

5-26-2022

5.26 NYC Districting Commission Hearing Summary

Piper Benedict



WE ARE NEW YORK'S LAW SCHOOL

**The New York City Districting Commission 2022-23 Public Hearing
May 26, 2022
3-6pm at 1 Pace Plaza, New York, New York 10007**

Opening points on process:

- 2020 Census - 8.8 million residents in NYC
- 51 city council districts
- City Charter requires “one person, one vote”
- Ideal population per district: 173,000
- Charter allows for 5% deviation
 - Districts should be between 168,000 and 177,000
 - All districts are currently over or under this range
 - Charter allows for exceptions to the 5% deviation if there are particular concerns from the public regarding communities of interest or other criteria
 - Chair Walcott mentioned potentially a 10% deviation but indicated the legal department was still discussing this
- Next steps:
 - Iterative process
 - Monday, June 6 – LaGuardia Community College – approval of first draft plan
 - Then more public hearings to get feedback on the first draft
 - Then commission will work on a second draft
- Chair Walcott encouraged members of the public to hold their own meetings in their communities as well to get feedback and hear concerns
- Commission is conscious of the need to accommodate the public when it comes to deciding when and where these meetings are held
- Further meetings will be held throughout the boroughs
- Public can send written testimony by email to PublicTestimony@redistricting.nyc.gov

The Bronx		
Witness Name	Organization(s)	Testimony
Yahay Obeid	Bronx Muslim Center Alliance of Yemeni American Businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little Yemen area – currently divided into district 13 and district 15 – make whole • Van Nest, Morris Park, Little Yemen, Bronx Park East, Allerton, and Pelham Gardens

New York Census and Redistricting Institute

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing community of 10-15,000 people – need to be in one district
Bernadette Ferrara	<p>Community Board 11</p> <p>Van Nest Neighborhood Alliance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Van Nest • Currently located on the border of a district resulting in lack of funding from elected officials • Do not split • Area currently in 15 should be united with 13 • Aligns more with Van Nest’s low density community concerns • Would also unify Yemeni Muslim community • Referenced attached maps • Van Nest, Morris Park, Pelham Parkway, Bronx Park East, and Allerton – should be made together
Charlene Jackson Mendez	Van Nest Neighborhood Alliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Van Nest • Concerns regarding community board • Importance of community engagement • Need support from elected officials • Keep the two districts • Having two separate city council members represent the neighborhood allows for two pools of appointees to community board – leads to more inclusivity and diversity • Also allows for Van Nest community to benefit from expertise from one city council member who is an expert in finance and one who is an attorney and housing expert • Also provides more funding for neighborhood

Brooklyn		
Witness Name	Organization(s)	Testimony
Yiaten Chu	Asian Wave Alliance (founder, president)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep Asian communities whole • Important to consider which neighborhoods will be grouped with these communities to ensure values and issues are represented • Asian population is fastest growing in NYC

New York Census and Redistricting Institute

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chinatown becoming gentrified, while Asian communities in Queens and Brooklyn are expanding • Recent concerns <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attempted to change admission criteria for specialized high schools – negatively impacted Asians – (DeBlasio characterized Asians as a “privileged class”) • plan to close Rikers and create borough-based jails – enraged Asian residents in Chinatown and Kew Gardens • homeless shelters placed in Asian neighborhoods • Surging Asian hate crimes • Communities of concern: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brooklyn Bensonhurst – 65th St. / 18th Ave. to Bay Parkway • W. 6th and Kings Highway, Bath avenue and Stillwell, Benson Ave. to 18th avenue • Bensonhurst currently divided into 4 districts • keep these Asian communities whole
Ekram Akrowmeim	<p>Academy of Medical and Public Health Services</p> <p>APA Voice Redistricting Taskforce</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make Sunset Park whole with Bensonhurst • Make Sunset Park whole in district 38 (currently divided among 4 districts) • More in common with Bensonhurst than Red Hook
Wah Lee	<p>OCA-NY (advisory board member) (Organization for Chinese Americans)</p> <p>APA Voice Redistricting Taskforce</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bensonhurst (currently broken into 4 districts - 43, 47, 44, 38) – make whole • keep APA communities whole • Asian population growth in Brooklyn • Emphasized recent hate crimes and need for representation

