

**CITY COMMISSION WORKSHOP MEETING**

**5:34 P.M.**

**August 25, 2011**

Meeting was called to order at 5:34 p.m. by Mayor Seiler on the above date, in City Hall, 100 North Andrews Avenue, 1<sup>st</sup> floor Chambers.

Invocation was offered by Commissioner Rogers, followed by the recitation of the pledge led by Mayor Seiler.

Roll call showed:

Present: Mayor John P. "Jack" Seiler  
Vice Mayor Bobby B. DuBose  
Commissioner Bruce G. Roberts  
Commissioner Charlotte E. Rodstrom  
Commissioner Romney Rogers

Also Present: City Manager Lee R. Feldman  
City Auditor John Herbst  
City Clerk Jonda K. Joseph  
City Attorney Harry A. Stewart

Mayor Seiler explained that the purpose of this meeting is to obtain the community's feedback. He drew attention to the redistricting options set forth by the City Attorney in Memorandum 11-0365; but made it clear that no proposals are currently on the table. He opened the floor for public comment.

Trudy Palin, vice president of Beverly Heights Association and president of Venezia Las Olas Condominium Association, opposed redistricting and expressed desire to remain part of the downtown area.

Veronica DePadro, 1405 SE 2 Street, submitted a letter of opposition to Colee Hammock being moved from District 4 to District 2 which was made a part of the record. She noted she is the former president of Colee Hammock Homeowners Association. She favored staying with the downtown. She indicated that she also is speaking for Richard Mancuso and Tom Welch, former president of Colee Hammock Homeowners Association.

Robert Saugstad, 818 SE 4 Street, noted he is a member of the Rivercrest Condominium Board of Directors and deferred to Robert Huebner to speak on behalf of Rivercrest.

Robert Huebner, representing Rivercrest Condominium, submitted letters of opposition to moving voting precinct 49 out of District 4 from Jo Adams and Robert H. Doddridge, Jr., and a note from E. Birch Willey expressing his desire to keep things as they are, which were made a part of the record. Mr. Huebner believed that a majority of downtown residents prefer not to split this area into two districts. He reasoned that the downtown has historically been viewed as a unit, and the issues that arise here are unique to this location. He recognized there is a numbers problem and stressed that the consequences must be considered. He was willing to work with the City to resolve this.

Ron Centamore, president of Downtown Fort Lauderdale Civic Association (association), expressed support for maintaining the Las Olas corridor as one district because it preserves cohesiveness and simplifies the process for residents to bring forward local issues. He noted that the association's Board unanimously voted for all three Las Olas area neighborhoods (downtown, Beverly Heights, and Colee Hammock) to remain within District 4. In response to Commissioner Rodstrom, he clarified that Las Olas Isles was not considered in the association's vote.

Genia Ellis, representing Harbor Beach Homeowners Association and 17<sup>th</sup> Street Causeway Alliance, expressed support for the beach area to continue being divided among multiple districts. She noted that these neighborhoods are committed to the south portion of the beach area and prefer to stay within District 4.

Ed Smoker, 1200 East Las Olas Boulevard, noted he is a commercial property owner in District 4 and a Beverly Heights Association Board of Directors' member. Similar to the city's one-district central beach area which has undergone successful redevelopment, the downtown and central east Las Olas neighborhoods are connected as one district and are close to reaching long-term goals which may be delayed if this area is divided into two districts. He indicated that there is an alternate option that will keep the neighborhoods together, while maintaining the downtown and Las Olas areas. Rather than the City hiring a consultant, he offered to voluntarily work with staff on redistricting.

In response to Commissioner Roberts' interest in viewing his proposal, Mr. Smoker expressed desire to first address redistricting with staff to ensure its correctness. Mayor Seiler noted his experience with redistricting and warned that, if it is done incorrectly, it can amount to elected officials selecting their voters without the constituents' knowledge or input. He reiterated his desire to obtain the public's feedback and encouraged proposals to be submitted. He believed there is essentially only a need to move some voters from District 4 to District 2. Other adjustments could be made and this is where public input would be helpful.

