



**Minutes**  
**Deschutes County**  
**District Mapping Advisory Committee (DMAC)**  
Wednesday, September 17, 2025, 1:00 p.m.  
Sisters City Hall, 520 E. Cascade Ave, Sisters, OR

---

This meeting was conducted in person with the option of remote participation. 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.

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

City of Sisters Staff: Rebecca Green, Deputy Recorder/Communications Coordinator.

**II. Approval of September 10, 2025, Minutes**

Matt Cyrus motioned to approve the minutes, Carol Loesche seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

**III. Public Comments**

Ten community members provided public comment in person and one person provided comments via Zoom.

Rodney Cooper, a Sisters-area resident, urged the committee to guard against concentrating all five commissioner districts around "one central city." He asked that rural voters not be overshadowed by larger population centers and drew a parallel to the small-state concerns voiced by America's founders.

Cheryl Pellerin, a Sisters City Councilor, supplied long-range population forecasts from Portland State University that show Sisters growing 130 percent and La Pine 87 percent over the next 25 years. She encouraged the committee to supplement 2020 census data with those forecasts and to draft written guidelines for how future boards should update the map once growth makes rebalancing necessary.

Andrea Blum, also of Sisters, recalled serving on an earlier (unsuccessful) home-rule-charter effort and said Deschutes County's mix of small cities and vast unincorporated areas makes districting unusually complicated. She cautioned the committee to learn from that prior process before recommending any

final map.

Monica Tomosy of Sisters stated it is not clear what the intent of the DMAC is. The entire process is unclear, how the DMAC was formed is unclear, what their goal is unclear, the process needs to be provided in writing. This process is being pushed by two Commissioners who are affiliated with a party and there is a trust issue for the community. The question should be should there be five not districts not voting on a map of five districts.

Bryce Kellog of Bend stated that the process is inherently partisan. Having five at-large Commissioners behooves the growing liberal base of the County. Deschutes County has grown a lot between 2020 – 2024 Data needs to be brought to the problem to draw the problem. Districts that are unintentionally unfair are still unfair same with partisan districts. There are resources available for the committee to use including “Daves Redistricting”.

John Nielsen of Redmond reviewed recent county ballot measures that removed partisan labels and expanded the board to five seats. He argued that before carving districts the county should again ask voters whether they want districts at all, warning that drawing lines prematurely could “further divide” urban and rural communities.

Michael Tripp, a 23-year county resident, submitted an illustrative map he drafted after the previous meeting. The exercise, he said, revealed how few precinct combinations satisfy the committee’s stated principles. He asked DMAC to explain how any eventual map would improve representation, community cohesion, and governmental efficiency.

Samantha Smith from Redmond thanked the DMAC for listening to the public input on providing more times for comments. Smith stated the process is rushed and being pushed through. Having the process done by November is not enough time and other places throughout the state took much more time for the process. Seats should be at-large but if it is going to be districts Redmond should have their own districts, otherwise, Redmond is going to be a dis-enfranchised community. It makes more sense to have the question whether there are even going to be districts be put to the voters not a drawn map of districts.

Greg Bryant contended that fast-growing Redmond merits its own commissioner district. Citing census-based population estimates rising from 33,274 in 2020 to 37,009 in 2023, he warned that without a dedicated district Redmond residents could be “disenfranchised.” He favored letting voters decide whether to use districts once all five commissioners are seated.

Mary Fleischman (appearing remotely) asked the committee to evaluate alternatives—such as four districts plus one at-large seat—before settling on five single-member districts. She fears the current approach is being rushed and could “totally backfire” if voters conclude it does not reflect their 2024 mandate to simply enlarge the board.

#### **IV. Discussion on Defining “Communities of Common Interest”**

Neil Bryant reopened a topic carried over from the prior meeting—how the committee will define and

apply “communities of interest” (COIs). Bryant stated that the state rules purposely leave “community of interest” open-ended; he therefore urged the committee to decide whether to rely on a broad, neighborhood-based concept or to anchor the term in concrete overlays—school, irrigation and farm districts, media-market areas, and other functional boundaries the GIS team can display on draft precinct maps. He stressed that whatever framework the group adopts must still accommodate Bend’s large share of the county’s population, because some Bend precincts will inevitably be paired with rural areas to achieve equal numbers.

Melanie Kebler discussed the information she forwarded to the group from the Oregon Supreme Court. Stressing the committee should keep in mind incorporated cities and keep recognizable unincorporated areas such as Tumalo and Terrebonne intact wherever possible, and guard against splitting neighborhoods without a data-driven justification. Using voter-registration totals would overlook roughly 6,700 non-registered Bend residents in just five precincts and could disenfranchise children and non-citizens counted by the census. Kebler favored using 2020 population data—supplemented by Portland State University growth forecasts—to remain within the committee’s self-imposed 5 percent deviation target.

