



PUBLIC HEARING
ORLEANS COUNTY LEGISLATURE

February 9, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.

Local Law No. 2-Intro of 2023

A LOCAL LAW AMENDING SECTION 4 OF LOCAL LAW NO. 3 OF THE YEAR 2011
TO REAPPORTION LEGISLATIVE DISTRICTS

Present: Chairman Lynne M. Johnson, Vice Chairman William Eick, Legislators: Merle Draper, John Fitzak, Fred Miller, Ed Morgan; County Attorney Kathy Bogan, Chief Administrative Officer John C. Welch, Jr.

Chairman Johnson called the public hearing to order at 6:00 p.m.

Clerk Stenshorn read the published legal notice.

Chairman Johnson introduced Orleans County Attorney Kathy Bogan to introduce our consultant.

Orleans County Attorney Kathy Bogan introduced, Mr. David Schaefer, Skyline Consultants. He is the President and Owner of Skyline Demographics Consultants Services and a former member of the NYS Task Force on Demographic Research and Reapportion. Mrs. Bogan asked Mr. Schaefer to speak on what he did and how he came up with the map.

Mr. David Schaefer, stated that after the census was done in 2020 the Orleans County population was about 40,000 people. This was adjusted for the prisoner population to about 38,981 people. Orleans County is very unique because it is hybrid between Districted and At-Large Legislators. There are three (3) members that run At-Large and four (4) that run in districts. Looking at the four (4) districts, the population as it stands now, they deviate about 11.7%. The state and federal law require the Districts deviation to be under 5.0%. The three (3) At-Large Districts, the Municipal Home Rule Law the formula is as anticipated. The deviation of all seven (7) members is meet. We did redistrict the four (4) districts to be within 5.0% of each other. We took one (1) whole election district from the Town of Murray and put it in District 3. In District 1, we added a few hundred people by moving the boundary of one Street to the west. At the end of the process, the districts were are under the 5% deviation. The map looks very similar to what it was. The total deviation is now at 4.2%. We looked at the municipal roll out, did change in the last 10 years. What affects Orleans County the most is that the deviation used to be 10%, it is now 5%. The new plan does get it below 5%, it preserves the course of the districts that exists now. We did not use incumbents addresses or any other political data to draw this plan. We feel this is a legal plan that can be use for the next 10 years to represent the representatives for the Orleans County Legislature.

Chairman Johnson thanked Mr. Schaefer for the summary and opened the floor to comments from the public.

Jeffery Lewis, Carlton. I am the Chairperson of the Orleans County Democratic Committee. Let me laud you for making this time available to share our ideas and thoughts with you. On my part and the Committee, we are most inclined to move to a plan that moves to a community-based plan. That will bring people together in that community. As I live in Carlton, it is very different than living on a street in down town Albion. The Districts are different between our County. We propose you go back to the drawing board to look at plan going to seven (7) districts. That would retain the current number of seven (7) Legislators, but in fact have one represent each District. By doing so, we would increase that sense of community. All but two (2) communities within the plan that we now have and the plan to come up with, are all in one district. In each one (1) we could address Albion and Medina which are (*in audible*). One person One vote is what we are trying to achieve. We have heard a lot of reasons why the census data was no good. We know that the administration is working to smooth the glitches out of the census collection. My daughter worked on the Census collections and did a very good job. She was not turned away, but did get scarred when she was in the middle of a bridge in Holley and couldn't find a home. There were challenges in that. The next action in the plan we propose is a little more community centric to give people a stronger ability to touch their representative on the legislature who really represents ones that look like the individuals in their district. It is important. We are the last county in New York State that uses At-Large Members. There are no other counties using that model at this time. Thank you for the opportunity to share my comments.

Chairman Johnson stated that the comments that are given tonight will go in the permanent record. We are asking that everyone stay within a three (3) minute limit so that everyone has a chance to speak. In a public hearing, it is not a debate. We are to hear to listen to the public. We will not be commenting back. Your comments will be part of the permanent record.

James Renfrew, Clarendon. Submitted a letter that he read aloud. We are very serious about this.

Jason Dragon, Village of Albion the highly taxed Village of Albion. I agree with the sentiment that the At-Large Districts need to go. I missed my opportunity ten (10) years ago and have been waiting for the next go around. Each of the Villages in Orleans County are more expensive than with their local village rates in Niagara County, Genesee County and Monroe County. The way the at large districts were created seems to dilute the voice of people that own homes inside the Villages in this county. It seems based upon, over the years, that the County spends its money, it seems to have a favor for projects located outside the villages. Even residents pay the same County tax rate as those that live outside the village. I urge you to scratch that At-Large and divide the county into seven (7) equal districts and get as close to a one person deviants as possible.

Dennis Seeking, Lyndonville. I support no At-Large districts. We had a very disrespectful State of the Union a few days ago. I am hoping that any Republican here, that you agree those 10-15 people did a very shameful thing.

Jess Marciano, Town of Ridgeway. I do appreciate the leadership that we have here and the accessibility here. There are many different ways that you have demonstrated that you are

listening. One is that you are all actively listening right now. The other is having the meeting at 6:00 pm, a time that a lot of people can access. That was thoughtful. You are actually here to hear. That is very appreciated. The new October 2021 law has growing pains. If you draw out where the Legislators live on the maps, what we are proposing would cause there to be some converging representation of those already on the board. It's not something that we took to heart when we were proposing this ultimately. Yes, there will be growing pains to eliminate the At-Large Districts, but you have the opportunity. After looking through previous Legislative minutes, you have met some uncomfortable challenges in the past and have had to overcome. You have the opportunity to do something and remove the At-Large Districts and I think this is the right thing. What I believe, a lot of the County would agree it is the right thing to do. It obviously is not a partisan. A One person One vote is not a partisan vote. Everyone in this room agrees that this is not the gold standard in the world, to constitutionally trying to match. This is how we define One Person One vote. In Orleans County we historically hate how NYS paints with a wide brush. We wind up shoehorned into those city Congressional districts. My district is drawn very largely around a city. I am classed with people who are in a similar vote to me into Monroe County District. They may not be listened to because they would go to the larger city. This is an opportunity for us to not paint with that broad brush. To get a representative from Clarendon or Barre. Somebody who is under represented here now. The easiest path would be to for an independent redistricting commission, because nobody knows Orleans County better than Orleans County. If my land was on the facet that is the direction I'd want to do. Ultimately it is up to you guys to figure out the best way to do this. I do think nobody knows Orleans County better than us. When it comes to doing a further redistricting, we should have a commission of people from Orleans County who all know the area and all small areas. Not to use political data, there is no interest in redrawing the lines to make it more favorable to our party, it is just a matter of making an equal representation to the people. Thank you very much.

Jack Gilman, Kendall. I was completely uneducated as far as districting and gerrymandering. I learned a lot about it. My opinion is that everyone has a right to vote. And everyone needs to have the right to vote. That is what we formed this country on. What has been going on hasn't been a good thing. My standing is everyone get a vote and everyone should be counted.

Chairman Johnson asked three more times if there were any additional comments.

There being none, Chairman Johnson thanked everyone for coming tonight. She then closed the Public Hearing at 6:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Lisa Stenshorn, Clerk of the Legislature
Orleans County Legislature