



Minutes
Deschutes County
District Mapping Advisory Committee (DMAC)

Wednesday, August 27, 2025, 4:00 p.m.

Deschutes Services Building, DeArmond Room (1st Floor), 1300 NW Wall Street, Bend

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 4:00 p.m. by Facilitator and Chair Neil Bryant.

Attendees:

Chair/Facilitator: Neil Bryant

Committee Members: Ned Dempsey, Drew Kaza, Melanie Kebler, Carol Loesche, Bernie Brader, and Phil Henderson

Absent: Matt Cyrus

Staff: Nick Lelack, County Administrator; Dave Doyle, County Legal Counsel; Steve Dennison, County Clerk; Jen Patterson, Strategic Initiatives Manager; Kim Katchur, Public Information Officer; Lee Klemp, IT/GIS; and Phil Chi, IT/GIS

Neil Bryant welcomed the appointed committee members and support staff, highlighted the decision of the voters in 2024 to expand the Board of Commissioners from three positions to five, and thanked everyone for volunteering to draft a district map that will appear on the May 2026 ballot if approved by the Board. Staff introduced themselves and summarized their experience in county administration, elections, public information, and strategic initiatives, emphasizing the technical and legal support available to the committee.

Neil Bryant has been in Bend since 1973 and previously worked as a lawyer and a State Senator. He has a deep background in chairing committees and facilitating diverse group discussions.

Ned Dempsey is an engineer who has been living in the area since 1971 working on initiatives such as the development of Black Butte Ranch and Bend's sanitary sewer system along with many other airport and infrastructure projects throughout the area. Dempsey is the former chair of the Oregon Future's Commission and Oregon Climate Change Commission.

Drew Kaza is owner of the Sister's Movie House and was born and raised in Oregon. Kaza has been involved in the Oregon Independent Party since 2008 and currently serves as the co-chair. Kaza was also one of the primary advocates for the ballot measure which changed the positions of

County Commissioners from partisan to non-partisan.

Melane Kebler is an attorney and currently the Mayor of Bend. Kebler was born and raised in Bend and her legal career has entailed working in the criminal justice field. Kebler is a member of the Democratic Party and sees her role on the committee as representing the citizens of Bend.

Carol Loesche moved to Central Oregon eight years ago. Loesche grew up in a farming community in southern Illinois and was a small business owner. Loesche has been very involved in the League of Women's Voters along with many other community-oriented volunteer roles and strongly believes in being a non-affiliated voice on the committee.

Bernie Brader has lived in La Pine for 21 years and is a veteran of the US Air Force. His background is in industrial water treatment. Brader is the President of Ponderosa Mountain Men and is on the Board of Directors with La Pine Frontier Days.

Phil Henderson was born and raised in Oregon. Henderson was a lawyer and started his own practice in the area and eventually became president of a local building company. Henderson was a former Deschutes County Commissioner and would like to be a voice for the rural community on the committee.

II. Review Meeting Schedule

Neil Bryant confirmed the DMAC meeting schedule: meetings will take place on Wednesdays from 1 to 3 p.m., beginning September 10 at the current Bend location. Subsequent meetings will occur at locations throughout the county, including Sisters on the 17th, Redmond on the 24th, and La Pine on October 1st. The committee's objective is to complete its recommendation by November, so that the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) can review and act prior to the statutory deadlines for placement on the May ballot. Bryant fielded questions regarding possible alternatives if the Commissioners do not accept the committee's recommendation, explaining that the Board can choose either to reject the proposal or proceed with its own mapping.

III. DMAC Meeting Rules and Conduct

Neil Bryant said the DMAC will use Robert's Rules of Order as the guiding principle for meeting procedures. Reminding that the DMAC is non-partisan and will not be gerrymandering maps, he asked that any committee member having specific questions and/or requests to be added to the agenda to filter those communications through him. Committee members can call Bryant if they have questions about the protocol of the meetings.