Ned Dempsey underscored the need for a shared working definition before staff begins drafting maps. Given the county’s rapid growth, he favored using current voter-registration totals—updated daily—as a practical proxy for population, provided that the committee continues to observe its previously adopted principles: contiguity, reliance on existing precinct lines where feasible, and neutrality toward parties and incumbents.

Phil Henderson suggested that population equality is only one facet of “community.” In his view, cities and their immediately adjacent unincorporated areas should be treated as presumptive communities of interest, while functional service boundaries—such as fire-district or sheriff-patrol zones—may prove more meaningful than school-district lines. He added that election-registration data, updated frequently, could be useful because the 2020 census is already five years old.

Bernie Brader urged simplicity, suggesting that population alone could define the county’s shared interests; he cautioned that trying to align numerous rural and urban indicators might create “a list of twenty different items” without yielding clearer results.

Matt Cyrus urged the committee to acknowledge “geopolitical” identities—predominant partisan leanings that separate, for example, conservative Redmond from progressive west Bend—while Carol Loesche countered that drawing lines explicitly around partisan concentrations risks sliding into gerrymandering.

Phil Henderson wanted to clarify what gerrymandering means to him: when one political party has enough clout to create a map to what they want. That is not this county, the county is fairly well balanced with a large amount of the population identified as non-affiliated.

Melanie Kebler said the committee should take the concerns from the public very seriously. The committee is not a balanced representation of the partisan makeup of the county. The committee should be very careful in how they talk about this issue and starting with partisan voter registration data is not a way to earn public trust.

## **V. GIS Mapping Work**

Neil Bryant transitioned the meeting from conceptual criteria to the practical task of drawing districts. GIS analyst Lee Klemp confirmed that staff will begin with the 50 existing voting precincts, 2020 census counts, and current registration totals; he added that each of those data sets can be toggled on or off in the software as the committee tests scenarios.

Lee Klemp reminded the committee that the software already houses an extensive catalog of boundary layers—including city limits, county lines, urban-growth boundaries, road districts, school districts, tax and fire districts, water features, and the full range of public-land ownership classes. Any of those layers can be turned on or off in real time. There is a delay while loading while dozens of overlays and it would help the process if staff had advance notice of which datasets the committee would like to consider.

Neil Bryant concurred that without a focused request list GIS could “pick any answer you want and make it work with the data,” leaving the public to question the map’s objectivity. He recapped the legally mandated criteria already adopted—districts must be contiguous, stay within existing precinct lines where practicable, avoid favoring a party or incumbent, and achieve equal population with a self-imposed target of plus-or-minus five percent (roughly 39,000 residents or 33,000 registered voters per district).

The group discussed which optional overlays could enhance public understanding without over-complicating the visuals. Suggestions included public-lands ownership, school-district and fire-district boundaries, major road networks and water bodies. Several speakers cautioned that turning on too many layers at once could allow anyone to “pick any answer you want,” so the committee will revisit the overlay list after it receives the first drafts.

Carol Loesche asked staff to quantify the gap between total census population and registered voters; staff replied that the spread is about 35,000 people, implying that each district should contain roughly 39,000 residents or 33,000 registered voters.

Drew Kaza emphasized that staff need actionable direction, not a perfect academic definition. He proposed agreeing on a starter set of priorities—cities, nearby unincorporated settlements, and recognized service-district boundaries—so GIS staff can generate map options and the committee can then refine those drafts in public.

Two formal actions concluded the item. First, a motion directing staff to prepare draft five-district maps for review at the next meeting passed on a 5-2.

Afterward, a second motion to have staff also create an alternative showing four single-member districts plus one county-wide at-large seat was ruled within the body’s right to debate but ultimately failed, 4-3, because several members said it exceeded the Board of Commissioners’ charge to the committee.

Jen Patterson confirmed that staff will not define COIs on their own; instead, they will produce several draft maps using criteria and/or considerations provided to them from the committee including using the library district as a basis for one map, two options for Bend which include one that draws a line dividing the city north and south and one east and west, consider the State House District Map, start with

population centers, and consider cities and unincorporated areas

Staff will draft maps and include those drafts in the next meeting packet, which will be published on Monday, September 22, 2025, for the September 24, 2025, DMAC meeting.

The chair closed the discussion by reiterating that the forthcoming drafts are only data-driven starting points; decisions about communities of common interest, precinct swaps or additional overlays will follow public input and further committee deliberation.

## **VI. Wrap Up and Adjourn**

Neil Bryant adjourned the meeting at 2:57 p.m.

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