



MARYLAND MATTERS

Redistricting Commission Sets Regions for Public Hearings

Bennett Leckrone

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The Maryland Citizens Redistricting Commission is set to begin regional-based public hearings in June, commissioners decided at their Wednesday night meeting.

At the virtual meeting, commission Co-Chair Kathleen Hetherington, an independent voter, laid out the seven regions the commission will be focusing on for its public hearings between June and August. The regions encompass all of Maryland's 24 jurisdictions.

Hetherington emphasized that the regional groupings, which include Baltimore City and all of Maryland's counties, are not meant to indicate how maps will be drawn. The commission will hold public hearings based around the following regions:

- Prince George's County;
- Montgomery County;
- Central Maryland, including Baltimore City, Howard County and southern Baltimore County;
- Northern Maryland, including northern Baltimore County, Carroll, Cecil and Harford counties;
- Southern Maryland, including Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles and St. Mary's counties;
- Western Maryland, including Allegany, Frederick, Garrett and Washington counties;
- And the Eastern Shore, including Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, Somerset, Talbot, Wicomico and Worcester counties.

Members of the redistricting commission are hoping to get input from the public before they receive final Census population data. Due to pandemic-related delays, Census officials are set to release block-by-block population data that state officials need for redistricting by Aug. 16 as a "legacy format summary file."

After the state receives that data, planning officials will need an additional four weeks to readjust the data to comply with Maryland law and have incarcerated individuals reallocated to their last known address. Hetherington said the commission will conduct additional public hearings after the data is released to get Marylanders' input on mapmaking.

Commission co-chairs Alexander Williams (D) and Walter Olson (R) said that although public hearings will be focused on particular regions, anyone will be able to comment. Exactly when each of those public hearings will take place will be determined at an upcoming meeting, Hetherington said. The commission is set to meet again next Tuesday, May 25. Commissioners hope to eventually conduct in-person meetings, but the first public hearings are likely to be conducted virtually.