

Draft Report and Recommendations of the 2021 Long Beach Independent Redistricting Commission

Table of Contents

- Background 2
 - Special Challenges in 2021 2
 - Commission Staffing 2
- Establishing and Convening the Inaugural Independent Redistricting Commission 3
 - Outreach for Commissioner Applications 3
 - Selection Process 4
- State and City Charter Process and Criteria for Redistricting 4
 - Implementing the Charter Criteria and Requirements 5
- The Work of the Commission 5
 - Public Hearings 5
- 2021 Redistricting Commission Public Engagement 6
- Thoughts and Recommendations from the 2020-21 Redistricting Commission 7

Background

The Long Beach Independent Redistricting Commission (Commission) was established in Measure DDD, passed by voters on November 6, 2018.

This measure established a process for establishing new City Council districts as required by federal and state law, independent of City Council and mayoral control. The Commission developed new City Council district lines for use over the subsequent decade using the Charter criteria enacted by the voters.

The Charter's selection process outlined in the City Charter (Charter) focused on selecting 13 members and two alternates from each of the nine existing Council Districts to reasonably reflect the diversity of Long Beach. The Commission has the ultimate authority to develop and implement district lines that will guide City Council elections for the coming decade. These lines are transmitted directly to Los Angeles County for implementation without any intervening approval by the City Council or other agencies.

Special Challenges in 2021

The redistricting process conducted by this inaugural redistricting commission was heavily impacted by two external factors: the delay of the census data and health guidelines due to the COVID pandemic.

Federal law requires that the US Census Bureau release data by March 31 of every year ending in a "1" for states to conduct redistricting. This requirement allows cities, counties, or other agencies with districted election systems to have access to total population counts at the census block level so lines can be redrawn.

Within California, the data for redistricting undergoes an additional step of adjusting the total census population by reallocating the prison population. This extra step can take up to a month to complete. For the City of Long Beach, this release of data triggers a 6-month window for the Commission to conduct its work.

With the final census data being released nearly six months late and the additional month to allow for the reallocation of the prison population, the Commission's timeline was cut down to approximately 60 days, a third of the time considered in the original Measure DDD. This concentration of the mapping, feedback and revision cycle into a condensed timeline seriously impacted the Commission.

Additionally, the health and safety protocols at the state, county, and city-level constrained the ability of the Commission to hold in-person hearings for much of the time it was meeting. Even when meetings were in public, they were impacted by some participants' need for remote access options or by some members of the public who were unwilling to engage in any in-person activities. The Commission had to learn about redistricting while adapting to new technologies for holding hearings during a pandemic. These challenges impacted the process in 2021 but are, thankfully, not expected to be faced by future Commissions.

Commission Staffing

The Charter established the roles in which city staff supports the Commission. The staffing of the Commission was a joint effort by the Office of the City Manager, Office of the City Clerk, and the Office of the City Attorney consisting of supporting commissioner recruitment, meeting facilitation, production of agendas, reports and minutes, development of the Commission work plan, community engagement and other general staffing throughout the process.

Also, the City was responsible for contracting outside firms to perform specific redistricting tasks, which included:

Olsen Remcho Johansen providing legal services around the redistricting process and specific questions regarding the Voting Rights Act.

Redistricting Partners providing demographic and mapping services and redistricting training, workplan and timelines, analysis, meeting support, public engagement, and ongoing technical assistance.

Establishing and Convening the Inaugural Independent Redistricting Commission

The Office of the City Clerk developed an application and selection process that produced a Commission that is representative of the diversity of the City and meets specific requirements, such as being a registered voter, having voted in the most recent City election, and having been a resident of the City for more than a year at the time of the initial application process.

Outreach for Commissioner Applications

The City conducted an extensive outreach campaign to encourage residents to apply to be part of the Commission. Outreach began in August 2019 and was conducted utilizing traditional, digital, and out-of-home avenues of communications to reach the City of Long Beach residents.

- Traditional communication included the use of flyers, Citywide utility bill mailers, local news outlet print advertisements (Grunion Gazette and Long Beach Press-Telegram), Housing Authority Newsletter, Park, Recreation and Marine brochure advertisements, booths and presentations at City events, Redistricting webinars, partnerships with community-based organizations and the Long Beach Census Complete Count Committee, and a construction site fence wrap.
- Digital communication included creating the Redistricting website, public notices, press releases, social media (In-house and paid), public service announcements, local news outlet digital advertisement (Long Beach Post, Grunion Gazette and Long Beach Press-Telegram), local television advertisements (Khmer TV), City department newsletters, City on-hold phone messages, and email blasts to internal and external partners.
- Out-of-home communication included digital billboards (Worthington Ford, Airport, and Convention Center/Terrace Theater), City Hall elevator screens, Long Beach Transit bus cards, and bus shelters.

