
From: Carolyn A. Highsmith <carolyn_highsmith@outlook.com>

Sent: Monday, September 19, 2022 9:08 AM

To: John Larson <John.Larson@cityofws.org>; jlarson1839@gmail.com

Cc: Aaron King <aaronk@cityofws.org>; Chris Murphy <chrism@cityofws.org>; Robert Clark <robertc@cityofws.org>; Denise Adams <denisea@cityofws.org>; James Taylor Jr <jamestjr@cityofws.org>; Jeff MacIntosh <jeffm@cityofws.org>; Annette Scippio <annettes@cityofws.org>; Kevin Mundy <kmundy@cityofws.org>; Barbara Hanes Burke <bhburke@cityofws.org>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] 9.19.2022 OFFICIAL PUBLIC COMMENT ON and OPPOSITION TO The Proposed SOUTH WARD REALIGNMENT MAP. RE: G-2. 22-0559 Public Hearing/Resolution on Ward Realignment for 9.19.22 Must Be Postponed.

Importance: High

***** CAUTION! EXTERNAL SENDER *** STOP. EVALUATE. VERIFY. Were you expecting this email? Does the content make sense? Can you verify the sender? If the email is suspicious: Do not click links or open attachments. Click the Report Message button in Outlook to notify Information Systems.**

RE: SOUTH WARD REALIGNMENT MAP--G-2. 22-0559 Public Hearing and City Council Resolution on Revising the Ward Boundaries of the City of Winston-Salem as the Result of the 2020 Census" currently on the 9.19.2022 City Council Agenda.

Dear John,

I regret this last-minute **official Public Comment On** and **Opposition To the 22-0559 SOUTH WARD REALIGNMENT MAP** based on the results of 2020 US Census. Therefore, I am asking for your help in addressing the issues identified below and postponing the 9.19.2022 Public Hearing and Decision-making until these issues can be effectively addressed.

FYI: I attended the August 31, 2022 DROP-IN Session at Miller Park Recreation Center for the

South and Southwest Wards, where I verbally made my issues known to the Planning Staff and told them I would send in a written Comment before the City Council meeting on this subject. However, I was using the timetable as noted on City's Ward Realignment website, where it is posted that the Ward Realignment proposal would be going to City Council in OCTOBER not September.

Please Note: I brought many of these same issues to the attention of the City Council in 2010 with regards to the South Ward. So, my concerns are not new but are being compounded by these latest South Ward Realignment proposed changes.

As a major neighborhood advocate and leader in the Konnoak Hills Community and its surrounding peripheral neighborhoods for the past 15 years, I am officially objecting to the currently proposed South Ward Realignment map from results of the 2020 US Census and am asking for a postponement of the Ward Realignment Public Hearing and Resolution voting until these issues can be addressed and rectified. Given that the City's Wards can be realigned up to a 5% variance among all of the Wards and is currently tightly realigned at 1%, I think at minimum if the South Ward variance was changed from 1% to 5%--that those neighborhood areas north of West Clemmons Road (from Potomac Street to Peters Creek Parkway) and currently proposed to be pulled into the Southeast Ward --- could remain in the South Ward.

As referenced above, I also absolutely object to those neighborhoods that are on the north side of West Clemmons Road from Potomac Street to Peters Creek Parkway being pulled into the Southeast Ward (as well as those neighborhoods below West Clemmons Road). Pulling primarily South Ward black voters from the 605 and 606 Precincts into the Southeast Ward is diminishing the 606 and 605 Voting Precincts for the South Ward. As such, I also equally object taking South Ward voters out of the 606 Konnoak Hills UMC Voting Precinct—(where these voters are part of the extended Konnoak Hills Community area)—and placing such voters in the Southeast Ward.

Discussion

Splitting neighborhoods and dividing streets between two Wards has an inherently negative impact for all involved and creates major voting barriers, voting mistakes, and significant irreversible voting errors, while also impacting the cohesiveness of neighborhoods looking for effective City leadership in dealing with their neighborhood issues and problems.

There also appears to be either an intentional or unintentional plan to move all of the South Ward neighborhoods below I-40 and directly SOUTH of Old Salem and Downtown into the Southeast Ward, even though all of the neighborhoods below I-40 from US Hwy 52 to Peters Creek Parkway are directly and geographically SOUTH of Old Salem and Downtown. These neighborhoods ARE NOT in southeast or southwest Winston-Salem. These neighborhoods are geographically in SOUTH WINSTON-SALEM and should politically be located in the SOUTH

WARD and more closely reflect the geographical area of the South Suburban Area Plan.

