



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 22-016, **Version:** 1

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**City Council Meeting Date:** January 11, 2022

**To:** Mayor & City Council

**From:** Lynette Peterson, City Clerk  
Ben Martig, City Administrator

**Subject:**

Review of Redistricting Process Including City Process for Establishment or Re-Establishment of Election Precincts, Designation of Polling Places and Confirmation or Redefinition of Ward Districts.

**Action Requested:**

Review of Redistricting Process including City process for establishment or re-establishment of election precincts, designation of polling places and confirmation or redefinition of ward districts.

**Summary Report:**

A broad overview of redistricting will be presented at the Worksession. Redistricting is the process of redrawing the boundaries of election districts after the completion of the decennial census. The purpose of redistricting is to ensure that the people of each district are equally represented. Following the census, the City must either confirm or redefine the ward boundaries.

The redistricting guide from the Secretary of State's Office on Redistricting is attached (Attachment 1). The early and late schedules for redistricting are also attached (Attachments 2 and 3).

Staff will review principles and timelines for redistricting. In 2011, the City adopted a redistricting process, timeline & principles. This is also attached for your reference and as a guideline for redistricting (Attachment 4).

**Basic Redistricting Principles:**

- By Statute, most election districts must be:
  - Compact
  - Contiguous
  - Equal in population (to some degree)
  - Composed of Census blocks
- Other principles that may inform the state (or local) redistricting process:
  - Preserve political subdivisions
  - Preserve communities of interest
  - Political competitiveness
  - Not protect or pair up incumbents

- Comply with requirements in City Charter
  - Section 3.3 Council Compositions and Election:

The council shall be composed of a mayor and six (6) council members who shall be qualified. To qualify for elective office a candidate must be qualified to vote, be at least twenty-one (21) years of age on the date he or she would assume office, and be a resident of the city and of any ward he or she seeks to represent, or will become a resident therein at least thirty (30) days before the election. If elected, candidates must further qualify for office by taking and filing an oath of office. One (1) council member shall be elected from each of four (4) wards and two (2) council members shall be elected at large. Each council member and the mayor shall serve for a term of four (4) years and until a successor is elected and qualified. Two ward council members and one council member at large shall have terms that expire at the end of each even numbered year. A person who is sworn in as mayor while holding a council seat thereby vacates the council seat.

## **City Requirements**

Once congressional and legislative redistricting is complete, cities have the following responsibilities:

### **1. Precinct establishment or reestablishment**

Every city is required to establish or reestablish its election precincts, even if there is no change. At a minimum, each city is required to have at least once precinct; additional precincts are necessary if the city is divided by a county, county commissioner, legislative district, or congressional district. One precinct cannot be split between more than one county, congressional district, legislative district, or city ward. Precincts are not tied to population size, but precincts with over 1,500 voters may be difficult to manage. The secretary of state recommends that precinct boundaries follow census block boundaries.

If there are any changes in precinct boundaries, the city clerk must post a notice of the changes in the office of the city clerk or county auditor for 56 days before changes take effect. In addition, the city clerk must immediately notify the county auditor and secretary of state of precinct boundary changes. The city clerk must also file a corrected map of precinct boundaries with the secretary of state within 30 days of any changes.

The deadline to establish or reestablish precincts is 60 days after the redistricting is complete or March 29, 2022, whichever comes earlier. If redistricting is completed after March 29, 2022, cities have 28 days following redistricting to establish or reestablish precincts.

### **2. Polling place designation**

The state requires governing bodies that establish or reestablish precincts to also designate polling places for those districts. Typically, precinct establishment and polling place designation will happen at the same time through a common resolution. If not, governing bodies have 30 days from the establishment of precincts, or March 29, 2022, whichever comes earlier, to designate polling places.

If a polling place location changes, the city clerk must notify the county auditor as well as all affected households by a first class, non-forwardable mailing at least 25 days before the next election. Typically this is accomplished by mailing postal verification cards to affected households and voters.

Every precinct must have a designated polling place. This includes mail ballot cities, where it is usually city hall or the clerk's office. Combined polling places or polling places outside of precinct boundaries are allowed

in certain circumstances. All polling places are subject to federal and state laws regarding location and accessibility.

### 3. Ward redistricting

Approximately 70 cities elect council members by ward. Cities using the ward system must either confirm or redefine ward districts after each decennial census. Home rule charter cities may have additional redistricting processes in their charters. Ward populations must be as equal as practicable, and wards must be bounded by precinct lines and composed of compact, contiguous territory. Precincts cannot be located in more than one ward. Changes in ward boundaries do not disqualify council members from serving the remainder of their terms. An ordinance establishing new ward boundaries becomes effective on Aug. 9, 2022, the date of the state primary election.

Cities cannot redistrict wards until legislative redistricting is complete. Cities have 60 days from legislative redistricting or March 29, 2022, whichever comes first, to complete ward redistricting. If legislative redistricting takes place after March 29, 2022, cities have 28 days from the date of legislative redistricting to complete ward redistricting. If cities do not redistrict wards by those deadlines, mayors and elected officials are prohibited from receiving compensation until the process is completed.

#### Census Information

Updated Census information by Ward for Northfield is as follows:

Ward/Precinct	Population	Percentage
W1	5,223	25.1%
W2	5,398	26.0%
W3	4,939	23.7%
W4	5,240	25.2%
Total	20,800	
Average	5,200	

Ward	Population	Variance	% Variance
W1	5,223	23	0.4%
W2	5,398	198	3.8%
W3	4,939	(261)	-5.0%
W4	5,240	40	0.8%
Total	20,800		
Average	5,200		

Updated Census information by Ward/Precinct for Northfield is as follows:

Ward/Precinct	Population
W1P1	2,144
W1P2	3,109
W2P1	2,618
W2P2	2,780

W3P1	3,678
W3P2 (Dakota County)	1,261
W4P1	2,481
W4P2	2,759
Total	20,800

City staff met to discuss redistricting and redrawing ward/precinct boundaries. The current ward/precinct map is attached with updated Census numbers (Attachment 5) and a current ward/precinct map indicating the potential boundary adjustment between W1-P1 and W1-P2 (Attachment 6). A draft map is included that has a shift of W1-P1 and W1-P2 to even out those two precincts. This map indicates a boundary change to reflect W1-P1 with an adjusted population of 2,703 and W1-P2 with an adjusted population of 2,520 (Attachment 7). The Council could also consider a boundary shift to add residents to W3-P1 to balance out the wards more evenly. If the Council would like options showing a change for this ward, more options can be drafted by staff and brought to a future Council meeting for discussion.

A copy of a memo from Flaherty & Hood from 2012 redistricting regarding permissible population variance between municipal wards is also attached for reference. This memo references the five percent maximum variance in population in any ward from the average ward population referenced in the State's guidance for municipal ward redistricting is roughly equivalent to the federal constitutional threshold of ten percent deviation between the most overrepresented and underrepresented districts. (Attachment 8).

A copy of the presentation for Tuesday's worksession is attached (Attachment 9).

**Alternative Options:**

N/A

**Financial Impacts:**

N/A

**Tentative Timelines:**

February 15, 2022	Congressional and legislative plans completed
March 29, 2022	*Precinct & City redistricting deadline
April 26, 2022	County commissioner and other redistricting deadline
August 9, 2022	State Primary
November 8, 2022	State General Election

\* Ordinance must be passed