



Minutes
Deschutes County
District Mapping Advisory Committee (DMAC)

Wednesday, September 10, 2025, 1:00 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 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; Lee Klemp, IT/GIS; and Phil Chi, IT/GIS.

Matt Cyrus introduced himself and provided background on his experience and family. Cyrus is a sixth generation Oregonian and his family homesteaded in Central Oregon back before there was a Deschutes County. His family has a background in agriculture and excavating. Cyrus is involved in several community boards and organizations including the Farm Bureau and as a serving member on the Deschutes County Planning Commission.

II. Approval of August 27, 2025, Minutes

Melanie Kebler requested the minutes going forward provide more details on who is speaking and requesting specific information. Phil Henderson motioned to approve the minutes, Ned Dempsey seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

III. Public Comments

Nine people signed up to give public comments. Phil Henderson requested that public comments be kept to the business on hand. Neil Bryant said at this time there are no restrictions on what the public can comment on. Bryant said each person will have about one minute and forty seconds for their comments.

Nathan Jenkinson provided comments on whether it is necessary to create districts when the Commissioner seats are non-partisan. Jenkinson also expressed concern about the prospect of gerrymandering districts and the need to go through this at this time instead of waiting until the next census when there will be more updated data. Bryant responded that Commissioners, in a majority vote, wanted to create districts. Ned Dempsey responded that the committee would aim to create nonpartisan districts and possibly an at-large seat.

Ashley Proctor expressed concern about the lack of representation on the DMAC. Proctor highlighted that there are only two women, no people of color, and little representation in the audience of younger generations. Proctor is in her 30's and had to take time off work to come and provide comments. Proctor also stated that the process feels rushed.

Connie Peterson expressed concern about the composition of the DMAC and after additional research her concerns have risen about the lack of public input in the process. Peterson is unhappy with the process and how quick the timeline is and expressed that there is lack of diversity and representation on the DMAC.

Carl Shoemaker would like the areas on both sides of the Deschutes River to have their own representation/district.

Liz Goodrich has concerns about the makeup of the committee, the County is 50/50 male and female but there are only two women on the committee and no people of color. Redmond will be disenfranchised in the districts and Goodrich will be working to repeal whatever map is presented.

David Roth does not think there should be an at-large position, it should be one district per Commissioner. The districts should be made up of two in Bend split east and west, one south of Bend, and two north of Bend split east and west.

Greg Bryant suggests the districts should be made like spokes in a wheel. The DMAC should also take into consideration the increase of population from 2020. Bryant also suggests the DMAC should make more than one map for the Commissioner's consideration.

Samantha Smith has concerns about the whole process including the makeup of the committee and not having fair representation of women and the BIPOC community. Other concerns include census data that is five years old. Redmond has grown considerably over the last five years and will be dis-enfranchised in the process. Community members should have more time and ability to provide public comment to the DMAC.

Amanda Page thanked the committee for being there and thinks their task is impossible. Page expressed concerns that even though it is intended to be a non-partisan process the makeup of the committee is four republicans, one independent and two democrats and no non-affiliated voters. Carol Loesche and Neil Bryant made the correction that they are both non-affiliated voters. Page stressed that non-affiliated voters make up 40% of the population and the timeline is rushed and does not have a sufficient process for public input.

IV. DMAC Member Requests

Neil Bryant reviewed requests from the previous meeting including the requests about how the jail populations are counted. Steve Dennison confirmed that registered voters who are eligible to vote and currently in jail will receive their ballots at their registered voter address. Melanie Kebler asked how they would be counted in their population count. Dennison confirmed that those in jail will be counted, if they are Deschutes County residents, at their registered voter address. Jen Patterson reviewed the process for

data requests and confirmed that staff will respond to data requests, as best to their resources and availability, when a majority of DMAC members have agreed to requests. If individual DMAC members have requests that are not supported by a majority of members, the individual can research and provide information to the DMAC members for consideration. Kebler put together a table comparing districted counties in the Oregon. Kebler will email the table out to the committee members for reference. Matt Cyrus suggested bcc'ing or email staff the table so the committee members don't inadvertently violate public meeting laws. Patterson will email Kebler's table to the committee members.

V. Definitions of Common Terms

Neil Bryant reviewed a document of common terms and their definitions that may be frequently used during the course of DMAC meetings. Phil Henderson asked for clarification of the term "communities of interest" and if that is different than "communities of common interest" and what term was litigated in court. Bryant clarified it is different than the litigation that was specifically to the OR Congressional District 5 and ultimately the Oregon Supreme Court ruled that it was constitutional in relation to CD 5.

