



Minutes
Deschutes County
District Mapping Advisory Committee (DMAC)

Wednesday, September 24, 2025, 1:00 p.m.
Redmond City Hall, Council Chambers, 411 SW 9th Street, Redmond, OR

This meeting was conducted in person and by video. It was video recorded and can be accessed on the committee website: [District Mapping Advisory Committee \(DMAC\) | Deschutes County Oregon](#)

I. Introduction

This meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by Facilitator and Chair Neil Bryant.

Attendees: Chair/Facilitator: Neil Bryant. Committee Members: Bernie Brader, Carol Loesche, Drew Kaza, Matt Cyrus, Melanie Kebler, Ned Dempsey, and Phil Henderson.

Staff: Nick Lelack, County Administrator; Steve Dennison, County Clerk; Jen Patterson, Strategic Initiatives Manager; and Lee Klemp, IT/GIS.

II. Background on the Formation of the DMAC

Neil Bryant began by outlining the sequence of board and voter actions that led up to the creation of the District Mapping Advisory Committee (DMAC). County voters approved a ballot initiative in November 2024 expanding the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) from three to five seats. Two new commissioners will be chosen at-large in the May 2026 primary and will serve an initial two-year term before standing again in January 2027 so that all five positions can move onto a staggered four-year election cycle. The BOCC majority voted to draft district maps potentially changing the current election process from county-wide to district representation and, in May 2025, formally created the seven-member DMAC committee. The committee's statutory charge is to recommend five commissioner districts that are "as equitable as possible" with respect to 2020 census population, registered-voter counts and the additional redistricting criteria adopted by the board. The DMAC will meet weekly until a majority approved map is drafted to give to the BOCC for consideration. The BOCC will decide whether to place that proposal on a future county ballot; if voters approve, the first district-based elections would occur in 2028.

Responding to member questions, Jen Patterson confirmed that the BOCC did not convene separate listening sessions before forming the DMAC; instead, public testimony was taken during multiple regular BOCC meetings held between November 2024 and May 2025. Staff also clarified that the draft district map process has a budget of \$12,000 which, in part, goes to contracting Bryant for facilitation services. Existing county GIS software meets the committee's technical needs, so no additional software expenditures have been required.

III. Approval of September 17, 2025, Minutes

Carol Loesche moved to approve the September 17, 2025, minutes, Ned Dempsey seconded the motion. Minutes were approved unanimously.

IV. Public Comments

Samantha Smith, Redmond resident, questioned the committee's reliance on 2020 precinct-level census data, arguing that the numbers "don't reflect where Redmond is today." Smith maintained that districts, like state House seats, must be based on equal population ("one person, one vote") rather than on precinct data, and warned that any map grounded in outdated registration totals could be legally vulnerable.

Gloria Olson, Redmond resident, wants to ensure the maps include all people, not just registered voters.

Amanda Page, Redmond resident and a member of the Klamath Tribes, opposes using State House districts citing the 2021 Oregon redistricting process, which Common Cause graded a "C-." Page said the legislature had "gerrymandered multiple tribal communities," including the Klamath and Warm Springs Tribes and she urged the DMAC to avoid basing commissioner zones on those House lines, contending the maps were "highly controversial" and inequitable.

Lena Berry, Redmond resident, asked whether oral and written comments reach the Board of Commissioners and requested that all emailed or web-portal submissions be posted weekly for public review. She felt three-minute speaking limits were inadequate and stressed the need to solicit input from BIPOC, Latine, LGBTQIA2S+ and tribal residents, many of whom are unable to attend daytime meetings.

Keith Rockoco, Deschutes County resident since 2003, encouraged the committee to incorporate projected population growth so that districts remain workable through the 2030 census cycle. He urged staff to "focus on population as well as communities of interest" and to appreciate the differences that exist within those communities before finalizing boundaries.

Tony Oliver, Redmond resident, would like the committee to look at population and consider communities of common interest. She feels disenfranchised with the current Library District and hopes the DMAC does not do the same for the Commissioner maps.

