

Raina Allan

From: Mark McMullen <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Thursday, February 13, 2025 11:15 PM
To: Raina Allan
Subject: [EXTERNAL] - Fw: Advocating for Fair Representation: Support for Six-District System in Healdsburg

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Dear Raina,

I do not see my letter to council from December 16th, 2024 on the Districting page. Please add it to the list.

Thank you,

Mark McMullen

----- Forwarded Message -----

From "Mark McMullen" <[REDACTED]>
To "David Hagele" <dhagele@healdsburg.gov>; "Evelyn Mitchell" <emitchell@healdsburg.gov>;
"Chris Herrod" <JHerrod@Healdsburg.gov>; "Ariel Kelley" <akelley@healdsburg.gov>; "Ronald Edwards" <REdwards@Healdsburg.gov>
Cc "Jeff Kay" <jkay@healdsburg.gov>
Date 12/16/2024 14:32:55
Subject Advocating for Fair Representation: Support for Six-District System in Healdsburg

Dear Mayor Hagele, Vice Mayor Mitchell, Council-members Herrod, Kelley, and Edwards,

I am writing to express my strong support for adopting a **six-district** electoral system with an at-large mayor for our city. This addresses the issue contained in the Shenkman & Hughes PC letter claiming inadequate representation for our minority population.

Your decision on Healdsburg's district structure stands as a historic moment, rivaling the significance of our city's founding in 1867. Just as the choices made by our first Trustees - Peter Griest, Henry Dudley, William Smith, L.A. Norton, and N. Wagenseller - set Healdsburg's course, your decision will shape our community's future for generations. This pivotal choice will determine how our city grows, governs, and represents its diverse population in the decades to come. The weight of this decision will echo through time, connecting the visionary actions of our founders to the path you now forge for Healdsburg's future.

Healdsburg would benefit significantly from a six-district structure. With our current population of approximately 11,137 residents, this model would create districts of roughly 1,856 residents (16.7%) each. This smaller constituency size allows for more personalized and effective representation, ensuring that each council member can intimately understand and address the unique needs of their district.

The six-district model offers several key advantages:

1. **Enhanced Representation:** Smaller districts enable council members to focus on hyperlocal issues, from neighborhood-specific concerns to localized economic development initiatives.
2. **Diversity in Governance:** With more districts, there's a higher likelihood of representing Healdsburg's various communities, including our significant Hispanic population (28%) and other minority groups. This directly addresses the concerns raised in the lawsuit.
3. **Future-Proofing:** This model provides a buffer against population dilution as Healdsburg grows, ensuring stable representation over time without necessitating immediate redistricting.
4. **Inclusive Governance:** This structure benefits all residents, including those ineligible to vote due to age or immigration status, by increasing the likelihood that their voices are heard and needs addressed.
5. **Balanced Leadership:** An at-large mayor complements the district-based council by providing a citywide perspective, ensuring a cohesive vision for Healdsburg.

Upon inspection, the six-district model avoids several pitfalls associated with a four-district structure:

1. A four-district model would result in larger constituencies of about 2,784 residents (25%) per district, potentially limiting a council-member's ability to address hyperlocal concerns effectively.
2. Larger districts in a four-district system could dilute the voting power of geographically concentrated minority communities, failing to address the core issue raised in the lawsuit.
3. Fewer districts generally lead to less diverse representation, whereas a six-district model increases the likelihood of electing council-members from varied backgrounds.
4. Larger districts may make it more difficult for residents to access their representatives, potentially decreasing civic engagement.
5. A four-district model provides less flexibility for future growth and redistricting, potentially leading to more frequent and disruptive changes in representation.

I believe adopting a six-district system with an at-large mayor would not only address the concerns raised in the letter, but also create a more responsive, inclusive, and future-proof governance structure for Healdsburg. It ensures that every voice in our community, from our youngest residents to our newest arrivals, has a chance to be heard and represented in our city's governance.

I urge the City Council to seriously consider this option as we move forward with redistricting. It represents an opportunity to strengthen our democracy and better serve all residents of Healdsburg.

Respectfully,

Mark McMullen