VI. Data

Steve Dennison reviewed the population count by precinct. The County has 50 precincts that represent geographical areas throughout the County. The provided chart included the 2020 Census population, registered voter numbers as of August 26, 2025, and whether the precinct lies within a city or unincorporated areas. Melanie Kebler asked if the committee could see the voter registration numbers from 2022 since the guidelines from the Commissioner stated that data will be provided. Dennison responded that the precincts as of today don't align directly with precinct lines from 2022 as precinct lines have been updated due to annexation and balancing of voter boundaries. The table from 2022, especially in Redmond, would not align with the current precinct lines. Kebler stated that it would be helpful to see where those lines were re-drawn due to voter registration data. Matt Cyrus mentioned that there were a few precincts that had higher number of 2025 registered voters than had total population from the 2020 Census population. Dennison discussed how there are specific areas throughout the County that had rapid growth over the past five years including Black Butte Ranch. Kebler mentioned that the DMAC would not be able to see a direct comparison of the 2020 census data to the current registered voter data because a lot of the precinct lines have been redrawn. Dennison introduced Nancy Blankenship, former County Clerk. Blankenship further discussed the growth areas in the County since COVID and the re-drawing of precincts to balance out the growth trends and keeping lines of interest together within a precinct. Growth occurred in a number of areas including Black Butte Ranch, 27th street in Redmond, areas of Bend, and Sunriver.

VII. GIS

Lee Klemp gave a demonstration of GIS and the tools available to creating maps by precincts, including data and overlays available within GIS. Melanie Kebler asked what information was collected and is currently available for census block data. What are the other layers available (i.e. school districts, fire districts)? Klemp responded that the census block data is strictly population but will look into what further demographics could be available to align with the census population count. Klemp gave a demonstration of the fire district layering and how that shows up in the GIS mapping system within the precinct boundaries. Ned Dempsey asked how to visualize the layering boundaries with locations (i.e. roads). Klemp added additional layering for the members to be able to see boundaries and roads as an example of the features of GIS. Drew Kaza asked how granular GIS can get at the school district layer. Phil Chi

demonstrated that for school related data it can be broken down by type of school (i.e. elementary, middle, and high school) and attendance data. Steve Dennison reiterated that the GIS demonstration is a starting point to understand what systems and information are available.

Bernie Brader would like to use the map Klemm used as for demonstration as the starting point of mapping. Kebler cautioned that any maps printed off can become public and the map that Klemm demonstrated is just a tutorial and not a starter map.

Neil Bryant asked Klemm to define Census Block. Klemm defined a block as statistical areas bound by visible features, such as streets, roads, streams, and railroad tracks, and by nonvisible boundaries, such as selected property lines and city, township, school district, and county limits and short line-of-sight extensions of streets and roads.

Dempsey would like further clarification on the process to define areas of common interest and how the committee goes about incorporating communities of interest into the mapping process. Kebler said it would be helpful to get further clarification on how the Supreme Court defines communities of interest. Bryant stated that communities of interest defined by the Supreme Court in relation to congressional maps might not be much help to this committee's task. Kebler iterated that the guidelines state not to unreasonably divide communities of interest and geographic boundaries so why wouldn't a Supreme Court decision not matter to the committee. Bryant stated it would be dependent on how specific the ruling was. Dempsey stated that it seems an important criteria but has no specific definition. Kaza stated it seemed it had many definitions which is the same as no definition.

Phil Henderson stated that the precinct maps are online and helpful to zoom in on. Henderson continued to say if he was to design districts, he would want to make it effective and efficient for Commissioners. For example, Fire Districts are something Commissioners are involved in and it would be helpful to the Commissioners and citizens or groups of citizens not to divide those communities.

Matt Cyrus said GIS has the capability to add all the roads like an atlas so that view could be beneficial when drawing district lines. Kebler requested to have all the precinct maps in a book (binder) for each committee member, having a page for each precinct to be able to visually look at while going through the mapping process would be helpful. Dennison said it can be done but it will be time intensive for the staff as some of the precincts need to be updated from 2022. Dennison also referenced the public tool of Dial that has all the precincts with layers available (i.e. senate districts, school districts). Dial can be accessed at dial.deschutes.org.

Dempsey iterated again that the committee should define communities of interest and whether the group will consider the term while mapping districts. Bryant said staff can get the legal term. Jen Patterson clarified that there is no further definition of the term than the information that has already been provided to the committee. Different counties have interpreted the term in different ways. Patterson sent a message to County Legal Counsel to see if there are legal definitions used in ORS or court cases to provide to the group. Patterson read out the email that Legal Counsel provided: ORS identifies district drawing criteria. Included in that list is: "Not divide communities of common interest". OAR provides the following definition relative to communities of common interest. "Where urban neighborhoods, rural communities or other communities can be identified, an effort will be made to retain that community

within a single district.” The Oregon Supreme Court (*Sheehan v. Legislature*) has confirmed the necessity to comply with ORS and OAR. Other criteria will influence consideration of community of common interest. In the end, the committee should be able to articulate a reasonable basis for its identification and preservation of communities of interest. Patterson will email the group with the specific ORS and OAR numbers following the meeting.

