



VA Redistricting <varedist@dls.virginia.gov>

Virtual and In-Person Hearings

1 message

Neal Sumerlin <neal.sumerlin@gmail.com>
To: Redistricting Commission <varedist@dls.virginia.gov>

Tue, May 25, 2021 at 5:28 PM

This is in regard to the upcoming meeting of the Citizen Engagement Subcommittee tomorrow morning. My understanding is that you are considering 8 public hearings (4 virtual, 4 in-person) before the line drawing begins plus another 8 hearings (4 virtual, 4 in-person) before the maps are sent to the General Assembly, and are leaning towards requiring 4 Commissioners (only) to attend each in-person hearing.

I am writing to urge you to have ALL commissioners attend ALL public hearings. The important work you are doing is not confined to any one region of the state; neither should what commissioners hear be confined to only a few regions. Each commissioner will bring his or her own perspective to the process, and should not have to rely solely on those of other commissioners. You need to hear directly from the public yourselves.

Thank you for your consideration!

Neal Sumerlin
Lynchburg, Virginia

VA Redistricting <varedist@dls.virginia.gov>

Public hearings

1 message

Carla Heath <cheath340@icloud.com>
To: varedist@dls.virginia.gov

Tue, May 25, 2021 at 5:36 PM

Comissioners,

As you plan for public meetings, I strongly urge you to hold LIVE sessions in each of the 21 Planning districts with ALL commissioners present. Many of us who have been playing with redistricting map-making software have found that Planning Districts are pretty representative of Congressional district size communities of interest.

Carla Heath

[339 Sumpter St](#)
[Lynchburg, VA](#)



VA Redistricting <varedist@dls.virginia.gov>

Tomorrow's meeting

1 message

Missy Raines <missyraines@yahoo.com>
To: "varedist@dls.virginia.gov" <varedist@dls.virginia.gov>

Tue, May 25, 2021 at 8:45 PM

To Whom It May Concern,

Regarding the meeting you have tomorrow and the meetings you have planned for drawing the district lines, I feel it is important to have each and every Commissioner attend each and every meeting to be held. The redistricting is extremely important to me. Therefore, I feel EACH Commissioner should hear what the public has to say, not just a few of them at each meeting.

Sincerely,

Mary Raines
Lynchburg



VA Redistricting <varedist@dls.virginia.gov>

Redistricting

1 message

Richard Raines <raines6@att.net>

Tue, May 25, 2021 at 8:47 PM

To: "varedist@dls.virginia.gov" <varedist@dls.virginia.gov>

This is in regard to the hearings you have planned on drawing up the district maps. It is very important to me that you have all, not just some, of the Commissioners attend all proposed meetings in order that each one hears what we, the public have to say. Our input is necessary to be heard by all Commissioners, not just a few.

Thank you,

Richard Raines
Lynchburg



for the Citizen Engagement Subcomm and full Commission

1 message

Chris DeRosa <chris.lww.222@gmail.com>
To: varedist@dls.virginia.gov

Tue, May 25, 2021 at 9:47 PM

Public engagement and transparency are the two most valuable requirements in this new redistricting process. I have several suggestions that I hope that you will consider seriously to engage robustly with your constituents and provide maximum transparency. I apologize for the length of this comment, but these issues are very important to me and others.

Rename the subcommittee. Please consider changing this subcommittee's name to **PUBLIC Engagement**, rather than Citizen Engagement. Using the term "public" is more inclusive and invites all Virginians, not just US citizens, to participate because they are all stakeholders.

Create and maintain a user-friendly, robust website. Hire a webmaster who can create and maintain an informative, well-organized, and user-friendly website. I applaud DLS' creation of a new website that is dedicated to the Redistricting Commission. That is a step in the right direction, but it can be improved. We recognize that DLS staff are devoting many hours to support this Commission and this process; contracting with a professional webmaster would improve public engagement while relieving the DLS staff of this task, allowing them to focus on the other tasks they are charged with.

