



2022 City Council redistricting plan for new councilmember districts

March 17, 2022 - Mesquite, TX – On March 29, 2022, at 7:00 p.m., the City of Mesquite will hold its first public hearing at Florence Recreation Center, 2501 Whitson Way, to discuss and receive public input on the proposed redistricting Illustrative Plan 1 that was adopted by the City Council at the February 21, 2022, City Council meeting and any proposed redistricting plans that may be submitted by the public. A second public hearing is scheduled for April 5, 2022, at 7:00 p.m., at Rutherford Recreation Center, 900 Rutherford Drive, and a final public hearing and adoption of the redistricting plan is scheduled for the May 2, 2022, City Council meeting.

In May 2018, Mesquite voters approved City Charter amendments that included a change in how City Councilmembers are elected, from a system where all members of the City Council and Mayor are elected by all voters of the city regardless of where those voters reside (“at-large” system), to a “single-member district” system where only voters residing within a specific district vote for the City Councilmember representing that district.

City Council representation is now divided into six (6) districts of relatively equal total population known as District 1, District 2, District 3, District 4, District 5 and District 6, and persons serving as councilmember in each district must reside in that district. The Mayor still represents the entire city and is elected by all voters in the city.

Because Mesquite voters elect their City Councilmembers from single-member districts, each federal census can affect the balance of population and demographics among the districts. The City Charter requires the City Council to review, and where necessary and permissible, alter or change the boundaries of existing City Council districts for the purpose of preserving and maintaining the equal apportionment of residents in each district based on population. This rule is known as the “one-person, one-vote” (equal population) principle established by the U.S. Constitution.

The federal Census Bureau conducts a census every 10 years and when the census data becomes available, the data must be reviewed to ensure councilmember districts remain sufficiently equal in total population with no more than 10% deviation between the largest and smallest district. If it is determined that district boundaries must be redrawn, then the City Council must adopt a redistricting plan by ordinance at least one hundred twenty (120) days prior to the next general municipal election.

On January 18, 2022, representatives of the consulting law firm Bickerstaff Heath Delgado Acosta, LLP provided the City Council with an overview of the 2020 Census population and demographic data, and based on this review of the 2020 Census data, the City’s councilmember districts were found not of

sufficiently equal population and must be redrawn in order to comply with the “one-person, one-vote” principle.

The City Council has outlined the process of redistricting councilmember districts, and this public process will culminate with Council’s adoption of a redistricting plan for use in municipal elections over the next ten years beginning with the November 2023 election. The three public hearings are opportunities for the public to participate in this process and learn how City Council districts may be redrawn.

Requirements for Plans Submitted by the Public:

In implementing the redistricting process, the City Council has adopted by resolution certain guidelines for persons wishing to submit specific redistricting proposals and criteria to serve as a framework to guide formation of redistricting plans so that the “one person-one-vote” principle and the non-discrimination standard of the Voting Rights Act in redistricting are maintained. As such, any proposed redistricting plan submitted to the City Council for consideration must meet the following criteria and guidelines:

Adopted Criteria

- Easily identifiable geographic boundaries
- Avoid splitting neighborhood communities of interest
- Avoid splitting census blocks, unless necessary
- Existing districts form the basis of alterations
- Districts must be relatively equal in total population with no more than 10% deviation between the largest and smallest district
- Districts should be compact and composed of contiguous territory
- Consideration of Incumbent-Constituency relationships
- Avoid racial gerrymandering
- Avoid “cracking” or “packing” of minority voters

Adopted Guidelines

- Proposed plans must be submitted in writing and be legible
- Proposed plans must show a demographic breakdown of total population and voting age for each district
- Proposed plans should redistrict the entire city
- Proposed plans should conform to the redistricting criteria
- Persons providing proposed plans must identify themselves by full name, address, phone number and, if available, email address
- All comments and proposed plans must be submitted to the City Council by the close of the public hearing prior to final adoption by Council

The City has the proposed redistricting Illustrative Plan 1 maps, documents and educational videos on a webpage dedicated to this topic. The webpage is www.cityofmesquite.com/Redistricting. For more information, the public may contact the City Secretary’s Office at 972-216-6244.