Jim McAllister, Redmond resident and has lived in Deschutes County for over 30 years, apologized to the DMAC for being assigned what he called "a fool's errand." He argued that carving the county into districts would "dilute shared accountability," create political silos and amount to a "back-room deal" unless voters are asked directly to approve the change.

Jayne Simmons, Bend resident who lives in rural Deschutes County, drew an analogy to the Electoral College, saying the map must ensure that less-populous rural areas are not overpowered by city voters. She asked the DMAC to keep the county's logging, farming and ranching heritage in mind so that "our voice is heard as well."

Nathan Jenkinson, Redmond resident, encouraged a proactive outreach to under-represented groups while acknowledging the DMAC's "impossible task." Mr. Jenkinson presented a printed list of community organizations, especially those representing children and others not reflected in voter registration—that

the committee should invite to testify. He urged members to request, not merely welcome, input from those groups.

Rod Cooper, Sisters resident, suggested that if districts are drawn poorly, rural residents could be “out-voted by people that live in the city” and lose their voice in county affairs. He urged the committee to be “super conscious” of maintaining balance between urban and rural voters.

V. Review of Draft District Maps

Patterson recapped the direction staff received at the September 17 meeting to draft several district map concepts: incorporate the Library Board district as one scenario; consider cities and unincorporated towns (citing Tumalo and Terrebonne); provide both a north-south and an east-west split of Bend; begin with population centers; and examine whether the State House District map could inform commissioner districts. She reported that senior staff conducted a multi-hour work session on September 18 and generated three draft maps using 2020 census population. Voter-registration figures were tabulated for context, but overlays such as fire- or school-district boundaries were excluded. Staff found the existing House map an unsuitable baseline because of substantial population deviations. Bryant confirmed the drafts were offered strictly as starting points and that the committee retained full discretion to alter or replace them.

VI. GIS Update Overview

Lee Klemp demonstrated a new program to display and work with draft maps which allow side-by-side comparison of population totals and voter-registration counts.

VII. DMAC Mapping Work

Discussion opened with data currency. Multiple members voiced concern that relying on 2020 numbers may already understate actual population, particularly in fast-growing Redmond and in newly annexed areas on Bend’s western edge. They asked staff to look into the American Community Survey further and provided updated census estimates if possible. Others suggested that active-voter counts—although an imperfect substitute for total population—might better capture current settlement patterns until newer census data become available.

There was extensive discussion on “communities of interest” and what that means to individual committee members. Several members expressed interest in hearing from the community on what the terms means to them. A motion was made, and passed unanimously, to hold a Community Listening Session scheduled for some time in mid-October. This meeting will be an opportunity for community members to make public comments to the DMAC for consideration. Patterson will work to find a time either during a weekday evening or on the weekend to schedule the listening session.

The facilitator reminded the group that partisan registration should not drive early choices, cautioning that over-attention to party balance could draw accusations of gerrymandering. Members generally accepted that suggestion, though several asked that raw registration numbers be made readily available once a preferred shape is selected, in order to confirm that no single district is inadvertently tilted.

Population deviation standards were also debated. One member questioned whether the five-percent ceiling imposed by the Board was unduly rigid, noting that Oregon law allows local districts to deviate by up to ten percent. Staff responded that the tighter threshold reflects both board policy and best practices among other Oregon counties that elect commissioners by district, most of which keep deviation under one percent.

The work session concluded without work on a preferred map. Action items assigned to staff includes applying a more legible color scheme, generating comparative precinct tables for draft map options, providing precinct data for the existing Library Board map, exploring data options available in the American Community Survey and providing updated census data if available, and stand ready to add communities-of-interest layers once the committee provides specific guidance.

VIII. Wrap Up and Adjourn

Neil Bryant adjourned the meeting at 2:54 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by
Jen Patterson, Strategic Initiatives Manager, Deschutes County Administrative Services