As Ms. Babichenko and Mr. Abrenio have suggested, the Michigan Redistricting Commission's website is excellent! I urge you to take a look : <https://www.michigan-mapping.org/> One of its key features is a user-friendly **Citizen Portal** to submit comments; it's front and center on the landing page. It is designed as a google form which allows the public to enter the information directly and easily. No one needs to search for the email address. The submissions appear to be uploaded into the website's **Gallery** in "real time". This **Gallery** shows all of the submissions for everyone to view. Submissions are tagged and sortable by topic. Currently, Virginia's public comments are uploaded just hours prior to meetings, which is not enough time for Commissioners and citizens to review before the meeting begins. They are "attached" only to the meeting(s) held that day/week.

Schedule numerous public hearings in all regions of the Commonwealth. It is vital to hold as many public hearings as possible, in person, as well as virtually. It is vital that you schedule many more public hearings **prior to drawing the lines**. You need to hear from Virginians about their Communities of Interest, which you must respect when drawing maps. I submit that 8 hearings are inadequate.

It is important to hold hearings in different geographic areas – especially where broadband and internet are not reliably available to all. Using the 8 Weldon Cooper regions may be appropriate, but do not rely solely on those categories. Please consider using the 21 Planning Districts of Virginia, which provide naturally-organized regions. If a region or district is geographically large and requires long hours of driving, you may need to schedule a second or even third hearing in that area. If a region or district (e.g., Cooper's Northern region) has a very large population, you may need to schedule an extra hearing to accommodate all the citizens who may want to testify.

Also, please realize that each hearing may need to last longer than 3 hours. Michigan's first public hearing a few weeks ago attracted 150 speakers! Also – some or all hearings should be held in the evenings or weekends to allow working Virginians to fully participate. Note that Michigan's 16 hearings are all scheduled for the late afternoon and evening. California's meetings and hearings are likewise scheduled to allow more public participation.

Attendance should be required of all Commissioners at every hearing, either virtually or in person. Note that Michigan and California Commissioners are expected to attend ALL hearings **in-person**. Michigan Commissioners who cannot attend must file a "Notice of Remote Attendance" that explains why (s)he cannot attend. For Virginia, I strongly believe that at least half (8)

Commissioners should be present, in-person, at every hearing. All others should attend remotely. I agree with this subcommittee's recommendation that there should be a balance between citizens and legislators, Democrats and Republicans.

Yes, this will require more driving and more time of each Commissioner. Transportation and accommodation costs will be acceptable expenses if they allow the public full access to the Commission and this redistricting process.

All California Commissioners traveled to every hearing throughout their state, with few absences in 2011. They felt that their presence was important.

Outreach is critical, but it doesn't need to be expensive. Learning that \$160,000 was spent on publicity by the Selection Committee in December was surprising, even shocking. **I wonder how many of the eight citizen Commissioners learned of the application process via those paid ads.** In other words, were those ads effective and worth the money?

Hire a communications expert to determine the best ways to reach the most Virginians as you begin your engagement with the public.

We also suggest that you utilize the network of organizations that have, and continue to, inform the public about the redistricting meetings and process. The League of Women Voters has been reaching out to its members and to the greater public on redistricting for many years. Our efforts to get the word out about the Constitutional Amendment and the Citizen Application process have been strenuous and effective. We continue to attend every Commission and subcommittee meeting, sharing notes via our website and on social media. It is not necessary to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Other community organizations such as VCET, NBNRO, and OneVirginia2021 stand ready as well. Press releases should be widely utilized. Libraries, community centers, government buildings and other public spaces can post flyers. The Commission should also establish its own robust social media presence in order to engage with Virginians.

Accessibility should be improved. As I have mentioned before, sharing information in different languages, and providing accurate closed captioning are vital to reaching many Virginians.

I hope that you will seriously consider all the recommendations that I have provided here.

Thank you for your kind attention, and for your dedicated efforts to make fair maps a reality in Virginia.

