

**MOTION:**

**May 18, 2021  
Regular Meeting  
Res. No. 21-**

**SECOND:**

**RE: ADOPT THE PRINCE WILLIAM BOARD OF COUNTY SUPERVISORS' CRITERIA FOR THE 2021 REDISTRICTING PROCESS**

**ACTION:**

**WHEREAS**, redistricting is the process of redrawing lines for local election districts and precincts and establishing polling places; and

**WHEREAS**, the Constitution of Virginia requires any locality that conducts elections by district to change its district boundaries every ten (10) years in the year ending in one (1); and

**WHEREAS**, the Code of Virginia requires localities to use the most recent decennial population figures from the U.S. Census for the purposes of redistricting and reapportionment; and

**WHEREAS**, the Virginia Redistricting Commission is responsible for redistricting the congressional and state election districts; and

**WHEREAS**, the Prince William Board of County Supervisors is responsible for redistricting the local election districts and precincts;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Prince William Board of County Supervisors hereby adopts the following criteria to guide the Board in its efforts to revise local election district boundaries:

- Election districts shall be **"as nearly equal in population as practicable."**
- Election **district populations shall not exceed five percent less or five percent more than the ideal district population.**
- Election districts shall **be drawn in a way that assures equal opportunities for racial and ethnic communities to participate in the political process and shall not diminish their right to elect candidates of their choice**, as mandated by the Voting Rights Act.
- Election districts shall be **compact and contiguous**, with due regard to natural features and accessibility of voting places.
- Election district boundaries shall **follow clearly observable boundaries.**

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- Election districts shall **avoid splitting precincts**, as precincts must be wholly contained within single congressional, state, and local election districts.
- Election district boundaries shall **preserve communities of interest**, to the maximum extent possible. A community of interest means a neighborhood or any geographically defined group of people living in an area who share similar social, cultural, and economic interests.
- Election district boundaries shall **recognize incumbency of both the Prince William Board of County Supervisors and the Prince William County School Board**, to the maximum extent permissible under law and consistent with the other criteria, so that existing incumbent office holders remain in separate districts.
- Election district boundaries shall **maintain existing boundary lines**, where possible, if existing locations can be reasonably accommodated.
- Election district boundaries shall **be politically fair**, so as to not seek political advantage through the redistricting process or sway the balance of political power on the Prince William Board of County Supervisors to favor any political party.

**Votes:**

**Ayes:**

**Nays:**

**Absent from Vote:**

**Absent from Meeting:**

**For Information:**

County Executive

County Attorney

Electoral Board

School Board

**ATTEST:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Clerk to the Board**



# STAFF REPORT

<b>Board Meeting Date:</b>	May 18, 2021
<b>Agenda Title:</b>	Adopt the Board of County Supervisors Criteria for the 2021 Redistricting Process
<b>Requested Action:</b>	Approve the resolution to adopt the Board of County Supervisors criteria for the 2021 redistricting process.
<b>Department / Agency Lead:</b>	Office of Executive Management
<b>Staff Lead:</b>	Nikki Brown, Assistant to the County Executive

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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The Constitution of Virginia requires the Prince William Board of County Supervisors (Board) to change its district boundaries every ten (10) years in the year ending in one (1) using the most recent decennial population figures. Therefore, the Board must embark on redistricting measures and is required to adopt a redistricting ordinance in 2021.

To guide these redistricting efforts, the Board adopts a set of criteria. These criteria are a combination of legally required criteria and traditional districting principles that are recognized by the courts.

The Board has used the same criteria for the last several redistricting efforts. Staff brought forth to the Board on March 2, 2021, recommended updates to the criteria based on research, guidance from the Virginia Division of Legal Services, and feedback from the Board. During that meeting, the Board requested that the criteria regarding election districts being politically fair be added back to the criteria, if there is an agreed upon definition for that criteria.

Therefore, it is recommended that the Board approves the resolution to adopt the updated criteria for the 2021 redistricting process.

