

MINUTES
City of Guadalupe
Special Meeting of the Guadalupe City Council
Wednesday, November 17, 2021, at 5:00 pm
City Hall, 918 Obispo Street, Council Chambers

1. ROLL CALL:

Council Member Liliana Cardenas
Council Member Gilbert Robles
Council Member Eugene Costa Jr.
Mayor Pro Tempore Tony Ramirez
Mayor Ariston Julian

Meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. All members were present. (Note: The abbreviation "CM" is being used for "Councilmember" in these minutes.)

2. MOMENT OF SILENCE

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

4. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION FORUM

Each person will be limited to a discussion of three (3) minutes or as directed by the Mayor. Pursuant to provisions of the Brown Act, no action may be taken on these matters unless they are listed on the agenda, or unless certain emergency or special circumstances exist. City Council may direct staff to investigate and/or schedule certain matters for consideration at a future City Council meeting.

There were no speaker requests on any item not on the agenda.

REGULAR BUSINESS

5. Endorsement of a Proposed Map for New Santa Barbara County Supervisor Districts.

Written Report: Todd Bodem, City Administrator

Recommendation: That the City Council adopt Resolution No. 2021-87, endorsing a proposed map or maps previously submitted to the Citizen Commission on Redistricting Supervisor Districts for Santa Barbara County.

Mr. Bodem gave a brief background regarding the need for this special meeting. He said, "There was a deadline of November 18th, and the next Council meeting was November 23rd. The Council was asked to select three (3) proposed maps to discuss at this meeting." Mr. Bodem noted that the City Council had another meeting with the School District at 6:00 p.m. this evening and if the Council needed additional time, they could reconvene after the joint meeting with the School District.

Mayor Julian read two written requests:

Garrett Matsuura

“Just a quick note for tonight in support of Councilman Costa’s Plan 404. I appreciate the fact that we would be grouped with Orcutt and Vandenberg – it seems to be a more homogeneous fit from an economic development standpoint where we stand on our own merits instead of being an addendum to Santa Maria.”

Shirley Boydston

“Guadalupeans have a critical choice to make, one that will determine the direction, character and growth in the next 10 years. Yes, it is redistricting time and once again, Guadalupe is a pawn being pulled into various districts. I strongly support joining with Map 404 or Map 109B in the 4th District as suggested by Councilman Eugene Costa, Jr., which includes the Orcutt area.

Our 9th graders go to Righetti High School in Orcutt or to one of the several private schools there. Parents and siblings become familiar with the area by attending school and athletic events. Orcutt is a thriving, growing area with many services and businesses that are not available in Guadalupe, such as supermarkets, dry cleaners, watch and jewelry shop, photography, many medical services, and uniquely cultural restaurants. These amenities should prompt and prod our businesses to upgrade to draw more customers and become a destination place.

The growth of Pasadera, bringing in retired or semi-retired professionals, some with entrepreneurial spirit, has had several new businesses formed and are being helped by the Guadalupe Business Association. The low crime rate of Guadalupe is consistent with the Orcutt area as well as culturally, just two of the several similarities needed in defining districts.

This is the time for Guadalupe to break out of its parochialism, to plan for a stronger economic base, to reach for the vibrant community we can be by being associated with a strong community demonstrating progression and prosperity, such as the 4th District. Please let Council know that Map 404, with its community spirit, is the best move for Guadalupe for the next 10 years of our lives.”

There were two (2) speakers present at the meeting:

Frances Romero

“I’m here to voice my concern over the process that you have used to address this important topic. We know that redistricting happens every ten (10) years. And we all knew this year was the year it was going to happen. When I was at the meeting last week, I heard the Council indicate that they had not adequately prepared to address this topic. It seems this was not on your radar until the City of Santa Maria submitted a map. My comment is that just because you can do something doesn’t mean you should.

Sure, the meeting tonight meets the minimum requirement for public noticing but the City has done zero outreach to the community on the topic of redistricting, as opposed to the way we handle things like parks that affect this community. We have outreach and we have meetings. I know meetings are difficult during Covid but I think we've all master zoom at this point probably just in time for the pandemic to be over.

