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ALBANY COUNTY LEGISLATIVE OFFICE

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JOINT PUBLIC HEARING

LOCAL LAW 8 for 2019

Authorizing the notice of publication regarding
The 30 day period for public review and comment
Concerning Realigning Albany County's Thirty-nine
Districts

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Minutes of Hearing, on 8th day of March, 2022
commencing at 4:00 p.m., Via Zoom connection

BEFORE: CHAIRMAN LARRY VOLK
CHAIRWOMAN MARIE ALLEN CAMPBELL

Reported by Howard Hubbard

1 APPEARANCES :

2 JEFFREY WICE

3 PRIYA SANKALIA
4 ASHLEY TARDIF

5 PATRICIA SIBILIA

6 TOM CLINGAN

7 LARS DAHL

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1 (The hearing commenced at 4:00
2 p.m.)

3 CHAIR VOLK: Good afternoon. I'm
4 going to call this Joint Public Hearing of the
5 Albany County Redistricting Commission and the
6 Majority Minority District Redistricting
7 Subcommittee to order. A warm welcome to those
8 intending to provide testimony and those just
9 watching or listening.

10 For the record, I'm going to call
11 the roll of the members of the Commission and the
12 Subcommittee. For the Commission, I am Larry
13 Volk, Chairman of the Commission. The other
14 members are Tom Clingan.

15 If you would unmute and announce
16 yourself, Tom?

17 MR. CLINGAN: Sorry about that.
18 Tom Clingan and I am here.

19 CHAIR VOLK: Warren Hamilton?

20 MR. HAMILTON: Warren Hamilton, and
21 I am here. Thank you.

22 CHAIR VOLK: Leif Hartmark?

23 MR. HARTMARK: Leif Hartmark, I'm
24 happy to be here to be part of the hearing.

25 CHAIR VOLK: Mark McCumber?

1 MR. MCCUMBER: Mark McCumber, I'm
2 here.

3 CHAIR VOLK: Joan Ramsey?

4 MS. RAMSEY: Joan Ramsey, I am
5 here.

6 CHAIR VOLK: Julia Reeb?

7 MS. REEB: Julia Reeb, I am here.

8 CHAIR VOLK: Patricia Sibilialia?

9 MS. SIBILIALIA: I am Patricia
10 Sibilialia. I am here.

11 CHAIR VOLK: And Sita Subbaram?

12 MS. SUBBARAM: Sita Subbaram, I'm
13 here. Thank you all.

14 CHAIR VOLK: We're also joined
15 today by Jeffrey Wice and Marissa Zanfardino of
16 New York Law School, Counsel to the Commission.
17 And Priya Sankalia, Russell Cohen, and Ashley
18 Tardif of AppGeo, the Commission's mapping
19 consultant.

20 For the Majority Minority District
21 Redistricting Subcommittee, we have Subcommittee
22 Chair Marie Allen Campbell.

23 MS. CAMPBELL: Marie Allen
24 Campbell, here.

25 CHAIR VOLK: Keshana Owens-Cody?

1 MS. OWENS-CODY: Keshana Owens-
2 Cody, here.

3 CHAIR VOLK: Constance Graves?

4 MS. GRAVES: Constance Graves,
5 here.

6 CHAIR VOLK: Adrienne Smith Kissee?

7 MS. SMITH KISSEE: Adrienne Smith
8 Kissee, here.

9 CHAIR VOLK: Larry Mauldin?

10 MR. MAULDIN: Larry Mauldin, here.

11 CHAIR VOLK: Dominic Mazza?

12 MR. MAZZA: Dominic Mazza, here.

13 CHAIR VOLK: And they are also
14 joined by their intern, Nassim Ramdani.

15 Redistricting is a process that
16 applies to every legislature in the country and
17 takes place after every national census to realign
18 the legislative body to account for population
19 changes.

20 The Albany County Redistricting
21 Commission was established by Local Law 8 of 2019,
22 to provide a recommendation to the county
23 legislature for how to realign the Albany County
24 Legislature's thirty-nine districts. Local Law 8
25 requires the Commission to hold no less than four

1 public hearings. The purpose of this hearing
2 today is to allow members of the public to have
3 input into our redistricting process before we
4 begin drafting any maps.

5 We would like to know what concerns
6 members of the public have and what specific
7 concepts people would like to make sure we are
8 considering as we begin to draw maps. We will be
9 holding additional public hearings to get your
10 reactions to district maps as we get further into
11 the process. Our goal is to complete this process
12 and have a report to the county legislature by the
13 end of June.

14 In undertaking redistricting, we
15 are subject to three separate sets of legal
16 constraints, Federal, New York State, and Albany
17 County. At the federal level, redistricting is
18 subject to the equal protection clause of the 14th
19 Amendment and the Voting Rights Act, which require
20 that each district have about the same population
21 and that they are not created in a racially
22 discriminatory fashion.

23 In October of last year, Governor
24 Hochul signed a law that establishes very specific
25 parameters for county redistricting. That new law

1 establishes six criteria in rank order, from the
2 most to least important.

3 First, the districts must be as
4 equal -- nearly equal in population as possible.
5 But in no event can there be a difference of more
6 than five percent between the largest and the
7 smallest.

8 Second, lines cannot be drawn to
9 deny or abridge rights of any racial or language
10 minority group.

11 Third, districts need to be
12 contiguous. That is you need to be able to go
13 through the entire district without ever leaving
14 it.

15 Fourth, each of the districts needs
16 to be as compact in form as possible.

17 The fifth criterion is really a
18 whole package of things not drawn to discourage
19 competition, maintain the core of existing
20 districts, consider public's political -- excuse
21 me -- consider political subdivisions and
22 communities of interest, and to the extent
23 practicable, not divide cities, villages, and
24 towns.

25 And the final criterion is to

1 promote the orderly and efficient administration
2 of elections.

3 And now, Marie Allen Campbell,
4 Chair of the Subcommittee will discuss the
5 requirements of Local Law 8, and the special role
6 of the Majority Minority District Redistricting
7 Subcommittee under that local law.

8 After Marie, there will be a brief
9 discussion of how the current districts line up
10 after the population changes of the past several
11 years and a brief discussion of the legal
12 underpinnings of redistricting.

13 Then, we want to hear from you and
14 any concerns that you may have as we go through
15 this process. Thank you.

16 MS. CAMPBELL: Thank you, Larry.

17 On behalf of the Albany County
18 Redistricting Commission and the Majority Minority
19 District Redistricting Subcommittee, which I'll
20 refer to as M -- as the M.M.D., thank you for your
21 participation tonight.

22 My name is Marie Allen Campbell,
23 and I am currently serving as Chair of the M.M.D.
24 In addition to the commissioners and interns
25 introduced by Larry, our work has also been

1 greatly supported by a number of Albany County
2 professional, technical, and administrative staff.

3 Albany County Local Law 8 for 2019
4 is essentially about fairness and equity. It's
5 about giving Albany County residents a voice in
6 the redistricting process. It was established to
7 facilitate a non-partisan, independent, inclusive,
8 and participatory process for redistricting.

9 The law followed three legal
10 challenges to Albany County's redistricting work
11 that followed the 1990, 2000, and 2010 census.
12 All of these challenges resulted in increased
13 representation for minority communities and in an
14 increase in majority minority districts.

15 A majority minority district is
16 essentially a district in which a racial group or
17 groups comprise the majority of the total
18 population of that district. Under the Voting
19 Rights Act, majority minority districts can be
20 created to prevent the dilution of minorities'
21 voting strength.

22 The M.M.D. was created under the
23 law to provide a laser focus to ensure fair
24 representation of Albany County minority
25 communities in all aspects of the redistricting

1 process, more specifically, to fully examine the
2 unique needs of -- of majority minority
3 communities and minority residents, to protect the
4 voting rights of minority residents, and to ensure
5 electoral representation of minority residents
6 residing in majority minority districts, lastly,
7 to make a recommendation to the Commission
8 regarding the configuration of majority minority
9 districts.

10 The law requires that the
11 Redistricting Commission and the M.M.D. work
12 collaboratively in tandem and with a high level of
13 interaction, that incumbent candidates and
14 political parties not be considered enjoying
15 district lines.

