



Jennifer McGuirk Multnomah County Auditor

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March 8, 2021

To: Deborah Kafoury, County Chair
Sharon Meieran, Commissioner, District 1
Susheela Jayapal, Commissioner, District 2
Jessica Vega Pederson, Commissioner, District 3
Lori Stegmann, Commissioner, District 4

From: Jennifer McGuirk, County Auditor *JM*

RE: 2021 Commissioner District Redistricting and unforeseen delay outside the Auditor's control

County Charter §3.15 directs the County Auditor to provide a plan for redistricting Commission districts to the Board of County Commissioners by August 1 in the year of the official release of each federal decennial census. The Board has 45 days following the submission of the report to alter Commissioner district boundaries as necessary by ordinance to provide for an approximately equal population distribution. The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the Board with official notice of U.S. Census Bureau plans that prevent the Auditor's Office from completing redistricting by the deadline set forth in County Charter.

The U.S. Census Bureau expects to release census data by the end of September.

My office is dedicated to following Charter's direction with respect to §3.15. That section of the Charter provides a series of logical steps to complete the redistricting exercise. These steps appear aligned with the traditional timeline in which the U.S. Census Bureau has released census data to the states because that is when the data are then available to our county. Typically, the Bureau has released data to the states by the end of March in the year following the decennial census. But this year the Bureau has announced that they expect to release census data by September 30. The Bureau cited the COVID-19 pandemic as the reason for the delay.

The Bureau's delay in releasing census data to the states means that my office's redistricting plan will be delayed as well. This is completely outside of my office's control. We can't complete the redistricting plan without the census data, and we can't access the data until the Bureau releases it.

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Auditor's redistricting plan will comply with all possible Charter requirements.

Except for the August 1 deadline, my office's redistricting plan will comply with Charter §3.15. While we wait for the Census Bureau to release decennial data, we will:

- Coordinate with county GIS and elections staffs to identify all work that can be done prior to receiving the census data, and complete this work.
- Meet with stakeholders to gather information about challenges with the current district boundaries.
- Solicit public comments on the existing boundaries.
- Provide a public briefing to the Board of County Commissioners on the redistricting process; if offered to the Board over the summer, my office can also give updates on work done to date.

Past practice has been that once we can access census data, it takes the Auditor's Office about five months to complete the redistricting plan. Accordingly, assuming the Census Bureau does release census data by the end of September, we expect to complete the redistricting plan no later than February 28, 2022.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss this issue with you further.

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