Based on your staff report you're going to pick a map from your personal favorites. My point is that I don't think this City Council should support a map that has not been subject to factual input by your constituents. I appreciate CM Costa and him recognizing that Map 404 is something that would actually improve our partnering in a district.

Redistricting process is supposed to be non-partisan. Yet special interests who tap the representation of hundreds, if not thousands, of members continue to weigh in. Just know that these special interests do not represent the majority of your residents. If you feel compelled to make a vote tonight, anyway, please don't dilute the residents of Guadalupe by lumping us in with the 5th District in Santa Maria

Twenty-five years ago, we made a choice to live here instead of Santa Maria despite all the conveniences that Santa Maria offers. And today, I'm still very happy with that decision especially seeing how things have trended in Santa Maria. While Santa Maria is a model on how to run your city fiscally, they have crime. They have many undesirable things that we don't have here in Guadalupe. I'd really prefer to see our community, again, look at areas like Los Alamos and Orcutt and find out what is it that we should be exposing in our community to the outside world to tourists to bring the dollars here that this city needs to generate the revenues that it needs to operate. We can't be on the treadmill of grant cycle after grant cycle as the only way to get the things we need. Grants should be augmenting things you already want to do. They shouldn't be something that is necessary to deliver the things that you have to provide to your community.

So, I just hope tonight if you're going to made a decision, you remember that your charge is to represent everyone in the community. When I was mayor, I was re-registered as an Independent. I didn't want to give any signal to anyone of my constituents of any pre-conceived notions. When you're at the dais, we all have biases and certainly, those all weigh into your decisions. But this isn't a personal preference of you want to do is best or what you think is best. You represent 8,000 in this community. Thank you."

Jeannie Mello

"I was just following up on Frances. I don't pretend to know a whole lot about this. But I know for sure when I look at something and it smacks me in the face like the way Map 404 is, that that's absolutely the way we should be going. That's all I have."

Mayor Julian then brought the discussion back to the Council and asked, "Who wants to start off?"

CM Ramirez

"Thank you for all your input. Much appreciated. I just want to say that I've been at a lot of redistricting meetings and it's so interesting to see how it plays out countywide. There are so many entrants out there that are being pulled in so many directions. This is really my first time really focusing in on redistricting because 10 years ago, I was not really engaged in the process whatsoever because I was in grad school.

I've been able to really take a deep dive into how this all works and being able to see the layout of the land. Looking at the current map and how the supervisorship is, it is so interesting to see how it is all so spaced out. I don't know how they came up with the decision last time to have us all the way down to Isla Vista. That's a very interesting perspective there.

Back to the choice I had which is Map 801. I know people were labeling one map or another map. When I started looking at the maps, I also started to take a look at what the representation looked like when it came to the current supervisors. There was a point in the last year where I was asked to go represent Santa Barbara County as one of the Latino elected officials to get some sort of an award. I don't even know what the award was. Das Williams' office contacted me and asked if I would accept this award on behalf of the Board of Supervisors because we don't have any Latin supervisors. And that, to me, with a county that has a high percentage of it, is ridiculous to not to have that sort of representation on that sort of Board.

Aside from just the layout of the land and having people who look like us represent us, that was one of the reasons. The other reason being that, and CM Robles has mentioned this a few times before, too, when it comes to Map 404, I've lived through that experience. I have several family members who've lived through that experience of having to get bused into the Orcutt school. I've been through the experience of almost basically trying to get rid of my culture to try and fit into a group of people who I had no idea who they were, but they were the majority group there.

