of the School Board electoral districts fall within the permissible variance. The variances are substantially less than those meriting redistricting in 2002. Moreover, they are not inconsistent with the “guiding principles” that have been utilized in the past as goals for redistricting. In light of the small variances that currently exist, we recommend no redistricting.

cc: Superintendent