16 The A.C.R.C. and M.M.D. have to
17 make available to the public on the Albany --
18 Albany County website, through electronic media,
19 any draft redistricting maps or concepts that we
20 come up with, relevant data, and related
21 information. And we have to make that information
22 available in a form that's useful to the public.

23 The law also requires our
24 redistricting work to be guided by the goal of
25 equal and fair representation of all people in

1 Albany County, consistent with established federal
2 and state laws, as interpreted by court in
3 appropriate jurisdictions. It requires our work
4 to be transparent, accountable, and independent
5 without the undue influence of sitting elected
6 officials and their representatives.

7 And last, but certainly not least,
8 it requires that our work be driven by public
9 input. Under Local Law 8 for 2019, the M.M.D. was
10 authorized to acquire its own legal and mapping
11 expertise and staff resources, and is required to
12 hold its own public hearings and public forums for
13 the purpose of collecting and considering input
14 from minority communities, as well as county
15 communities at large.

16 The success of this redistricting
17 work is highly dependent on engagement and input
18 from you, the public. We encourage you to visit
19 the redistricting website at Albany County dot
20 com, backslash, A C R C, and to stay tuned for
21 additional opportunities to participate.

22 Questions, comments, and information can also be
23 emailed to us at Redistricting Commission at
24 Albany County NY dot gov, as well as at MMD
25 Redistricting at Albany County NY dot gov.

1 Again, thank you for being here.
2 You are critical to this work. I will now turn
3 the program over to Jeffrey -- Jeffrey Wice,
4 Counsel to the Commission, who will talk a little
5 more about redistricting. Thank you.

6 MR. WICE: Okay. Good afternoon,
7 everybody. I'm Jeff Wice from New York Law
8 School. And I serve as Counsel to the Commission
9 and to the Majority Minority Subcommittee. I'm
10 going to cover the basic areas which the Chair has
11 alluded to before on the relevant federal, state,
12 and county laws that -- that -- that guide this
13 process.

14 And to do that, for parts of my
15 presentation, or at least to ... I'd like to use a
16 PowerPoint. So I don't know if I have screen-
17 sharing capabilities. I think I do. I'll find
18 out in a second. Okay. So do you see a
19 PowerPoint? Okay. I see that few people have
20 said yes.

21 So we have several laws that guide
22 the process. We have, first, the -- the equal
23 protection requirement in the Federal
24 Constitution, often known as the one person, one
25 vote doctrine.

1 Excuse me one second. I need to
2 adjust the light so you can see me.

3 And the -- the one person one vote
4 doctrine basically requires that each district be
5 generally of the same population as every other
6 district, or as the Supreme Court put it back in
7 the 1960s, so that one person's vote is equal to
8 another person's vote.

9 And prior to the 1960s, we'd have
10 districts in various states, even including New
11 York State, where districts might vary as much as
12 ten to one, very lopsided. And beginning in 1962,
13 the U.S. Supreme Court held that redistricting
14 matters were, as the courts call it, justiciable,
15 that these are issues the courts would hear.

16 Believe it or not, from 1790 until
17 1962, the U.S. Supreme Court did not get into the
18 -- the nitty-gritty, the -- the meats and bones of
19 what goes into a redistricting plan. It dealt
20 with other kinds of procedural issues, but not to
21 ensure that district lines were drawn fairly so we
22 have equal population.

23 And for the purposes of Albany
24 County, and localities throughout New York State
25 as Chairman -- Chairperson Volk mentioned earlier,

1 districts are limited to being within five percent
2 from the size of the largest to the size of the
3 smallest district.

4 And New York has gone an extra step
5 farther than what the U.S. Supreme Court has
6 allowed, where the Supreme Court in various
7 opinions, not in any federal or a state statute,
8 but in U.S. Supreme Court opinions has determined
9 that districts cannot exceed population by more
10 than ten percent from the size of the largest to
11 the smallest district.

12 And in fact, the district lines in
13 place today from the -- the 2015 court-ordered
14 plan employ that ten-percent standard. But moving
15 forward, the Commission that we're here today with
16 is limited to a five percent overall population
17 difference standard.

18 And the -- the second requirement,
19 also a federal one, is the -- the Voting Rights
20 Act. I'm going to spend a few minutes, before I
21 conclude, on some of the specifics from the
22 Federal Voting Rights Act case that Albany County
23 was confronted with several times over the course
24 of the past decade.

25 But, in essence, the Federal Voting

1 Rights Act has something called Section 2. And
2 this 1965 law essentially prohibits a vote
3 dilution where certain requirements are met that
4 result in creating single member districts where
5 minority voters have the opportunity to elect
6 their preferred candidates. And what happens
7 under the Voting Rights Act is that you have to
8 demonstrate three features. Out of all of the
9 single member districts in the county legislature,
10 you have to show that the minority voting age
11 population in -- in the size of an ideal district.

12 Now, when I say voting age
13 population, I mean people eighteen years of age or
14 older. So you have to be able to demonstrate that
15 minority voters, regardless of whether they
16 registered or not, but if they are eighteen, or
17 over that fifty percent plus can constitute the
18 population in the ideal size of a district.
19 That's the first requirement.

20 The second is that you have to
21 demonstrate whether the minority voters vote
22 similarly or cohesively. Just as an example of
23 what is not cohesive, if you look at the Hispanic
24 population in Florida, heavily Puerto Rican and --
25 and heavily Cuban, Puerto Ricans tend to vote

1 Democratic, and Cubans tend to vote Republican.
2 You -- you really can't show that they are
3 cohesive even though they're -- they are all
4 Hispanic. So you have to show that the fifty
5 percent plus population is cohesive in their
6 voting.

7 And then third, and most
8 importantly, you have to show that the White
9 voters in the area, in the ideal district,
10 consistently deny minority voters their
11 opportunity to elect their preferred candidates of
12 choice.

13 That's done by looking at several
14 past years, not more than ten past years, but you
15 look at all of the primary general election
16 contests where you had a minority candidate and a
17 White candidate run. And if the data
18 demonstrates, through various kinds of
19 mathematical tests, that there is a high level of
20 vote dilution and that the minority voters are, in
21 fact, denied their right to elect their preferred
22 candidate, then the Voting Rights Act generally
23 kicks in and would require that the -- that the --
24 at least one district be drawn.

25 You also have to show the court

1 that you meet something called the totality of the
2 circumstances test. And that's named after the
3 1982 U.S. Senate Committee report that set forward
4 the 1982 amendments to the Voting Rights Act,
5 which was basically the statute we operate under
6 now.

7 And there you have to show
8 different kinds of indicia of socioeconomic
9 unfairness, inability for minority community
10 residents to have equal access to voting, housing,
11 employment, education, that there's discrimination
12 in being able to run for office, inability to
13 elect candidates to office, discriminatory appeals
14 taken in election campaigns. And you really want
15 to basically flavor the situation to inform the
16 court that there's a lot of negativity going on
17 here.

18 So you have the Federal Voting
19 Rights Act. And then third, we have the New York
20 State Municipal Home Rule Law. Now, redistricting
21 -- and -- and by the way, redistricting, by
22 definition, as the Chair mentioned, is the
23 redrawing of district boundaries within a
24 jurisdiction, here, Albany County.

25 Just to inform you the word

1 reapportionment is different. Reapportionment is
2 the reallocation of the four hundred thirty-five
3 congressional districts among the fifty states,
4 based on the federal statute. It's a very simple
5 process. Reapportionment takes place once every
6 ten years. And once reapportionment is done --
7 once the four hundred thirty-five congressional
8 districts are assigned to the states, based on
9 their populations, everything then turns to
10 redistricting.

11 So in New York, the State
12 Constitution was amended by the voters in 2014, to
13 set up an entirely new process for the
14 redistricting of New York's congressional, state
15 senate, and state assembly districts. Prior to
16 2014 the Congress and the Legislature, those
17 districts were simply drawn by the Legislature
18 internally.