There was a word that was tossed around at the last redistricting meeting that actually caused me to speak, as well, as an individual, and it was the word 'assimilation'. If you look at 'assimilation', by the dictionary term, it doesn't sound too bad. But if you look at it like a societal or sociological term, that ends up being problematic. A long time ago, there were things that were happening, even now so, in mainstream media. There's a majority culture that wants us to basically shed who we are as individuals to be able to fit within the larger crowd. And that for me was one of the things I had to do and many people within this community have had to do. I work with them, day in and day out with students who feel, if not similar, but cannot label it because they walk out of here being ashamed that they speak Spanish, being ashamed that they have to go to different cultural type of events. Not understanding when they tried to come visit me over here... 'oh, it's Guadalupe. It's ghetto over there.'

I remember we would try to have get togethers. Our parents were out of town. We'd try to bring people over and people wouldn't come because of the negative connotation that Guadalupe had. Even though we are the safest city in the County, and it's been that way for a very, very long time. So, aside from personal, aside from the anecdotes from the students I work with on a daily basis, and aside from the representation, that's why I support that specific map."

CM Cardenas

"For me the choice for Map 801...really looking at the redistricting as who will be representing us and our area at the County level. We have our transportation investments go to Santa Maria. The majority of our residents work in Santa Maria. There are several things that happen that we're tied to this geographical area. So, it makes sense that whoever is making decisions at a County level for Guadalupe and Santa Maria to really know and understand both cities and how they work and really understand and be able to have a voice for those. Because anything that they decide will impact the livelihood of their work, getting to work, where they shop, grocery shopping, etc. So, those are the reasons why Map 801 makes a whole lot of sense."

CM Costa, Jr.

"So, I don't know too much on how this redistricting works. I'm not very political. But I look at it as Map 404 was the first choice for me because our students that live in this community do go into Orcutt to go to school. If you look at the size of our geographics here, the majority of the communities that are in this district on the Map 404 are similar in size to us. You have a portion of Santa Maria which will be part of that district.

But if you look at all the green, they want a district where we're with the bigger city. We're still, as we are in this County, the redheaded stepchild that gets second. We get nothing after first. If we go into a district where we have the ability to be at the top, or at least same level as the other communities, it will help us.

I listened to my counterparts, and I understand where they're coming from, going to a school where the population is different than the community where our kids are coming from. I went to the same school. I've heard all the stuff that would happen, but we have to be able to make that change in there. And the population of the cities in there are similar to ours. I think that would be beneficial for us in that aspect of trying to get someone to be a representative for our community that could be in there as our district representative.

I have two other ones that are all similar to this one in size. My second choice was Map 108 which brought in all of Santa Maria, Orcutt, Casmalia and us. Like I said, our kids go to school in the Orcutt area. But it also opened up with Santa Maria and Casmalia who also go into that area. But trying to stay away from getting into Cuyama and all that. That has nothing to offer our community when someone is representing us. My third choice on there was Map 109B which had similar areas which went out to Buellton, Los Olivos, Ballard, Los Alamos, Sisquoc, a little bit of Santa Maria, and still similar to what was on Map 404.

Like I said, a lot of this was new to me. I've never understood any of the redistricting; this is my first time. But the communities that are closer in our proximity with our size would be beneficial."

CM Robles

"I chose Map 119B, Map 119 and Map 110. I believe they reflect what we have in our community as far as our Latino vote and Latino people. The same thing...going to school at Righetti High School was always something for our children. It was a task. We didn't match up with kids well. It was essentially

'culture shock'. So, I think lumping us in with Santa Maria's needs...it's not like crime's gonna jump nine miles or there's going to be any change in that. It's just a reflection of our makeup. I stand by those choices. Thank you."

Mayor Julian

"On California State Redistricting Commission, the state districting commission, which then relates to districting here, has a clear mandate to support representation from communities of color where they are geographically concentrated and share political interests. How well do current districts represent these communities and what does this mean for the new districts being drawn? That was a question.