A major City architectural book even refers to the neighborhoods directly south of I-40 such as Konnoak Hills, Kingstree, etc., as being in southwest Winston-Salem—totally absurd. I assume this goes along with the westward push of the South Ward into southwest Winston-Salem since 1990—where the South Ward's western boundary is now Stratford Road. The 607 and 709 Voting Precincts that include such neighborhoods as British Woods and are geographically in southwest Winston-Salem and are west of Ebert Road—should be in the Southwest Ward not the South Ward.

In 2010, I consulted a political science professor from UNC-Charlotte about the 2010 South Ward Realignment. He said a good Ward Realignment should take into effect geographical and natural boundaries. In describing the issues of the South Ward's 2010 Realignment, he agreed that **US Hwy 52 should be the natural easternmost boundary of the South Ward and a good westernmost boundary should be Ebert Road (NOT STRATFORD ROAD).**

Therefore, it appears that with the 1990, 2000, and 2010 Censuses—the South Ward has been gerrymandered moving South Ward voters (predominately black voters) into the Southeast Ward and taking voters (primarily white) from the Southwest Ward and packing them into the South Ward to keep the South Ward a majority white Ward for the 2010 Ward Realignment. The US Census in 2010 was showing that SOUTH Winston-Salem was already diverse enough such that it should have been realigned in 2010 as a majority minority Ward. Instead in 2010, the South Ward continued to be gerrymandered in order to keep a 60/40 split of white vs. minority voters. Only now from the 2020 US Census results can the South Ward no longer be cast as a Ward with majority white voters—again a change that should have occurred in 2010 not 2020.

Some History of South Winston-Salem

When the Washington Park, Sunnyside, and Konnoak Hills neighborhoods were being developed in the 1900's to 1920's, these neighborhoods were considered the Southside of Winston-Salem and were connected by several major north/south streets/transportation arteries: Patria Street, Stockton Street, South Main Street, and Konnoak Drive. These streets still survive but several have been cut in half with the development of the new I-40 Expressway, where South Main Street was left as the main connecting transportation artery to and from Downtown and Buchanan Street was designated to connect the Konnoak Hills Community instead of Konnoak Drive to the Washington Park neighborhood area. Of note, one of the early South Ward Alderman of the 1940's—1950's lived on Devonshire Street in the Sunnyside Neighborhood—in the Southside of Winston-Salem. As such, these neighborhoods were originally built in and should remain in the SOUTH WARD, because that is their geographical location then and now—and given that in 2022 all of these neighborhoods are now west of US Hwy 52 and still directly south of Downtown. And FYI, the Southeast Ward

historically started at Waughtown Street.

Conclusion

The South Ward needs to be un-gerrymandered and re-constituted as a truly SOUTH WARD that includes both its political as well as its geographical and economic interests--where its easternmost boundary should be US Hwy 52 and its westernmost boundary should be Ebert Road. Once this new Realignment is configured—where the South Ward would still be a majority minority Ward--I think the balances between the Southeast, South, and Southwest Wards will actually fall back into a more appropriate re-alignment. It is absolutely absurd to make the westernmost boundary of the Southeast Ward--Peters Creek Parkway—when all of this area is geographically SOUTH of Downtown and Old Salem (not southeast, not southwest--SOUTH).

Finally, at a minimum, the residents north of West Clemmons Road from Potomac Street to Peters Creek Parkway must REMAIN in the South Ward and absolutely should not be moved to the Southeast Ward. Increasing the variance percentage to 5% for the South Ward (and possibly the Southeast Ward as well) should help make this revision feasible in this latest South Ward Realignment map.

Your help in discussing and rectifying these South Ward Realignment issues will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

Carolyn Highsmith

President, Konnoak Hills Community Association

Vice Chair, 606 Voting Precinct--Konnoak Hills UMC--South Ward

Vice President, New South Community Coalition (a coalition of neighborhoods in South W-S)

Member of the W-S Neighborhood Coalition (a coalition of citywide neighborhoods); WSNA Zoning Committee member

Member of the Coalition for Neighborhood Association Presidents