19 The 2014 constitutional amendment
20 created what's known as the Independent
21 Redistricting Commission that was tasked with
22 recommending congressional and state legislative
23 lines to the state legislature. For those of you
24 that are on top of the news, you should know that
25 the Commission effort basically came to no

1 conclusion, that they were unable to recommend
2 plans to the legislature.

3 On February 3rd the legislature
4 passed new plans under the state constitutional
5 provisions for Congress and the legislature.
6 Governor Hochul approved those plans. And those
7 are the new lines being used for petitioning as we
8 speak, to run for office in the June 28th state
9 primary. The lines are also being contested in
10 state court in Steuben County. However, that
11 court case outcome, if it -- if it goes against
12 the state, in that the plan for congress or the
13 state senate were found to violate the
14 constitution, they will not impact the elections
15 this year. The judge there is letting the new
16 plan go forward for 2022 elections, but a remedy
17 would come for future years.

18 The other half of the State Law is
19 in the state statutes, in the New York State
20 Municipal Home Rule Law that was amended through
21 an act of the legislature, approved by the
22 governor back in October of 2021. And the -- the
23 bill created mandatory criteria language that
24 counties, with or without charters, have to follow
25 in their redistricting. It's known as Chapter 516

1 of the laws of 2021. And in my next slide, I'm
2 going to show you what the criteria include.

3 Let's see. Okay. This is part of
4 another -- a different presentation, so I'll get
5 right slide now. Okay. So the -- the new law
6 requires, and these are in prioritized order, so
7 you've got to follow each of these criteria from
8 top to bottom. And as you go -- as you go lower
9 down the totem pole, it becomes harder to achieve
10 some of the criteria because you're trying to meet
11 the higher criteria first.

12 And the highest criteria is the
13 population equality requirement that the
14 populations have to be as near as practicable
15 within the five percent window from the size of
16 the smallest to the largest district. That's what
17 we discussed before.

18 And then secondly, my third bullet
19 point here, the plans cannot intend to, or result
20 in denying or abridging minority voting rights.
21 That basically brings at the state level, the
22 Federal Voting Rights Act into the picture.

23 The third criteria is that -- is
24 that districts must be contiguous. And that, by
25 definition of contiguous, you have to be able to

1 travel from one part of a district to another part
2 of the district and not leave the district, that
3 each part of the district has to be attached to
4 each other.

5 The next criteria are that
6 districts must be compact. And by definition of
7 compactness, you want to draw a district that is
8 basically round or square or rectangular, but you
9 don't want to go as far as having a fifty-eight-
10 sided Rorschach test type district, that you want
11 to draw the -- the -- the new districts to be
12 somewhat compact. And although compactness could
13 be a matter of subjectivity, that what might be
14 compact to you might not be compact to me, there
15 are different kinds of mathematical standards that
16 we used in our redistricting software that you'll
17 learn about later that will determine to tell us
18 how compact a district is compared to other
19 measures.

20 And the criteria also indicates
21 that districts cannot favor or disfavor incumbents
22 or particular candidates or political parties.
23 Districts can also consider the existing cores of
24 the current districts of political subdivisions,
25 meaning townships and villages, and also

1 communities of interest. And a community of
2 interest is not defined in law, but is generally
3 defined by community people testifying at hearings
4 like the one we're holding today that will
5 indicate or inform the Commission of like-minded
6 neighbors, whether they are socio-economic,
7 racial, ethnic, educational, medical. You can
8 have a community that's -- that surrounds a
9 hospital or a university that identifies this part
10 of the university neighborhood or -- or -- or the
11 hospital community. And I know Albany city has
12 both of those, a major hospital area and a college
13 campus area. In fact, I think you know, more than
14 one. So you might also find neighborhoods that
15 have distinctively, historically, been united,
16 whether it's by shopping districts, the same
17 churches, civic centers, you define what a
18 community of interest is, and ask that a community
19 be kept whole within a single district.

20 And then a new feature in the -- in
21 state law is that you cannot divide a village, a
22 city, or a town within a county of more than forty
23 percent of a full ratio of a district. That
24 means, in plain English, that you take the ideal
25 size of a county legislative district, and if a

1 village or a town makes up forty percent or less
2 of an ideal county legislative district, then you
3 don't want to -- you -- you -- you try not to
4 split that jurisdiction to the extent you can.

5 But again, this is the -- the
6 lowest priority. So as you work from population
7 equality down through voting rights, compactness,
8 contiguity, the bottom issues -- the lower ones
9 have less priority.

10 The last one, districts must be
11 formed so as to promote orderly and efficient
12 elections, simply means that you want to make sure
13 that you present the plan so that your board of
14 elections can -- you know, can administer the plan
15 in an orderly fashion.

16 What's often happened in the state
17 is that a plan is adopted two days before
18 petitioning for office starts, which gives the --
19 the local board of elections almost no time to
20 carefully figure out where the new lines ought to
21 be. So that gives you a pretty good sense of
22 overall redistricting law.

23 I want to spend a few minutes just
24 -- just giving you the highlights of a court
25 decision case of Pope versus Albany County, which

1 took up a large part of the last -- of the last
2 decade, challenges to the last 2011 county
3 redistricting plan.

4 What happened in 2011, or just
5 shortly after, a challenge was brought in federal
6 district court in New York's Northern District,
7 alleging that the county legislative plan violated
8 the Voting Rights Act because it weakened or
9 diluted the voting strength of Black voters in the
10 county.

11 There were several iterations of
12 the court plan. The -- the county government
13 fought the -- the complaint, tried to defend
14 against it, but inevitably, by 2015, Federal Judge
15 Kahn ruled that there was, in fact, a Section 2
16 violation in the county, and he found several
17 different things wrong with the 2011 plan. I'll
18 just highlight a few of those.

19 The judge found that the -- the
20 three preconditions that I have outlined were met.
21 The judge said, I'm quoting here from the case,
22 that the Black community in the County of Albany
23 was sufficiently large and geographically compact
24 to form five majority minority districts.

25 The judge also concluded that based

1 on the expert testimony of a witness, Dr. Baodong
2 Liu, the judge concluded that based on the
3 expert's findings, the expert's statistical
4 analysis showed that in a vast majority of
5 elections in the county, that Black voters
6 preferred the same candidates and that they were
7 cohesive, especially in primary elections where
8 party affiliation is a major factor. Albany
9 County, as we know, is heavily Democratic.

10 The judge also determined that
11 there was a high level of racially polarized
12 voting, that the White community usually defeated
13 the majority community's preferred candidates.
14 The -- the judge found that because the
15 statistical analysis showed that racial Black
16 voting in most of the elections for county
17 legislature was even higher in terms of showing
18 racial Black voting than you'd find for the
19 congressional or state legislative races.

20 The judge also looked at the -- the
21 socio-economic tests, the -- the totality of the
22 circumstances test, and also found that there was
23 a significant level of racially polarized voting,
24 that -- the judge also found that the county --
25 just going back in the -- before 2011, but that

1 the county had a recent history of attempting to
2 interfere with minority voters' opportunity to
3 participate back in 1991 and in 2003, and that
4 despite significant increases in the county's
5 minority population, the county failed to -- well,
6 the county only created minority districts when it
7 was taken to court. And that was a factor, that
8 the County's recalcitrance to want to be
9 supportive.

10 The -- the judge also found that
11 African Americans in Albany County lag behind non-
12 Hispanic rights on nearly every kind of socio-
13 economic measure he looked at, and that witnesses
14 testified to the continued effects of
15 discrimination in the County's housing and health
16 care worlds.

17 And the judge, in closing, he found
18 that though there has been meaningful progress in
19 Albany County, the journey to real electoral
20 opportunity for minority voters in Albany County
21 was not yet over. And that with rare exceptions,
22 he found there was not yet an equal, fair
23 opportunity for minority preferred candidates to
24 be elected on a county level, absent special
25 circumstances.

1 So the judge closed by saying,
2 while wonderful progress to address racial
3 disparities the county has been made, the County's
4 redistricting plan diluted the voting strength of
5 Black voters in Albany County in violation of the
6 Federal Voting Rights Act.