## **BACKGROUND**

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The Constitution of Virginia requires localities to change their district boundaries every ten (10) years in the year ending in one. The Code of Virginia requires localities to use the most recent decennial population figures from the U.S. Census for the purpose of redistricting and reapportionment. Local election districts must be established and altered by adoption of an ordinance. Therefore, the Board is required to adopt a redistricting ordinance in 2021, using the most recent data from the U.S. Census, as adjusted by the Virginia Division of Legislative Services.

The Board has used the same criteria for the last several redistricting efforts. Staff brought forth to the Board on March 2, 2021, recommended updates to the criteria based on research, guidance from the Virginia Division of Legal Services, and feedback from the Board. During that meeting, the Board requested that the criteria regarding election districts being politically fair be added back to the criteria, as long as there is an agreed upon definition for that criteria.

The U.S. Census Bureau has stated that it will make redistricting legacy data publicly available in mid-to-late August and will formally make tabulated redistricting data available to the public by the end of September. Legacy data is the raw data; the tabulated data are organized into files that are easily decipherable. Staff expects to use the legacy data to begin its data analysis efforts.

It is important to note that the Board and staff recognize that redistricting will also alter the districts for the members of the School Board, as they are elected from the same districts as the Board (other than the chairs for each board, who are elected at large).

### **Updated Criteria for 2021 Redistricting:**

- Election districts shall be “as nearly equal in population as practicable.”
- Election district populations shall not exceed five percent less or five percent more than the ideal district population.
- Election districts shall be drawn in a way that assures equal opportunities for racial and ethnic communities to participate in the political process and shall not diminish their right to elect candidates of their choice, as mandated by the Voting Rights Act.
- Election districts shall be compact and contiguous, with due regard to natural features and accessibility of voting places.
- Election district boundaries shall follow clearly observable boundaries.
- Election districts shall avoid splitting precincts, as precincts must be wholly contained within single congressional, state, and local election districts.
- Election district boundaries shall preserve communities of interest, to the maximum extent possible. A community of interest means a neighborhood, or any geographically defined group of people living in an area who share similar social, cultural, and economic interests.
- Election district boundaries shall recognize incumbency of both the Board of County Supervisors and School Board, to the maximum extent permissible under law and consistent with the other criteria, so that existing incumbent office holders remain in separate districts.
- Election district boundaries shall maintain existing boundary lines, where possible, if existing locations can be reasonably accommodated.

- Election district boundaries shall be politically fair, so as to not seek political advantage through the redistricting process or sway the balance of political power on the Board to favor any political party.

## **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

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It is the recommendation of staff that the Board approves the resolution to adopt the updated criteria for the 2021 redistricting process.

### **Service Level / Policy Impact**

The adoption of the criteria will guide all those involved with Prince William County's reapportionment and redistricting efforts to revise the local election district boundaries.

### **Fiscal Impact**

No costs will be incurred by the Board adopting the 2021 redistricting criteria.

### **Legal Impact**

The Board is required by the Constitution of Virginia to redistrict in 2021. If the Board decides not to adopt local criteria, then only those criteria legally required will be considered during the redistricting effort.

## **STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION**

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**PRINCE WILLIAM**  
COUNTY

# 2021 County Redistricting Update

May 18, 2021



# Proposed Redistricting Criteria



- Election districts shall be **“as nearly equal in population as practicable.”**
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# Timeline Milestones



April 26,  
2021

- Census released state population counts for congressional apportionment

August 2021

- Redistricting legacy data made available in mid-to-late August

Sept. 30,  
2021

- Redistricting tabulated data made available by Sept. 30

December  
2021

- BOCS must adopt redistricting measures by ordinance

# Next Steps



- BOCS Decision Points:
  - Adopt Criteria
  - Independent Contractor
  - 8<sup>th</sup> District
- Wait for data!
- Keep BOCS and public informed throughout process

Questions?