IV. Public Meeting Laws & Ethics

County Legal Counsel Dave Doyle explained that DMAC is a governing body under Oregon's open-meetings statute. He emphasized proper notice, live-streaming, minute-taking, and avoidance of "serial communications" that create an inadvertent quorum outside noticed meetings. Doyle strongly urged members to confine discussions of committee business to public sessions, use county email for all correspondence to simplify future public-records requests, and contact County Legal if clarification is needed.

V. Communications

Jen Patterson discussed communication protocols, including the use of county email for all official correspondence, access to meeting minutes, the DMAC website, staff support, and the channels for media interaction. Patterson is the primary point of contact for logistical and technical issues and can connect committee members to appropriate county staff as needed. Kim Katcher provided information concerning media contact and county communications and will support the committee with press releases and public information content.

VI. Review DMAC Guidelines

Neil Bryant then reviewed the DMAC Guidelines which have been approved by the BOCC as a framework document for the work the DMAC will conduct.

Melanie Kebler asked what problem the committee is trying to solve? Does the DMAC have the ability to draw a map other than five districts? Can the DMAC draw a map that includes an at-large seat? Kebler and others expressed concern that the guidelines provided might inadvertently constrain the committee's creativity or limit mapping options that could result in better representation and governance. Ned Dempsey stated that an interpretation could be a map with four distinct districts and the fifth district could be the entire County. Dempsey did not want to rule out an at-large seat from the outset. Phil Henderson stated that other counties in the state which have at-large seats are "Home Rule" counties and by their very structure are set up differently than others.

Deschutes County staff clarified that the Board of Commissioners had already reviewed and intended for the DMAC to draft a map consisting of five commissioner districts, and not a model featuring four districts plus one at-large position. Nick Lelack, referencing the Board's prior public deliberations, stated that the board's clear intent was for five geographically-defined, proportional districts. The committee was reminded that while its role is advisory, and any map that obtains majority support from DMAC members may be presented to the BOCC for final consideration, the Board directed that the committee focus its work on a five-district scenario. Nick Lelack confirmed that staff would bring the discussion before the BOCC to confirm whether the DMAC has flexibility to draft a map with five districts, as well as one with four districts and one at-large seat.

The discussion pivoted to the fundamental problem the mapping process was intended to solve, with several members articulating their priorities: improve representation, expand engagement across Deschutes County, and account for the fact of urban and rural populations and how these differ.

Questions arose regarding how other Oregon counties structure their commissioner districts. Carol Loesche would like background on which Oregon counties are "Home Rule" counties. Several committee members requested a county-by-county survey or comparative analysis detailing which counties use districting, which select commissioners at-large, and the rationales that exist for either approach.

There was robust debate about what constitutes fair districting, with committee members emphasizing the need for the DMAC to consider emerging growth areas, patterns of representation, and public feedback. The need for transparency in determining district boundaries and thoroughly documenting

their logic was repeatedly discussed.

Committee members touched on the topic of district numbering and how that process could play out. Bryant recapped that four Commissioner seats will be on the May ballot, which could potentially be the same ballot that the district map is put to the voters for consideration.

Kebler expressed interest in looking at data that includes voter registration each year over the past five years, jail population, and city populations. Staff will provide 2020 Census data and current voter registration data in the September 10th meeting packet.

Henderson commented that historically, the cities of Sisters, Redmond, and Bend have each increased proportionally over the years (five times in size).

VII. Historical Information on Census and Voting Population

Chair Neil Bryant opened the historical-data segment by asking committee members what data they are interested in seeing. Staff explained that federal and state redistricting rules require districts to be as proportional in population as practicable—the guidelines state the districts should be within 5% variance between the largest and the smallest district. The 2020 U.S. Census population count by precinct and an up-to-date voter registration count by precinct will be provided to the committee. The census data is now five years old and updated information will not be available until after the 2030 Census. During the discussion, one member asked staff to supply GIS layers showing 2020 Census blocks, current precinct boundaries, and unincorporated communities so the committee can evaluate geographic cohesiveness alongside numerical balance. Staff confirmed that those files, plus comparative population data, will be uploaded to the DMAC web portal before the next DMAC meeting on September 10th.

VIII. Adjourn

Neil Bryant adjourned the meeting at 5:45 p.m.

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