7 And that, as we know, led the
8 county legislature to move to create a commission
9 and the subcommittee that's -- that are meeting
10 today. And it's the goal to comply with the
11 various federal, state, and -- and, you know,
12 local laws to ensure that this process be a fair
13 and open one, the first step of which is to hold a
14 public hearing.

15 So I'm not sure how we're -- if
16 there are any questions or how to address those in
17 this presentation, but I'm hoping you know a
18 little bit more about the law than you might have
19 twenty minutes ago. So thank you.

20 CHAIR VOLK: Thank you, Professor
21 Wice.

22 And now I -- I'd like to ask Priya
23 Sankalia and Ashley Tardif from AppGeo to talk a
24 bit about the current map and also the mapping
25 software that will be available for everyone to --

1 to work on and -- and see how they think the maps
2 were to be drawn.

3 Priya?

4 MS. SANKALIA: Thank you, Chairman
5 Volk, and -- and Professor Wice for, you know, the
6 excellent introduction. I am going to share my
7 screen to give our presentation. So here we go.
8 Please confirm that you can see my screen.

9 Okay. I'll -- I just want to
10 reintroduce myself. My name is Priya Sankalia.
11 I'm here with my colleague, Ashley Tardif. And we
12 will be -- we are the Commission's G.I.S. support
13 for redistricting. So we will be, you know,
14 sharing with you how -- what are the -- what are
15 the tools that you can use to actually create some
16 of these plans, give you some insights into the
17 process, and also show you a little demonstration
18 of the -- of the tools.

19 To just cover what we're going to
20 do today is talk about a little bit about the --
21 the mapping tool and the data that's used and,
22 like Chair Volk said, I'll talk about the current
23 map, the current districts with the population
24 deviations. Then we'll get into how you as the
25 public can provide input, and what are the

1 different ways you can provide input, including
2 the online tool, which is called Maptitude Online
3 for Redistricting, and then also talk a little bit
4 about how you can submit your plans and share
5 them, and how the Commission will then review them
6 and take everything that you've suggested into
7 consideration. And then finally, we'll wrap up
8 with a short demo of the -- of the tool.

9 Now, this is just a little bit of a
10 demo, but we have plenty of information as far as
11 the user guide and training tools and -- and
12 videos available for anybody who wants to use this
13 tool. So I'll dive right in.

14 So you know, as -- as you've heard
15 from the previous speakers, redistricting is
16 essentially redrawing the lines of the district
17 based on the population. We will be using the
18 state-of-the-art software called Maptitude for
19 Redistricting developed by Caliper for doing the -
20 - the work.

21 The draft plans created by the --
22 by the Commission will be following the specific
23 parameters that Professor Wice just shared with
24 us. A lot of those parameters are already set in
25 the software, so the software will sort of guide

1 you through that process. We hope that this
2 process is going to be transparent with everything
3 that the Commission does, and what the public, you
4 know, shares with the Commission and -- and uses
5 your input in the -- in the draft plan creation.

6 So diving into the current
7 districts will be that we actually have a map of
8 the current districts and the population
9 deviations which is posted on the County
10 Commission website. I have the -- the link in
11 this presentation, but you can also go to it if
12 you went to the county website, and you can pull
13 it up. And here's the actual map.

14 And here, I'll just really quickly
15 show you how -- it's -- the link is right here and
16 you can then go into the map and see what the --
17 the populations are currently for the districts.
18 And here, we are using the 2020 population. And
19 this has been adjusted for the incarcerated
20 population, so that's what you're seeing in this -
21 - in this map.

22 And as you can see, each of the
23 districts is highlighted with the population. And
24 what it is showing you is also the deviation from
25 what the ideal population would be. And this goes

1 back to what you've heard from the previous
2 presentations about the population deviations
3 about -- ideal population would be the total
4 population divided by the number of districts.

5 And then you have to reach within,
6 you know, five percent across the -- across the
7 districts to get the maximum five percent to get
8 your, you know, draft plan which will be -- which
9 will be workable.

10 So as you can see, some of these
11 districts have a really high population deviation,
12 which means they would really need to be adjusted
13 to be balanced across the entire county.

14 So that's just giving you a little
15 bit of a visual on that. But you can also see
16 that on -- in a table, and all of this will be
17 available to you in the -- in the tool that you
18 can use to do the -- to create your draft plans.

19 So you know, the -- the data that
20 we are working with and that you will have access
21 to is the 2020 census population data. The County
22 of Albany has thirty-nine districts and the ideal
23 population value is eight thousand, one hundred
24 and five for -- for each district. And the goal,
25 of course, is a plus or minus two point five

1 percent deviation from the ideal population.

2 So we've highlighted some of these
3 districts, as you can see, you know the -- the --
4 based on the adjusted population, what the
5 deviation is and the percentage is. So these are
6 the -- these are the, you know, districts that we
7 have to work with to adjust.

8 Okay. So moving on to how the
9 public can -- how you, as the public, can provide
10 input. We will be giving you access to the tool,
11 which is called Maptitude Online for
12 Redistricting, MOR for short -- in short. This is
13 an online tool so it can be accessed from any web
14 browser and it will be available to you from the
15 website.

16 You will -- we'll soon post a link
17 to it so you can get into the application and
18 create your own login and start creating plans.
19 It will be accompanied by a user guide and
20 instructions. The Maptitude for Online
21 Redistricting has been used by several other
22 jurisdictions across the country. And so there's
23 a lot of information and tutorials and videos to
24 help you walk through how -- how you can create a
25 plan. And we'll also be doing a little bit of a

1 demo for you today.

2 Of course, there are other ways
3 that you can give the Commission input. You can
4 provide a description via an email. You can
5 provide the testimony. You can use other
6 software.

7 There are plenty of other tools out
8 there. If you are more comfortable with any of
9 those tools, you can always create your own plan
10 and submit those as a -- as a map, as a P.D.F., as
11 a shapefile, which is a G.I.S. format, a
12 geospatial format. So we will accept anything
13 that you give us and take everything into
14 consideration.

15 All the input that comes in from
16 the public will be posted on the Commission's
17 website. So it will be made public, and anybody
18 can consume any of that information.

19 Now, how do you submit a plan and
20 how will the Commission review it? So once we
21 give you access to the tool, you can create your
22 own draft plans and you can create as many as you
23 want. You can share those plans with all the
24 users who have access to the tool. And honestly,
25 anybody can get in there and create a login and

1 start creating plans, and you can create as many
2 as you want. You can start with, you know, ones
3 that have already been shared if you wanted to use
4 one of the previous users' plans, or you can start
5 from scratch. And what you will be seeing from
6 scratch is the plan that I -- the map that I just
7 showed you, which is the -- the current districts.

8 You can also submit a plan sort of
9 focused on an area. So say you don't want to deal
10 with the whole county, but, you know, you have --
11 you know, you're concerned about the particular
12 district that you live in, or particular
13 neighborhood or an area, then you can work on that
14 and submit that. But make sure that you put in a
15 comment, when you do -- or when you submit there's
16 actually a place where you can put all your
17 contact information.

18 And when you submit it, include a
19 description of what it is that you are -- are
20 focusing on when you submit that so when the
21 Commission reviews it, they get what you're -- you
22 know, they get what you're trying to do here.

23 So there really are multiple ways
24 of submitting the plans and -- and sharing them
25 with the Commission.

1 Now, once it's submitted -- so of
2 course going back, if you are in draft mode, and
3 you want to keep working on it, it will stay in
4 your login. But when you're done and you're happy
5 with your plan, that's when you should submit it.
6 Once it's submitted, you know, you've -- you've --
7 you've sent it in to the Commission, and they will
8 start reviewing it. And then that plan that you
9 have submitted will be made available publicly on
10 the website.

11 The Commission, itself, will be
12 collaborating on plans so they will start their
13 own plans as a group. They will look at what the
14 public has submitted and weigh in on all of the
15 submissions, and then incorporate that into the
16 public draft plan process.

17 The -- the Maptitude for
18 Redistricting software that we have access to also
19 takes a lot of the -- the criteria into
20 consideration. So for example, as Professor Wice
21 said, the, you know, compactness measure, the
22 software has many ways of calculating the
23 compactness and giving you the results for it and
24 then you can choose which one makes sense to --
25 you know, for a draft plan.

