

Raina Allan

From: Marilyn Joyce <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, January 6, 2025 4:36 PM
To: Marilyn Joyce
Subject: [EXTERNAL] - Thoughts regarding districting questions for 1/6/2025 council meeting

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Dear Mayor, Council, City Manager and staff,

Personal thoughts regarding districting questions

As I've shared previously, my main concern is that Healdsburg make decisions through a participatory process. In that regard I'd like to hold off on determining the number of districts until we get into the interactive mapping exercises. I hear that staff believe they need this decision made BEFORE mapping but those are my thoughts.

I sent one of you what I learned in meeting with Betsy Mallace from Windsor re: electing an at-large mayor. I'm copying it for all of you.

While I'm open to electing an at-large mayor, I am not dissatisfied with our rotating system. Recently I heard arguments dissuading us from choosing an at-large mayor on the same grounds that forced us to change our voting system to districts. The logic goes like this: it would be harder for people with busy work schedules, Spanish as their first language and/or low economic means to launch a winning city-wide campaign for mayor. Since Windsor does elect their mayor at large, I met again with Betsy Mallace to check out that assumption. Here's what she shared:

Windsor's mayor, Rosa Reynoza, a Latina, came from outside the political establishment, she ran for town council after Windsor was forced to form districts. She won her district seat without accepting any campaign contributions. Then last year she ran for the 2-year at-large mayor seat against Esther Lemus. Lemus outspent Reynoza by \$30k and had endorsements from all the North Bay influencers. Lemus was sure she had mayor in the bag. Though Rosa was decidedly the underdog, 60% of the voters chose her.

So there is one example that doesn't follow the logic of the wealthy, politically connected candidate having the winning advantage in a city-wide election.

I also asked about the real or perceived power advantage of the elected mayor. In Windsor they claim there is none. I need to double check because our conversation was interrupted, but I think she said that the mayor doesn't even run the council meetings. Maybe they rotate that role?

Besides defining communities of interest, the primary challenge in drawing the interactive maps comes from coordinating the small census data blocks to ensure population differences are within $\pm 10\%$. Maybe 6 or 7 small districts would serve us better. Again, we can't know

what is better for Healdsburg if we put the cart before the horse. (Another example of this thinking was putting Measure O on the ballot before we had a comprehensive community driven vision. This is not so much a criticism, I do understand the constraints, but a bit of unsolicited wisdom.)

In terms of ethnic 'communities of interest,' Windsor couldn't identify any. Latinos, for example, are integrated throughout the community. Personally I don't think in a small city that communities of interest make much sense. I'm open.

Merrilyn
Healdsburg