

To: Legislative Apportionment Board (LAB)

From: East Montpelier Board of Civil Authority

Date: November 15, 2021

The East Montpelier Board of Civil Authority (BCA) met on Monday, November 8 with members of the community in attendance. Discussion focused on the splitting of the town of East Montpelier (EM) to be included in both the WAS-3 and the WAS-4 districts as outlined in the tentative draft released recently by the Legislative Apportionment Board (LAB). The BCA voted unanimously to oppose the creation of the legislative districts as proposed. There was no one at the meeting who spoke in favor of the proposed new districts.

Currently, East Montpelier is part of a single member district composed of the towns of East Montpelier and Middlesex—each in its entirety. The changes in population noted in the 2020 census do not mandate any change in this particular district. In fact, were the district left as it currently is, the deviation from the ideal representation would be -2.1% as opposed to 7.32% under the tentative proposal. Clearly, it is not the 2020 census numbers of the EM/Middlesex district that pose a problem. It appears that in the creation of WAS-3, the three small towns of Calais, Woodbury, and Worcester didn't total as many as the LAB desired, so a small section of East Montpelier, housing 404 residents, was added.

However, in coming up with this proposal—carving out a small portion of East Montpelier (including one of its two village centers)—the LAB has violated the other, non-numerical standards for reapportionment outlined in 17 V.S.A. § 1903 (b) (1-3) which read as follows:

- (1) preservation of existing political subdivision lines;
- (2) recognition and maintenance of patterns of geography, social interaction, trade, political ties, and common interests;
- (3) use of compact and contiguous territory

Failure to preserve the existing political (town) subdivision lines is obvious and needs no further explanation except to note that many of the interactions of residents with the state legislature revolve around affairs of the town or city in which they live. Which leads readily into criterion (2).

It is the strong belief of the BCA and the citizens attending the November 8 meeting (many of whom live in the small part of EM assigned to WAS-3) that the residents of that part of EM would be completely disenfranchised with regard to issues regarding their town and its relationship to the VT legislature. This is in addition to the disruption of normal flows of social interaction, commerce, and other common interests.

With regard to criterion (3), while the part of EM appended to WAS-3 is contiguous, it is clearly an add-on and is not at all compact; nor does it lend itself in any way to making the 404 residents of the area feel in any way a part of the other three towns.

In addition to flying in the face of the legislatively mandated criteria, the newly-proposed district makes the running of elections far more complex. A separate operational center must be set up with its own printed ballots, tabulator programming, check list, and staffing.

The meeting on November 8th meeting included, also, discussion about the general underlying issue of single- vs. multi-member districts. The sense of the meeting was that the greater accountability and fairness issues sometimes touted as benefits of single member districts are heavily outweighed by the legislatively mandated criteria cited above—the maintenance of a sense of community being primary.

The BCA does not feel the current configuration of WAS-3 and WAS-4 is fair or feasible. It believes strongly that EM should remain as one unit in whatever larger configuration is chosen. In the event that a change from the current district *must* be made, we suggest three alternatives involving the same five towns: two variations of single member districts (1A and 1B) and also a two-member district.

It should be noted that the EM BCA has *not* discussed these ideas with any of the other towns.

To summarize other possibilities brought up:

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| 1A – | East Montpelier and Middlesex form single-member district: | deviation= -2.1% |
| | Calais, Woodbury, and Worcester form a single-member district: | deviation= 17.12% |
| 1B - | East Montpelier and Calais form a single-member district: | deviation= 0.65% |
| | Middlesex, Woodbury, and Worcester form a single-member district: | deviation= 14.37% |
| 2 - | All five towns form a two-member district: | deviation= 7.51% |

These calculations were based on the census numbers you provided:

Calais	1661
East Montpelier	2598
Middlesex	1779
Woodbury	928
Worcester	964