

Group recommends three redrawn district maps to San Mateo County supervisors

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A map that would split Menlo Park into two San Mateo County supervisorial districts but unite Redwood City into one emerged as the favorite among three that a committee endorsed Tuesday night.

The group forwarded the three ranked maps to the Board of Supervisors, which is scheduled to review them Oct. 8.

Dubbed "Community Unity 4" because it was revised four times since June, the preferred map essentially leaves intact the top part of the county -- District 5 -- as a "majority-minority Asian district" and places all of Redwood City, east Menlo Park, East Palo Alto and North Fair Oaks in District 4.

Committee member Gonzalo "Sal" Torres, a Daly City council member, said the Community Unity 4 map does the best job of not dividing cities while also forging "communities of interest."

Six of the nine committee members voted to make that map their top choice. The other three -- supervisors Adrienne Tissier and Warren Slocum and public representative William Nack, a Menlo Park resident and San Mateo County Building Trades Council business manager -- abstained.

Although she voted to put the map on the recommendation list, Tissier said she didn't feel comfortable ranking any since she'll be voting on them next month.

The committee was formed to redraw district boundaries in the wake of a legal settlement between the county and a group of civil rights lawyers who sued it on

grounds that the county's system of electing supervisors at-large instead of by district weakens the voting power of Asian and Latino residents. The settlement was reached after 58.7 percent of voters in November 2012 chose district elections over a countywide system.

Some of the lawyers who sued the county attended Tuesday's meeting at the College of San Mateo to advocate for the map that received the most votes.

The map that received the second most votes was submitted by and initially named after the San Mateo County Republican Party, although the GOP agreed to have it renamed the "equity map" at the suggestion of South San Francisco Vice Mayor Karyl Matsumoto. The third-ranked map is called "Nakamura 1G" after the man who proposed it, James Nakamura, although he is not a resident of the county, according to officials.

In all three maps, Redwood City is united in District 4 with Redwood Shores, which is currently in District 3. All three maps also split Menlo Park -- which is now whole - - with the city's east side going to District 4 and west side to District 3.

Tissier suggested a fourth map be presented to the board that would only tweak current boundaries. Her motion was rejected 5-4.

Committee alternate Annie Loya, an East Palo Alto resident who leads the nonprofit Youth United for Community Action, said a vote for such a map "moves us backward."

When Tissier later suggested that maps not recommended by the committee could still be considered by the Board of Supervisors, several committee members strongly objected, saying that would invalidate the group's work.

"It begs the question, why were we even formed if the maps that we voted to eliminate could be considered?" Torres asked, as applause broke out from an audience that roughly numbered 70.

Tissier reminded everyone that the committee is only an advisory body, then added she doesn't want to give the impression that the supervisors are "evil people who are just going to do as we please."

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