1 So -- so that's the entire process.
2 And you know, we hope that it will be easy for you
3 to submit your plans, for you to share any
4 information or thoughts that you have with the
5 Commission, and everything will be taken into
6 consideration.

7 I am going to now hand it over to
8 my colleague, Ashley Tardif, who will walk us
9 through the -- the redistricting tool and
10 hopefully give you a little more insight into the
11 -- into the map.

12 MS. TARDIF: Thank you, Priya.

13 All right. So as we jump in here,
14 this, after you create your login and sign in, is
15 the first screen that you'll come to. And as
16 Priya said, I'm just going to kind of jump through
17 things pretty quickly. But we'll have training
18 guides online. There's lots of access to
19 information as to how to use this tool. But I'm
20 just going to give a quick run-through today so
21 you kind of have an idea of how this works.

22 So when we first come to this page,
23 this is your plan manager page. This is where you
24 can create a new plan, copy plans. Start from
25 here. So the first thing you'll do when you come

1 in here is you'll create a new plan. What's
2 available to you are the current legislative
3 districts. So you'll click on that, and create,
4 you'll give this plan a name. Press okay. And
5 this will generate the current plan.

6 So these are the current districts
7 and all the options that you have to kind of look
8 around in here. I'm going to quickly kind of go
9 through how you can adjust these districts, using
10 either census tracts, census block groups, or
11 census blocks. As Priya said and Jeffrey Wice and
12 everyone has kind of commented on, you want to try
13 to get the population as close to the ideal
14 population as possible within that five percent.

15 So if we kind of zoom in here,
16 using this zoom tool to District 19 and 22, where
17 District 19 is a bit above on that population
18 deviation and 22 is a bit low. So what we want to
19 do here is be able to provide a bit more
20 population to District 22 and take away some from
21 19. So if we come over here, this is how we will
22 start modifying the districts.

23 Your target is the district that
24 you want to add to. So we'll grab 22 from the
25 list. Now, your source can be all the districts

1 or it can be from a specific district, so we want
2 to take away from 19, so we'll select it there.
3 And as you'll see, it'll also highlight in the
4 color over here. So target is green, it
5 highlights green. Your source is red, that'll be
6 highlighted red. Now, if we come in these, you
7 can, as I said, select by census tracts, census
8 block group, or census block. We'll start with
9 block group. And actually, let me zoom in here a
10 little bit more. So these are your census blocks.
11 The numbers here is the population in each of
12 those blocks.

13 So if we come in -- and I'm just
14 going to kind of click things, don't really have a
15 specific plan in mind, but just to kind of give
16 you an idea of how this works. As we click these
17 blocks, if you notice down here, you'll see the
18 pending changes.

19 So this is what happens if we move
20 this block into District 22 from District 19.
21 You'll see how the population changes. You'll see
22 how the -- the deviation then changes. And again,
23 just trying to get within that goal.

24 So mostly paying attention to this
25 percent deviation, you can also see all that

1 demographic information. So your population that
2 is White, Black, Hispanic population, and so on.
3 So if we just select a few districts, or sorry, a
4 few blocks, rather. And so you think that looks
5 pretty good, you'll come over here and hit this
6 checkmark. And that -- those blocks will now be
7 designated to District 22.

8 And so this is kind of like a
9 puzzle is how we like to think about this. You'll
10 move things around, trying to affect that percent
11 deviation, looking for M.M.D. districts, keeping
12 your community together, everything that has been
13 talked about -- talked about.

14 From there, if you are happy with
15 your plan, what you would then do -- well, first,
16 what you would do -- so there are several --
17 you'll check for plan integrity. And this is
18 where you can check to see if there are any areas
19 that are unassigned. You want to make sure that
20 all areas are assigned to a district, as well as
21 looking for any of those noncontiguous districts,
22 so making sure that there are no holes in the
23 districts or districts separated by other
24 districts.

25 Once you've checked for both of

1 those, you'll come over to your share plan and
2 submit to your administrators. Let me click on
3 this quickly. It'll come up with a quick pop-up.
4 If you are not quite meeting that deviation, try
5 to fix those errors if you can or, as Priya said,
6 if you're working on a specific area, just press
7 okay and make a comment about that, saying what
8 you're focusing on, letting the Commission know,
9 you know, what this plant is trying to achieve.

10 And then you'll add in all of your
11 contact information and press okay. And that plan
12 is then submitted to the Commission, where they
13 will review it, as well as then post it to the
14 public on the website.

15 Jeffrey, you have your hand up?
16 Would you like to unmute yourself?

17 MR. WICE: Yeah, just -- just to
18 point out, you took two different districts and
19 moved population around that you guesstimated
20 would be good numbers. But what you did, in fact,
21 you took a district that was about sixteen percent
22 over and one that was about four percent under,
23 and you brought them almost exactly to the maximum
24 difference of five percent, four point nine six,
25 in fact. So that's just a great example.

1 When you look at a map and figure,
2 well, when you're -- I think it was sixteen point
3 something over and a four percent under, I mean
4 how are you going to do this? You have to come to
5 within five percent. That was about nineteen
6 percent over. So by picking a few of those census
7 blocks in Colonie, magic, you came almost
8 approximately equal in the goal. It won't always
9 be that way, but just -- not moving there
10 necessarily, but it's a great example. Thank you.

11 MS. TARDIF: Yeah. Are there any
12 other comments on that?

13 MS. SANKALIA: Ashley, I think it
14 would be good if you just share with the -- with
15 the -- with everybody here the different layers
16 that are available, so that they can see that.
17 You know, we have election districts, we have the
18 M.M.D. districts, and some other information that
19 they can use as reference while they're doing the
20 redistricting.

21 MS. TARDIF: Of course. So let me
22 unselect those to kind of declutter things. We'll
23 zoom back out, using this tool.

24 So if you come over to this display
25 manager, it'll initially should show this map.

1 Sometimes these districts, I know, it can be
2 difficult to see. So just a quick review, you can
3 click on this drop-down, select district I.D., and
4 it'll highlight the districts by color, if that's
5 easier to kind of see what's going on.

6 Unselecting that, we can then come
7 over to this layers list. Now, this layers list
8 shows your selection layers. These again are your
9 census tracts, block groups, and blocks that
10 you'll be working with to kind of move pieces
11 around. And then we have various background
12 layers to give some more information.

13 So we have your villages, your
14 cities, and towns. These are all labeled. If we
15 zoom into Albany City, we've also provided some
16 neighborhood data. So you can see that there.
17 Zooming back out, and we've also provided election
18 districts. So these are highlighted by color.
19 And as we zoom in, zoom in a little bit more here,
20 you can then see that election district with the
21 population within that district, as well.

22 Zooming back out again, and go and
23 turning that layer off, and going back into this
24 area here, we've also highlighted what are
25 currently set as the M.M.D. districts, though, of

1 course, these may change through this process.
2 We'll kind of find out as we go along.

3 So those are some key layers that
4 you can turn on and off to try and help you kind
5 of see where things are, move things around,
6 follow election districts, if you so choose, and
7 so on.

8 MS. SANKALIA: So actually, is
9 there anything else that anybody in the Commission
10 would like Ashley to walk through on the map? I -
11 - I know that, like we both said, that there are
12 lots of -- there's lots of information out there.
13 We will provide a user guide, tutorials, but since
14 we're here, is there anything that we can spend a
15 little more time on?

16 Okay. If not, then I'm going to
17 hand it over to Marie. I think Marie, you have a
18 little -- I'll pass it on to you. Thank you.

19 MS. CAMPBELL: Hi. Often -- often
20 with -- with redistricting, you hear a lot about
21 the criteria that has to be applied in doing the
22 redistricting work. And one of the things that --
23 that often gets discussed is communities of
24 interest, which can be a term that people are not
25 familiar with and don't really understand.

1 So oftentimes when we come out to
2 the public, we're looking for information around
3 communities of interest. And essentially, what --
4 what -- what communities of interest is, it's a
5 neighborhood of community or a group of people who
6 share common interests or passions. It's a way --
7 there are different ways for communities and
8 residents to share information about communities
9 of interests.

