

MINUTES
JACKSON COUNTY APPORTIONMENT COMMISSION MEETING
April 13, 2011
5:30 p.m.
County Commission Chambers

1. **Call to Order** – Chairman Zavislak called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

2. **Roll Call** – Amanda Riska

Board members present: (5) Zavislak, Coffman, Riska, Choate, and Marquez.

Others present: Scott Ambs, Joe Filip, Cliff Herl, Janie Hildebrandt, Pattie Rayl, Jon Williams, Sandra Marsh, Holly Klaft, Julie Alexander, Mike Way, David Elwell, Carl Rice, Jr., and Steve Shotwell.

3. **Pledge of Allegiance** – Led by Chairman Zavislak

4. **Public Comment**

Jonathan Williams, County Commissioner, District 9. He believes that the current members of the County Commission are competent and professional. He knows that they will continue to work and represent the citizens of the county as they have been doing for the last few years if the Apportionment Commission decides to make a change in the amount of board members.

David Elwell, County Commissioner, District 12 – He stated that he is in his 5th term as a commissioner. He thinks the commission should remain at 12 because it works, and also because of where they have the county functionally and financially right now.

Julie Alexander, County Commissioner, District 5 – She stated that she is a new commissioner and her plate is very full. She finds it is very time consuming to put forth the effort that the constituents deserve. She thinks those things should be considered if the Apportionment Commission would like to see younger, employed individuals on the board.

Cliff Herl, County Commissioner, District 1 – He feels that the board should be kept at 12 commissioners to be able to represent the constituents properly.

Carl Rice, Jr., County Commissioner, District 3 – He stated that he is very busy and attends more meetings than he is required to. He doesn't know

what the purpose or need would be to reduce the commission from 12 members unless there would be a significant savings.

5. **Approval of the March 29, 2011 Meeting Minutes** – Moved by Coffman, seconded by Choate to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried.
6. **Review Commission Responsibilities – Mandated vs. Non-Mandated Boards/Commissions/Committees** – Chairman Zavislak asked if there were any questions on the list of responsibilities that Acting Administrator/Controller Adam Brown provided. Hank Choate requested a brief synopsis of the board's primary purpose. Board of County Commissioners Chairman, Steve Shotwell, provided his interpretation and answered questions.

Chairman Zavislak read the guidelines for apportionment [MCL 46.404].

Discussion was held regarding the range of divergence.

7. **Review Maps - Potential Districts 9, 11, and 12** – Scott Ambs presented the maps of the potential districts.
8. **Public Comment**

Jonathan Williams, County Commissioner, District 9, doesn't feel that the current even-numbered board has been a problem in the past, and believes it can even be an advantage in certain circumstances. He isn't sure that reducing the number of commissioners is the right thing to do, with the county commissioners being the conduit between the people and the government.

David Elwell, County Commissioner, District 12, stated that their pay has only increased one time within the last 10 years. He feels that with the huge amount of work that a commissioner is responsible for, including duties that aren't statutorily required, he thinks that the board should remain with 12 commissioners.

Janie Hildebrandt, Summit Township Clerk, is viewing the process from an elections perspective regarding the other districts (i.e. state offices and school districts) and she stated that she will need help from Scott Ambs to redraw the precinct boundaries.

Sandra Marsh would like to see more research done on other counties that currently have an odd-numbered board. She thinks efficiency should always be a major factor – not just during redistricting. Since Jackson County's

population didn't change significantly, she wonders if there is a need to change the size of the commission. She also questioned why all of the commissioners didn't submit a list of their required meetings and duties.

Patricia Rayl clarified that the County Commission serves as both Legislative and Executive branches of government and the oversight of the county is done by an administrator. She likes the proposed map of 9 districts because of the clean lines and believes it would help to eliminate potential disenfranchising.

Carl Rice, Jr., County Commissioner, District 3, thinks that the map of 9 districts cuts a lot of communities in half. He also stated that it takes a lot of homework, in addition to attending the meetings, to do the job of county commissioner properly.

Cliff Herl, County Commissioner, District 1, believes that the current commissioners are very knowledgeable and oversee the county very well. He believes reducing the number would be a mistake.

Mike Way, County Commissioner, District 11, spoke regarding the amount of meetings commissioners attend, as well as ad hoc committees. He believes that if the number of commissioners is reduced, their ability to represent will be watered down and the people it will affect will be the citizens. He stated that he did not run for commissioner for the money. He did it to help people, and stated that he will work for free if he needs to.

9. Other

Karen Coffman explained the commission's responsibility to perform their due diligence, and how this process has been a matter of discovery and exploration and not about any one particular member. She stated that she is asking the questions she's asked to ensure that she has a clean and clear knowledge base to start from.

Chairman Zavislak added to Karen Coffman's comment that in reviewing the court cases, one of the real standards in addition to population, is whether or not the commission performed their due diligence.

Hank Choate clarified that he asked for the budget numbers, not only because he needed the information, but he also wanted to make that information available to the public.

Ruben Marquez feels that the group needs to look at all of the avenues before a decision is made.

Hank Choate asked if it would be inappropriate to make a motion. Chairman Zavislak stated that a motion may not be appropriate at this time, because he feels it is important for the public to have an opportunity to see the information first. He believes that a cost-benefit analysis would be more beneficial than strictly a cost analysis.

Karen Coffman recommended looking at other counties as far as their population numbers and their number of commissioners. Chairman Zavislak will prepare that information for six counties with population less than Jackson and six counties with more population.

Cliff Herl asked the Apportionment Commission to also look at the budgets of other counties. Chairman Zavislak assigned that duty to Karen Coffman to include the budget, expenditures of the commissioners, and each county's fiscal rating.

- 10. Adjournment** – Moved by Choate, seconded by Marquez to adjourn. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.