New York Census and Redistricting Institute

Lori Huang	<p>United Chinese Association Brooklyn</p> <p>APA Voice Redistricting Taskforce</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bensonhurst – most divided of APA communities (4 districts) • Should be unified • Emphasized growth of Asian populations - lines should reflect this • Keep Asian communities of interest whole • Support AALDEF maps, specifically for Bensonhurst, Sunset Park
------------	---	--

Manhattan		
Witness Name	Organization(s)	Testimony
Ashley Chen	<p>Chinese-American Planning Council (CPC) (policy fellow)</p> <p>APA Voice Redistricting Taskforce</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep AAPI communities together • Emphasized need for accessibility (language, physical) and transparency (collaboration with public and accountability) in this process • Keep communities of interest whole • Required to keep ethnic, racial, and language minority groups intact (federal Voting Rights Act and NYC Charter) • Avoid racial and partisan gerrymandering • Seek public input • AAPI population is fastest growing in the city • LES/Chinatown • Sunset Park in Brooklyn • Flushing Queens
Mae Lee	<p>Chinese Progressive Association (executive director)</p> <p>APA Voice Redistricting Taskforce</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LES/Chinatown is a community of interest • Diverse community • Asian, Latino, Black, and many others • Tied by socioeconomic commonalities and common interests (affordable housing, healthcare, public safety) • Keep LES/Chinatown whole
Shari Weiner	<p>Community Board 8 Manhattan – voting reform taskforce (co-chair)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District 4, 5 • Both 4 and 5 will have to shed population • Reviewing criteria and will have more recommendations later • Following up on letter CB8 sent to chairman regarding lack of female participation on commission

New York Census and Redistricting Institute

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City’s population 53% female, only 26% of commissioners are female • Staff hiring should take into account gender - hire most qualified people but need female perspective
--	--	---

Queens		
Witness Name	Organization(s)	Testimony
Jagpreet Singh	Desis Rising Up and Moving APA Voice Redistricting Taskforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping communities of interest together • Don’t pack them into districts where they lose voting power <p>Queens</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bangladeshi, Indo-Caribbean communities in Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park – currently divided, make whole • Indian and Bangladeshi communities in Hillside corridor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From Jamaica portion of Hillside corridor to Glen Oaks portion of Hillside corridor – communities have revitalized area and share a cultural hub • Western Queens – communities of interest in Elmhurst, Jackson Heights, and Woodside <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These communities of interest share a lot of ideals, religious institutions, food diversity <p>Bronx</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bangladeshi community in Parkchester - keep whole <p>Brooklyn</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bangladeshi community in Kensington area around Church and McDonald – keep whole
Linette Townsley		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southeast Queens area • Important to keep cultural communities together • Downtown Jamaica Ave., 165th down to Van Wyck • Redraw to include Sutphin Blvd down to Van Wyck where Jamaica Ave. corridor is • Budgetary issues with Far Rockaway

New York Census and Redistricting Institute

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggestion to unify all of Rockaways and separate from SE Queens • Emphasized development on Jamaica Ave. and importance of this process as the lines are for 10 years and they might be currently antiquated
Phil Wong	<p>Elmhurst United (founder)</p> <p>Chinese American Citizens Alliance Greater NY (President)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District 30 - Elmhurst, Maspeth, Middle Village, Woodside, Glendale, Ridgewood • Population decreased by 1,604 • District 25 (his district) population increased by 2,559 • Small portion south of Forest Park was drawn in 10 years ago to be part of district 30 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This piece is very different from the rest of 30 – more in line with 32 or 37 • He lives in triangular area of Grand Ave. / Simonson St. / and Queens Blvd. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primarily single family or 2-3 family homes • should be part of district 30 – matches character of that district more than district 25 • this part of 25 is very different from the rest of 25 • city council office does not understand their problems as they are dealing with more large condo buildings, coops, etc. • move that area back to district 30
Sally Wong	Elmhurst United	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move section of Elmhurst to district 30 • Southside of Queen’s Blvd. to Grand Ave. • Zoning and housing type more like district 30 • character of the neighborhood – 2-3 family homes • While rest of district has changed to larger apartment buildings • More like Maspeth • Make Elmhurst and Maspeth together in district 30
John Bahia	Woodside on the Move	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep Woodside and Elmhurst’s Filipino populations whole