Carmine Melchionna, president of Riverview Gardens Condominium Board of Directors, submitted a petition of thirty-two signatures which was made a part of the record, requesting that Riverview Gardens be allowed to remain in District 4; that for a variety of reasons, common interests, coordinated area vision, transit opportunities and our urban core location, they do not want to be separated from their downtown neighbors. There are seventy-seven units in Riverview Gardens. He would like to look at any upcoming proposals. Riverview Gardens intends to continue their petition drive.

There was no one else wishing to speak.

The City Attorney outlined the charter requirement concerning redistricting. In response to Commissioner Rodstrom, the City Attorney noted that areas must be contiguous. Mayor Seiler questioned the implication of another city area dividing districts, the City Attorney advised that the only lack of continuity is some unincorporated area at 62 Street. Even though Oakland Park separates part of the area, it is contiguous to the eastern part that extends to the City's boundary. Commissioner Rodstrom thought natural and man-made features should be followed. The City Attorney noted voting rights act cases provide for a maximum population deviation of ten percent. In order for it to be in time for the next election, it would be best not to change precinct lines. It would also

be a lot more expense. In order to accomplish the redistricting for the next election, it needs to be completed within the next six or eight weeks.

Mayor Seiler noted one option brought forward by the City Attorney is to make adjustments to the downtown area where Districts 2 and 4 are contiguous. Another option is to make adjustments to the area west of Andrews Avenue where Districts 2 and 3 are contiguous; then some area could be moved from District 4 to District 3. Then two precincts in District 3 could be moved to District 2. District 4 needs to shed voters and it only touches Districts 2 and 3. He reiterated his desire for the public to submit proposals. Commissioner Rodstrom thought if adjustments are made, the population should be made even. Commissioner Roberts agreed. He also thought the neighborhoods should be kept intact as much as possible. He wanted more public input and time to think about it. He listed the population numbers for all of the districts. He pointed out the only adjustment for District 1 would be into District 2 which would split neighborhoods. Moving Precinct 63 to District 1 would result in a split of the North Beach Homeowners Association. He did not think District 1 has a lot of options without splitting neighborhoods which is bothersome. Further discussion ensued about the splitting of neighborhoods wherein Mayor Seiler concluded it is a matter of looking at Districts 2, 3 and 4. Commissioner Rogers pointed out that there are reasons to keep things intact because of the synergy of things that have been in motion for some time. He used the example of South Andrews that took ten years to progress from a master plan to an ordinance. However, he agreed with Ms. Ellis that the beach requires three commissioners. He wanted to look at the natural and neighborhood boundaries. As to a potential shift from District 3 to District 1, Vice Mayor DuBose pointed out Lauderdale Manors is over 8,000 voters.

Mayor Seiler wanted each commissioner to submit a map. He also invited the public to submit map proposals.

Mr. Smoker commented on the difficulty this poses and his hopefulness that it will not have to be done again in ten years. Mayor Seiler noted that annexations and so forth would affect the districts.

Commissioner Rodstrom wanted to know exactly what the federal government requires including the definition of contiguous. Mayor Seiler did not think there are any barriers in the city that will come into play. The City Attorney clarified the deviation between the highest and the lowest can be no greater than ten percent. He offered to provide the criteria in a memorandum. In response to Mayor Seiler, the City Attorney advised that this needs to be completed by the middle of October at the very latest. The Supervisor of Elections has suggested that September is getting late. In response to Commissioner Rodstrom, the City Attorney explained that the charter requires redistricting after every census but it does not specify a time frame. The information was not available until earlier this year, thus the City has had less than ten months to redistrict and provide the information to the Supervisor of Elections. It would not be harmful if this election is missed. Mayor Seiler pointed out the state is not redistricting until next summer. He suggested and there was consensus approval for a deadline of two weeks and that the maps be submitted to the City Attorney who will verify the population figures and provide copies to the Commission.

The meeting adjourned at 6:24 p.m.