All communication was built with equity in mind to reach the diverse community that Long Beach has to offer. Communication materials were created in English, Spanish, Tagalog, and Khmer. City staff worked with local partners identified in the 2020 Census initiative to connect with residents through trusted messengers.

Pursuant to Charter Section 2505, the application period for the Commission was open for three months, from April 1, 2020 to June 30, 2020. As a result of the extensive outreach, a total of 400 applications were submitted, with 353 applicants deemed eligible after removing duplicates, withdrawn applications, or ineligible applicants.

Selection Process

The Ethics Commission, per Charter Section 2505, was designated as the screening panel responsible for creating a sub-pool of 20 to 30 applicants most qualified to perform the duties of the Commission. The Ethics Commission made each assignment to the sub-pool based on the applicant's relevant analytical skills, familiarity with the City's neighborhoods and communities, ability to be impartial, and apparent ability to work cooperatively with other potential Commissioners.

The Ethics Commission began the process by being randomly divided into three ad hoc committees to evaluate applications by Council District to review and rank the applicants. Assignments were made to have the Ethics Commissioners review applicants from Council Districts other than the one in which they reside with names and personal information of applicants redacted to minimize any potential bias.

After reviewing the applications, the Ethics Commission selected 45 applicants to be interviewed by the entire Ethics Commission and created a sub-pool of 23 applicants after holding four meetings for interviews.

Following the selection of the sub-pool, the Ethics Commission Chair randomly selected nine individuals, one from each existing Council District, appointing them to the Long Beach Independent Redistricting Commission. The nine Commissioners randomly selected by the Ethics Commission then appointed the final four members and two alternates from the remaining sub-pool applicants.

The Commission members are as follows:

- Alejandra Gutierrez, Chair
- Sharon Diggs-Jackson, Vice-Chair
- Genna Beckenhaupt, Member
- Thomas J. Cooper, Member
- Ryan Giffen, Member
- Frank A. Gutierrez, Member
- Nicole Lopez, Member
- Kelly Nhim, Member
- Marissa Martinez, Member
- Eric R. Oates, Member
- Feliza Ortiz-Licon, Member
- Zhelinrentice Scott, Member
- Sevly Sngunon, Member
- Josias Gonzalez, Alternate
- Melody Osuna, Alternate

State and City Charter Process and Criteria for Redistricting

As the basis of the council district boundaries, the Charter provided the standards to which the Commission and staff held its work and conducted outreach. The established traditional criteria used in redistricting under the Charter specifically includes:

- 1) Districts be nearly equal in population
- 2) Map complies with the Federal Voting Rights Act
- 3) Geographic Contiguity

- 4) Respect for neighborhoods, seeking to minimize their division
- 5) Consideration of Communities of Interest (COI)
 - a. A community of interest is a connected population that shares common social and economic interests that should be included within a single district for its effective and fair representation as a potential voting bloc in current or future elections
- 6) Not dividing neighborhoods that have a common history, culture, or language
- 7) Follow geographic and topographical city features
- 8) Districts should be understandable by voters
- 9) Compactness – nearby populations should be together
- 10) Correspond to census blocks

Implementing the Charter Criteria and Requirements

The Commission was forbidden from considering the residence of any individual, including any incumbent councilmember or candidate, and it could not draw districts with the intent of favoring or disfavoring any political party.

The Commission considered adding additional criteria, such as considering the existing district lines or possible adjustments based on where the census may have been unsuccessful in properly counting the city population. Neither of these additional criteria was ultimately adopted.

After the passage of Measure DDD, State lawmakers passed the Fair and Inclusive Redistricting for Municipalities and Political Subdivisions (FAIR MAPS) Act which also placed requirements on counties and cities for the decennial redistricting process. Where required, the Commission followed both the Long Beach Charter and the FAIR MAPS Act.

Additionally, the Commission’s work was structured around maintaining the integrity of Charter criteria to ensure the voter’s intent was effectuated, the community was heard, and the Commission’s work remained fair, equitable, and neutral.

The Work of the Commission

The Inaugural Commission accomplished many tasks, such as:

- Adopting By-Laws
- Learning Brown Act and parliamentary rules to conduct public meetings
- Learning essential redistricting concepts, including legal principles and case law
- Becoming familiar with the public mapping software and tools
- Adopting a Vision and Values Statement
- Hosting outreach meetings in the community
- Holding required public hearings to obtain public testimony regarding communities of interest
- Approving new council district boundaries

Public Hearings

Under the Charter, the Commission is required to have one hearing in each of the nine existing City Council districts prior to adopting lines. These could be concurrent with business meetings, training, or hearings to develop and consider maps. All the outreach and business meetings of the Commission were live-streamed.

