



Sarah Kenney <skkenney@barringtonhills-il.gov>

VBH BOT FYI Administration

1 message

Fri, Apr 15, 2011 at 6:49 AM

Robert Kosin <rkosin@barringtonhills-il.gov>
To: Dolores Trandel <clerk@barringtonhills-il.gov>
Cc: Sarah Kenney <skkenney@barringtonhills-il.gov>

County panel eyes redistricting
By KEVIN P. CRAVER - kcraver@nwherald.com
NW Herald
Created: Friday, April 15, 2011 5:30 a.m. CDT

WOODSTOCK – A majority of the McHenry County Board committee in charge of redistricting wants to keep a 24-member, six-district body.

But even if the rest of the board agrees, the county's population growth over the past 10 years is going to mean changes to its legislative districts.

The board's Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs Committee met Thursday to lay out redistricting options for the full County Board. The County Board is expected at a special Tuesday meeting to make recommendations as to its desired size and number of districts, and instruct county staff to develop possible maps.

County boards must redraw their legislative boundaries after each Census to ensure that each district contains an equal number of people to within 10 percent. Boundaries cannot cut across township or municipal boundaries for any reason other than to maintain that equilibrium.

State law also gives county boards the ability during redistricting to decrease their size if they so choose. Such discussions are taking place in neighboring Kane, Lake and DeKalb counties.

Two committee members, Peter Merkel and Kathleen Bergan Schmidt, advocated shrinking the board and spreading it out among more districts. Merkel, R-McHenry, prefers nine or 10 districts of two members each, while Bergan Schmidt, D-Crystal Lake, wants 20 single-member districts.

To Bergan Schmidt, single-member districts mean more citizen participation. Merkel said he wants fewer municipalities divided between districts, and said that the board should be more austere in an age where the private sector is cutting back.

"I think that's maybe where we can lead by example," Merkel said.

But the other four committee members present opposed the idea. Marc Munaretto, R-Algonquin, said the present six-districts-of-four makeup has served county voters well for years.

Nick Provenzano, R-McHenry, likewise rejected the idea of shrinking the County Board during a time when its population is increasing.

McHenry County grew over the past decade by 48,683 new residents to 308,760, or an 18.7 percent increase, according to the 2010 U.S. Census.

"All of that work increases exponentially as you decrease the number of people to which you can spread that out," Provenzano said.

Provenzano also said that increasing the number of districts could have an adverse effect on the committees in which most of the County Board's work gets done. The County Board has seven-member standing committees with at least one member from each district for equal representation.

Committee members got a look Thursday at maps showing how far out of equilibrium the six districts have gotten over 10 years.

If the County Board keeps six districts, each must be as close to 51,460, one-sixth of the new population, as possible. District 5, which contains fast-growing Huntley, is the farthest off the mark with 68,410 residents. Huntley's population exploded 324 percent over the past decade, from 5,730 to 24,291.

Districts 1 through 3 in the county's heavily populated southeast corner are each several thousand residents short of that balance, while Districts 4 and 6 are just slightly over it.

The redistricting process this time around is being made easier by a \$5,100 software upgrade to the county's geographic information system.

###