

Warren County Redistricting Plan 2011



*Recommended by the Planning Redistricting Advisory Committee
March 30, 2011*

*Approved by the Board of Supervisors
_____, 2011*

Warren County Board of Supervisors

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Redistricting Advisory Committee Minutes

- February 23, 2011
- March 16, 2011
- March 30, 2011

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Article VII, Section 5 of the Virginia Constitution provides that governing bodies of counties, cities and towns are to be popularly elected. The Constitution allows elections at large or by districts within the locality. If elections are by districts, the locality must redistrict each 10 years beginning in 1971.

Warren County must redistrict this year and the districts must be drawn "to give as nearly as is practicable representation in proportion to the population of the district." Districts must "be composed of contiguous and compact territory". From a legal perspective the County must ensure that there is no more than a +5% or -5% deviation between the populations of each district.

Based on the time limitations given, the following schedule was outlined in order to have new district boundaries approved in time for the November 2011 elections:

- February – Receipt of population data from the State
- March/April 2011 – Development and review of the proposed changes to the election districts by the Redistricting Advisory Committee
- April/May 2011 - Adoption of proposed Election District Boundaries by the Board of Supervisors

At its meeting on February 1, 2011, the Board of Supervisors appointed the following individuals to a Redistricting Advisory Committee:

- Member of the Board of Supervisors
- Member of the Warren County School Board
- Member of the Warren County Electoral Board
- County Administrator
- County Attorney
- Registrar
- Member of the local NAACP Chapter

The Purpose of the Redistricting Advisory Committee is to review the existing election district boundaries and the 2010 Census results and make suggestions and recommendations on proposed changes to the district boundaries including recommendations on adjustments to the precincts.

CENSUS

The 2010 Census showed that Warren County's population increased from 31,584 to 37,439 or an increase of 5,855 persons (18.53%). Based on this population, each of the County's five election districts should have an ideal population of 7,488 or be within the range of 7,132 to 7,862 persons.

CRITERIA

During its initial meeting on February 23, 2011, the Redistricting Advisory Committee adopted the following criteria to consider when adjusting the boundaries of the election districts:

Rank	Criteria
1	Keep current polling places within their districts.
2	Maintain diversity in each district.
3	Do not create/use any imaginary lines/use major boundaries.
4	Minimize repeat of voter moves.
5	Minimize splitting of subdivisions/neighborhoods.
6	Maintain balance (to the extent possible) of in-town voters in each district.
7	Do not disfranchise any School Board member.
8	Do not disenfranchise any Supervisor.

PROPOSED OPTIONS

The Redistricting Advisory Committee has recommended the following three options to be considered by the Board of Supervisors:

Option #1

Criteria

- Option #1 meets 7 of the adopted criteria.
- Both of the polling places in the proposed Shenandoah District are located outside the district but within the one mile allowable limit. Currently the Youth Center (East Shenandoah) is located outside the boundaries. The proposed shift of boundaries would place the Front Royal VFC (Town – West Shenandoah) outside the district as well. There are no facilities that currently meet the requirements as a potential polling place inside the Shenandoah District to allow the criteria to be met.

Pros

- Provides for the fewest changes for both voters and the Registrar's Office.
- Provides some room for growth in the Happy Creek District with a population of 7,334 persons. This will help to accommodate expected growth in the Happy Creek Knolls and Swan Farm area of Town.
- Maintains clear boundary lines between most districts.

Cons

- Perhaps does not shift enough voters which will necessitate changes in 2020.

Option #2

Criteria

- Option #2 meets 6 of the adopted criteria.
- Both of the polling places in the proposed Shenandoah District are located outside the district but within the one mile allowable limit.
- In addition, Option #2 repeats voter moves by shifting voters along the Route 55 West Corridor back to the Fork District.

Pros

- Provides room for growth in the Happy Creek District with a population of 7,148 persons. This will help to accommodate expected growth in the Happy Creek Knolls and Swan Farm area of Town.
- Provides a "traditional" Fork District by adding back in the area north of Route 55 West and the North Fork of the Shenandoah River.
- Provides a "super majority" Town voting district with the North Fork having an in-town population of 73.8%.
- Cuts off "salient" between Happy Creek District and Shenandoah District out towards Howellsville area.

Cons

- Shifts some residents that were shifted in 2000 (from Fork District to North River District and now back to the Fork District).
- Reduces the Fork District's in-town population from 40.4% to 28.3%.
- This configuration will mostly likely provide split voting districts or even precincts for the House of Delegates.