The Commission far exceeded this requirement with a total of 30 public hearings from establishing the commission structure to the adoption of a final map, including:

- 13 business hearings including the election of a Chair and Vice-Chair, adoption of processes, training on the redistricting process, city/state/federal laws, best practices for commissions, and other training
- Nine outreach hearings, one in each current Council district
- One day-long team-building retreat
- One Citywide outreach hearing before drafting lines
- Five hearings on draft lines, feedback and map adoption, and selection of potential final maps.
- One hearing on the selection of a final plan

Community of Interest Outreach Hearings

The Commission's district-specific and Citywide outreach hearings were virtual (May 19, 2021 – July 7, 2021) and hybrid (July 14, 2021 – September 8, 2021). The purpose of these meetings was to inform the public about the redistricting process and gather input from the public about the community. The meetings consisted of a presentation led by the Commissioners from their respective district or the Chair and Vice-Chair and the Consultant and City staff. After the presentation, public comment was held in which the members of the community will be encouraged to provide testimony on their Communities of Interest.

Mapping Hearings

The Commission's mapping hearings were held in person from October 6, 2021 to November 18, 2021. The process included providing mapping direction to staff, considering public and consultant drawn maps, selecting potential draft maps, choosing a draft map, and approving a final map. During these meetings, the Commission listened and considered public feedback from community members from various neighborhoods and organizations.

The Commission made it a priority to hear the voices of Long Beach's diverse community. While conducting these hearings in hybrid and in-person formats, the Commission implemented KUDO, a new virtual meeting platform, to be language accessible to the Spanish, Khmer, and Tagalog speaking communities. The same priority of access was considered during the public engagement campaign to gather their input.

2021 Redistricting Commission Public Engagement

Concurrently, City staff led outreach to build public awareness in the redistricting and encourage participation in the process. This included a more than year-long process utilizing traditional, digital, and out-of-home communications to reach residents of the City.

- Traditional communication included physical flyers, Citywide postcards, Citywide Utility Bill mailer, local news outlet print advertisements (Grunion Gazette and Long Beach Press-Telegram), Housing Authority Newsletter, park banners, and construction site fence wraps.
- Digital communication included updated Redistricting website, Public Notice, Press Releases, social media (In-house and paid), public service announcements, local news outlet digital advertisement (Long Beach Post, Grunion Gazette and Long Beach Press-Telegram), text

message campaign, City department newsletters, City on-hold phone message, and email blast to internal and external partners.

- Out-of-home communication included digital billboards (Worthington Ford sign, Airport, Houghton Park, and Convention Center/Terrace Theater), City Hall elevator screens, Long Beach Transit bus car cards, and bus shelters.

All communication was built with equity in mind to reach the diverse community in Long Beach. In alignment with the City's Language Access Policy, communication materials were created in English, Spanish, Tagalog, and Khmer.

There were two campaigns structured to build awareness and participation. The first campaign started in January of 2021 and concluded in November 2021; this campaign focused on fostering public participation before and throughout the map-making process. The effort of this campaign was to gather community of interest testimony to inform the Commission in their decision-making process. The second campaign was scheduled from December 2021 to February 2022 to focus on awareness of the new City Council district boundaries to the Long Beach residents.

City staff worked with local partners throughout the process to connect with residents through trusted messengers. City staff was able to create digital communication toolkits to provide to partners and provide partners with promotional items and attending events.

Community Mapping Workshops were held, from September 11, 2021 to October 7, 2021, by City staff throughout various city libraries to work hands on with community members that wanted to be a part of the Redistricting Mapping process. Each workshop had language access available, resource materials and training from consultant staff.

As a result of this work from staff and the Commission, the Commission received a record number of public comments and draft maps, including:

- 772 Communities of Interest Form Submissions
- Over 16 Hours of Public Comment
- Over 1,000 Pages of Written Correspondence
- 90 Community of Interest Map Submissions
- 110 Partial and Full District Plan Submissions

After considering all the community feedback received from the public, the new map was adopted November 18, 2021. The Commission was able to reflect the current interests of the community in the new City Council district boundaries with fair and equal representation in each district, in compliance with the Charter criteria.

[Thoughts and Recommendations from the 2020-21 Redistricting Commission](#)

Redistricting in a city with the diversity of Long Beach is a complex task. Despite the public health meeting-related restrictions of the pandemic and the delay in receiving US Census data, our Commission succeeded in completing the work on time, and with legal, VRA compliant maps, allowing for these new lines to be used in the upcoming 2022 election cycle.

Measure DDD contemplated that adjustments to the Measure’s rules might be necessary to make the process run more smoothly and better accomplish its goals in future years. Charter section 2509(e) permits the Long Beach City Council, by two-thirds vote, to “...adopt by ordinance changes to time limits and deadlines imposed by this article that are specifically recommended by the Commission.”