I bet you that all of the Supervisors in the current districts have not been to Guadalupe at 5:30 in the morning and seen the traffic coming from Santa Maria through Guadalupe, in and around Guadalupe, to San Luis Obispo County. The strawberry and the vine industry are not going to change. Like I said, I bet none of those Supervisors have been here during that morning commute and then the evening commute at 3:30pm, our residents trying to go to Santa Maria are stuck at Bonita School. That's an issue. I serve on SBCAG. I communicate with the other districts, especially the 4th and 5th Districts. And they do support Guadalupe, but they don't live here. They don't feel Guadalupe. How many residents, several weeks ago, went to the function, Dia de los Muertos, that the Little House had? How many of those individuals came to see the community and what we're basically involved in? And it was mentioned that we may not represent the community, but we do.

There's a group called 'Local Agency Formation Commission' which is made up by the County. They select individuals to make decisions on incorporation, bringing in land to different cities. Look at Santa Maria, they've expanded exponentially into the areas of ag. Yet, we can't. They say, 'This is farmland. You can't go into farmland.' The County basically said, 'You take the Gularte tract, take the 200 acres that's now Pasadera, take LeRoy Park and the Veterans Building. You take those buildings and we'll let you take the 200 acres so that you can expand.' If it weren't for the 200 acres that Pasadera is now on, we would basically go under. On this LAFCO committee, we have the ability, if we have the strength of numbers in District 5 in Map 801, to call the shots in terms of our input regarding our community. If you look at the ag business, we have similar issues regarding housing, health, transportation, education. All the elements that Santa Maria shares, we share.

We've lacked representation on the Board. Salud Carbajal last served in 2012. Luckily, he served the community well in terms of the Latino community as a representative. But we need to be able to say in that district that we want someone in that district that represents us. Doesn't matter what color they are. Or what race they are. If they represent the area we live in, that's important to the community and it's important to me.

Again, if you go back and look at the ag side, I belong to SBCAG's CalVans, where they issue vehicles. Santa Barbara County has close to 500 vehicles. Are they in Montecito? In Santa Barbara? Some are but the majority are in our area transporting people back and forth. You see several on Pioneer Street at H2A housing. The farmers need workers. It's too bad they don't pay \$20 an hour. Then you'd have people working in the fields as opposed to \$11-\$12 an hour, working 36 weeks out of the year, 26

hours a day. We have a low-income population. We need representation on many items, including transportation, housing, elections. We have a right to have our self-determination.

Before Righetti, about 73 years or so, Guadalupe kids went to Santa Maria. Now when Righetti was there, and an echo to Gilbert and Antonio, and you have 80-90%....the school issue isn't the big one, but it is. It does hamper how we feel, and the community feels going to an Orcutt area. I have an associate who won't go past Stowell because she doesn't want to go into Santa Maria. I think that's an attitude that permeates to a lot of people. Not everybody but especially those areas that don't reflect the population we have in the northwest, and we have in Guadalupe.

I have four sisters who live in northwest Santa Maria. My mother lives in the northwest. Two sisters live here in Guadalupe. There's a strong connection to Santa Maria and Guadalupe. Everybody else has friends and relatives in Santa Maria and have residence here.

On the political side, there's nothing political when it comes to being able to vote your conscience and vote for the people that you serve. We serve Guadalupe residents. Having supervisor in the 5th District under the 801 plan will do that. This is the push not everybody will like who want us to remain with other districts. They're not going to like it. It's a sensitive issue. We live in a time where we have to look out for our youth, and we need that representation. Not only in this district but countywide. So, I strongly support Map 801. I have others - Map 119 and 119B all reflect Santa Maria and Guadalupe in the 5th District."

Mayor Julian then asked if there was any further discussion. There was none. The mayor then asked what the wishes of the Council were.

Motion was made by Council Member Ramirez and seconded by Council Member Cardenas to approve Resolution No. 2021-87 endorsing proposed Map 801 to the Citizens Independent Redistricting Commission. Roll Call: Ayes Cardenas, Ramirez, Robles, Julian Nos: Costa, Jr. 4-1 Passed.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Council Member Robles and seconded by Council Member Costa, Jr. to adjourn the meeting. 5-0 Passed. Meeting adjourned at 5:33 p.m.

PREPARED BY:


Amelia M. Villegas, Human Resources

APPROVED BY:


Ariston Julian, Mayor