

Commission Meeting Minutes

The following are the minutes of the Utah Independent Redistricting Commission meeting. The meeting was held on Saturday, October 16, 2021, in Utah State University Taggart Student Center West Ballroom - 650 N 800 E, Logan, UT 84322

Note: A copy of meeting materials, and an audio recording of the meeting can be found on the Public Notice Website. The minutes may refer to the recording found on the Public Notice Website with the approximate number on the recording where an issue is being discussed.

Attendance - Commission Members

Chair, Utah Independent Redistricting Commission - Rex Facer

Commissioner Karen Hale

Commissioner William Thorne

Commissioner Christine Durham

Commissioner Lyle Hillyard

Commissioner Jeff Baker

Attendance - Staff and Others in Attendance at Anchor Location:

Gordon Haight, Executive Director

Aly Escobar, Administrative Coordinator

Sariah Benion, Intern

Joey Fica, Intern

Cassidy Hansen, Intern

Bruce Copeland

Lou Ann Exum Sakaki

Sandy Goodlander

Alice Hillyard

Amy Anderson

Holly H. Daines, Logan Mayor

Mary Lynn Glatfelter

Ed Glatfelter

Nathan Holt

Christine Holt

Chris Call

Curt Benjamin

George Durham

I. Call to Order

Chair Facer began the meeting

II. Welcome – Chair Rex Facer

Chair Facer welcomed everyone to the meeting

III. Presentation: Redistricting Process – Rex Facer

Chair Facer moved to the next item and stated that he would explain some of the process of redistricting and how the commission functions.

He began by explaining that Proposition 4 in 2018 began the creation of the Utah Independent Redistricting Commission and after some compromise legislation in 2020 the Commission was created. Chair Facer explained that the Utah Independent Redistricting Commission is an advisory Commission to the Legislature and would be giving the Legislature three drafted Congressional, State House, State Senate, and State School board maps. He then explained that the Utah Independent Redistricting Commission was working to create maps informed by the people in a transparent way. Part of these efforts include livestreaming all meetings and mapping sessions and working to get public input.

Chair Facer then went on to explain the criteria to be used by the commission. More information about these criteria can be found here: <https://uirc.utah.gov/uirc-meeting/synopsis-criteria-and-standards/>

In this explanation, Chair Facer mentioned the requirements for equal populations as being the fundamental criteria as the commission works to create maps for the Utah Congressional seats, Utah House, Utah Senate, and State School Board. He presented the various population numbers for each map type. He presented the question of what counties and areas Sanpete County would like to be included with to meet those population requirements.

Chair Facer then moved to explain the additional criteria adopted by the Utah Independent Redistricting Commission which can be found in the link above. In this explanation he touched on the importance of communities of interest, both as a way to ensure representation and to help the commissioners understand where communities can be split if necessary. He also mentioned that the commissioners have decided not to consider political data as they map.

Chair Facer explained the Commissioners' efforts towards acting transparently, and explained that mapping sessions are all streamed on YouTube. He also explained that the public can comment through various avenues, including mapping the state or submitting a community of interest.

He also explained the different mapping teams the commissioners had split into and noted that each team contained at least one commissioner appointed by each party.

V. Presentation: Public Comment – Sariah Morey

Chair Facer turned the time to Sariah Morey to present on the commission website - uirc.utah.gov and how the public can use the website to submit comments. Tutorials and links to these resources can be found at uirc.utah.gov.

In these comments Sariah explained that likely the most useful comments at this point in the process would be comments directly on the drafted maps from the commissioners.

VI. Presentation: Public Hearing Format – Gordon Haight

Chair Facer asked Gordon to explain the format for giving comments.

Gordon explained that generally there is a five-minute limit for comments and reminded attendees that staff would be present after the meeting to help answer questions.

Chair Facer reminded attendees that staff can also help the public to use the mapping software if needed.

VII. Open Public Comment

Chair Facer opened the time for public comment. He invited Mayor Daines from Logan to give any comments specifically.

Mayor Daines from Logan City addressed the commissioners. Her comments centered around discussion of what communities Logan suggested keeping Logan with a city like North Logan might make more sense than Mendon. She also mentioned that these comments were more relevant for house and senate maps than congressional maps.

Commissioner Durham asked if Mayor Daines would be willing to submit those comments online as well. Commissioner Thorne also suggested that Mayor Daines might comment on individual maps to identify potential issues.

Nathan Holt addressed the commissioners. He asked why the commissioners were submitting three maps of each district type and if there were criteria to evaluate the maps.

Commissioner Thorne mentioned that it was in statute. Commissioner Durham further explained that it helped in debate around what criteria to prioritize, citing discussion around urban and rural splits in congressional districts as an example. Commissioner Hale explained that staff and legal counsel was running analysis on maps to ensure legal compliance and evaluate how commissioners were maintaining criteria. She explained that commissioners were using those evaluations to improve and ultimately select their maps.

Commissioner Hillyard explained that where a map started played a large role in how districts were shaped. He also mentioned that in previous meetings, they had heard conflicting public comments, and so he and Commissioner Thorne had worked to craft multiple maps that reflected some of those comments and started maps in different places to create different outcomes. He also mentioned being limited by census blocks in how districts were created. Commissioner Hillyard explained that while he knew where some legislators lived, he had never mentioned that information nor used it in his mapping. He then mentioned an example of hearing that part of San Juan County was a similar community to Moab and balancing that information with concerns around election logistics with other criteria. He then explained that the commissioners could certainly draw multiple maps that met all the criteria and legal requirements, but that the commissioners needed to hear from the people which maps they preferred and why and restated the commissioners' dedication to following the criteria before them. He ended by explaining the limitations surrounding the commissioners and the timeframes.