10 Oftentimes when people hear
11 community of interest, you know, they -- you think
12 about race or you think about ethnicity, but race
13 and ethnicity cannot serve as a sole definition of
14 communities of interest. Sometimes communities
15 come together around community issues or
16 challenges. They come together around issues of
17 advocacy where there are certain things that they
18 advocate for relative to better health care,
19 relative to -- to better services, relative to
20 better schools.

21 There -- there could be places and
22 communities where a significant amount of the
23 community tend to gather -- gather. There could
24 be festivals or events that the communities -- the
25 community gather around. A lot of times, you

1 know, it can be hard to define, but when you think
2 about the -- the ways that connect the residents
3 in your community, those all relate back to
4 communities of interests.

5 In some communities, there's
6 commonality around issues of income, issues of
7 poverty, educational levels, homeownership, or the
8 lack of homeownership, housing issues. There's
9 many different ways to describe communities of
10 interest.

11 MS. SIBILIA: Marie, this is
12 Patricia -- Patricia Sibilialia. I just wanted to
13 cut in a little bit on what you're saying, only
14 because Princeton did a very massive set of work -
15 - Princeton University did a very massive set of
16 work around redistricting and trying to end
17 gerrymandering.

18 And because communities of interest
19 were so important in the redistricting process,
20 they have a tool called Representable. And this
21 is where -- it is a tool that the public,
22 basically, you have to -- you don't need to know
23 anything about mapping. You don't need to know
24 anything about redistricting. It will walk you
25 through and allow you, as well as any other people

1 you want to work together in your community for,
2 draw maps of communities of interest. And then it
3 very easily will allow you to export those and to
4 send them in to us because communities of interest
5 are the backbone of really good redistricting,
6 people coming together.

7 So apologies for cutting in there,
8 Marie. But I just wanted to let people know that
9 Representable is a tool that's -- we've promoted
10 quite heavily for people who are not technical,
11 but who really have an interest and very much want
12 to get engaged. And this is a way for the common
13 person to really get engaged in redistricting.

14 So thank you for allowing me to cut
15 in on you.

16 MS. CAMPBELL: No -- no problem.
17 No problem, Patricia. But again, community
18 interests are all those things that you might
19 think about when you're considering why your
20 community needs to be maintained intact. It's all
21 those things that might come to mind. It could be
22 history. It could be ancestry. It could be
23 religion. It could be language.

24 So the tool that -- that Patricia
25 just provided to everyone sounds like an excellent

1 tool to inform a discussion around communities of
2 interest and coming up with more different
3 definition around what makes your communities a
4 community of interest.

5 Thank you. I'm now going to turn
6 it back over to Larry.

7 CHAIR VOLK: Thank you, Marie.

8 The -- the Commission has received
9 two written testimonies. And while the
10 individuals who submitted those are not appearing
11 today, I would like to read them into the record.

12 The first one is as follows. New
13 Scotland is a mix of rural and agricultural areas
14 in the south and west, expanding suburban areas in
15 the north and east, and multiple hamlets
16 throughout the town. The Town of New Scotland was
17 one of the fastest-growing community --
18 municipalities in Albany County over the last ten
19 years, according to the 2020 census, growing by
20 four forty-eight people, to nine thousand, ninety-
21 six, a growth rate of five point two percent,
22 while Albany County grew by three point five
23 percent.

24 Currently, New Scotland is split
25 between two county legislative districts, the 33rd

1 and the 38th. Since New Scotland, nine thousand,
2 ninety-six, has too many people to fit into the
3 ideal size legislative district, eight thousand,
4 one hundred five, New Scotland must be split
5 between more than one legislative district.

6 According to the data released by
7 the Albany County Redistricting Commission, both
8 districts that currently cover New Scotland will
9 need to add population to fit within the allowed
10 population deviation allowed under state law.
11 Additionally, most of the districts bordering the
12 districts that include New Scotland are also
13 underpopulated, as well, which means they will
14 also need to add population.

15 New Scotland should not be split
16 between more than two legislative districts, to
17 ensure that New Scotland is adequately represented
18 in the county legislature. While New Scotland's
19 legislative districts must expand, it is essential
20 that they expand to include similar communities of
21 interest in either the Towns of Bethlehem or
22 Guilderland.

23 New Scotland is unique in Albany
24 County, in that five different school districts
25 cross into New Scotland, Voorheesville, Bethlehem,

1 Guilderland, Berne-Knox-Westerlo, Ravena-Coeymans-
2 Selkirk, and Greenville. However, the vast
3 majority of the town's residents reside in the
4 Voorheesville and Bethlehem School Districts.

5 Additionally, under the new state
6 legislative districts recently enacted into law,
7 New Scotland is placed in the same assembly
8 district as Guilderland and the same senate
9 district as Guilderland and Bethlehem. New
10 Scotland is not included in either the assembly or
11 senate districts that the hill towns are located
12 in.

13 As one of the fastest-growing
14 communities in the county, New Scotland should
15 have its representation in the county legislature
16 grow, not shrink. If New Scotland is split more
17 than twice, there is a greater chance that new
18 Scotland will not be represented by a resident of
19 New Scotland.

20 The current county legislative
21 districts that currently encompass New Scotland
22 both are fairly representative of the population
23 of New Scotland. The 33rd District includes the
24 villages of Voorheesville and the northeast
25 portion of the New -- of New Scotland and includes

1 Slingerlands in Bethlehem.

2 The 38th district includes the more
3 southern part of New Scotland and also runs into
4 Bethlehem, taking in communities to the south and
5 west of Elm Avenue. The current structure of
6 these districts have represented New Scotland
7 well, and the cores of these districts should be
8 preserved. However, since these districts
9 seemingly need to expand to include more
10 population, they should expand into either
11 Guilderland or Bethlehem, not the hill towns or
12 Coeymans as New Scotland is much closer to
13 communities of interest with its neighbors in
14 Guilderland and Bethlehem than the hill towns or
15 Coeymans.

16 And that was submitted by Dan.

17 The other one that we received --
18 just a second, let me find it again -- is as
19 follows. I am from the City of Watervliet, which
20 is one point four square miles in land area. We
21 have a population of roughly ten thousand. Yet,
22 despite our small geographic and demographic size,
23 Watervliet is currently split up into three
24 different county districts, Districts 14, 15, and
25 16, represented of course by three different

1 county legislators, McLean, Beston, Ward.

2 I would say that with one mayor,
3 two council people, and a very small budget, the
4 City of Watervliet represents a community of
5 interest. The current three-way split of
6 Watervliet makes it very difficult for the
7 residents of our city to collaborate in advocating
8 for community when communicating with our Albany
9 County legislators.

10 Please put Watervliet in a single
11 district when drawing the new district maps.

12 Thank you, Lois.

13 So those are written requests --
14 written commentaries that we have received. We're
15 certainly willing to receive further ones if
16 anyone is interested. Those can be submitted.
17 There's information on the website as to how to
18 submit if you go to redistricting at Albany County
19 dot gov, slash -- I'm sorry. Go to redistricting
20 at -- I was right the first time -- at Albany
21 County NY dot gov.

22 Thank you very much.

23 Patricia, would you like to discuss
24 the -- the Commission's website?

25 MS. SIBILIA: I apologize. I

1 think, actually, it's -- we're going to go to Tom
2 first and then I'll -- I'll do the website, if
3 that's okay.

4 MR. CLINGAN: That sounds good.
5 I'm assuming everyone can hear me. My name is Tom
6 Clingan. I'm a member of the Redistricting
7 Commission. And I want to speak for a minute
8 about the outreach and publicity we did for this
9 first public hearing.

10 We do expect to have at least four
11 more public hearings by either the Albany County
12 Redistricting Commission or the Majority Minority
13 District -- Redistricting Subcommittee. These
14 hearings could be held together.

