

District 14

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To: Redistricting Commission <RedistrictingCommission@albanycountyny.gov>

 1 attachments (973 KB)

Healthy Eating Food Security Report July 2019 final.pdf;

Dear Commissioners,

The proposed map of District 14 is one that is very challenging for our rapidly-diminishing community and highly detrimental to its' economic future. This district is traditionally a Colonie/Menands seat; however, in your recent proposed draft, it adds more of a separate municipality as well as divides census tracts. The commission has taken district 14 and removed the contiguous Loudonville portion within the natural roadway boundaries of Menands Road to Rt 9 and Rt 9 South to the Albany line and added to it more of the city of Watervliet. It is my hope this public comment will tell you the story of our community and how negatively impactful your map changes will be to a village which has already lost so much. The village of Menands may be the fastest growing community in all of Albany County, but I quote Kevin O'Conner of the Advance Albany County Alliance "Broadway [in Menands and North Albany] looks like a ghost town".

In recent years, all of the grocery stores in Menands pulled out, in addition to the bank, pharmacy, wine shop and their ancillary businesses. Yet, Watervliet and Loudonville (west of Rt. 9) have grocery stores, multiple wine stores, pharmacies and banks. Due to traffic being extremely heavy on Rt. 9 and Rt. 32 at peak hours, it has become untenable to drive west of Rt. 9 or north to Watervliet to go grocery shopping. This has resulted in county sales tax receipts going across the river to Rensselaer County; simply by our residents shopping in the many retail shops, grocery stores, big box stores, etc. where they will be able to get there more easily than any stores in Albany County. This is due to a lack of investment in the mutual Rt. 32 commercial corridors of North Albany and Menands.

Almost every single grocery retailer has told us they will not come, except for one: C&S Wholesale Grocers. Their representatives came to see Menands, Loudonville and North Albany on May 3, 2022 and spoke to us about bringing a Grand Union to our community. I was, up until your proposed final draft, able to point to the high-wealth Loudonville area of district 14 that I would help bring to the store. I was also able to point out that the Assembly representative lived in the district on Paul Holly Drive; sadly, I can no longer do that. That section of Loudonville, as well as Menands and North Albany are now federally recognized food deserts. My colleague to the south in district 3, an MMD, is deeply invested in Menands getting a grocery store as we have a contiguous bus line (and a bus plus!) and the only location in our mutual districts set up for a grocery store on that stretch of Rt. 32. I have attached an Albany County Health Department study which confirms our food desert status, and shows that we are a contiguous community with the portion of Loudonville you are proposing to remove. In this study, I ask you to also read about the ill-health effects this food desert has had on our mutual communities, especially our children.

When Menands completed its comprehensive plan survey, the single most requested necessity was a grocery store. This proposed map puts the possibility of a grocery store in Menands in dire jeopardy; in fact, it may end the opportunity altogether. The representative of the 25th district will have

absolutely no incentive to ensure there is a supported grocery store in Menands, thus taking away that portion of Loudonville will negatively impact Menands for years to come - forever losing a place where we can shop, while also seeing our neighbors, family and friends. This is what Menands/Loudonville used to be until they all pulled out of our community. This map compounds this problem in spades.

This section of Loudonville and Menands is also a very tightly-knit community in our familial and social relationships. Many of the residents who grew up in Menands or Loudonville have moved either up the hill into the portion of Loudonville that is proposed to be removed or down the hill into Menands (you ask in the 14th LD (do you live "up the hill" or "down the hill). For example, I grew up on Paul Holly Drive, Loudonville (in your proposed 25) and now I live in Menands (your proposed 14),. The proposed map redistricts out the Assembly representative for Colonie/Menands (who was the county legislator for 14 before he was elected to the assembly), my parents, the Mayor of Menands Grenier's sister and family, and Village Trustee Marsh's mother (just to start). This is the same for multiple families who grew up in Menands and now live on Patroon Place, Colonial Green, Roost Estates, etc. In fact, a large number of retirees downsize from that section of Loudonville into Dutch Village (in Menands) or to Loudonwood East. When I first got an apartment in the Capital District (after growing up in Loudonville) it was in Dutch Village. This is how close we are as a community. It should also be mentioned that this bifurcation contradicts the census tracts for Menands, Colonie and Watervliet.

Access to Little's Lake, on the corner of Rt 378 (Menands Road) and Van Rennsealer was gifted to those residents of Loudonville and Menands and now it is proposed to be in a separate district from Menands. Every single kid who grew up in Menands participated in Cub Scouts there, swam in the lake, as well as hiked all the trails there. Wolfert's Roost Country Club has also traditionally been in the 14th legislative district and has numerous members from Menands (including my own family) and the section of Loudonville that surrounds the property. Wolfert's Roost is a community gathering place for residents of the current 14th legislative district as we do not have many restaurants in Menands or Loudonville.

Additionally, the proposed 25 and 14 maps cut North Sage Hill Lane down the middle. Years ago, the residents there signed a petition to be annexed into the village of Menands as it makes no sense whatsoever that they are not in Menands (Colonie refused to allow it). North Sage Hill is the entryway into a massive development in Menands and now a limited number of homes, on one side of the street, will have different representation. Unfortunately, this would be very confusing for the voting constituency to see signs for one candidate at the entryway of their development, and then voting for a different candidate.

When I meet with residents about their community concerns, we walk about the forever wild area of the Sage Estate and Little's Lake (both natural wonders) as a part of the same community. It would be odd that they are no longer together in a single legislative district.

It makes more sense to take away Watervliet so that separate municipalities have distinct representatives, which I understand to be a statutory guideline of the commission's mission. As the elected representative for LD 14, it would not be in my best interest to take away Watervliet as it is a Democrat-rich area, however, it would be in the best interest of the district so that municipalities are not competing over representation in the legislature. This has been a significant issue when it comes to grants and other county funding opportunities. For example, we are in desperate need of a grocery store in Menands and we have been working with the economic development arm of the county to obtain funding, should that come to pass, it will appear that only one section of the district is being

helped because we are distinctly two different communities. If there was more of the district that had to be taken out, the northern portion of election district 57 would likely make more sense, possibly down to Turner Lane because that is where the community engagement ends.

It is self-evident that the proposed map was created with little knowledge of the tightly-knit community we have here. That being said, I do not expect the commission to be aware of all the complexities of 39 individual communities, but please, I am imploring you, do not do this to us.

I thank you for your kind consideration of my comments above and I am available to you at any time for questions or even a tour of the affected areas.

Sincerely,
Alison McLean Lane, 14th LD