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## Virginia Redistricting Commission

April 12, 2021, at 10:00 a.m.

Electronic Meeting

<https://redistricting.dls.virginia.gov/>

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The Virginia Redistricting Commission (the Commission) met virtually with Greta Harris and Mackenzie Babichenko, co-chairs, presiding.<sup>1</sup> The meeting began with opening remarks and a clarification regarding use of the virtual meeting chat feature from Ms. Babichenko. The chat feature is to be utilized as a mechanism to flag an issue if there is not enough time to verbally raise the issue during discussion. The chat will be read aloud by the co-chair when there are breaks in the conversation. Materials presented at the meeting and video of the meeting are accessible through the [Commission's meetings webpage](#).

### Meeting Etiquette Training; Question and Answer

*Claire Waters, Board Administrator, Division of Legislative Services*

Prior to the meeting, members viewed a publicly available training session in which Ms. Waters reviewed Robert's Rules of Order, general meeting etiquette, and guidelines for communicating with the media and the public. Members discussed the training as follows.

- A clarifying comment was asked by Delegate Marcus B. Simon about the chair casting a tiebreaking vote as prescribed in Robert's Rules. Delegate Simon noted that the Commission's enabling statute requires the chair to vote in all votes. Ms. Babichenko responded that her understanding was the same, that Robert's Rules will be followed loosely and the Commission statutes will override Robert's Rules. Ms. Babichenko clarified the question with Ms. Waters, who also confirmed that Ms. Babichenko and Delegate Simon's understanding was correct.
- Senator George L. Barker mentioned the prohibition on Commission members discussing information outside of formal meetings to ensure no one is working around the transparency of the redistricting process. Ms. Harris reminded the Commission that staff sent out email templates after the last meeting for Commission members to use so that no public comments are ignored outside of Commission meetings.

The next meetings and presentation topics were announced as: Monday, April 26 – Redistricting 101; Monday, May 10 – Introduction to the Mechanics of Redistricting; and Monday, May 24 – Presentation by the Census Bureau. The Redistricting 101 presentation on April 26 will be pre-recorded.

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<sup>1</sup> **Members Present:** Mackenzie Babichenko, co-chair, Greta Harris, co-chair, James Abrenio, Jose Feliciano, Marvin Gilliam, Rick Harrell, Brandon Hutchins, Sean Kumar, Delegate Les R. Adams, Delegate Delores L. McQuinn, Delegate Margaret B. Ransone, Delegate Marcus B. Simon, Senator George L. Barker, Senator Ryan T. McDougle, and Senator Stephen D. Newman.

**Members Absent:** Senator Mamie E. Locke

## **Redistricting Website**

*Julie Smith, GIS Analyst, Division of Legislative Services*

The web developer is working through the changes for the Commission's website. The intended changes include: an email subscription service for users to be notified of any updates from the Commission; a frequently asked questions section; a resource for information relating to redistricting, including information on redistricting legislation; an improved layout to find commissioner information; a meetings page that will continue to be maintained; and a meeting bulletin where all upcoming meetings will be posted. All changes are currently in progress. Staff will continue to implement changes as the Commission directs.

- Delegate Simon asked if the Commission website would be separate from the Division of Legislative Services website. Ms. Smith clarified that the web developer is working on creating the Commission's own separate website.
- Ms. Harris questioned if there was going to be a translation option on the website. Ms. Smith suggested that the Commission request a write-up of the cost for the translations. Ms. Smith will provide write-up information to the Commission in the coming weeks. Ms. Harris also asked that the commissioners list which prominent languages to include in the translations to ensure that the language diversity of the Commonwealth is represented with each translation page.

## **Budget Update**

*Amigo Wade, Acting Director, Division of Legislative Services*

The Commission's available funds cover the 2021 and 2022 fiscal years. During the first year, the Commission has up to \$1,069,500 available, and the same amount is available for the second year. The Division of Legislative Services and the Virginia Redistricting Selection Committee accessed a portion of the first year's appropriation to cover expenses to support redistricting activities. A total of \$404,327.49 was utilized to cover the following expenses: the services of Citygate GIS (\$220,000.00), specialized computer equipment for the Division of Legislative Services (\$23,811.00), and advertising expenses to support the application process for the Virginia Redistricting Selection Committee (\$160,516.49). The total amount remaining from the first year appropriation is \$665,172.51. If the remaining amount is not spent in 2021, it will roll over into the second year.

Mr. Wade also noted that a new budget amendment raised the citizen member per diem to \$300 per day or if there were a second meeting in the same day, a maximum of \$400, matching the legislative member per diem. The cost of per diems for the Commission would be up to \$4,800 for one meeting in one day. If there were two meetings in one day, then it would be up to \$6,400.

- Senator Barker asked how the budget will be developed for the available funds. He also mentioned that at the first meeting there was discussion around hiring two attorneys for this process and there were references to consultants the Commission might want to hire. Senator Barker suggested that the Commission consider hiring a racial voting block analyst to assist in this process.
- Sean Kumar added that it would be beneficial to have a list of gaps and needs of the Commission and a list of which state resources are available to limit costs. He did not agree with having two sets of attorneys. Ms. Babichenko explained that staff is working on



providing a list of costs and how they will affect the funding. The proposal will be provided by the next meeting with different options for the Commission to take. Mr. Wade also stated that staff would work on different samples and proposals with price points and would research any state resources, along with a procurement process.

- Ms. Babichenko emphasized that she and Ms. Harris are meeting with the staff regularly to ensure all recommendations and tasks are prepared.
- Delegate Delores L. McQuinn mentioned that it is imperative for there to be a proposal to educate and engage the public to reach people across the Commonwealth.

### **Proposals for Approval at the Next Meeting**

*Amigo Wade, Acting Director, Division of Legislative Services*

Section 30-396 (A) states that all meetings should be adequately advertised; however, the statute does not define what “adequately advertised” means. Staff recommended putting together an advertising plan that would include a “media blast” across the state to notify the public of redistricting meetings and to direct people to the website.

Staff will also provide estimates for costs of transcribing meetings.

- Ms. Babichenko asked if staff could provide estimates for physical flyers to send out to the public for those who do not have access to the internet. Mr. Wade emphasized that the first media blast would include print media as well as social media.
- Delegate McQuinn suggested that the greatest avenue to connect with the Black community is to distribute brochures in places of worship and to be intentional when reaching out to different communities. Mr. Kumar suggested reaching out to the DMV, mass transit facilities, and vaccination sites and researching the possibility of discounted advertisements from social media sites. James Abrenio suggested the option of placing brochures in courthouses.

### **Public Comment**

Prior to commencing the meeting’s public comment period, Ms. Babichenko announced that 32 individuals were signed up to provide public comment and priority would be given to those who did not have the opportunity to speak at the last meeting. Of those registered, nine provided comment. The public comments covered the following topics: the value of partnering with different organizations to assist the Commission, the importance of citizen participation, scheduling public comment hearings after typical working hours, providing different transcription services and ASL translation, scheduling the public comment hearings in advance, and a request that the Commission respond to public comments.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Commission will be held on April 26, 2021, at 10:00 a.m.



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For more information, see the [\*Commission's website\*](#) or contact the Division of Legislative Services staff:

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