15 CHAIR VOLK: You're frozen, Tom,
16 F.Y.I.

17 MR. CLINGAN: Am I better now? Is
18 that okay? Okay. Certainly, use our website to
19 try to reach out to the public. We also publish
20 the legally required legal notices in both of the
21 county's newspapers, make people aware of it. But
22 not everybody sees those. So we made an effort go
23 the extra mile to seek out what are called display
24 advertisements, advertisements similar to a
25 commercial ad, in both the Sunday Times Union and

1 in Thursday Times Union that preceded this public
2 hearing.

3 We put similar display ads, even
4 larger in size, in several of the county's weekly
5 newspapers, the Altamont Enterprise, and the two
6 Spotlight newspapers that cover the Towns of ...
7 and Colonie. The effort was really made to try to
8 group people who may not read legal notices and
9 make them more aware that we're seeking public
10 comment at public hearings of this like -- of this
11 kind.

12 The Commission also posted flyers
13 in Stewart's Shops throughout the county. We
14 reached out various blogs, media organizations,
15 and we're hoping to do more in the future with
16 social media. We're looking for your help. We're
17 looking for your advice to let us know how we can
18 encourage more public participation in the future
19 hearings of Commission and the M.M.D.

20 And we would ask you to contact us
21 by way of the link that is shown on our website
22 and let us know how we can better do this when it
23 comes to making the public aware of future public
24 hearings. That's it.

25 Larry, do I turn this to you?

1 CHAIR VOLK: It goes back to
2 Patricia.

3 MS. SIBILIA: Hi, everyone. I'm
4 Patricia Sibilialia. I've been doing a lot of the
5 administrative work in addition to other stuff for
6 the Commission. I'm going to share my screen and
7 start to show you the website a little bit so that
8 you get an understanding of where we currently are
9 with it.

10 So as I share, I'm assuming
11 everyone can see this. We are hosted, obviously,
12 under Albany County's website. If you were to
13 just come into Albany County site, under
14 government, we have our own page, the
15 Redistricting Commission, which is what you're
16 seeing here.

17 And on the left-hand side, you see
18 some navigation here. You have the fact that the
19 Majority Minority District has its own page. Its
20 importance in our process is very high. You look
21 at you can see our meetings and hearings. You can
22 look at the bios of the Albany County
23 Redistricting Commissioners. And we have some
24 F.A.Q.s and a guide to the Local Law 8 for 2019,
25 which is the law that established this Commission.

1 So it also -- we're trying to make
2 it prominent, if you wanted to speak, that it's
3 right here, as well as right at the top of the
4 page. Okay?

5 We are -- also have a calendar
6 here. It's showing, right now, our Commission's
7 public hearing as -- as we're in it now. So when
8 you start to look down here, if you go to our
9 meetings and hearings page, you'll see that a lot
10 of it is about this particular hearing, but it
11 will be -- will -- will particularly keep the same
12 sort of format going forward if we continue to be
13 doing it remote, where you -- people can watch and
14 listen to it on YouTube.

15 But we wanted to make sure that if
16 you did not have the bandwidth to do that, that
17 you can listen in by phone, and people can always
18 take advantage of that.

19 We do ask that if you want to
20 submit a statement, you have to preregister. And
21 we will come back to you with that process with
22 how to participate in the meeting.

23 And we also have out -- we have
24 been recording our Redistricting Commission
25 meetings. We meet every -- every Monday at four

1 p.m., and as well as we sometimes have a second
2 meeting, because there's a lot of work for us to
3 do. And the M.M.D. Subcommittee has their own
4 meetings. And then there's also the public
5 hearings.

6 But we wanted to make sure you know
7 that at any point, if you have input for us,
8 because we very much want input into the process
9 in order for it to be your maps, you can email us
10 at the redistricting, or if you really want to
11 focus on M.M.D., you can go to M.M.D.
12 redistricting. I will note that this email, the
13 redistricting at Albany County NY dot gov, it does
14 go to pretty much the entire Commission, and that
15 includes both the Albany County Redistricting
16 Commission and the M.M.D. Subcommittee
17 Redistricting Commission, because we want to
18 ensure that we're working in close partnership
19 between the two -- the two committees -- the two
20 Commissions.

21 If I go back to the main page, you
22 can see here that there's background on basically
23 redistricting and the local law. We will build
24 this out more so that there are resources that are
25 available to people who want to dig in, in

1 understanding more about redistricting. So we'll
2 end up posting quite a bit of some of the legal
3 legislation at the federal, the state, and the
4 local level.

5 And we do note that, as Professor
6 Wice has said, we know that there was the New York
7 State Law that passed in October last year, that
8 basically redefined what the County had passed.
9 It -- it actually strengthened it by having, as
10 Professor Wice has said, the amount of change
11 between the districts to go from ten percent to
12 five percent.

13 So when you look at the Albany
14 County Redistricting Commission section, it talks
15 really about the fact that we've been meeting
16 regularly. It gives you that -- that sort of a
17 background. This will be updated regularly as
18 things happen. And so it will always allow you
19 really to see what's current for us.

20 Obviously, our YouTube Channel, in
21 which this meeting is live streamed, as well as
22 our regular meetings are going to be live streamed
23 on, will be able to be seen on that channel.
24 You're just going to click, and you'll get into
25 our YouTube Channel.

1 The Majority Minority District, it
2 -- it has its own separate page because of its
3 importance. And it goes into the background and
4 why what -- what is going on with them and why
5 they were established. And it talks again about
6 the different commissioners, if you open them. So
7 if we -- we take, actually, Marie, she's the
8 chair, you would see her background and her lovely
9 picture and so forth.

10 Similarly, if you wanted to see
11 more about us as commissioners, we have our bios
12 here. So I'll -- I'll choose myself for now and
13 show you that it gives our backgrounds. So this
14 way you know who is serving you in this process.

15 We have an F.A.Q. page at this
16 point. And again, some of this stuff will get
17 built out even further. So we're -- we're still
18 in the process of doing that.

19 And there's the guide to Local Law
20 8, which passed, really, to try and address the
21 fact that there had been issues in the past with
22 Albany County and there really needed to be an
23 independent way of drawing the district lines. So
24 you can take a look at that.

25 I'm trying to see what else I can

1 really show you, but the key here is that we
2 definitely want input, and our webpage is easy to
3 find. Again, it's under -- if you go under the --
4 if you go into the Albany County site, and under
5 government, you just click on Redistricting
6 Commission.

7 So at this point, as I said, we're
8 going to continue to build out the website and to
9 have a lot more information there for you. We
10 welcome input as much as -- as people want to give
11 it. And we'll be posting a lot more resources for
12 you to be able to dig in, to submit testimony
13 more, and to really learn about redistricting.

14 So I appreciate everyone watching
15 this and their involvement. And I shall turn it
16 over to Larry.

17 CHAIR VOLK: Thank you, Patricia.
18 That's -- that's -- that's very helpful.

19 I really wanted to go back to the
20 two pieces of written testimony that we've
21 received, and to make sure that everyone
22 understands the types of concerns that -- that can
23 be voiced and why we really need to hear from the
24 public.

25 One of these commenters was

1 concerned about how the City of Watervliet has
2 been -- the lines have been drawn there to break
3 Watervliet into three separate districts.

4 And the individual from the Town of
5 New Scotland was concerned that -- as I read it,
6 there are really two concerns. One is that there
7 be no more than two districts involving the Town
8 of New Scotland. And secondly, that at least he
9 believes that there is much more of an affinity
10 with the Towns of Guilderland and Bethlehem than
11 there is with the hill towns. And so to the
12 extent that the Town of New Scotland needs to be
13 combined with other areas, he is suggesting that
14 those areas be either in -- in Guilderland or
15 Bethlehem.

16 So I think that that indicates, at
17 least from a geographic perspective, the types of
18 -- of things that -- that constitute a community
19 of interest. And the -- as Marie was talking, and
20 as everyone else has -- has stated as well, that
21 communities of interest is really a fundamental
22 foundation of -- of redistricting, and that we all
23 need to feel that we are represented.

24 And by being represented, it means
25 not only that we have the opportunity to vote, but

1 it means that we have the opportunity to be
2 connected with people with whom we share some
3 things. You're not going to -- they're not going
4 to be cookie cutters; not everybody else that's in
5 your community of interest has all of the same
6 interest. But there's going to be one or more
7 specific interests that unite the group.