New York Census and Redistricting Institute

	Youth on the Move	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roosevelt Ave. in Woodside and Queens Blvd. Elmhurst hold many Filipino small businesses • Little Manila - 63rd St. along Roosevelt Ave. in Woodside • Keep Woodside and Elmhurst whole
Victoria Leahy	<p>Woodside on the Move (Chief of Staff)</p> <p>APA Voice Redistricting Taskforce</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep Filipino community and Little Manila whole in Woodside • 63rd St. to 71st St. • Filipino community has expanded across Woodside into Elmhurst • Referenced AALDEF neighborhood maps for detailed map of Filipino neighborhoods in Woodside, Elmhurst, and Jackson Heights • Additionally, other Asian ethnic groups throughout Elmhurst, Woodside, and Jackson Heights • Keep these Asian communities of interests whole
Paul Graziano	Queens Civic Congress (urban planner) represents over 80 civic organizations and HOAs in Queens County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He will submit a document with maps of borough based on interests of organizations that Queens Civic Congress represents (including Elmhurst United) • Noted that the majority of Queen's districts are below minimum threshold – only two districts above maximum threshold (26, 28) • Emphasized the need to keep neighborhoods together while also looking at common zoning, common boundaries, and hard boundaries • Most districts are about where they should be • Prefers incremental rather than wholesale changes
Howard Moskowitz	Elmhurst United	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He is located in Elmhurst (district 25) – south side of Queens Blvd. bordering Maspeth section of district 30 • 1-3 family homes - closely resembles homes in Maspeth • Many students in his area are zoned to go to schools in Maspeth • Common issues as homeowners with Maspeth

New York Census and Redistricting Institute

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South side of Queens Blvd. to Grand Ave. to LIRR - Combine with Maspeth (district 30)
Robbie Sayid?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasized focusing on languages and cultures and not dividing up communities • district 24 Jamaica Queens area – keep whole South Asian and other minority communities
Milly Wong	Elmhurst United	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elmhurst south side of Queens Blvd. • Predominantly working-class homeowners • Private 2-3 family homes • Quieter area compared to north side of Queens Blvd. • Should combine Maspeth with south side of Queens Blvd. to Grand Ave. • Most people don't cross Queens Blvd. because it's a dangerous intersection • North side is very different – larger apartment buildings, different character • Need better representation
Liz OuYang	APA Voice Redistricting Taskforce (Coordinator)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asian population growth in Queens and Brooklyn • Keep Asian communities whole • Aside from Bronx, in each borough Asian population was fastest growing racial group • Most growth was in Queens and Brooklyn • Referenced AALDEF maps
John Schaffer		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elmhurst 2-3 family homes • Combine with Maspeth • Elmhurst is more aligned with district 30 • Utilize Juniper Park, stores, doctors, etc. all in Maspeth
Kevin Cho	Korean Community Services of Metropolitan NY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep AAPI communities together • Flushing and Bayside should be combined – currently in 19 and 20 • Growing AAPI population in this area
Shivana Jorawar	Jahajee Sisters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indo-Caribbean communities • Asian American communities • Richmond Hill, South Ozone Park, and Ozone Park – keep together • Keep Little Guyana together • Advocates should not have to make demands of three different city council offices

New York Census and Redistricting Institute

Mark Laster	Central Queens Redistricting Coalition Forest Hills Green Team Queens Community Board 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rego Park and Forest Hills • Very divided among state level representation • Keep whole at city level • Try not to divide communities of interest
Paul Trust		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unify Richmond Hills and South Ozone Park • Currently it's a "Cracked community" • Emphasized need to prevent voter suppression and to keep Asian American communities of interest together • Referenced AALDEF recommended maps
Albert Baldeo		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Richmond Hill, South Ozone Park, Ozone Park - Little Guyana • From Van Wyck Expressway to Cross Bay Blvd., Hillside Ave. to Conduit – should be one district • Keep Little Bangladesh and Little Punjab whole in Hillside • Concerned about gerrymandering, voter suppression, and dilution • He submitted maps
Mohamed Q. Amin	Caribbean Equality Project (founder, executive director) APA Voice Redistricting Taskforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Richmond Hill, South Ozone Park - Little Guyana • AAPI – fastest growing population in NYC • Keep Asian communities together • South Asian and Indo-Caribbean communities • Currently divided - 28, 29, 32
Linda Lam		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elmhurst • 58th Ave. and Seabury St. - South side of Queens Blvd. • Currently in district 25, should be in district 30 • 2-3 fam homes – more closely aligned with district 30
Sandra Choi	MinKwon Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asian communities in Flushing – keep communities whole