Klemp gave a brief visual overview of Dial and the options available within the program.

Drew Kaza suggests using the layering options in Dial as a guideline for referring to “communities of common interest”. Kaza suggests the members play around with Dial outside of the committee meeting to determine what layers the committee may want to use in order to meet the mapping criteria.

Bryant said communities of interest is just one of the criteria, there are other criteria listed in the guidelines. Kaza stated there are lots of definitions and examples of common interests out there and the committee should look at other examples. Cyrus said examples could include not splitting communities like Eagle Crest and Black Butte or looking at registered voter data and not splitting large blocks of Republican or Democrat voters. Cyrus and Dempsey talked back and forth about starting with equal population maps and then drilling into what common interests would be to move around map lines. Kebler stated that hearing from the public on their definitions of communities of interest could be informative. Carol Loesche stated that the committee could expand the public comment input and suggested whether the DMAC should consider having a more open forum on what the public wants the committee to consider. Loesche stated having a listening session similar to a candidate forum to garner further citizen input could be helpful. Kebler agreed with that concept. Cyrus said that the scheduled time the committee is meeting is the only time that works for every committee member so if they held a public listening session at another time at least one committee member couldn’t make it and that didn’t seem like the best approach. Kebler liked the idea of having the public listening session not be during working hours.

Bryant discussed the current process of having public comments during the DMAC meeting and that the public comment agenda item has a time limit in order for the DMAC to have enough time to do the map drafting work. Dempsey said he liked the public comments today and would be interested in having more time for public comments during the DMAC meeting. Henderson stated he would like the public comments to be limited in scope to what the DMAC is able to do and not what is out of their scope (i.e. the makeup of the committee). Cyrus agreed and said it can be stated before the public comments to keep comments pertinent to the work of the DMAC. Bryant said the public comments section will be expanded to 30 minutes going forward and each person will have up to three minutes each.

Bryant moved the committee discussion to the topic of partisan data and emphasized the goal of not creating gerrymandered maps. Bryant suggested drafting a map first and then as a final stage look at the voter registration data to confirm that they didn’t inadvertently draw gerrymandered maps.

Patterson referenced previous research on what Washington and Lane County used for definitions of communities of interest. The committee members requested Patterson share the spreadsheet she put together when researching the process. Kebler said the layering options Kaza mentioned and the further census data overlays could be helpful when considering the communities of interest discussion.

Henderson asked for further clarification from Dennison on the precinct updates from 2022 to current precinct boundaries. Dennison discussed precinct changes specifically in Redmond when precincts were approaching the legal limit of 10,000 registered voters and/or when areas have annexed which required the Clerk's office to move the precinct lines. Henderson asked for clarification on whether the new precinct maps incorporate the new growth areas throughout the county. Dennison replied that they don't necessarily have that information in the precinct maps but that is the benefit of Dial where it does show that information. Brader confirmed the group is not redistricting but in fact districting for the first time so the group should not use the terminology of "redistricting".

Kaza stated the committee could spend a lot of time and potentially many meetings trying to define communities of interest. Kaza further stated citizens giving public comments could provide information on what it means to the individual, additionally committee members can state what it means for them. Henderson agreed and stated the committee members should come to the next meeting with how they individually define the term. Loesche agreed with having the discussion of individual meanings from each committee member as an agenda topic for the next meeting.

Kebler asked for clarification on how they will actually commence the mapping. Staff confirmed that GIS is not available to committee members but the IT team will be at the table and the committee members can direct them interactively on drawing the map and playing around with different areas and scenarios. Henderson stated that he can't actually read the screen, staff will rearrange the room so the committee members are closer to the screen. Staff will also try to provide several laptops at the tables for members during the meetings.

VIII. Wrap Up and Adjourn

Committee members were in favor of expanding the public comments section to 30 minutes (as needed) for each meeting. Additionally for the next meeting members would like to discuss what criteria and communities of common interest mean to each committee member.

Action items for staff:

- Provide February 2022 voter registration from data by precinct
- Email legal counsel's findings on defining and adhering to the guidelines of drafting maps that consider "communities of interest"
- Share spreadsheet of previous redistricting considerations by counties
- Print out precinct maps in binders for each DMAC member

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

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