Chris DeRosa (she, her)

Chris.lwv.222@gmail.com

Arlington, VA



VA Redistricting <varedist@dls.virginia.gov>

Urging all commissioners to attend all 8 public hearings

1 message

Niro Rasanayagam <niro_r@hotmail.com>
To: "varedist@dls.virginia.gov" <varedist@dls.virginia.gov>

Tue, May 25, 2021 at 9:52 PM

Dear members of the VA Redistricting Commission,

I am writing to ask that all members of the commission attend all 8 public hearings with citizens (4 virtual, and 4 in-person). Hearing directly from citizens is crucial for making good decisions, and one that each of you pledged to do as part of your responsibilities when you stepped forward to serve on this commission. Your service on this commission is to the Commonwealth of Virginia as a whole, it is not just to specific districts, regions, or parts of the state. Therefore, each commissioner must have the opportunity to hear and consider the full spectrum of public input. I strongly urge all 16 commissioners to attend all 8 citizen hearings so you have the benefit of hearing directly from citizens. Thank you for your service to the Commonwealth.

Niro Rasanayagam
Lynchburg, Va



VA Redistricting <varedist@dls.virginia.gov>

Concerning the Redistricting Commission

1 message

Koring, Heidi <koring@lynchburg.edu>
To: varedist@dls.virginia.gov

Tue, May 25, 2021 at 9:59 PM

This concerns tomorrow's Redistricting Citizen's Engagement Subcommittee meeting. I believe you plan 8 public hearings (half in person and half virtual) before lines are drawn plus 8 meetings (again half and half) before maps go to the General Assembly and that you will require 4 Commissioners to attend each in person meeting.

It's vital that Commissioners hear the full range of public opinion. Issues that rise to a level of concern in one region may be unimportant in another. Therefore all commissioners should attend all public meetings so they can form opinions directly from public input across the Commonwealth.

Thank you for your consideration!

Heidi Koring
Lynchburg, VA



VA Redistricting <varedist@dls.virginia.gov>

Costs for Michigan Independent Redistricting Commission Web Portal?

1 message

Fran Larkins <franlarkins40@gmail.com>
To: VA Redistricting <varedist@dls.virginia.gov>

Tue, May 25, 2021 at 10:47 PM

At a previous meeting of the Citizen Engagement Subcommittee, I was delighted to hear several references to the Michigan Independent Redistricting Commission Web portal.

The new Redistricting Commission Web page is quite nice with lovely pictures and easy to navigate, but it really lacks the capability to organize and share input from the public. Have you approached the Michigan Commission to learn the cost for their page? I believe it was developed with the assistance of Moon Duchin of Tufts University's MGGG Redistricting Lab. It might be good to determine the cost for this before your budget is finalized.

As you look further for consultants to assist the Commission, you may also want to discuss with the MGGG Redistricting Lab their capability to evaluate and compare maps from COIs particularly with minority communities in mind. They are a highly respected, nonpartisan group of mathematicians, data scientists, geographers, software developers, and civic researchers that could make a valuable contribution to the Commission's efforts. Ms. Duchin could be reached through contact@mggg.org.

I became familiar with the work of the MGGG Redistricting Lab while volunteering for redistricting reform in Virginia. If I had been selected as a Citizen Commissioner, that is one of the first contacts I would have suggested for the Commission. I am quite happy though to watch as you all begin progress toward fair maps for Virginia and am also pleased to assist in any way in getting the word out to all Virginians.

Note - A version of this suggestion was sent immediately after the May 20 subcommittee meeting, but I didn't receive a response from DLS. A second similar email was sent May 23. This is the third attempt to share my suggestion that the Commission investigate costs for a Web portal similar to that of the Michigan Independent Redistricting Commission. I have received no response and they have not been published under "Comments."

I sincerely hope it will be easier to communicate with Commission members in the future.

Fran Larkins

Fredericksburg, VA