New York Census and Redistricting Institute

	APA Voice Redistricting Taskforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support AALDEF maps • “Koreatown” is divided, should be whole
Raj Korpan	Central Queens Redistricting Coalition (co-chair)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rego Park • District should represent community • Central Queens is distinct community different from surrounding areas • Rego Park, Forest Hills, and Kew Gardens – maintain in district 29 • Large Jewish and Asian population • District should include all of these communities • district 29 is nearly ideal for representing Central Queens • However, part of Richmond Hill that’s in district 29 would be better suited to join with South Ozone Park • Then would need to expand district • Expand district 29 north to Elmhurst but don’t expand west into Middle Village or cross over Flushing Meadows Park
Amanda Deebrah	South Queens Women’s March APA Voice Redistricting Taskforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park whole as shown in the AALDEF Communities of Interest map • Asian-American population, South Asian, Punjabi, Indo-Caribbean • Census data does not fully account for these populations • Currently divided among 3 districts - 28, 29, 32 • Emphasized growth of Asian population • Keep Asian communities of interest whole
Arianne-Ron Maliwanag	NY State Secretary for the National Federation of Filipino American Associations APA Voice Redistricting Taskforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little Manila in Woodside and Elmhurst • Highest concentration of Filipino small businesses in NY are in Woodside and Elmhurst • Devastated by COVID-19 and recent anti-Asian hate crimes • Keep Little Manila, Woodside, and Elmhurst whole • Keep Filipino community whole

New York Census and Redistricting Institute

<p>Heather Beers-Dimitriadis</p>	<p>Central Queens Redistricting Coalition (co-chair)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rego Park – district 29 • This district is pretty good • Keep neighborhoods whole • Remove small piece of Richmond Hill from district 29 so they have a single city council representative • Will need to add population so move northwest into Elmhurst on north side of Queens Blvd. • Don't move into Middle Village (different character) • Don't break the current grouping of Rego Park, Forest Hills, and Kew Gardens
<p>Israel Peskowitz</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jewish Community of Central Queens • Kew Gardens Hills – district 24 • district 24 should remain the same as it is contiguous, compact, and includes communities of interest – compared to oddly-shaped new Assembly/Senate districts • Kew Garden Hills, Pomonok, Electchester, Hillcrest – keep together

<p style="text-align: center;">Staten Island</p>		
<p>Witness Name</p>	<p>Organization(s)</p>	<p>Testimony</p>
<p>Neil Barry</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staten Island • Concern re racial gerrymandering
<p>Edward Josie</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small Black community in Staten Island • Needs representation • Staten Island should not secede from NYC
<p>Jasmine Robinson</p>	<p>Female district leader of 61st Assembly District</p> <p>Alliance of South Asian Labor</p> <p>National Council of Negro Women (Staten Island)</p> <p>Staten Island Political Action Club</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • district 49 • North shore of Staten Island • Need for more outreach to Staten Island residents • Don't divide district 49 • Large immigrant community • Keep diverse voices of north shore together

New York Census and Redistricting Institute

Witness Name	Organization(s)	Testimony
Ben Weinberg	Citizens Union (director of public policy)	<p>Emphasized need to harbor public confidence and trust in this process especially after what happened at state level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparency and public participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make all materials public – agenda, minutes, transcripts, resolutions, etc. • schedule meetings in the evening or on weekends • translations and accessibility • Fair and independent redistricting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adopt expansive anti-gerrymandering criteria • adopt a code of ethics to address political conflicts of interest • preclearance report to explain reasons for drawing lines the way they were drawn
Lurie Daniel Favors	Center for Law and Social Justice (attorney and executive director) Unity Map Coalition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasized need for equitable political power in Black communities • Looking at Voting Rights Act • Look at communities of interest • Look at actual population data for Black populations • Racial data is not always enough to correctly draw lines that do not split communities – communities are diverse • Increase accessibility for hearings (locations, times)
Jerry Vattamala	Director of democracy program at AALDEF Unity map Coalition APA Voice Redistricting Taskforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submitting 16 Asian American communities of interest maps • Keep these communities whole as much as possible • Superimpose these boundaries over any map to check that communities are being kept whole • Race was just one of many factors considered when drawing these boundaries • New maps should reflect large growth in Asian populations

New York Census and Redistricting Institute

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emphasized that Asian Americans are a protected group under Voting Rights Act and under NYC Charter• Required to follow criteria:<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Population Equality2. Then protections and fair and effective representations for racial and language minority groups protected under Voting Rights Act• Then other factors may be considered
--	--	--