

Board of Commissioners/Board of Education
November 22, 2011

The Duplin County Board of Commissioners and Board of Education met on Tuesday, November 22, 2011 at 6:00 p.m. at the Ed Emory Auditorium in the Lois G. Britt Agriculture Center.

Present: Commissioners: Kenn Thompson, Tim Smith, Frances Parks, Harold Raynor, Zettie Williams, Jessie Ladson, Mr. Mike Aldridge, County Manager, Ms. Paige Marshburn, Administrative Officer, and Ms. Wendy Sivori, County Attorney.

Present from the Board of Education: Mr. David Phillips, Ms. Cindy Rogers, Mr. Jennings Outlaw, Ms. Pam Edwards, Dr. Obasahon , Mr. Reginald Kenan, Mr. Chuck Farris, and Mr. Willie Gillespie.

Absent from the Board of Education: Mr. Hubert Bowden

Invocation: Mr. Chuck Farris

The Board of Commissioners and The Board of Education met to conduct a public hearing on new electoral district boundaries as proposed.

Mr. Dan Cronin began with an introduction on what took place since the beginning. Representative Jimmy Dixon had a map prepared using software that took the census blocks creation of districts based on population while preserving the two majority minority districts. We used this map as a baseline. Over the next several months, both boards had the chance to work with Dan for possible changes. There were a few changes made, with version D being the final map proposed to redistrict the electoral boundaries in Duplin County.

Motion was made by Commissioner Raynor, seconded by Commissioner Thompson, carried unanimously, that any citizen should be allowed a 10 minute time limit for public comments.

Motion was made by Mr. Jennings Outlaw, seconded by Ms. Pam Edwards, carried unanimously, that any citizen should be allowed to a 10 minute time limit for public comments.

Commissioner Smith: Have there been any changes since the last time the two boards met?

Mr. Cronin: No, there have not been any changes.

Commissioner Smith: How many towns now have more than one commissioner?

Mr. Cronin: Beulaville has one, Warsaw has one, Magnolia has one, Town of Wallace has one, Rose Hill and Kenansville is split by two, and Teachey is split by Hwy 117. The towns are based solely upon demographics.

Commissioner Smith: How over populated was my district?

Mr. Cronin: Around 1,600.

Commissioner Parks opened the public hearing for public comments at 6:37 p.m.

Mr. Win Batten appeared before the boards with concern about Warsaw. Warsaw has been split three ways and with the situation now, it would be split two ways. This is not fair to the citizens. Why can't Warsaw have only one commissioner?

Mr. Woody Brinson appeared before the boards disappointed in every response he had received from a County of Commissioner or someone on the Board of Education when asked a question. You need a person experienced in electoral redistrict mapping and not tax mapping. Political decisions have been made that were not in the citizens best interest. Why is 117 a sacred line? Why are some towns being split and not others? This county needs to stop this redistricting and delay the election for two more years.

Mr. Chris Anderson appeared before the boards to talk about the last meeting. I have known Commissioner Ladson was not living in the district she represented. He followed Commissioner Parks as she dropped Commissioner Ladson at her house after that meeting. There were at least five other qualified candidates that wanted that seat and were capable and lived in that district. I actually took pictures, kept records, had an attorney to draw up a lawsuit and told Commissioner Williams what I was doing. I am not going to file a lawsuit but I will vigorously work to get whoever elected in that seat when those lines are redrawn to include the house that Commissioner Ladson is currently living in.

Representative Jimmy Dixon appeared before the boards to say the irregularity of the districts was completely opposite of what Mr. Brinson tried to portray. It is ridiculous that these districts take the kind of shapes that they take, especially in Duplin County. Duplin County is not a section 5 voter's right county. Everything I have ever tried from the beginning was to make sure the two majority minority districts stayed in tack. This is an excellent map but the communication as to the input was poor. All board members and board of education members should have participated and had input into this map and not just Commissioner Smith and Commissioner Parks. Two things that need to be cleared up is why Mr. Cary Turner was called out of his district and putting Commissioner Ladson legally in the district which she belongs. However, if the map passes just like it is, it's a much better map. Let's vote it in and move on. This process has taken way too long.

Ms. Carol Newkirk, Teachey, appeared before the boards and was told if you live in the city limits you can vote as long as your taxes are paid. At the same time when it was time to vote there were Teachey citizens that lived inside city limits, paid their taxes, but was told they could not vote.

Mr. Chuck Farrow told Ms Newkirk she would need to talk to the Board of Elections in Teachey to get answers.

Mr. George Farrow appeared before the boards to voice his opinion about the two majority black districts. It took a long time to get our representation and he is very concerned about losing the majority district.

Mr. Victor Wilson appeared before the boards with concern that rezoning takes the power away from the people. Has a study been done with the people about the redistricting that the minority will have a voice? This needs to be looked at again and give the citizens a chance to voice their opinion.

Mr. Leonard Filleyaw appeared before the boards and stated that he did not know he had to live inside the town of Teachey to vote. He thought it was based on the zip code lived in. He would have won the election and been the first African American in that town. What determines the boundaries of the town; the zip code or the line? Voting is a sacred right. I will go to my representatives and look into the Teachey's zoning and lines and keep people from voting with their natural rights.

Commissioner Parks thanked everyone for their participation and informed that the deadline for the new map has been extended to December 10, 2011.

The public hearing ended at 7:15 p.m.

Motion was made by Commissioner Smith, seconded by Commissioner Williams, to approve Map D. Commissioners Thompson, Smith, Parks, Williams and Ladson voted for. Commissioner Raynor voted against. Motion carried 5 to 1.

Mr. Willie Gillespie: Can we vote with a member absent?

Mr. Chuck Farrow: In my opinion, it would not be fair.

Mr. Reginald Kenan: We have been fair as possible in working with all six districts and both boards have been in attendance several times to go over this and I think this should be completed tonight.

Motion was made by Mr. Reginald Kenan, seconded by Mr. Willie Gillespie, carried unanimously, to adopt version D.

Commissioner Raynor: Who is responsible for the precinct lines?

Commissioner Parks: The Board of Elections.

Ms. Wendy Sivori, County Attorney, passed out a proposed resolution in case the boards were ready to adopt the resolution adopting new electoral district boundaries.

Motion was made by Commissioner Smith, seconded by Commissioner Thompson to adopt the redistricting resolution prepared by Ms. Wendy Smith. Commissioners Thompson, Smith, Parks, Williams, and Ladson voted for. Commissioner Raynor voted against. Motion carried 5 to 1.

Motion was made by Mr. Willie Gillespie with the Board of Education, seconded by Mr. Reginald Kenan with Board of Education, carried unanimously, to adopt the redistricting resolution prepared by Ms. Wendy Smith.

Motion was made by Commissioner Smith, seconded by Commissioner Williams, carried unanimously to recess until November 28, 2011 at DSS for strategic planning meeting at 1:00 p.m.

Clerk