Amy Anderson from Logan addressed the commissioners. She asked whether the colors assigned to maps would affect what maps were selected to present to the legislature. Chair Facer explained that the color only designated the team that had drafted the maps, and commissioners were working to evaluate their drafted maps as well as maps from the public to submit.

Amy noted some concern with the scale of differences between the maps, noting that one congressional map put Logan with southern Utah. She expressed some concern with keeping communities together. She also raised potential concerns with the logistics of a large district for a representative. Commissioner

Durham explained that in large, these concerns were an effect of the population differing population densities in Utah, and that keeping populations equal requires picking up large geographic areas at times.

Chair Facer explained a public submitted map that placed the Wasatch Front into three districts and the remainder of Utah in another. Chair Facer explained that the general feelings from the commissioners had been that a district of that size would be unworkable for a representative. He then echoed Commissioner Durham's comments that it was an issue they had to be cognizant of. Commissioner Hale noted as an example that in southern Utah there were instances where several counties had to be combined for one house district.

Christine Hold from Logan then addressed the commissioners. She expressed concern with the potential for the legislature to ignore the recommendations of the commission. Commissioner Durham explained that the commissioners hoped that the transparent process of the commission would help encourage the legislature to consider and respond to the work of the commission. Christine asked what the public could do to help. Chair Facer explained that the public could call their representatives, write opinion pieces, tell friends, or provide public comments. He explained that there was some hope that the word would spread.

Christine suggested that the time that the commission had spent would help reinforce their work. Commissioner Hillyard explained that while there was some vocal support for the commission, attendance of meetings had been low. He said that he hoped that more people would be at meetings. He also suggested that at the end of the process, every map would likely meet criteria but have issues as well. He expressed his belief that each commission had an honest intent to do the work well.

An audience member asked how many comments had been received. Chair Facer explained that roughly 1000 comments regarding the individual maps had been received as well as roughly 1000 communities of interest as well as various emails. Commissioner Thorne explained that the commissioners did not expect to have a perfect map, but they expected to demonstrate a solid process with no political or incumbent considerations. He explained that it was as fair a process as the commissioners could make.

Commissioner Hale explained that she felt it was important for the public to remind their legislators that the commission was created by a proposition that had passed. An audience member asked if the boundaries had to change according to the criteria being used.

Chair Facer explained that the boundaries needed to change as a matter of unequal population growth, explaining that for instance Utah and Washington Counties had grown faster than average.

Commissioner Hillyard gave some examples of areas that needed to change.

Kirk, a local teacher, addressed the commissioners. He thanked the commissioners for their transparent process. His comments then focused on the importance of school board districts and the communities around them. Commissioner Durham explained that the commissioners did not know all those communities and public comments helped with that. She also noted that the UEA had stated they were preparing a drafted map.

Commissioner Hale thanked Kirk for his work as an educator and giving comments. She explained that staff had been reaching out to school districts officials for input as well. She also explained that the commissioners had tried to keep local districts intact when drafting maps.

Sandy Goodlander from Logan addressed the commissioners. She asked if the drafted house maps could be pulled up for questions.

Commissioner Hillyard noted that one map split Cache County in unusual ways because that map had started in Summit County and that had necessitated different districts. He explained that nobody should panic over a map just yet as they hadn't selected final maps. He then explained some obstacles for larger school districts and understanding where to split them, while areas like Cache and Rich Counties were easier for the school board. He then explained that there were legal concerns for population deviations though larger deviations made districts easier. He then explained some legal background and surrounding law in regard to race in redistricting.

Staff pulled up drafted house maps for the public to view.

Commissioner Durham echoed Commissioner Hillyard's comments that it was likely that some of the early drafted maps would not be considered strongly and that the commissioners had learned a lot. Commissioner Hale then expressed that the input from this meeting would help to improve maps.

Commissioner Hillyard explained some concerns heard in the meeting in Layton regarding Clearfield and explained that was an issue that he would be looking at in future mapping.

Commissioner Thorne and Chair Facer explained that district numbers had not been updated to reflect current district numbers as of this meeting. Chair Facer explained that a central goal of making draft maps available was to hear comments and modify the maps. An audience member asked when the commissioners hoped to have 12 maps selected for the public to comment on those maps before moving to the legislature. Chair Facer explained they hoped to have maps selected soon.

An audience member asked about what sorts of feedback commissioners hoped to receive.

Commissioner Thorne explained that they hoped to hear suggested changes and reasons for why.

Commissioner Hale asked about having Cassidy Hansen briefly explain the sorts of analysis staff were conducting on drafted maps. Cassidy Hansen then explained some of the analysis staff was doing, including looking at how cities and counties were split. She explained how commissioners would take analysis to improve their maps. She also explained how staff and commissioners were looking at cores of prior districts, in part to help renumber districts to reflect current numbering. She also explained how computer-generated maps were being used as comparisons.

Commissioner Thorne explained that after receiving this information, commissioners would take that data and try to make improvements such as reducing the number of cities split.

An audience member asked if drafted maps had dates posted. Staff explained that maps did not use a date system but used a numbering system to reflect how many versions each map had gone through.

VIII. Close Public Comment

With no additional comments Chair Facer asked for any final comments from the commissioners.

VIII. Open House

Chair Facer reminded the public that staff was available after this meeting.

IX. Discussion: Map Refinement

Chair Facer asked for any final comments and hearing none asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

X. Adjourn

Chair Facer asked for a motion to adjourn.

Commissioner Hale motioned to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned.

DRAFT