8 And so very often that's
9 geographic, but it may not be. I know I have seen
10 indications of -- of communities of interest,
11 particularly in -- in New York City, where --
12 where it is much more local, much more
13 neighborhood, and the neighborhood has defined
14 characteristics and that -- that those
15 neighborhoods feel very strongly that they need
16 not be broken up.

17 And so we would welcome your
18 knowledge because, as much as we come from various
19 parts of Albany County, we don't know all of the
20 neighborhoods. We don't know all of the
21 communities of interest. And unless the public
22 tells us, we have no way of knowing. So I just
23 wanted to go back and -- and reemphasize that.

24 Marie, do you want to talk further
25 on that, as well?

1 MS. CAMPBELL: I -- I agree with --
2 with everything that Larry has just expressed.
3 We're going to hear testimony from someone who
4 requested to speak who has just arrived. And so
5 we will admit him.

6 MS. SIBILIA: If you could -- if
7 you could state your name and where you're from?
8 But also, I see that you -- you -- you muted
9 already the live stream. So that's important. So
10 go ahead and you do have permission to share.

11 MR. DAHL: Hello, everyone. For
12 those of you who don't know me, my name is Lars
13 Dahl. And I'm a resident of the City of Albany.
14 I'm actually giving -- speaking here today on
15 behalf of the League of Women Voters, Albany
16 County.

17 So to begin, Albany County has had
18 a pretty fraught relationship with redistricting,
19 as I'm sure you all are aware. For the past three
20 decades, maps that have been drawn by the County
21 have been rejected by the court system, costing
22 the taxpayers millions, and silencing the voices
23 of all kinds of different Albany County residents.

24 And this has led to a lot of public
25 outrage. The public is particularly displeased

1 that previous commissions have drawn districts
2 that tried to dilute the power of minority voters
3 in drawing lines that are designed to favor
4 incumbents and protecting themselves, instead of
5 drawing maps that actually represent the
6 communities of interest across Albany.

7 And so to that end, the League is
8 proud to have successfully advocated for the
9 creation of this independent redistricting
10 commission that I see here in front of me. And we
11 hope that you work to avoid the pitfalls of
12 previous commissions, also work to draft fair maps
13 that reflect our county and the citizens of
14 Albany.

15 So in order to achieve this goal of
16 fair maps, we ask for three things. One, we ask
17 that the Commission adopts a map that protects the
18 power of non-White voters to elect candidates of
19 their preference. And this is because the non-
20 White voters of this county have struggled with
21 representation.

22 The -- the county legislature is
23 overwhelmingly White, despite the increasing
24 diversification of the residents living there.
25 And our county is around ten percent less white

1 than it was last time we were up for
2 redistricting. So it should be at least the same
3 number of majority minority districts, and
4 ideally, even more. That way more people of color
5 can have a seat at the table and be able to be in
6 our county legislature.

7 We also ask that the Commission
8 also prioritizes communities of interests.
9 Keeping like-minded communities together is an
10 essential part of drawing fair maps and it's
11 really been lacking last couple of maps by the
12 Commission. Communities can be anything from
13 where people worship together, to community
14 spaces, parks, city, village, town lines, just
15 neighborhoods, or wherever residents form strong
16 bonds with each other.

17 And lastly, we do ask that the
18 Commission be more transparent. We do appreciate
19 this Commission having hearings like this one and
20 streaming the hearings on YouTube, but we do think
21 that there's a lot of room for improvement. For
22 example, the Commission has not published
23 recordings of its meetings. And if that is not --
24 if that continues to be the case, we ask that the
25 Commission at least post meeting agendas and notes

1 for all of the weekly meetings. That way, the
2 public has a better idea of what's going on.

3 As of now, the only agenda that
4 we've been able to easily find on the Commission's
5 website is a progress report from a month ago.
6 And that's really not enough to understand what
7 the Commission has been doing for the past five or
8 so months, ever since October when the Commission
9 started meeting.

10 Other things we'd like to
11 Commission to do to be more transparent include
12 giving more information about the timeline, so
13 where we are in the process and what the future
14 looks like so people know what to expect and when
15 they should plan on testifying, as well as also
16 publicizing the work of the Commission more so
17 you'll hear from more residents and everyday
18 people can see what's happening.

19 That's it for my testimony from the
20 League of Women Voters. On a personal note, I
21 would like to direct the Commissioners' attention
22 to a map I drew myself and have submitted to the
23 Commission last night. Please note, again, that
24 that map reflects my individual opinions alone.

25 And with that, thank you for the

1 time and I'm more than happy to take any questions
2 the Commission might have, either about my map or
3 from the testimony from the League. So thank you
4 all for listening to me.

5 CHAIR VOLK: Thank you, Mr. Dahl.
6 I don't believe that we had planned on -- on
7 addressing questions at this point in time. I
8 didn't know if you wanted to -- to share the map
9 and -- and discuss it, what you were trying to
10 achieve?

11 MR. DAHL: Sure. I'm more than
12 happy to share my screen now. Give me one second.
13 Can everyone see my screen?

14 CHAIR VOLK: Yes.

15 MR. DAHL: Perfect. So here's the
16 map that I, again, drew myself to give insight
17 into the Albany County redistricting process.
18 This was done using free -- free software that you
19 -- anyone can access online and view. You all
20 should have received the link to view this,
21 yourself.

22 I'm going to just -- if you want me
23 to comment on it, I'll highlight a couple of the
24 key things.

25 One, one of the key things I did

1 that you can see easily is all of these lines
2 represent the different town -- town and city
3 limits. As you can see, this map doesn't do a
4 perfect job, but certainly does a much better job
5 of the existing maps of actually respecting those
6 borders between the different communities. That
7 way when someone asks who's my county legislator,
8 someone can say, oh, what town do you live in, and
9 be able to -- easily be able to understand where
10 they are. And it also allows for residents of
11 towns which form very good communities of interest
12 to actually be able to advocate for themselves by
13 keeping themselves whole.

14 The most important thing I'd like
15 to point out about these districts is that there's
16 actually the creation of five seats.

17 So District 5, 3, 4, 1, and 2, all
18 of those districts have a voting-age population
19 over fifty percent. That is up for Black voters.
20 That's important because they allow those
21 districts to consistently elect people of color.

22 In addition to those -- keeping
23 those five that the -- that previous maps already
24 have, District 7 does, if you combine the Hispanic
25 population and the Black population, which is how

1 the court defines minority, the voters in the last
2 round of redistricting, that also is majority
3 Hispanic and Black. So that way, there's more
4 ability for more people to be elected to the
5 county legislature that are non-White. So this
6 will further increase representation of a
7 community that has seen a lack of representation.

8 So that's -- that's a quick example
9 of how maps can easily draw and create more
10 additional majority minority districts while
11 preserving the existing districts and keeping fair
12 maps throughout the entire region.

13 So that's a quick presentation on
14 my maps.

15 CHAIR VOLK: Thank you very much,
16 Mr. Dahl. I really appreciate your going to that
17 trouble and appreciate your -- your being here to
18 testify today. Thank you.

19 MR. DAHL: Thank you.

20 CHAIR VOLK: And to the best of my
21 knowledge, there are no further individuals
22 wishing to testify. And so accordingly, unless
23 anyone has anything further that should come
24 before this public hearing, we will close it and
25 thank everyone for participating. And everyone

1 who is watching or listening, thank you for being
2 here, and we look forward to your continued
3 engagement with the Commission. Thank you.

4 (The public hearing concluded at
5 5:31 p.m.)

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1 STATE OF NEW YORK

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3 I, HOWARD HUBBARD, do hereby certify that the foregoing
4 was reported by me, in the cause, at the time and
5 place, as stated in the caption hereto, at Page 1
6 hereof; that the foregoing typewritten transcription
7 consisting of pages 1 through 69, is a true record of
8 all proceedings had at the hearing.

8

9

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto
subscribed my name, this the 16th day of March, 2022.

10

11



HOWARD HUBBARD, Reporter

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