Option #3

Criteria

- Option #3 meets 5 of the adopted criteria.
- Both of the polling places in the proposed Shenandoah District are located outside the district but within the one mile allowable limit.

- In addition, Option #3 repeats voter moves by shifting voters along the Route 55 West Corridor back to the Fork District.
- Option #3 also fails to maintain “balance” between the number of in-town voters between the districts by shifting a significant number of in-town voters from the Fork District to the North River District.

Pros

- Provides a more balanced population between districts – highest variance from the ideal population is - 3.44%(South River).
- Provides a “traditional” Fork District by adding back in the area north of Route 55 West and the North Fork of the Shenandoah River.
- Cuts off “salient” between Happy Creek District and Shenandoah District out towards Howellsville area.

Cons

- Shifts some residents that were shifted in 2000 (from Fork District to North River District and now back to the Fork District).
- There is no room for “growth” in the Happy Creek District which is anticipated to have the highest growth in the next 10 years.
- South River would have the lowest population and would probably require significant modification after the 2020 Census.
- This configuration will mostly likely provide split voting districts or even precincts for the House of Delegates.

Precincts

Each of the county’s five election districts is divided into polling precincts. This is done for a number of reasons including:

- Federal law requires that no more than 5,000 voters be assigned to any one precinct. By population, each of our districts would need at least two precincts to meet this requirement based on the population levels.
- Some of the districts, because of the drive distance, have historically had additional precincts.

The location of the polling precincts has changed over the years primarily due to the need to meet handicapped accessibility requirements including paved parking spaces. For these reasons, public facilities generally served as the best locations when available. The number of existing precincts is broken out as follows:

- Fork District (3) – Fork Town Precinct (Warren County Government Center), Otterburn Precinct (Rivermont Fire Department), Waterlick Precinct (The Front Royal –Warren County Airport).
- Happy Creek District (2) Happy Creek Precinct (Warren County High School) and Linden Precinct (Linden Fire Department).
- North River District (3) Reliance Precinct (Reliance Methodist Church), Riverton Precinct (A.S. Rhodes Elementary School), and North River Town Precinct (Old Warren County Middle School).

- Shenandoah District (2) East Shenandoah Precinct (R.E. Santmyers Youth Center), and Town-West Shenandoah Precinct (Front Royal Fire Department).
- South River District (3) South River Town Precinct (Skyline High School), Bentonville Precinct (South Warren Fire Department), and Browntown Precinct (Browntown Baptist Church Fellowship Hall).
- Central Absentee Precinct (CAP) (Warren County Government Center).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Redistricting

At its meeting on March 30, 2011, the Redistricting Advisory Committee has unanimously recommended that the Board of Supervisors consider the adoption of Option #1 for the following reasons:

- Provides for the fewest number of voter changes.
- Coupled with the proposed House of Delegates District changes, it impacts the smallest number of residents and potential voters.
- Provides for growth in the Happy Creek District.
- Will have the least impact on staff of the Registrar's Office for implementation.

Precincts

During the review process for the redistricting, the Advisory Committee evaluated the existing polling precincts and has made the following recommendations:

- Consolidate the Otterburn and Waterlick polling precincts into the Otterburn precinct at the Rivermont Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department. Because the two existing polling precincts are located only 2 miles from each other, the time and distance impacts will be minimal for voters. Currently the Waterlick (Airport) precinct has issues with lighting in the parking lot that needs to be addressed. The Board of Elections has reviewed the Otterburn precinct location and feels that it can adequately accommodate the additional voters. The consolidation could save County taxpayers and estimated \$1,500-\$4,500 (based on 1-3 elections per year).
- Split the Riverton precinct by sending the in-Town portion to the North River Town precinct and the County portion to the "Riverton" precinct located at a new location at the North Warren Volunteer Fire and Rescue Company. This precinct would also include the Reliance precinct. The existing Riverton precinct and the North River Town precinct are only 2 miles apart. Currently, voters in the Route 340/522 corridor east of Route 340/522 have to come in to vote at A. S. Rhodes Elementary School. The consolidated precinct will be a government controlled facility with more than adequate parking and accessibility. The consolidation could save County taxpayers and estimated \$1,500-\$4,500 (based on 1-3 elections per year).
- The Committee reviewed the possible consolidation of the Browntown and Bentonville precincts, but based on distance and numbers of voters have not recommended consolidating these two precincts at this time.