While the Commission work was a success, there are a number of areas in which we believe the City and Long Beach residents may want to adjust the process:

Application and Recruitment

The Commission application process could include more information about the number of hours that would be required in the Commission – upwards of 30 hearings at 3+ hours each. Additionally, some part of the application process could include an exploration of the analytical skills of applicants.

Training

Commissioners were trained on multiple technical, legal and other issues around redistricting and working within the commission setting. Due to COVID and the late census, much of these lessons had faded prior to the actual line drawing, requiring some refreshing as the final maps were developed. Future Commissions should have the ability to begin preliminary map creation immediately after training and initial public input.

The Commission appreciated the direct training from former redistricting commissioners, including the Chair of the 2011 State Redistricting Commission. Future Commissions should receive training and assistance from the 2021 Commissioners and others with direct experience in this new independent redistricting process.

Additional training should be done on Roberts Rules of Order and the procedures to be used during hearings as maps are considered and adopted. This could make a future Commission more able to function within the parameters of proper board governance.

Staffing of the Commission

The staffing of the Commission was excellent and provided a foundation upon which the Commission could function. The staff worked extended hours and facilitated elements of the Commission process that could not have been done by the Commissioners alone.

However, future Commissions should have greater authority to shape the direction of the process, including more direct involvement in the Commission’s budget and spending, more direct access to Commission staff, and the selection of the demographer and outside legal counsel. Additional power in the hands of Commissioners could enhance the independence of the process.

Commissioners feel that this should also extend to the ability of the Commission to have their own legal counsel and potentially their own staff that are not working within the City government.

The Commission should work directly with legal counsel to have any questions regarding process. This could improve the functioning of the Commission as an independent body, and avoid any conflict of interest with City staff directing legal counsel, whose decisions may limit or enhance the ability of the Commission to draw Council district lines. Future Commissions could avoid some of these potential conflicts of interest by also having an independent staff.

While the Commission felt as though it was being limited in its independence in regard to the overall process, Commissioners did have much more control over the line drawing itself. At no point did staff of demographer attempt to guide the line-drawing process, something that the inaugural Commissioners hope will also be true for future Commissions.

Due to the Charter section 2507 and out of an abundance of caution, Commissioners were not encouraged to do their own outreach activities or participate in any public forums, attend group meetings to educate residents on redistricting or work in their own neighborhoods to build awareness. Future Commissions may want to identify ways that the Commissioners can be utilized or develop rules around Commissioner activities.

Public Input

Public hearings were held at schools and community centers – places that many members of the community would be aware of and provided an ability for greater engagement. Future Commissions should continue to rely on these types of locations as they reach out to residents in each council district. The early Community of Interest mapping and public testimony focused on the building blocks of districts allowed for some greater exploration of the areas with special concern – from historic tribal lands to language/national origin communities to LGBTQ areas and where residents had the greatest concern regarding airport noise – without regard to potential district lines. This was helpful, and should be engaged in future redistricting efforts, but for a more limited period.

Due to the delay in the Census data, the 2021 neither the Commission nor the public had the benefit of being able to draft maps prior to the outreach hearings. When final maps were finally released, and the public could draw complete plans with the final data, the input dramatically increased and changed.

Without a late census, future Commissions will be able to start with more ideas around draft maps earlier, providing a much more helpful public engagement. If future Commissions begin mapping after a round of Council district-based outreach, they should consider going back to the Council district hearing format for localized testimony about draft plans.

The 2021 Commission was conducted in an environment that we hope no future Commission will face. However, the use of virtual hearings, supplementing traditional in-person hearings, should be considered as it can allow for participation from some individuals who cannot attend a long hearing in person. This Commission made considerable headway in using a blend of virtual and in person and hopefully more advances in this technology over the intervening decade will allow for a blend of both approaches.

While incumbent members of the City Council, their staff, consultants, or candidates have every right as residents to participate in the redistricting process, this should be discouraged in future redistricting efforts as it could sway the Commission to adopt lines that are inadvertently skewing toward a political outcome – something that is not within the principles of the Charter.

Creation of Redistricting Plans

The process of creating maps during this inaugural Commission began with maps drawn by the public (using criteria that was not always described by the person responsible for the plan) and maps drawn by the consultant based on community of interest input and direction from the Commission. This allowed

for initial draft plans to be explored as complete balanced plans, rather than having the Commission begin from a blank map.

The process then transitioned to several hearings with live line drawing – mapping in the redistricting software, led by the consultant responding to requests from Commissioners. This allowed Commissioners to see the impacts of potential changes in real-time and allowed the public to understand the rationale for changes. As a result of this live line drawing, and recording of every move of a line, the public, and future Commissioners, can understand the intent behind every district drawn in the final plan. This significantly added to the transparency of the process.

Future Commissioners should consider this same blend of maps that are created by the public and the consultant, based on Commission direction, and several hearings with live line-drawing to make amendments to maps prior to their final adoption.